

These are the questions and answers with Baba Hari Dass at the Hanuman Fellowship Satsang on September 27, 1981. Comments added by Shankar who also read Babaji's chalkboard are indicated by (Sh:). Copyright 1981 by Sri Rama Roundation. Transcribed by Kamla Bai.

Q: When our children ask why are some people dark-skinned and some light-skinned, what should the answer be?

A: Those who are from hot countries get dark skins in order to resist the heat. White skin can resist the cold.

Q: Don't the Eskimos have dark skins? (Sh: Not very dark.)

A: The Eskimos are from different places. Mongolian origin.

Q: Is the use of ceremonial magic and Goddess worship, etc. ever a detriment to the path, to one's advancement?

A: It can be a hindrance. It depends on what kind of rituals you do. Some are pure devotional rituals. Those can help.

Q: Is the devotion to ancient Goddesses, is that similar to demigods? (Sh: It wasn't to those people.)

A: Gods are energies. Symbols for different energies are Gods. (Sh: Gods have evolved as personifications of energies.) In olden times, people started believing that all those Gods are real. There is a reality. You and your hand are not different, but your hand alone is not you. (Sh: In a like manner, all the Gods represent various qualities of the absolute, yet none individually is the whole.)

Q: So there's just one?

B: Yes.

Q: He's interested in Zen meditation. Could you make some comment on Zen?

A: The word Zen comes from the sanskrit word Dhyān (Sh: which means meditation) and the Chinese word Chèn. All three mean meditation. (Sh: The ancient Sanskrit word was Dhēn (sp?) which is more like Chen and Zen.) When Indian monks went to China, they started the dhyān methods which in Chinese became Chen. It's the same method. From China, it reached Japan and they gave it a particular system of meditation.

Q: What's the difference between surrender to God and losing one's desire to go on in life?

A: Losing one's desire to go on in the world can be due to failure in life. But surrender to God is out of devotion. An army surrenders because there's no hope of winning. (Sh: That kind of surrender, in the first example, doesn't further one in the devotional path in finding God.) An aspirant surrenders because there's devotion. (Sh: He feels that God is doing it all anyway, so might as well acknowledge that.)

Q: What is there that you see in a person when you meet them that gives you such an insight into their personalities?

A: All are not the same. People have different samskaras, different thoughts, different desires.

Q: (About surrendering to God and accepting everything.)

A: Yes. (Sh: We can't say it's surrender if we say 'except if you give me bad things.') If God gives you candy, you take it. If God gives you quinine, you run away. It's not surrender. In surrender to God, the ego is surrendered. "It's my will." (Sh: That type of thinking.)

Q: What do you ~~feel~~ when someone close to you dies?

A: Death is a law of nature. I accept it. But I don't say, "Oh, he's dead. Ho, ho, ho."

Q: Does dispassion mean that one won't feel pain when a loved one dies?

A: If you understand (that) the attachment is a self-created thing, then you don't associate the separation with attachment. But you have to do things as required in this society. (Sh: Even if we are dispassionate, we have to act as if we are <sup>feeling</sup> passionate, or others won't understand.) We know everyone will die someday and no one can tell when. We feel pain because we forget that death is real.

Q: How should we understand that when someone close to us commits suicide? What does it mean karmically?

A: Suicide is caused by anger or pain. Karmically, it makes a samskara of pain or anger and repeats in some ways in the next life.

Q: She wants to know how to react towards someone who has committed the act of suicide.

A: Compassion, sympathy, understanding.

Q: It seems like a vicious cycle, that if one is condemned to experience similar pains that drive one to suicide in the next life.

A: It's not necessary to repeat the same act. (Sh: We have a measure of free will. We can't say it's someone's karma to commit suicide until they've done it. Up to that point, they have a choice.)

Q: Why wouldn't there be divine intervention to prevent them from doing it if it weren't their karma?

A: It's not necessary to repeat the same act (in another life). Also, it's possible some supportive samskaras may come up and suppress the suicidal samskaras. Otherwise, once a person has fallen down, they'll have no chance of getting up. (Sh: Yoga does not accept that. It accepts that we have some free will.)

Q: He has a recurring dream where he's murdered someone and the authorities chase him and he is very afraid. Does this mean he has killed someone in a past life?

A: It is possible (that it is an act from the past) or that it's just a deep print from this life from hearing of or seeing a similar act. It's memory is creating a dream.

Q: There's been aerial spraying of malathion in the San Lorenzo Valley for 6 weeks now. Do you know any technique to know about long term effects of the spraying, specially on children?

