

Sharad Sangam 2009
3.30 p.m., 6th November 2009
Question-Answer Session

-by Sw. Shraddhanandji

Q1. How can a senior devotee show so much of superiority; so much of ego and bitterness?

Ans. Devotees who have been longer on the path than we have been are not necessarily ideal examples. Guruji has mentioned that there are three essentials to the spiritual path: meditation, devotion and right behavior. One may be ahead in meditation but may remain backward in right behavior. So we have to improve our behavior to give enough attention to right attitude, right behavior, thinking reactions and motives in our interactions. Sw. Sri Yukteshwar always told Guruji 'Learn to behave.' That is something very necessary. It is the foundation of the spiritual path. The principles of yama, niyama help us to learn to behave. We have to work on that aspect in addition to meditation in order to cultivate a close personal relationship with the Guru. All of us have different natures and temperaments through past incarnations. Some people for e.g. get angry very quickly. I recently read about a devotee who when he was very young he was very frightened of his father. His mother and sister were also very frightened as the father would get angry, shout and this would make everyone feel miserable. Once the father saw the boy shaking with fear at the table and the father did not like it and so he said something very nasty to the boy. At this the boy started crying and the father hit him for crying. The boy ran away from the table. Later the father came to apologize. When the son grew up he came to Guruji's teachings. He read the book 'Only Love,' and realized that he isn't unfortunate. God is his eternal father. This enabled him to forgive his father and his relations with his father improved. One day when he was travelling back home with his sister, the sister asked, "How can you be so calm and not be terrorized of the father?" The boy replied, "You are expecting an ideal father. I am not. I have already an eternal Father." When the mother and father both became ill, the son spent more time with them and on one occasion the father said, "I have treated you very badly." The son jokingly replied, "Don't worry, in your next life I will be born as your father and I will give you a hard life." The father responded, "No you will not because you are meditating." But the son continued to banter, "No; let us see what I give you." The son later said that his father was a gentle, caring, nice person and had a habit of being nasty when angry. Some people have the habit of blaming people, being resentful or being angry. It takes incarnations or a very long time for them to overcome that habit. There was a devotee who earlier had the habit of breaking television sets, mobiles when angry and his wife and son were terrorized of his anger. Now the devotee has succeeded in controlling his temper to a great degree. The wife said, that now he doesn't fling things; he does get angry still but he doesn't show the anger. The children cannot recognize his anger. His anger is more subtle and much lesser. Also earlier while the duration of his anger used to be for 3-4 days and for 3-4 days he would be upset, now the anger lasts for about 2-5 minutes and then comes down. The frequency of the anger has also come down. Previously it used to be many times in a week. If he is angry for 3-5 days in a week

and if each bout of anger lasts for 3-5 days then he is angry all his life. But he has basically overcome his anger though it has remained. If we give him a good incentive for getting angry then he can still get angry.

Q2: If we regularly and sincerely practice Kriya, and if the mind is still restless, will kriya improve concentration over time?

Ans. Yes. I know a devotee, who had not become a devotee then. I was very impressed by him. He was living in India and he used to come for every Founder's Week (in the early days we used to celebrate Founder's Week). He would miss his business engagements for that one week, and for years he kept on coming. Several years later, he came to me with his wife and said, "I had come for a retreat, and I am extremely thankful to you for the first words that you said (I wanted to know what I said), 'During the next 2 ½ days completely forget the world, and just be absorbed in God and Guruji.'" He said, "My nature is very mercurial." If you have a ball of mercury, resting on a surface it keeps moving. Similarly the mind always keeps moving. He continued, "I was always trying to but not really meditating. I try to bring the mind back but it doesn't stay, it goes away immediately. My wife also has a mercurial temperament. So we often have quarrels. In the middle of my quarrel I realize it's time to meditate and I leave the quarrel to go to meditate. And often the meditation is less than zero and often I come back and continue with the quarrel. I come for the Founder's Week and sometimes Mrinalini Ma or Sw. Anandmoyji is here and I feel now my sadhana will progress and I realize my mind wanders and I miss what has been said and I cannot make the effort. But you started the retreat with the statement - 'During the next 2 ½ days completely forget the world, and just be absorbed in God and Guruji.' So the last 2 ½ days my heart got hooked and it still has not come off. After 12 – 13 years of 0% successful meditation there was a good meditation in the last 2 ½ days."

