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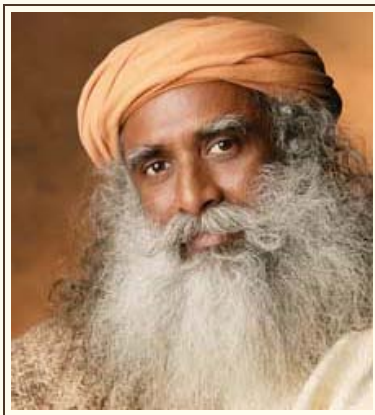
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In The Company Of The Enlightened

An Interview With Sheela Rajdev

by [Steve Gildersleeve](#)



Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev

What is it like to work for an enlightened being? Few of us will become Realized Masters this time around, but some, like Sheela Rajdev, have the chance to work with one. Sheela works closely with one of this era's gurus, Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev.

Sadhguru's talks and sathsangs routinely draw more than 300,000 people to his home in the Coimbatore district of India, and he has been called to share his wisdom at places like the World Economic Forum and the United Nations. In addition to teaching, his foundation works on a number of humanitarian efforts like providing free health care in southern India (and now in Tennessee) and funding reforestation projects and village schools in India.

When I ask somebody about her work and what she likes to do with her free time and she answers, "I don't really consider it like free time or work. I don't go out looking for entertainment – I don't have to – everything I do

is entertaining," my B.S. detector starts flashing red. I've heard that song and dance before and it has always let me down.

So I asked Sheela to explain herself.

"It's so hard to explain..." she replied. "Maybe it's that I don't have to go through what everybody lives – the typical life that everyone's going through. I don't have to try everything to see that nothing will satisfy me. I found something that's so satisfying and so fulfilling that I can't even contain it. I don't know...call it blissfulness or a certain sweetness. But every moment, if you can live like this or experience life like this, you cannot exchange that for anything in the world. You know? What I thought I am and who I thought I am is just completely transformed."

And, as I spent more time talking with Sheela and the people who know her, I was amazed to discover she was for real. She had found her way to the oasis many people search in vain for their whole lives.

Sheela is one of only four teachers approved to transmit his Kriya to students here in the United States after undergoing years of training by Sadhguru. She returns to Minneapolis in May to teach an Isha Yoga program called Inner Engineering – the same program that altered her path from pre-med to Isha teacher many years ago.

Why is the program you teach called Inner Engineering?

Inner Engineering means to create the inner situation the way we want it. It is not a teaching. It is not a philosophy or a belief system. It's just a method of creating the right kind of inner climate. Isha Yoga is part of this.

Any engineering is to create the situation or atmosphere the way we want it. We're really good at engineering our exterior the way we want it – at great cost to all other species and the Earth itself. External engineering has brought us a lot of comfort and convenience. We can say we are the most comfortable generation ever on this planet. At the same time can we claim to be the most peaceful generation? Most loving? Most happy? Anything like that? After all, with everything we do in our life we are only seeking to be happy. But that's not happening simply because we don't handle our body, mind, emotions and energies properly.



Participants practice Sukha Kriya during an Isha Foundation event.

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We're not so great at engineering our interiority. This is simply because we haven't paid any attention towards this. We always believe that if we fix the outside, the inside will be fixed. But it never happens. So inner engineering means to have the technology to make the interiority happen the way you want it. The Inner Engineering program teaches us how to do that.

When people hear Yoga, they think of contortions and postures, which is Hatha Yoga. Many of us haven't heard of the type of Yoga that you teach through Inner Engineering – Isha Yoga. Why? Hatha or Hata Yoga appeals more to the Western mind because it's very physical and people can easily relate to that, but hata yoga itself is actually a very deep science. It's not just bending your body.

You may have observed that for each mental state you go through, your body takes on a different posture. If you are happy, you sit one way. If you are unhappy, you sit another way. If you are angry, you sit another way. For different experiences you go through, your body takes on a certain posture. Conversely, assuming certain postures with your body, you can elevate the level of your consciousness. That is the science behind hata yoga. People generally misunderstand this and get too caught up in the few physical and health benefits that come along with it. All kinds of fancy teachings are going on in the name of hata yoga without much understanding of what it actually does.

Isha Yoga energizes the system, but it is also a meditative process. Your body, mind, emotions and energies are like four wheels of a car. Unless you align all four wheels, your ride will not be enjoyable. Isha Yoga is a perfect tool where you can take all the four aspects into your hands so that they go where you want them to go.

A lot of the self-proclaimed masters teaching self-awareness fall back on “just be here now” or “get out of your left-brain” explanations of their method. This leaves people frustrated because they can't repeat the classroom experience in the real world. How is Isha different?

I've spent time in places like India, the U.K., Singapore, and I've met spiritual masters, but I've never met anyone with Sadhguru's depth and understanding of life. He has developed a certain practice with this understanding as to how to create a person to be naturally joyful and peaceful. He's been able to develop the step-by-step process into a method for the modern mind that can be incorporated into your daily life.

You don't have to believe anything. That's the beauty of it. That's the whole science of pranayama or Kriya – notice that whatever kind of mental or emotional state you are in, your breath takes a certain pattern. If you just sit this way, breathe this way, do this, this, and this, then this will elevate your consciousness. Once you start experiencing the benefits, your perception will change and slowly your understanding will come along with it.

