

Satsang with Om Baba

(February 2017)

Beyond all layers

Question: The practice of Self-enquiry can become very subtle so that when looking it can seem that there is nothing there to be seen, but I still feel that there is something there that hides, and because I can't see it, I can't work with it or get rid of it.

In the process of Self-enquiry we go deeper and deeper inside ourselves, we gradually become aware of many layers, more and more subtle layers, until we reach the most subtle layer - that is the ego. Some people during their Self-enquiry try to find the ego and to kick it out, but who tries to do so..? It is only the ego that tries to kick out the ego. When there is a tendency inside to be rid of something, or, to add something, that is exclusively the ego. This tendency is something that we can observe, but who observes?

In the process of Self-enquiry we don't try to define what is observed. When we ask 'Who am I?' we don't try to find what is around us, we are not interested in analysing these things, we are not interested in modifying or enhancing it, we are not interested in getting rid of it, we are interested only in the source of the attention, the source of the awareness, That is our Self. That is why it is called Self-enquiry.

Everything else around the Self, the many many layers like those of a big onion, these are not the Self. These are transitory tendencies, coming and going. Sometimes tendencies with a form, sometimes without a form. Sometimes gross, sometimes subtle. Sometimes supremely subtle, it does not matter, this is not what we are looking for. We are not looking for any object of the awareness. We are looking for that which looks. St. Francis of Assisi used to say: 'What you are looking for is That which is looking'. So... when there is this subtle tendency inside to be rid of something, to be rid of the ego, this tendency is something that can be observed, and this entity that wants to be rid of the ego is nothing else but the ego.

And it's very clever. You cannot play tricks on it because it is the greatest trickster. It is the master of all tricks. Tricks will not work, hacking will not work. You cannot hack through the ego because the ego is the greatest hacker. You should rather go the way of truth, of pure sincerity. This can be either a very clear understanding, or a very pure devotion, or it can be selfless service, or full renunciation, or it can be surrender. This will work. It might take a long time, it may take much effort, but it doesn't matter. It will work!

If you try to hack through it, if you try the short cut, the quick way, what is it that wants the quick way? Do you think that the Self is in a hurry? Do you think the Self is in a rush to reach somewhere? Do you think the Self is in a rush to attain something? It is only the ego that is in a rush! Now we are speaking about Self-enquiry, so it is necessary that there is a very clear understanding.

In my experience, clear understanding is very important, but by itself it might not be sufficient - the approach must be more integrated. The understanding must be as clear as possible, but there must also be a sense of devotion. There must be some love for selfless service. There must be some readiness for renunciation, some readiness for sacrifice. There must be a brave attitude. There must be trust in the Guru. There should be an attitude of surrender. So if all these elements are present, then we can go ahead, the clear understanding will have support. By itself it will be too weak.

Question: What is the approach of Vedanta toward understanding our psychological complexes?

Vedanta doesn't pay much attention to this – that is why it is called Vedanta, the final knowledge. Vedanta focusses exclusively on the Self. However, is it useful if we try to, somehow, clean up the psychological mess inside of us? Of course, it is useful, but you have to be careful that you don't spend your entire life trying to clean up this psychological mess. It is the nature of psychological tendencies to regenerate themselves. As long as one dwells within the ego there will always be psychological disorders. As long as one is identified with the ego there will always be fear, there will always be separation, competition, hate and envy because this is the nature of ego. To try to clean up the tendencies of the ego is a little bit like making a hole in water. The root idea of all fear is that 'I am a separate entity and I am surrounded by different separate entities'.

The Upanishad says this about fear... *'In the beginning Brahman was alone, and because He was alone He became afraid. Then Brahman thought, "if I am all alone what am I afraid of?" And His fear was dispelled and He attained supreme peace.'* We can only be afraid of something 'other'. If there is no other, of what will we be afraid? If we are truly all alone – one entity, of what will it be afraid? As a condition of fear, there must be something other.

Now, this idea that I am one thing surrounded by others – this is the ego and this is the source of all fear. So, being rooted in, and sponsoring the ego, how will we be free from fear? How will we be free from separation when the ego itself IS separation? And if we are not free from separation how will we be free from jealousy and competition and hate, etc. So, Vedanta and all the great masters are saying: "I understand very well that you have a psychological mess, I also want you to be free from the psychological mess, but if you try to sort it out one tendency at a time it will not work! As long as the ego is there, these negative tendencies will always be there." If you will spend a lot of time and energy working with your anger, maybe you will succeed after some time but then the very same energy will take on the form of jealousy and so you start working with jealousy and the same energy will become maybe low self-confidence, and you start working with your confidence then the same energy might become dramatizing. It is all different expressions of the ego! You can try, if you like, and observe it yourself, there is never an end to it. Until you take out the root, there will always sprout forth some negative tendency, and the root is the ego. So... Vedanta says uproot the tree of the ego, and then you will be fully healed of your psychological mess.

Let go of the idea that you are a separate entity!

Take shelter in Oneness.

Take shelter in the one life that pervades all forms.

Take shelter in the One Being that is One within all forms.

Know that you are this one Being and not something separate.

Remember this again and again and again.

