

Sonoma Ashram Foundation



Fullness
overflowing

P.O. Box 950
Sonoma, CA 95476
sonomaashram.org

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Aghoreshwar Bhagwan Ramji

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Sonoma, CA 95476
sonomaashram.org
info@sonomaashram.org

When our intellect
is exhausted,
it becomes easier
to find God.

Aghor Vani, Avadhuta's wisdom

Thus spoke Aghoreshwar

This life itself is a life of dreams. This life and the whole world are made up of dreams. All these dreams about our life that we see, all these dreams that arise in us, will disappear on the arrival of light. As soon as we wake up, all this will end. But right now, because of our minds, we are afflicted by desires and keep running here and there, just like a deer.



Retreat to the Ashram

Restore balance to your life and start or solidify your spiritual practice. Follow a daily routine of meditation, yoga, organic gardening and *seva*, selfless service. Learn to bring the sacred into cooking and eating, as well as experience the joys of silence and meaningful conversation. Be in the presence of Babaji and see the

teachings of Aghor Yoga in action. Please call or email to reserve accommodations:

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Sonoma Ashram
P.O. Box 950
Sonoma, CA 95476



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Worshipping Yourself



During Sunday morning satsang at Sonoma Ashram July 3, 2011, Baba Harihar Ramji said:

Two seekers went to a guru wanting to find God. Babaji said, "Look, it's a big topic and I'm a little busy right now. Here is a stick. Go find a place where no one is present. Break it into two pieces and come back to me. Then we'll talk."

Each aspirant took his stick and went out looking for a place where no one was present. One walked a short distance

away, looked around - nobody was there - and snapped the stick in two.

He returned and said, "Here are your sticks." Babaji took the sticks and told him to sit.

The other one returned after a very long time. Holding the same stick, he stood with his head bowed to the ground. Babaji asked, "What happened?"

He replied, "No matter where I went, the wind was there, the sun was there, the directions were there. And most of all, I was there. I couldn't find a place where no one was present."

The guru was very pleased with this answer. He said, "I have all the time for you. Come, sit down." And to the other he said, "Go enjoy the world, this path is not for you."

Before we set out to find God, our own presence has to be there. Baba says, "We have no right to worship anyone else until we learn how to worship our Self." And before we start worshipping our Self, we have to find our Self.

A young boy was walking in the night and saw an old lady looking for something under a street lamp. He said, "Grandma, what are you looking for?"

She said, "I'm looking for my keys."

"Can I help you?" he asked.

"Yes, yes, son, help me."

Baba says, "We have no right to worship anyone else until we learn how to worship our Self." And before we start worshipping our Self, we have to find our Self.



The boy said, "Where did you lose them?" "In the house," she replied.

Confused, the boy questioned, "But, why are you looking for them here?"

She said, "Well, this is where the light is."

It's the same story with us. We try to find our Self through what is familiar. We try to be happy by engaging in the world through our senses. Nice things to eat, nice music to hear, nice things to touch, see, smell. That's what we learned the very moment we were born. Look at a baby - everything goes into the mouth. A baby wants to touch, smell and taste everything.

We look for happiness in this same way, thinking we'll find our Self. But we're looking in the wrong place. Because of the desires of the senses, we experience restlessness. That's why in any spiritual practice, the first thing we learn is moderation, curbing the desires of the senses.

The great poet Kabir says, "That musk is within the deer. Intoxicated by its fragrance, the deer runs amok, looking for it under this bush, that bush, here, there." Although the fragrance is coming from within, the deer looks for it outside.

So, if we can't find it through the senses, where do we find it?

That which we are looking for resides within us in the form of *prana*, life force.

Prana is not the breath nor the air we inhale. It is something very subtle dissolved in the breath that

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comes into our system. And the portal to that realm is stillness. But it's very difficult to acquire stillness as long as we are running with our senses.

Stillness happens only when we detach ourselves from the outside world and become totally introverted, just as a turtle retracts into its shell. All the antennas of senses are pulled down. We separate from all the labels we know, our notions of right and wrong, good and bad, fair and unfair, pleasant and unpleasant. Holding ourselves back, riding on the breath, we go within. Then, going beyond even the experience of breath, we attune to what is being absorbed, the *prana*. We experience stillness. We experience the Self.

To acquire stillness, first we have to settle on one practice. But our minds are threatened by commitment to one thing. Those four nooses will come: "It's not a big deal, I can do it tomorrow" and "Maybe there's a better option" and then, some kind of fear creeps in, and finally, "It's not for me. I'm different. It's for somebody else." This has been the story of mankind from the very beginning.

Through experimentation on and study of the Self, the yogis of ancient times came to understand the nature of the mind. They knew that if we choose our practice, we'll end up digging lots of little potholes instead of one well deep to reach the water. From their realizations the guru-based tradition came into existence. It is said, "Your practice will be given to you by your guru."

Guru means "that which is higher," a place where we give ourselves permission to bow, to surrender our ego. Be it a person, a statue, a tree or a river, it doesn't really matter as long as we establish that place. With guru's presence in our life, there is a power of love and trust that allows us to transcend our limitations, emotions and judgments.

Whatever practice our guru gives to us, that is what we do. We stick with it and do it religiously every day. As our practice deepens, the attraction for what is outside lessens and the hunger to know what is inside grows. Going within, detaching ourselves from the rest, we try to find that stillness. Once we establish contact with the *prana*, there is a notion of our own presence. Some familiarity begins to dawn. This is an act of honoring our Self, loving our Self, respecting our Self, finding our Self. The day we begin to go deep, the journey is very beautiful.



News from Sonoma Ashram Foundation



SONOMA HIGHLIGHTS

Summer has been blessed with many friends and visitors from all over the world.

- Our annual Guru Purnima celebration in July brought a large gathering of friends and initiates, honoring the sacred tie of guru and disciple.
- We expanded our yoga and meditation offerings with ongoing children's programs and Sunday classes in Spanish for the Latino community. Both grow steadily each week.
- An inspiring summer yoga series sparked a plan to formalize Aghor Yoga and design a teacher training curriculum.
- A motivated group of friends are working diligently to republish *Oasis of Stillness*, the book Babaji wrote about the life of, and his time around, Aghoreshwar Bhagwan Ramji.

OUR FAMILY IN VARANASI, INDIA

The children of Bal Ashram continue to thrive and are back in school for the new session. Our first group of older boys graduated from high school with excellent marks. Sudhanshu went to Bangalore for a degree in Ayurvedic physical therapy; there he joins Hemant, who is already working towards his advanced degree in yoga. Ramesh is specializing in apiology, and two other boys are awaiting admission to a program in agriculture.

At Amrit Sagar environmental center, we installed a solar power plant. Besides providing light for the farm, it also brings 15 neighbors electricity for the first time.