A: It is a poison and it will effect people in more or less degrees depending on their resistance. How it will affect in the future, I can't say.

Q: How much do our thoughts affect the effect the spraying has on us?

A: By thinking it's bad, it will affect more. Mirabai drank a cup of poison thinking it was Krishna's prasad and it did not kill her.

Q: Along these lines, would it help if everyone got together and thought positive thoughts about the spraying, that somehow it was all for our good?

A: Then they'll stop spraying!

Q: At the time of death, how is it that a saint can help a disciple leave their body and can the saint help the dying person to have no fear when it happens?

A: At the time of death, fear comes because no one wants to die. This reality is a great attachment. A saint can create fearlessness in a person by his or her presence, thoughts or words.

- Q: If to surrender is to give up one's ego, to lose the concept of "I am doing this," then where does one receive the motivation to become something such as a doctor, or any level of attainment or profession?
- A: Surrender is in degrees. If one totally surrenders, then there is no need to be a doctor or a lawyer. (Sh: The question doesn't arise in someone who has actually surrendered.)
- Q: What is happening in meditation when the mind slows down, like it is taking longer to think its thoughts?
- A: Meditation means to remove all unwanted thoughts. If you try to think and it takes a longer time to identify with the thoughts, it means meditation is right. (Sh: It means it's progressing correctly.)
- Q: About phobias. (Sh: irrational fears.) Are they more difficult to get rid of than other samskaras? Does having phobias interfere with progress in sadhana?
- A: People develop such fears due to some accident in childhood. Some fears are worse than others. They can't stop the progress in meditation unless there is a fear of meditation.
- Q: Why do we hold onto pleasure in our minds? Is it conditioning, fear, habit?
- A: We hold onto pleasure because it's a reality which the senses identify. If the senses don't identify with something, then it's beyond our mind.
- Q: Frequently she dreams of large waves, tidal waves. What do they mean?
- A: Waves indicate spiritual progress. The water element (is active).
- Q: For what reason should a man and woman marry?
- A: Love. If they love each other.
- Q: If our love is to include everyone, then how do you sort someone out?
- A: Love for everyone comes when we reduce our ego. In theory, we say "love everyone equally," but our ego doesn't identify everyone equally. For example, you love your child more than someone else's child. In the same way, you can feel more love for one man among several.
- Q: What about when one loves others without expectation, but others expect something from you?
- A: Stick to your non-expectation. Let them expect. (Sh: After awhile, they'll start expecting that.)
- Q: He feels a personal romantic relationship towards someone, but the other person doesn't feel that it's coming back towards him. How should he deal with those feelings of attachment that are natural to this?
- A: If you're not getting love from the other side, it means seek for someone else. (Sh: That you'll need the attachment to get into that situation at all.)
- Q: Another way of thinking is to go with the flow, don't form any lasting relationships at all. That seems incomplete; it's not a real way for males and females to be together.
- A: So?
- Q: He feels he's the only one that gets up hopes for a lasting relationship, perhaps marriage, but it seems that all the women he gets his hopes up about are in the other category.
- A: Then flow with them.

Q: Is there a difference between Brahmā and Ishvara?

A: The word Brahma (in Sanskrit) is formless God. Ishvara is with form. Om is the form of Ishvara. Brahmā is one aspect of God. (Sh: this is a third category now.)

Q: Does Ishvardas mean servant of God?

A: Yes. (Sh: servant of Ishvara.)

Q: If one reaches the state of going beyond the ego, is marriage then not important?

A: Marriage is only for this world. When one goes beyond ego, it means beyond this world. (Sh: The question doesn't arise for that person.) You can't see any duality. (Sh: in this state of suppressed ego.) It's only the ego that makes us see separation (at all).

Q: How do you overcome lack of confidence and develop will power?

A: By meditation you can develop. By accepting yourself you can develop. By austerities you can develop.

Q: Which virtues are the most important to try to develop?

A: Accepting yourself.

Q: What would be a specific method to strengthen the will in order to break a negative thought pattern?

A: By developing good qualities. Selfless service, compassion, truthfulness, etc.

Q: What does it mean to accept oneself?

A: When the mind sees everything negative in you, then you develop fear. But if your mind sees the other side also (Sh: that is, things that are good), then you can decide which side is better for you.

Q: In addition to positive thoughts, what other methods are there on the road to self-knowledge and self-love?

A: Pranayama, meditation, surrender to God.