Q3. What is the relevance of long meditation in today's fast life?

Ans. Life is fast and I am often amazed at how much faster it is becoming. Even after a good performance you are told, "You are doing well, but we expect much more from you." This is what a lady was told by her boss. With so much pressure, an active life, a restless life, long meditation becomes a luxury. Meditation calms us down. With meditation we will find we are far ahead as compared to an average person. The intense activity and hurried life of pressure produces a state of tension. Even a short meditation can free us from tension. If once a week, as Guruji recommends if we have a long meditation then we are exercising our will to a greater degree. We can concentrate on practicing the techniques with perfection and doing them properly. Other days we concentrate on 'time up, I have to go to the next technique.' During a long meditation, you have more time to give to each technique, and you will reap more benefits. Depth and length of practice are both necessary. Shorter meditation can give you quality. A long meditation gives you both quantity and quality and so there will be more spiritual progress. Therefore it is important to have long meditations in spite of a busy life.

Q4. During the Hong Sau technique there are pauses in between breath in and breath out. Is it necessary during those pauses to concentrate on the kutastha and chant ‘Om Guru’ or ‘Jai Guru’?

Ans. During the pauses remain absorbed in the pause. Concentrate on breath with 100% alertness and awareness while not losing concentration on breath.

Q5. While making Kriya sounds audibly, is it disturbing others?

Ans. The Kriya sound should be loud enough for us to be hear but not loud enough for somebody else to hear. We practice in groups more silently without disturbing anyone.

Q6. How can we stop egotistic disturbing thoughts in our mind?

Ans. We are not saints and we can have non-saintly thoughts coming into our minds. In order to have the cosmic drama we have to have light and darkness. God created light and darkness, good and bad thoughts. If we tune in with the negative quickly transfer our attention back to the positive. We cannot remove darkness by beating at the darkness with a stick for eternity. It will never go away. Daya Ma has said, (Only Love): *“You cannot remove darkness in a room by complaining that you cannot see, or by beating at it with a stick.”*

Paramhansa Yogananda, (Where There is Light, Pg. 97): *“Darkness may reign in a cave for thousands of year, but bring in the light, and the darkness vanishes as though it had never been. Similarly, no matter what your defects, they are yours no longer when you bring in the light of goodness. So great is the light of the soul that incarnations of evil cannot destroy it.”*

Similarly replace negative with the opposite quality of positive and dwell on that positive.

Q7. What is the difference between incarnations (avatars) and Self-realized souls?

Ans. An incarnation has achieved Self-realization in a previous life and has come to free others. To free oneself from physical karma one take physical rebirth, to free oneself from astral karma one takes astral rebirth, and to free oneself from causal karma one has to take causal rebirth. An avatar is one who is free from the physical, astral and causal karma. One attains the state of Nirbikalpa Samadhi when one attains freedom from physical karma. There is still higher states of astral and causal karma to be overcome and for that we will have to come again. There are relatively very few souls who are avatars.

Q8.---

Ans. There is a person who is not a YSS devotee who often comes to the ashram. I once asked him, “Do you feel something? What draws you here?” He said, “No, I feel nothing.” I asked him again, “There is fresh air here, the sacred vibrations, it is likeable place. Don’t you feel drawn here for that reason?” He said, “I don’t tell others, but I am telling you truthfully, that is not the reason.”

