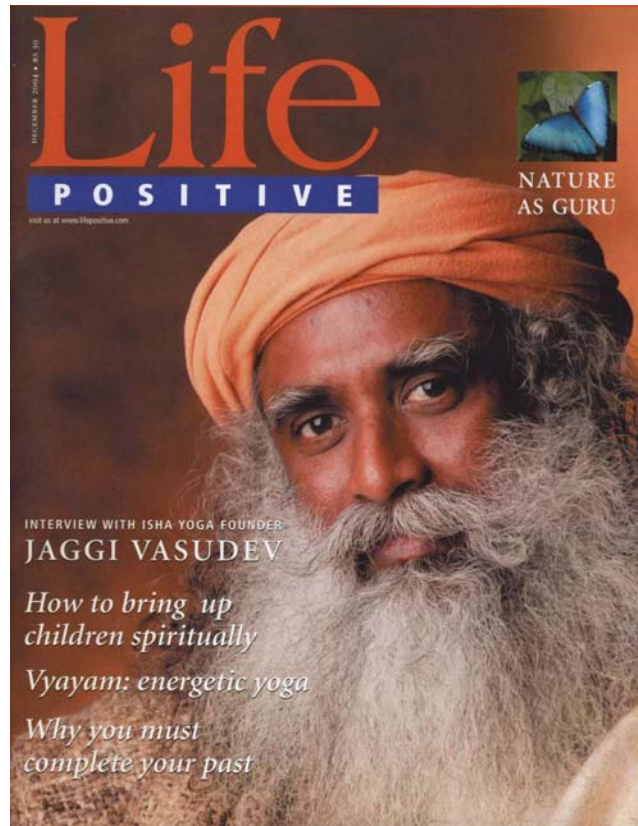


October 2004

Exploring The Unlimited

Sitting on a huge rock in the Chamundi hills, 12-year-old Jagadish Vasudev had a mystical experience. He felt himself spreading everywhere-in the rocks, the trees, indeed the whole earth. Tears gushed down his cheeks. He didn't know what it was, but he felt utter bliss. At the close of the encounter, he was shocked to realise that the day had almost ended-it was already evening! He wondered if he was hallucinating but surprise grew manifold when the experience recurred day after day. He could neither get sleep, nor eat food for the next three to four days, following the episode. The urge to share this bliss with others took hold of him. The experience also brought back memories of several lifetimes. The realisation dawned-his single purpose in life was to create the Dhyanalinga.

In 1992, in a bid to search for the right place for his mission, Jagadish, now metamorphosed into Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, along with a small band of aspirants, landed at the foothills of the Velliangiri hills in Coimbatore. His search ended. The childhood mystical experience found resonance in the misty hills and Isha Foundation was born. Spearheaded by



Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, the Foundation claims to practise the ancient yogic principle that the body is the temple of the spirit and that good health is fundamental to personal and spiritual development. Its cornerstone is what they call the "silent revolution of self-realisation," and trains young seekers in the finer aspects of yoga and sadhana.

They believe that the science of yoga is sacred. In his book, Dhyanalinga, the Sadhguru says, "Yoga transforms and liberates human beings so that

they can reach the unbounded state. In layman terms understanding yoga is body postures. But yoga extends far beyond these asanas, which only constitute its preparatory aspect. Central to the science of yoga is the awakening of the chakras, metaphorically symbolised as the astral lotuses."

However, the hallmark of the Isha Foundation is the Dhyanalinga-the largest lingam in the world (13-ft tall) and the first of its kind in 2,000 years to be fully consecrated. It is believed that the Dhyanalinga does not have any Shaivite links. Instead, it is the distilled essence of yogic science-energy focussed and power-generating. Both architecturally and spiritually a

wonder, its basic nature is a formless divine energy. The Dhyanalinga is not a place for worship or rituals; it is the spiritual body of the divine manifested in all the seven chakras.

Sadhguru Jaggi says, "In the gentle and energising sphere of this Dhyanalinga, the human mind, relaxed and contemplative, controlled and masterful, can become an instrument ... that creates music beyond the plane of five senses; that meets the challenges of self-renewal and profound transformation; that