And since it has been a very old habit to identify ourselves as a separate entity, a little time might be needed to break free from this. It will not be like turning off a switch. The ego is an illusion that we have sponsored for many lifetimes, we need some time to be free from this addiction. And when we become free from this addiction, we will be free from all psychological mess. It's like a man who is an alcoholic or a drug addict, he wants to be free from this mess, a doctor will tell him "Stop drinking alcohol!" So, Vedanta says: "Stop drinking the alcohol of the ego!" Then, if you take shelter in Oneness, of what will you be afraid?

If we are identified with a physical body that is so vulnerable, of course we will be afraid. If we are identified with a personality that is so vulnerable, always changing, of course there will be fear. If again, we identify with the One being, the One Self, of what will we be afraid? So, I understand the psychological mess is there, it is in everybody. Even the psychologist that we visit, he also has a psychological mess, and the psychologists have their own psychologists who have their own psychological mess. So as long as there is ego there will be some confusion inside. Therefore, uproot the ego and find Peace. Uproot the ego using all the tools that you have in your hands. Clear understanding, devotion, selfless service, discipline, surrender to the Guru. And be patient! Remember, that which is impatient, is no one else than the ego.

Question: It is necessary to have a true desire for freedom and the efforts that I am making seem to indicate a true desire. But at some point this is taken over by the ego that says 'I want to be free of ego'... I don't seem to be able to see this happening...

Let this desire be there, coupled with patience. When it is coupled with impatience, it is polluted by the ego. Simply keep on doing your practice. My Master, He would not answer questions like this. You could go to Him and ask Him a question like this and He would just say to you: "Go out and meditate!". All this practice that we do, our sadhana, this supports the clear understanding, this removes the obstacles through a clear understanding, that's why it is necessary.

When we are meeting in a retreat, like the Advaita Retreats, of course we focus on the Advaita and the nature of the Self, but we support this Self-enquiry with many practices – we use repetition of mantras, different kinds of meditations, we do some traditional fire ceremonies, we have satsangs, kirtans, a little bit of yoga. When the body is healthy the mind also can be healthy, when the body is unhealthy it will attract too much attention. The same if the prana is unhealthy it will attract too much attention. It will disturb our meditation, it will disturb the Self-enquiry – this is why practice must be integrated. We work with everything we have in our hands. Then Self-enquiry becomes much easier. Different techniques are necessary because everybody is different, different types of people have different needs in their spiritual practice. We learn many practices and you can continue with the practice that is most natural to you. If you depend only on Satsang, what will you do when the Satsang is finished? You need to have the tools that you can work with in your Self-discovery.

Question: Can you talk about death and life?

The previous question was about fear. I want to read the very first sentence of the Avadhuta Gita... one of my favourite verses.

'Truly it is by the grace of God that the knowledge of unity arises within. Then a man is released at last from the fear of life and death.'

The great fear of life and death. Some people are afraid of death, some people are afraid of life. Some people are afraid that something will finish, something that they love will finish. That is death. Death is not just about the body. Death refers to the expiry of any experience. For example, some people are afraid the Satsang will finish soon. Some are afraid that the experience of India will finish soon. Some others are afraid that the experience of having this body will finish. So the fear of death is like being afraid that some experience will come to an end. It's a very natural fear because it is a matter of observation that all experiences come to an end. So, as long as we depend on experiences, naturally we will be afraid. As long as our happiness depends on having good experiences, we will be afraid. Even when we have a good experience, an experience of paradise, we will still be afraid because somewhere inside of us we know it will finish. This is called the fear of death.

What about the fear of life? If we have an unpleasant experience, or if we are expecting an unpleasant experience – this is the fear of life. We don't want something unpleasant to come. Some people soon are flying back to their homes and they don't want this to happen. Fear of life. That is what the Avadhuta means by the fear of life. So, one way or the other the human is always persecuted by the fear of life and the fear of death.

And how is he freed from that fear? When *"the knowledge of unity arises within and at last the man is freed from the great fear of life and death"*. Exactly what we were saying in the beginning. When the ego drops down and the knowledge of unity becomes clear. When it becomes a living experience. At this point, when there is no more separation, when there is nothing to be afraid of, then, one is freed from the fear of life and death. Then life reveals itself in its natural beauty that does never expired, life not as a manifestation or as an experience, but Life as the very

being that pervades all experiences. That is truly Life.

As the mantra says.... 'Asato Ma Sat Gamaya Tamaso Ma Jyotir Gamaya Mrityor Ma Amritam Gamaya'

'Guide us from the unreal to the real, guide us from death to immortality'

These two things are the same prayer, one prayer with two different words. The unreal is death, the real is Life. The unreal, the whole illusion, is like death. It constantly dies, it is always accompanied by the fear of death. The real is Life, the true Life, the true Being.

*I am Life, you are Life.
Behind every form there is Life.
Behind every personality there is Life.
Behind every psychological mess there is Life!
This does not finish.
This does not change.
This does not get old.
It does not know separation.
This is the knowledge of unity.*

That Life is what we are looking for when we practice Self-enquiry. So, if you want to know what Life is, look behind the form and the personality. It is very simple... everything else is under the domination of death.

Asato Ma Sat Gamaya Tamaso Ma Jyotir Gamaya Mrityor Ma Amritam Gamaya.

'Guide us from death to immortality, guide us, for our focus is constantly on that which dies'

So, guide your attention away from that which always dies towards that which is eternal.

*Its name is Life.
Its name is Siva.
Its name is the Self.
Its name is Love.
Its name is Truth.*

Om Shanti Shanti Shanti!!!