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Aghoreshwar Bhagwan Ramji

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The reality within you,
absolutely yours,
is worthy of devotion...

Aughar Vani, Avadhuta's wisdom

Sonoma Ashram Foundation



Fullness
overflowing

We recently established the name, Sonoma Ashram Foundation, to unify our service projects in the U.S. and abroad. In the U.S., our primary service project is Sonoma Ashram, offering an oasis of stillness for self-growth and retreat, as well as support for those experiencing challenges and transformations. In the holy city of Varanasi, India, we provide a safe home for orphaned and abandoned children (Bal Ashram), a school for street children (Anjali School), an eye clinic (Vision Varanasi) and a knowledge-sharing program (Gyan Dan). We're in the initial stages of creating an educational Eco-Center (Amrit Sagar) and a safe haven for homeless women and abandoned babies (Project Shakti), also in Varanasi.

Sonoma Ashram Foundation's tagline, "Fullness overflowing", captures the heart of our work - *sadhana* and *seva*. *Sadhana* is spiritual practice, anything we do daily to acknowledge our wholeness, and the overflow of that wholeness is *seva*, selfless service in the world.

Thus spoke Aghoreshwar

Once you start dwelling in that state of harmony, away from quarrel and envy, away from criticizing others or even listening to criticism, you will become like an accomplished yogi. I pay my respect to such a yogi, not only by my words, but with my heart. And I hope whatever you are engaged in, you will give your full attention to it. In front of you the Sun of your devotion has risen.



A Season to Deepen Our Devotion



During Sunday morning satsang at Sonoma Ashram October 11, 2009, Baba Harihar Ramji (Babaji) said:



The season is changing and the trees are dropping their leaves, with a sense of knowing that new leaves will come. It's beneficial for us to get into the rhythm of nature and align ourselves with what's happening around us.

This is an ideal time of year to contemplate what we can drop that is not serving us, that is not helping us come closer to our true Self, and to have that anticipation for something new to emerge.

New emerges only after something old is dropped, and that dropping, that letting go, happens from our deep core, without a sense of loss or rejection. The dropping happens in a very compassionate way. Notice how gracefully a leaf falls from the tree. The tree is not throwing it out.

New emerges only after something old is dropped, and that dropping, that letting go, happens from our deep core, without a sense of loss or rejection.

The tree is not reacting or shaking. It happens very naturally. Whatever we drop, we have no attachment to anymore. We drop it by thanking it. We say, "Thank you. You have been a part of my life for so long. But you

are not serving any purpose any longer." The power of compassion is grand. When we let go of something with that understanding and depth, with that connection with our Self, it's lasting. Otherwise it finds its way back.

Leaves fall from the tree, turn into compost, get absorbed into the ground, and again through the roots travel up. That energy transforms into a new leaf, but it's much more vibrant and refined, with a new sense of purpose.

So whatever we drop, whatever we let go, there is a deeper understanding that it's not going very far from us, but it is going to be refined and then come back. So there is really no sense of loss, but a regeneration and feeling of hope.

Every year, when we enter into this season, it's good to look back on our lives, because it's also a time of hibernation and communion with our stillness. Summer is so active. The days are longer. We are outdoors, working, doing this and that, and running around. But now we will have more time to be with ourselves. This is a perfect opportunity to go deeper in our devotion.

I encourage us all to ask ourselves, "What am I devoted to?" And this can be taken on any level - devotion to Guru, devotion to God, devotion to our higher Self, devotion to anything in our life. It is all the same. A sense of sacredness surrounds whatever we are devoted to. If we are devoted to growing a wonderful garden, we will find Divine Presence right there. If we are devoted to making our life rich, meaningful and beautiful, in that we will find Divine Presence.

The mere act of devotion gives us that richness, that inner fulfillment, and allows us to be graceful. Devotion focuses us and makes our hearts smile. Devotion gives us grounding, a sense of identity and a sense of being. Just asking ourselves what we are devoted to gives us stability.

Devotion requires constant mindfulness and being on our toes. If we are devoted to our own higher Self, it requires vigilance - vigilance in every moment.

How sincere is our devotion? What is the fabric of our devotion? Is our devotion like that shirt made up of thousands of patches stitched together, which with a little pressure, just gives up and tears apart? Or is our devotion made out of material so strong and durable that even when stretched and pulled, it still doesn't break?

When we are devoted to something higher, whatever is limiting us naturally falls off. Gold-plated items look like gold and are even shinier than real gold, but as soon as we start grinding them on a stone, we see what's really inside. Real gold becomes brighter, but if the gold is only on the surface, the brass begins to show. It's the same with us - a little grinding is necessary. It's the stretching that makes

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us stronger. Otherwise real growth does not happen and we remain protected in our little cocoon. Any opportunity we have to be stretched is wonderful. It may not feel good in the moment, but if we come

Any opportunity we have to be stretched is wonderful. It may not feel good in the moment, but if we come out victorious, if we can withstand it, we become stronger.

out victorious, if we can withstand it, we become stronger.

Anything in our lives we are devoted to, we stay committed to. Even when it's tough, we don't give up. Look at the weight-lifters. They are doing strenuous exercise. It's hard work. If they just give up

in the middle, the weights will fall on their chest.

Cultivating humility helps us strengthen our devotion. There is a saying, "Water accumulates in the low spots." This is the language of the *Saddhus* (holy beings). Water is the essence of life. It doesn't stay on the mountain top, up there very high where all can see, visible even from a distance. "Water accumulates in the low spots" means that the essence accumulates where there is humility. When there is an attitude of showmanship, "Look at me - I'm important - I'm big," grace leaves us.

This is a wonderful time to rejuvenate, redefine and make a shift in our lives. Our practice is simple and steady. It has a defined path and process. We do our practice and we go deeper. We keep it simple and then it begins to bear fruit. Simplicity and regularity.

Let's take a little time to think, contemplate, hold the word "devotion" in our minds and take our practice deeper. Let's see what is about to drop and what is about to emerge. I just wanted to remind us all of the sacredness of this time, this season of transition.

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News from Sonoma Ashram Foundation



Our new video A new DVD about all our service projects is now available. If you would like a copy, we would be glad to mail it to you. To request a copy, please send an email to info@sonomaashram.org or give us a call at 707-996-8915.



Babaji's travels During the last part of October, Babaji traveled through the northeastern states for a series of talks and programs in New York, Connecticut, Massachusetts and New Hampshire. It was inspirational to see so many people being touched by Baba's love and teachings.

On December 9, Babaji will leave for a three month stay at Bal Ashram in Varanasi, India, returning March 15, 2010. If you are not yet on our email list and would like to stay connected through regular email updates, please let us know at: info@sonomaashram.org.



A tidbit from Baba A man was riding on a horse that was going very fast. His friend was standing by and shouted, "Hey, where are you going?" The rider turned back and said, "I don't know, ask my horse!"