



SRI SARVESHWARI SAMOOH, USA

SonoMa Ashram

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Aghoreshwar Bhagwan Ramji

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**If we are devoted to ourselves,
we can have devotion for everybody else.**

Aghar vani, Avadhuta's wisdom

Personal Retreats at the SonoMa Ashram



Carve out some time to visit the Ashram for a personal retreat this Spring or Summer. Let the peaceful Ashram grounds nourish and replenish you, and let a daily routine of meditation, yoga, self-reflection and rest inspire you. Guest rooms are available year round and can be reserved by calling or emailing the Ashram.

The Ashram's daily schedule and yoga class schedule are on our website: www.sonomaashram.org

To learn more about the Ashram's offerings, events and projects, please email us: info@sonomaashram.org or call us at **707-996-8915**.

Thus spoke Aghoreshwar

O silly human being!

What you look for does exist, but it is not what you think it is.

And the way to find it is absolutely not the way you are going about it.

It is difficult, but not impossible to find.

It can be found. You will find it, too.

But you will not find it in doing the things that you are doing now.



Living in Turbulent Times

by Baba Harihar Ramji

Recently Baba Harihar Ramji (Babaji) visited the Tucson, Arizona area for several speaking engagements. During his evening talk on April 16, 2009, Babaji spoke the following words:

With great love and respect, I welcome you. It's wonderful to be here.

I usually don't speak on a topic, but the flier for tonight's talk says, *How to Live in Turbulent Times*.

TIME IS TIME. In the Ramayan, an India epic, it is said, "All the days of one's life are never the same. Ups and downs are bound to happen."

There are good days and there are some days that look very challenging. Change is inevitable. This is the nature of evolution. When turbulence is prevalent, something has to remain steadfast that we can hold onto to stay on our feet.

I would like to encourage all of us to ask ourselves, "What is the anchor in my life? What is it that grounds me?" If we do not have an anchor, then we begin to flow with every little event, with every little wind that comes from whichever direction, and we get very far from our home.

What brings me back home? What is that tool? Who is that friend whose hand I hold to come back home to my Self? That friend of ours is called *sadhana* in Sanskrit. *Sadhana* means a *spiritual practice*. Any effort we make to come back home to our wholeness, to our grounded-ness, to our Divine Self, is called *sadhana*.

Sadhana comes from the Sanskrit word *sadhya*, which means *that which can be practiced*. So, the true definition of *sadhana* is a *spiritual practice that can be practiced*.

We can go to a workshop, a seminar or a spiritual retreat. We may learn something there, but if we cannot practice it, what good is it for us?

We may have a very well-known friend, but if that friend is not able to be there at our side when we need to hold someone's hand, we may have to look at it. A good friend is someone who is available to hold our hand at any given moment in our life. This is *sadhana*.

Our *sadhana* doesn't have to be complicated or mysterious, as long as we do something daily and are able to say, "This is my anchor. This is my spiritual practice. This is what I do to connect with God. This is what I do to come back home."

Taking a mindful breath could be our practice. It sounds very simple, but it works. Whenever we feel anxious and are getting washed away by the day's events, the very moment we stop, take a step back, and take a nice deep breath, we feel as if we have come back home. We may get involved in the situation again, but there is a break. There is a moment of connection with our wholeness.

In India, when people receive initiation into a spiritual practice, they are given a *mantra*. Do you know what *mantra* really means? *Mantra* is a *mitra*, meaning a *friend*. It is a friend given to us by our *Guru*, a friend whose hand we can always hold, to come back home to ourselves.

Our *Guru* teaches us how to be around this new friend. Just imagine what it feels like to fall in

love with someone. Being around this friend is not a chore or obligation. We are always thinking about this friend and we can't wait to be with this friend. We carve out time to spend with this friend. The day we develop this kind of attitude toward our spiritual practice, it becomes an anchor for us.

If we invest time in creating this anchor in our lives, it helps us deal with turbulent times. As I said, time is never going to be the same. If it is not the economy, then it is something else, and it goes on and on.

If we want to drink the water, we have to dig one well deep. If we want to get something out of our practice, we need to think in the same way. But instead of digging one well deep, we end up digging many potholes. We do a practice for a while, and then we start to feel it's not working for us. Then we try something else, and begin feeling the same. It continues like this and we never get to the water. We end up with lots of shallow holes, and we may even trip in one of them, fall and twist our ankle.

Creating an anchor in our life requires patience, persistence and forbearance. Suppose we are digging a hole and come to a big rock. If we keep spinning the shaft there, and continue applying pressure, someday that rock is going to shatter and the shaft will fall deep. But we tend to lose our patience. We move on to something else, and then something else, and we never get to the water.

I'm saying all this because hardship will come. Challenges will come. But we need not run away from them. Instead, we should search to find a spiritual practice that keeps us present to it all. It could be a mindful breath, a *mantra*, keeping good company or being around people who inspire us. These are all tools to help us stay connected with ourselves and stay grounded.

So please, let's take a moment and really ask ourselves, "What is that friend in my life that I connect with daily, not an occasional friend that I meet for coffee once a month, but a friend who is accessible to me at any given moment in my life?"

OM TAT SAT



Namasté from Bal Ashram

Our Safe Home for Children in Varanasi, India

During last winter's visit to Bal Ashram, two babies were taken in - *Indra* (above) and *Vidya* (below). If you are on our email list, you were kept abreast of their story—both their mother and father had died, and they were left alone. Vidya, only three years old, was taking care of her baby brother, Indra, only 18 months. Now they are thriving under the loving care of their new Bal Ashram family. This is a true example of how we can make a very meaningful difference in the world.

