

These are the questions and answers with Baba Hari Dass at the New Year's Retreat following Sadanand's talk on Devotion on the evening of December 31, 1993. Sadanand read the chalkboard. Copyright 1994 by Sri Rama Foundation.

Q: It says that by worship of the unmanifest God, you will come to me. What does this mean?

A: Krishna - Brahman

manifest - unmanifest.

SN: Krishna represents both manifest and unmanifest.

Q: What is the difference between actually renouncing the fruits of your actions and just thinking that you are?

A: By thinking you cannot drive away a cow who is eating your garden.

Q: But offering the fruits of actions is a mental thing?

A: Yes.

Q: How do I know if I am really doing it, or if God is doing it?

A: You know it by feeling non-attached.

Q: What is that feeling?

A: Can you tell me the taste of sweet?

A: No, I can't describe the ocean to you either.

A: So you have to experience it.

Q: Why can't you express your devotion through your work in the world?

A: You can. You do it by offering to God.

Q: There must be a lot of different levels of surrendering our fruits.

A: There are levels of dispassion. According to the level of dispassion, surrender happens. The more the mind is dispassionate or not attached to your world, the more the mind will go towards God.

Q: Is it more a matter of intention and will to give up the fruits of your actions that gives the results?

A: The will develops when the mind is pure. Pure mind means free from egocentric desires.

Q: There are many strong willed people who don't necessarily do pure acts. Will can be negative also.

A: They are fixed in their negative aims.

Q: You said that we must fight for our existence and we must fight our desires.

How does that relate to surrender the fruits of our actions?

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A: It is our ego who is continuously fighting for its existence. Because it wants to live forever and own everything. This is our bondage. But if we want to break the shackles of bondage, then we surrender the ego.

Q: I have found that I have become aware of past actions and behaviors that I am not really proud of. They are a form of attachment because there are still lingering feelings about those negative actions. How can I let go of those thoughts or purify past actions?

A: The past can't be changed no matter what you do. To get rid of the memory of bad actions, you have to forgive yourself. It was an action performed by ignorance.

Q: The ego-mind is a very tricky person. It can even trick us when we say we are giving up the fruits of our action. How can we keep ourselves honest in giving up the fruits?

A: The ego is the master performer and experimenter. It appears in a multitude of forms. It appears in bad actions. It appears in very saintly actions. We can get confused easily if we don't recognize the ego. A monk lived in a very dense jungle in India. A princess of Nepal who had tuberculosis came to him. He told her to live nearby and cured her. The princess left but the monk's desire to be a householder sprouted. In his good action, the ego was secretly pulling him to the world. Therefore, wear the glasses of discrimination.

Q: How about meditating twice as much?

A: With an awareness.

Q: Once you become one with God, you may feel the fruits of that. Is it wrong to have a desire to feel those fruits instead of just naturally doing it as the right thing to do?

A: That desire is called devotion.

Q: A lot of times, we get dispassion when something bad happens. How can we switch that into an active seeking of dispassion for a higher aim?

A: Dispassion happens 1) by achieving knowledge, 2) by going through pains. In a common person, pain is the cause of dispassion.

Q: How can we really forgive those people who have harmed us in our life? Even though we may want to forgive them, we still have negative feelings of hurt and anger, etc.

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A: The ego doesn't want to be a loser. So it keeps the memory of hurt. Now we have two ways: 1) take revenge, or 2) forget and forgive. In taking revenge, the cycle may not end.

Q: How do we know the difference between pure desires versus those desires which come from our ego?

A: Pure desires are conducive to liberation. Egocentric desires are conducive to bondage.

Q: In the story you told about the monk and the princess, one wouldn't say that he shouldn't have helped the princess. So at what point did the desire begin? It's often hard to see when the egocentric desires jump in.

A: Ego is hidden in all actions. His actions were good, but his mind was not fully controlled. If a young boy who doesn't know driving takes his father's car and drives around, it will be a mistake.

Q: Is it necessarily a bad thing to be a householder or was it just because he was a monk?

A: Householder is a natural path. It is not a bad thing. He renounced the world and could not retain it.

Q: A householder can attain liberation, though, right?

A: Yes. Lahiri Mahasaya was a householder. In the past, several saints were householders. I told the story to show how the ego appears in a good action.

Q: I have been following a spiritual practice for 16 years and it has really opened me up so that when I walk in the world my compassion comes up. And the world makes me feel very bad sometimes. How can I be open in a more positive way?

A: The world works by pairs of opposites. There are good things as well as bad things. Without pairs of opposites, the evolutionary process will stop. We learn to be good when we see bad things. What is bad is also good sometimes. It opens up human eyes. At the time of Hitler, what happened? After that the whole world said it will not happen again. It changed the lives of several. But the cycle never stops.

Q: I was wondering about the story of the monk who took the princess for a spin in his dad's car. (laughter) If you leave the car in the garage and you never drive, you never learn because you learn by making mistakes.

A: Yes, you learn or you may get killed! Learn with a driving teacher.

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Q: When you really do make a mistake, is it possible to offer the negative fruits to God?

A: Yes, if you don't repeat them again.

Q: I find it very frustrating. I work really hard for people doing good things for them, but they don't recognize them. I have to keep on bringing the energy to keep on helping them.

A: If there is expectation, then frustration will come.

Q: Is there a way that we are supposed to protect ourselves from the negativity in the world around us? I work in a hospital and people tell me I should protect myself psychologically and physically. Do we need to do that and if so, how?

A: You are creating yourself a receiver of negativity. You are creating a ghost.

Q: So you don't have to protect yourself?

A: Yes, if you know there is a contagious disease.

Q: One aspect of expectation is getting frustration but another aspect is that if I do a good job, I will get more referrals, and I will get more work and can help other people.

A: Wanting to develop a business. Bribe God.

Q: Babaji said that compassion is the one emotion that doesn't bind us. In our efforts towards becoming dispassionate, what role does compassion play?

A: In dispassion, there is compassion. Dispassion is not a standing apart. You care for the sufferers. When a person is completely enlightened, nothing remains to be attained. And there is nothing else to do. In that saint, compassion is automatically projected out.