

SRI SARVESHWARI TIMES

JANUARY 2002

Every man born in the world
comes with a mission

That which truly interests you
is your mission

The path to your future is paved
with your own actions

If you have found your right mission
devote all your physical and mental strength to making it
a success

You are bound to succeed



Aghoreshwar
Baba Bhagwan Ramji

AUGHAR VANI, Avadhuta's Wisdom

The following thoughts are drawn from a selection of passages compiled by Dr. Edoardo Beato (Anandoji) from Baba Hariji's talks. Hopefully these nuggets of wisdom will be of help in our practice as we enter the new year.

Be Good to Your Self

We spend so much time being good to others, but how often are we good to ourselves? We need attention too. The very moment you take a mindful breath, you begin to be good to your Self.

Time for Ourselves

The world outside is so engaging, so distracting. To go out in pursuit of it we keep going further and further from our Self. We're not able to be grounded, to be still, and experience that luxury of having a little time for ourselves. When we are still, if we really look at things, the way we spend our day, our time, we can weed out many things that aren't really necessary, that don't bring any happiness to ourselves or to others. When we take time for ourselves, somehow our priorities change. We're able to see what is more important, what is nurturing, what is healing, what is grounding. We're living in this world, our energy can move, and we can be active. But the question is, how do we spend that energy?

When we sit together in a group doing yoga, meditation, and chanting, it's not only for ourselves. The impact is much greater! It connects us with the whole community. The energy, the vibrations going out of our bodies, are touching those who are not able to be here, those who may be lying in bed not feeling well. The waves of compassion and love

reach out to everyone.

There are many aspects to an ashram. One of the most important aspects is learning to do things together. That is puja, that is the main message: how to live together, eat together, sing together. These things are the basic foundation, to be able to create something which can be meaningful in our lives, and in our community.

Each individual is a participant in creating such a thing in our community. Where a group of people are sitting together and singing, energy is high. No matter who comes in, no matter what is on his or her mind, that person can just sit down and begin to ride that wave that we create. Whenever good energy is flowing, the currents touch everyone.

Yoga Brings Us Home

It is said, the human body is craved even by Divine spirits, they are so eager to descend upon us and manifest their good will through us. But we have to be home. When they knock at our door, somebody has to answer. Let them come in, so they can manifest their good will. This is what yoga does: yoga brings us home.

The very moment we take a mindful breath, we come back home. While we are aware of our breath, if we are aware of our posture at the same time, that is yoga

How do we hold ourselves? How do we hold our body? What kind of thoughts do we entertain in our mind? Once we are aware of these things, we are doing yoga. You could be doing yoga while doing the dishes, while sitting, lying down, driving a car, reading. The very moment you become aware of your activities in life and take a nice deep breath you are doing yoga.

Mantra

We purify ourselves with pranayam, with pranav, and with the love of the Guru. There is so much joy and happiness, so much love just pours into me when I think of my Guru. All the darkness is washed away. There is no darkness. That house is cleansed with a little action, a little devotion, and we resonate with our mantra. Nothing can stop us from realizing the higher meaning of our mantra. Mantra is not just syllables to repeat; it is more, much more. It's up to each individual to explore and let the mantra reveal the inner mysteries, but for that one has to be focused and very dedicated. If we are not dedicated to our sadhana, we become like that cat that roams from door to door licking left-over bowls.

Going Deeper

Go deeper in your practice. Sab din hot na eek samana: All days are not the same. There are some good days and some not-so-good days. Today we have good health, tomorrow we may not have it. Let us use the time that we have at hand, when the body doesn't hurt or feel limited and we have the ability to sit and be at peace. We should definitely use this blessing to go a little deeper in our practice. Unless we have that hunger, that curiosity to go deeper in our practice, it will be very difficult to taste that richness. Hunger has to be there. There comes a time when the mantra comes closer to the practitioner. You get a little closer to your mantra, so that you feel like a mountain: nothing can move you. Although hungry, you feel full. Nothing from outside is needed, just a little reminder.

You Are the Guru

"You are the Guru." If we are not careful enough, this could be a cause of enhancement of our ego and delusion. Before we can get in touch with that Guru within, we have to learn humility, patience, forbearance, and devotion in the company of a Guru. Developing these qualities bring us closer to the Guru. The Guru's picture is meant to remind us of our highest state, to bring our attention, our focus, to a standstill, to rest there.

Service: Putting the Other First

The word service is so tricky. Sometimes this implies you are doing things for others only when you are doing things with your hands. If we apply the word service only to things we do with our hands, it's like calling asanas yoga, which are just a very small aspect of it. Being of service truly means putting the other first: putting the other's interest first, putting the other's emotions first, putting the other's needs first.

So, you don't have to go out of your house to do service. Take the whole of life as service. That's another way to look at being of service. But then again, one has to have some boundaries. When you're out in the world being of service, don't let people walk all over you or take advantage of you. These are all fine lines and the lines keep changing as growth occurs in you.