I don’t think that is the truth. The person is not a devotee, he has no techniques, and yet he attends all the meditations, and even the Thursday and Sunday long

meditations. He is not getting a mind blowing experience but something so subtle that he is not conscious of it.

There was another devotee who felt no experience even after 6 months. Then after 6 months he felt a very gentle peace and it remained even after meditation. Throughout the previous 6 months too it was there, but earlier the devotee was more active and less calm and so he did not notice it. All of us receive some benefit or the other, we get some new insight, we get some questions answered through the teachings or by listening to the talks and speaking to other disciples when we talk of sangam. All get something from Guruji's teachings. When we need help we get it; nothing phenomenal but we do get it. For e.g. we may find that the bus which would have come 10 minutes later has come within a few minutes of waiting; nothing so phenomenal that we can talk about to others.

On 31st Oct. we had a function when the deluxe copy of The Autobiography of A Yogi and the mp3 form of Autobiography were released by Sw. Vishwanandji. 2-3 days earlier, it was extremely cold in Ranchi and just before Sangam it has become a little warm. This happens every Sharad Sangam and Janmotsava. Things may not always be noticeable. This shows that the Guru is aware of my needs. He is responding to our conscious and unconscious needs. Pray for greater faith.

Q9. The day my wife gave response to my love I felt so happy. But Divine Mother is not giving any response to my love. Is meditation a thankless job?

Ans. It is easier to get the response from a human being. If you give kindness to someone it is natural to get kindness from the other. But in your silence God's silence ceases. God doesn't say doesn't say 'I love you' when we say 'I love You.' He may be remaining silent. In your silence means when you learn to become silent, to recognize, to listen, to respond to the one we love like the boy who keeps coming even when he doesn't seem to benefit; then we do get some unconscious response from God.

Guruji has spoken about the Christian saint, St. Anthony. Guruji says (in the cd – Removing all sorrow and suffering):

“That is why when you pray the ether will burn around you. You will see lights around you. But do not look for them. You will see that something is around you if you pray intensely. Something is trying to express to you, but he will not express to you as long as you will be watching, as long as you will be expecting. But remember, as St. Anthony said, when he got no reply from God and all the Satan's satellites manifested and tried to destroy him and Satan himself tried to break the tomb. He said, “Lord, Lord,” when the lord came, he was overwhelmed. That's the romance with God. 105 years of separation from God and he went on crying, “Why didn't you come before?” He said, “Anthony, just the same I was with you.”

Mrinalini Ma describes in the cd 'The Interior Life':

Master was particularly moved by the description of St. Anthony's great spiritual struggles during the many years he spent in solitude in the desert. He lived in an abandoned tomb, subsisting on a little bread and water brought to him by pious

villagers. During this period, he was tested severely with all kinds of temptations. At the culmination of these experiences, the devil himself appeared with his legions of demons, taunting the saint, saying, "Where is your God? Where is he to protect you now? There is no God!" The demons started tearing down the tomb; it was caving in around Anthony. He felt sure that this was the end, that he would certainly die. But still, with his last breath, he called upon God. In all those years, the temptations and threats of Satan had not been able to alter Anthony's faith or his love for God.

As the tomb was falling in upon him, and death seemed certain, the devil and his cohorts vanished; and in a great blaze of light Christ appeared above St. Anthony. Anthony fell on his knees before him and cried, "O Lord, where were you? Where were you during all my struggles?" And Christ answered him, "Anthony, I was with you all the time, and I saw your fight."

Swamiji said, that is why St. Anthony had the faith to continue fighting Satan because God was with him all the time.

Master read that passage over and over, with tears in his eyes. It reminded him of the anguish and ultimate joy of fulfillment in his own relationship with God – the divine dramas he had played, not only in this life, but in many lives past, all of which were known to him. And I know, too, that he shed those tears for us, that we be not fooled when Satan or maya tries to tell us that the Lord is not worth seeking, that He is not worth the tests and troubles we must endure for Him. Our blessed Guru had to go through so many difficulties to build this spiritually sheltering work of Self-Realization for all of us. Where did he, where did St. Anthony, get the strength to go through such trials, except from their love for God, and God's responding love?