We teach Isha Yoga to villagers whose scope of experience and perception of the world are very limited. The steps are very clear and presented in such a way that anybody can understand it.

It seems too good to be true. Why does Isha Yoga work where other methods don't?

We have understood this much in life – in the external world, unless you do the right thing, right things will not happen. Similarly unless you do the right things inside, right things will not happen. Simply doing something doesn't lead to well being.

You have to cultivate yourself in such a way that it can happen. You can't just go and do something – meditation, for instance. If you want to make a flower bloom, you have to have the right conditions.

There is a very old, very deep spiritual tradition in India. Yoga was approached so scientifically – not based on any belief. In India, just the way you sit, for example, was very deeply looked at in the culture and, you may not believe it now, but even that has an effect that can lead you toward your growth.

The whole process with Isha is to set those conditions, really. Flowering for each individual will be different depending on the way they are.

Can everybody be “naturally joyful and peaceful”?

Everybody is capable of achieving this. Being peaceful and happy is not the ultimate achievement in our life. It's the fundamental requirement in life. If you are not even happy, you can't even enjoy the dinner you eat or the time you spend with your child.

Every human being is capable of keeping himself peaceful and happy. If you lose peace of mind, you go to the doctor and he gives you a pill. When you put this pill into you, your system does become peaceful. The pill is nothing but a little bit of a chemical, isn't it? So what you call as peace is one kind of chemistry. Your anger is another kind of chemistry. For every kind of human experience, there is a different chemical basis to it. So Inner Engineering creates the right kind of chemistry in you so that being peaceful and joyful is natural to you.

Why doesn't it work for some people?

People that I thought would never be able to approach this in their life or never even be open enough to see it, they've turned around 180 degrees and become fully involved with the process. But, there are some who still firmly believe that they can fix their lives by fixing their external circumstances, or sometimes someone is not sincere enough to look within himself and experiment with the tools offered in the program.

Do people need to come to Isha with any skills or experiences to make it work?

In fact, it's better if they don't come in with all these kinds of background and baggage about what they think meditation is and what they think spirituality is and whatever. They tend to limit themselves from looking at

themselves fresh. Being able to see the difference between yourself and your mind – very rarely do people come to class with that understanding.

Do you have a way to find out how many people are still doing Isha Yoga after some time passes?

Yes. In Southern California, we have four cities where we do the programs and, because I'm often here, I coordinate monthly meetings where students can get together, for free, and do our practice. Also, students can come to future programs as volunteers – they don't have to pay – and they can go through the whole thing in a deeper way. Because of both of these things, I'm constantly in touch with past students here and a very, very large percentage of them are still doing the practice. The other teachers see similar results. Nobody's going to come and check on a person, though.

We reach to provide the necessary experience and inspiration during the class so that they will continue. And that's why so many people are continuing. It's because they know what it's doing for them.

Does anything upset you anymore?

If someone did something in such a way that I didn't prefer or didn't think was the right thing to do, maybe I would have acted in anger at some point, but now I'm not getting angry. There may be some reaction within me – it happens less and less, but I can actually feel a chemical reaction happening within me – there's a certain inkling towards that reaction, but I'm able to control that. It's not even control, because I'm so aware of it it's like it doesn't exist. It just dissolved at that moment. So, yes, anger largely doesn't exist. I don't even remember the last time I was angry.

It's not like I've been controlling it, but I'm so free from it. This is very subtle...but whenever I do any activity or anything, even just moment to moment in my day, I'm so aware of what's happening within me that if there's even a little bit of reaction within me, I'll look at it very consciously, and I can see how to go beyond it.

What was your first experience of Isha Yoga like?

The first time, I was pressured into going to an introductory talk and I left half-way through. A year later, I was bribed into going to the actual program. I started out the first day in the back row. By the last day, I was sitting in the front row and I remember feeling like I'd never felt so alive. I'd never had a problem being happy, I'd just never felt so alive. I walked outside and looked at the sky and the trees and something was brighter, crisper, more vibrant.

What happened after the class was over and you returned to the real world?

Something sweet just started happening inside of me and I wanted more of it. So, I kept doing the practice and it became more and more. I started to see there's something you can invest in within yourself and experience, and that all these things you've been told all your life about experiencing life in a deeper way and what the religions and scriptures have been saying – there's a reality to it. There's actual reality to that.

The essence of Isha Yoga is not to make you feel peaceful for twenty minutes. That quality should be embedded in every aspect of your life. Otherwise, what's the point, really?

Inner Engineering: Isha Foundation will present its “Inner Engineering” program May 6-12 at The Park Plaza Hotel, 1500 Park Place Blvd., Minneapolis. A free introductory talk will be from 7-8 p.m. Wednesday, May 6. The program will be presented May 6-12 – weekdays: 7-10 p.m., Saturday 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.; and Sunday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. For more information and registration, call 612.325.6350, email minneapolis@ishafoundation.org or visit www.IshaFoundation.org

Read Personal Experiences with “Inner Engineering”

Read Inner Well-being by Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev

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