Letting Go

Inner and outer cleanliness. How does cleanliness begin? Outer cleanliness is very easy: we take a shower, put on clean clothes. Inner cleanliness begins by letting go! Otherwise we accumulate so much trash that we don't create any new space.

I have a favorite story about letting go. In India people catch monkeys. They take a pot that has a narrow neck, and bury it in the ground under a tree where monkeys are jumping and dancing in the treetops. They leave the mouth open, sticking out of the ground four or five inches. Then they put nuts in it. The monkey finds them, puts its hand in the jar, gets a big fist full of nuts, and then tries to pull it out. But the fist won't come out because it's full of nuts. The monkey would be sitting there all night long trying to pull his fist filled with nuts. In the morning the monkey catcher walks up casually and putting a noose around the monkey's neck, taps on his hand and drags him away. The monkey, whose nature is to be completely free, to be playing on the treetops and walking around carefree, ends up in a cage. Just because the monkey didn't let go; all the monkey had to do was, let go of those nuts.

We have those nuts too@all the things we hang onto, that we identify with, that we want to own, to possess. Those are nuts! Ideas, concepts, memories... This life is ever new. With each new breath we enter a new world. Each new breath has the ability to transform our life. A whole new door opens, but those nuts keep us in that cage that we have created for ourselves. So, that is what cleanliness means: to be able to let go so that I can walk on this path without baggage. Because this path of union is very narrow. There is a Hindi saying: it's so narrow that there is just enough space for my body to pass through. We try to walk through with a whole mule carrying all our camping stuff. It just doesn't go through. The path is very narrow.

Cleanliness begins with letting go and it's one of the very important aspects of our *sadhana*

Meet the faces at the Ashram

Through this column we salute the special individuals at the Ashram

Luis Kong

It's been nine years since I first met Baba Hariji at a yoga class in an upper-story corner classroom at the Sonoma Community Center. While working as an executive director of an arts organization and commuting to San Francisco, I would come to relax and learn yoga from a white-robed Indian monk who, it turns out, has taught me through the years the value of compassion, caring, and wisdom in daily practice. It was on that wooden floor that I began to understand the true relationship between yoga and meditation, and how breath was the key to a powerful yoga pose. Most importantly, I learned that yoga is the way to prepare your body for meditation because the poses, as well as pranayam (breath exercises), help improve circulation and movement of the life energy throughout the body. This effort helps you be still during meditation. Sometimes it's the simplest effort that provides the most benefit when we are paying attention.



A couple of years later, I visited the Sonoma Yoga Ashram on Carriger Rd. and became involved in a new view of spirituality through Hinduism. I was raised Catholic, and had been a Buddhist for several years, and had a healthy skepticism of organized religion. But at the Ashram, I felt welcomed, as if I was a part of a small family of friends. I felt a heartfelt dedication to the development of a spiritual community in the Sonoma Valley among a very genuine group of people who maintained their individuality, intelligence, and appreciation for Baba Hariji's teachings.

What excited me about his teaching is that it is based on commonsense practices and fellowship. It is grounded in simplicity and service. It shuns cleverness and masquerades. Aghor literally means that which is easy, but for me, it wasn't easy to bring this practice as a part of my daily life.

At the start of my involvement in the Ashram, I felt very much like a tourist observing daily puja, participating in Navaratri, trying somehow to fit into the community of seekers. My practice relied on collective approval and group participation. It wasn't until a few years later, when all the puja began to settle deeper into a more personal practice, that I began to understand and enjoy more sincerely the sweetness of Navaratri and experience a higher power in my life. I began to challenge my own spirituality by making it more of an integral part of daily life. I felt the power and meaning of a mantra, and really began to appreciate the lessons I learned from Baba Hariji and Aghoreshwar Bhagwan Ramji, and my friends at the Ashram. Sometimes we have to learn things over and over until we finally get it, then work hard not to forget. I learned about mindfulness, about letting go of the past, about my own ego and skepticism, about devotion and passion for what I feel, about learning from mistakes and not being afraid to make them, and about working together and taking positive action in our lives. This awareness of spirituality and consciousness sustains my work as an organizational and community development consultant, educator, and life coach.

In the past nine years, I have helped in the construction of the yurt and the remodeling of the old buildings on the grounds. I have facilitated meetings about long-term planning and

fundraising. I have cooked meals, cut fruit very fast, and washed lots of dishes. I have been in charge of puja trays during Navaratri, a job I truly appreciate. I help whenever I can.

-- LK

Ashram News: Babaji left for India on November 17th. All the activities at the Ashram continue as usual. However, there has been a schedule change due to the shift back to standard time: The morning meditation sessions are cancelled during the winter. The evening Arati starts at 6:00 PM, except on Mondays and Wednesdays (7:00 PM).

In 2002 Navaratri begins on Saturday, April 13th.



SRI SARVESHWARI SAMOOH, USA
Sonoma Yoga Ashram

P.O. Box 950 1087 Craig Avenue Sonoma, CA 95476 USA
PH 707-996-8915 FAX 707-996-0388
Send email: info@sonomaashram.org

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