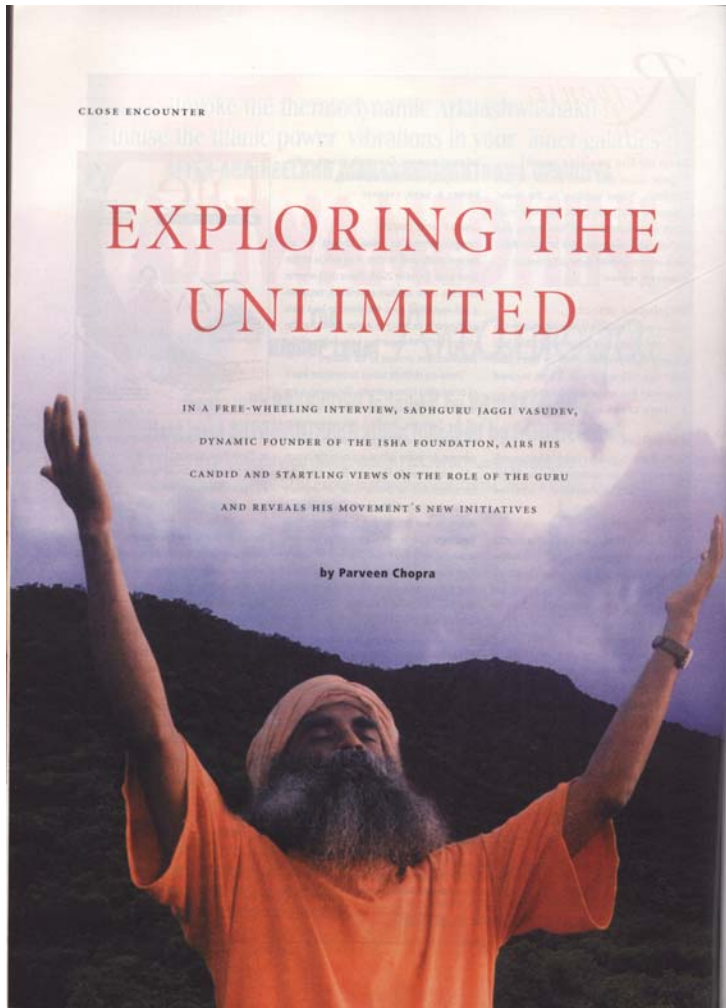
offers in other words, the possibility of a spiritual adventure in another dimension: the yogic adventure."

Dhyan, he believes, is the path to attaining enlightenment and the Dhyanalinga prepares us for this journey. Although the guru-shishya tradition does exert certain limitations, the Dhyanalinga (that is also identified as the guru in a metaphoric sense) leaps all boundaries and is a limitless powerhouse of the divine energy.

The Isha Yoga Centre is an integral part of the Isha Foundation. As part of the Isha Yoga Centre's activities, several programmes are conducted residentially, in neighbouring cities as well as in several parts of the world. These include Sahaja Sthithi Yoga-exploring the possibility that the spiritual does not negate the worldly but rather ssuses them for personal growth and realisation, Bhava Spandana-a four-day programme in advanced meditation Samyama-a seven-day contemplation in complete meditative silence to experience the explosive state of samadhi and

Wholeness, an eight-day scientifically structured programme teaching kriyas to enable personal exploration and attainment of the exalted Shambhavi Maha Mudra.

Inner Engineering is a weekend programme for executive expansion where simple and powerful processes



'Isha' means the formless divine and 'yoga' literally implies being in union with existence and encompassing the body, mind and spirit. Thousands of seekers today bask in the salubrious valley of the Isha Foundation, silently marching on towards a healthier, more fulfilling life. Life Positive caught up with Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, while he was on a visit to Delhi. Excerpts from the interview:

Everybody today has a guru or master who has inspired him or her. But you seem to have managed without a guru. The reason that I've not talked about my guru is because most people don't know the meaning of guru. just by teaching the 'abc' of life does not make anyone a guru. A guru should be indescribable. The

dimension is far more than you can ever imagine or express in terms of words.

from yogic science are offered to cleanse the system and increase productivity, balance and inner well-being.

So you do have a guru?

Everything that I am is because of my guru. I would rather have people not knowing about my guru, than misunderstanding the concept. You know, it is like a password, as long as you don't know it, it still is a password, but if you misunderstand, you get the wrong password.

A unique, one-of-its-kind programme initiated by the Isha Foundation is the Action for Rural Rejuvenation, piloted by the Sadhguru himself. With its base in Tamil Nadu, over one lakh active volunteers of the Isha Foundation support this programme. Its focus is to empower the village community with physical, social, mental and spiritual means to create a better living. Its central project is the 'Mobile Health Clinic' that offers medical aid to the remotest rural corners.

Do you think it is possible to get enlightenment without a guru? Or is it a must?

The word 'guru' means dispeller of darkness. Can I dispel my own darkness? I wouldn't say 'no'. In

modern terms, a guru is a road map' Let's say, you have a destination to reach, but don't know the way. You will reach your destination, because the world is round. But you might wander on your way or get lost. How many people started from Europe to discover India? Only Vasco da Gama made it; even Columbus got lost on the way and discovered America instead. History does not talk about people who get lost. It only talks about people who make it. The question here arises, Can I do without a guru? Definitely. But you will then walk on an uncharted path, an unknown terrain. I think it is sensible to go with a road map.

How does one know a genuine guru when one sees him? There are many gurus who lead people astray.

The concept of a genuine or fake guru is as flimsy as a genuine light and fake light. Either he's a guru or not. When we put on a light, it does not matter whether it's halogen, fluorescent or candlelight. When it lights up, it clears the darkness. How it manages it, is not your problem. The problem today is that whoever has read even two chapters of the Bhagavad Gita, becomes a guru. Everyone today seeks solace. Seeking solace means seeking survival- psychological, emotional, physical, financial or social. For your physical survival, you take up a job; for emotional survival you marry; for social survival you join a club and for your psychological survival, you consult a psychiatrist. But for all kinds of survival, you go to a guru.

