



On the Spiritual Path

Talks with Babaji

How do we respond to family members who are critical and who are judging our involvement with the yogic tradition and the deities involved in that tradition? How can I deal with people who make negative judgments about our family's choices?

Everyone defends his or her own beliefs. This battle never ends. In fact, the truth is one and explained in different languages. Debates and arguments did not solve anything for thousands of years and will not solve anything in the future. Your family members have their own beliefs and want you to squeeze yourself to fit in the same mold they are molded. Stick to your beliefs and don't attack someone else's beliefs.

Along those lines, any discipline or faith needs a focus or belief. We have different philosophies in which we invest our faith to realize the truth of teachings that we haven't yet experienced. So it's important to have those symbols and faith and yet we know they are not the ultimate. If we say that everything is the same, then we don't have a path to walk on.

To start the journey, you take a path and start walking. The deeper you go the more the paths start merging in one. Is there any difference for the realized one whether someone worships gods, deities, or just worships one God with a form or formless? Different philosophies give an understanding of seeing the same truth through different angles.

Most religions, including both the Christian and the Jewish, don't make graven images and don't worship images.

Yes, Jewish, Christians and Mohammedans do not use any form of God. In Hinduism the form is used as a symbol which indicates a particular divine energy.

You mean it's impossible to visualize God without some image or book?

Who doesn't worship God without a symbol? Symbols are an indicator of God's energy and not gods by themselves. Road signs indicate the path to a town and not the town itself. The alphabets of all languages are symbols of particular sound. So we live and function by using symbols.

In the Catholic faith, there are a lot of saints such as patron saints of healing, travel, art, etc. People pray to them to intercede with God. The deities serve as an intermediate being between God and ourselves.

Everything is a reminder. We are lost in the world and when we see a mosque, a church, a deity, it reminds us that there is God, whether there is God or not but it wakes us up.

Is it important to determine exactly which category (Karma, Bhakti, Jnana) we ourselves are practicing?

Karma Yoga is mixed in Bhakti and Jnana because any mental and physical activity, devotion or knowledge can't be practiced. Those who are naturally more devotional, their devotion predominates in any method that they practice. Similarly, knowledge predominates in the activities of intellectuals.

If one is living a spiritual life with the aim of peace and one's relationship is full of confusion and arguments, how can one keep the aim of feeling of peace?

Disagreement creates arguments. Two people together create this situation and both defend their ego. If they don't learn to compromise, the fight doesn't stop and they live in disharmony and emotional pain and sadness. So to live in peace, the living situation must change.

A person's dharma is said to be based on one's past actions. If one has a teacher who can instruct one as to one's dharma, that is one situation. Most people don't have such a teacher; they are caught in survival and desire. How are such people to understand dharma?

Dharma term means things like religion, duty, nature, but its real meaning is nature-born qualities. Like the sun's dharma is heat and light. Here we are using the meaning "duty." It's hard to understand one's duty when the mind is confused and deluded so we need some outer guidance. If such guidance is not available and a person has a spiritual mind, then in time the mind will be purified by the person's spiritual practice.

Even if we have guidance, we have difficulty in following the instructions.

Yes, the path is hard. Many setbacks appear time to time. But one who has a firm aim can make it.

If one person is in the yoga path and the partner is a Sufi or Buddhist, is there a way to support each other or are there inherent difficulties in such a situation?

Different spiritual path is not a factor. Different mind to relate to each other is a factor. We are all different even if we have the same path. But we still relate to each other with a spirit of compromise. When this spirit of compromise doesn't exist, there is always contradiction and confrontation even though we have the same path.

In one sense we are supposed to forget about and let go of the mind-body complex but these practices bring us back to focus on the mind and body.

How we are forgetting mind-body complex? We function with the mind-body complex. We are supposed to forget the misconception that "I am (the self) is the mind body complex."

The food we eat and how it affects the mind-body complex. Purity of thought and silence is focus on the mind. Is this focus on the mind and body used as a way to get beyond the mind and body?

All these practices are for weakening the egocentric desires. If a person is truthful, for example, that person's inner world will narrow down because unreal (illusory) world within it is vast.

About focusing on the body in order to go beyond that, is that an example of bhoga and apavarga?

To experience "poison kills," we don't take poison. So many things we don't need to experience because we know they are not conducive to our self-development. Some experiences we go through and as a result we get trapped by bhoga or pleasure and pain. This is our prison. When we are in prison and see the prison walls and feel choked inside, then we think to get out (apavarga). So we create good behavior and prison authorities start liking us and in time we get out.

I understand that through sadhana, the ego purifies and there's a natural tendency to become less attached to the fruits of action. The ego is so addicted to the pleasure of reward, that it's a hard process. Are there other tools, techniques or practices we can use?

What is the definition of sadhana?

Keeping the aim to purify the ego self.

Sadhana means the methods, which bring perfection in our self-development. It has two parts: 1) physical action, kriya yoga, and 2) mental action, vichara or reflection. Some who are mentally strong, they achieve nonattachment, desirelessness, by self-inquiry or self-reflection. Others practice the rules of restraints and observances, regular practice of meditation, etc.

About mental action and physical action: can mental action create physical action and vice versa?

In common people, yes. Like object creates desire and desire manifests the object. But for the yogi who is completely desireless, this doesn't happen. A common person picks an apple and sees it. He sees it, he eats it, and he appreciates it. The yogi does the same thing but there is a difference. The yogi doesn't carry the memory. It doesn't create any attachment or addiction.

When we become aware of our desires during meditation, such as thoughts of our investments in the stock market, or going to the bakery, what do we do?

All desires are present all the time, but the mind is so busy with various things that we don't notice it. During meditation, we separate ourselves from the outer world; the mind slows down. Now the inner thoughts have the full freedom to appear. How to remove it? Keeping the mind in one object. The mind goes out repeatedly but bring it back whenever it sneaks out. Don't be discouraged or frustrated. Keep the mind alert and aware of its nature of sneaking out. Gradually the concentration will get stronger and sneaking out mind will get weaker.

It seems there is spiritual perfection and there is spiritual progress. We tend to be hard on ourselves if we feel we're not attaining spiritual perfection. On the path, it's easy to lose track of perfection and progress and hard to understand the difference between the two.

There is always progress. If you go hiking, you cover some distance. You may not cover the distance you choose, but there is progress. Understanding a little truth in life is a big progress. "I am angry; I hate it." This knowing is a big progress. Spiritual perfection is a big word. It cannot be defined completely by any language since God is infinite and the striver to achieve God will understand God principle according to one's finite mind. Spiritual perfection is knowing God principle within but it is not complete. The ultimate perfection is merging in God principle where duality doesn't exist.