Q10. When should we meditate on God at the kutastha and at the heart centre?

Ans. When you want to experience a saint's blessings visualize his presence at the kutastha center and feel his qualities at the heart center. Visualize Sw. Sri Yukteshwarji for wisdom, Lahiri Mahasaya for bliss, Gururji for devotion coupled with wisdom. Primarily visualize at kutastha or heart center. Visualize the presence in the kutastha and feel their nature in the heart center. You may ask help to deal with daily life. But you must also trust. It's allright to tell God or Gururji help me in so and so way, but if you want in another way it will also do. How he wants to help us in a situation, he knows. We get better results if we allow God to choose what he thinks best. What he allows is better for us than what we think is best for us.

Whether we pray or not God showers his blessings. Through prayers we make ourselves receptive.

The rains of God's mercy cannot gather on mountaintops of pride, but flow easily into valleys of humbleness.

- Sri Sri Paramahansa Yogananda, "Sayings of Paramahansa Yogananda"

If we are covered with an umbrella we cannot receive the blessings of rain. Prayer increases closeness, receptivity and we can receive more of the rain of blessings.

Q11. How many sannyasis and sannyasinis have seen God after practicing the techniques?

Ans. I don't know. Someone asked me, "What spiritual attainment you have achieved?" and I said, "I don't know." We cannot judge until we become God. Sw. Anandmoyji said that there was someone who was not very inspiring and Guruji said, he would achieve liberation in this very life time. Sw. Anandmoyji would not have believed if Guruji had not told him. Each of us are souls. We manifest some spiritual quality of God that others do not manifest (he may manifest in this one life while other devotees may not manifest that same quality to the same extent). So we can learn from each other.

Some are regular in meditation, some are selfless, some deeply devoted. I know one devotee who has attained liberation in this lifetime is very irritating. He is very restless, very active, not very respectful but he is intensely devoted to Guruji. It is not possible to know who is at what state. Keep on trying, practicing meditation, keep trying to behave rightly. Very likely in this life or next we will achieve freedom.

Q12. How can Guruji answer so many prayers of so many devotees?

Ans. We can help one or two people but Guruji can help one or two quadrillions or even more as he has no limits. To receive the prayers, to transmit the prayers to God and Guru, and to receive the blessings our mind microphone should not be restless. It should be functioning properly.

When Daya Ma was in India, the audio system volume was up and they asked for a feedback. Ma said that is how we sound to Divine Mother when we are restless. If we calm the mind by meditation we are able to overcome intense activity and transfer that thought to God. To transfer the kutastha is the transmitting station, and the heart is the receiving station.

So calm the heart, tune in the heart. The radio is the receiving station. Transmitting tower signals are sent to the radio. Now days there are digital radios so now this example is not applicable. Earlier there used to be manual tuning by moving the knob and when you move the knob fast you miss the station. Lots of fine tuning has to be done slowly to get the signal. Same thing is to be done in the heart.

If we are intensely tuned in, wanting to be with God, if we want to give our love to others, and give our love to God then when we do fine tuning we are tuned in with God. Sometimes earlier due to cloud conditions tuning would get disturbed, off tune. Mind and the heart also can similarly off tune. Keep focused in the heart lovingly, intensely and then we can transmit and receive to get God's response.

Q13. What are the ideal conditions required to prepare to tune in with God's love?

Ans. 1). Stillness 2). Yearning 3). Pure love.

Stillness can be cultivated through meditation. You should have deep yearning for God's response, his presence, and pure love to wait for his reply unto eternity. And if he comes tomorrow - very good. If you are ready to wait for him 'In the valley of sorrow, a thousand years or until tomorrow' then you show pure love.