You go to him/her because you have a different kind of longing- to go beyond the parameters of human existence. A guru should give you the jitters. You should be most uncomfortable with him. You want to

run away, but something holds you back. You constantly seek him, amidst emotional violence. He threatens you with his presence. If he does not threaten you with his energy or his presence, then he cannot be your guru.

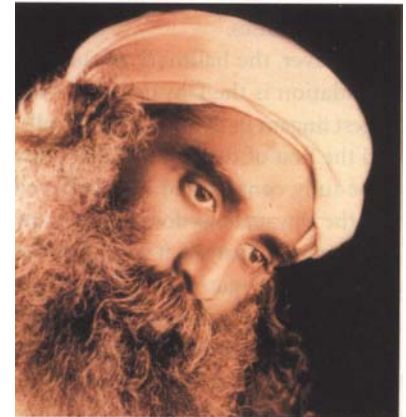
What is a guru's duty?

If I tell you this, you might misconstrue it. But a guru's work is fundamentally destructive. He should destroy the way you are till something bigger happens.

His existence finds meaning when he destroys the limited in you, so that the unbounded can face the world. The guru is someone who continuously punctures your ego, yet is your friend.

You said seekers should look for a different kind of longing. What do the seekers, especially these days, long for? Unfortunately, we have gained a reputation that we cure physical ailments miraculously. 10- 15 percent of the people who come to us suffer physically. The rest come to know about things beyond. All of us live within limitations, in some way or the other, and yet we want to revolt against them. Every human being longs for spirituality, but unconsciously and in installments. One cannot reach the Incarnate this way. My work is to transform the longing into consciousness and wholly so. If a person understands this, he's a genuine seeker. But today, everybody is a seeker. What I mean by this is, that we want more than what we already have. Even if I make you the king or queen of the planet, you will aspire for the moon and stars. You seek the Infinite through physical means. You can become infinite or unlimited by this method, but it is a self-defeating path and will lead to frustration.

Going back, you said people come to you for healing (from physical ailments) or for their longing beyond the physical. Is that all, or is there some other category?



*I want you to know
the power, the liberation of
another kind of science,
the inner science, the yogic
science through which you
can become the master of
your destiny*



People love to believe that there are various categories, but they all belong to the same category. They always think of the next step. You give them health, they think of happiness, then prosperity, wife and children. I don't care for what reason they come to me- health, money or mental peace. All I'm interested in is to provide a solution to their problems, by becoming the solution. I have to 'dissolve', not 'solve' their problem. All of them are people who are

seeking the Infinite in instalments. Tribals, corporates, academics and scientists-all think they are different owing to their different experiences (laughs).

The programme you started is called 'Isha Yoga'. Why so?

In traditional terms, Isha means God or 'formless divine' Isha is 'Ishwara' with form. We handle it as a science and have taken out the cultural dimension from it on a broad basis. But depending upon our mood and the nature of the audience, we bring in culture. Do you know that you can play with culture because it is purely subjective? Culture is a science. Have you seen trucks in different parts of India? They are painted in different ways, with Krishna, Shiva or Jesus. They are the same trucks with the same automotive parts.

though you can manage to sit on it without the cushion.

Do you have any deities, idols or statues in your Coimbatore centre?

There are statues and gods, but no deities to be worshipped.

What is the Dhyanalinga?

Dhyanalinga is a very deep science. The 'linga' literally means the 'form', because the energy manifest in the process of creation takes the form of a 'linga'. Linga means a perfect or three-dimensional ellipsoid.

So the orbits, galaxies are also ellipsoid?

Yes. This is why the linga became a sacred form. The first form is an ellipsoid-from unmanifest to manifest. If you raise your energies beyond a certain point, a delusion

So what does the Dhyanalinga actually do?

Hold and feel a flower. Then let me hold it for 10-20 seconds. I will energise it, and 'make it feel very different' But the energy in the flower will dissipate after some time. If you can energise a properly formed linga, it becomes a perennial storehouse for energy.

Linga is an energy form created in a certain way. For specific purposes, different kinds of lingas were created. In South India, there are lingas for five elements of nature. Some temples have water, air and akash lingas, created for different types of sadhana called 'Bodhasuddhi', which is also a fundamental aspect of yoga.

Bodhasuddhi means to become free from the five elements of the body. The whole aspect of yoga is to transcend the physical, and the five elements of nature. For me, the five elements were created for Bodhasuddhi, so that people can go to different areas conducive to them to do certain 'sadhana' Lingam-making is a deep and essential science. About 700-800 years ago, the bhaktas,

'A guru's work is fundamentally destructive. He should destroy the way you are till something bigger happens. His existence finds meaning when he destroys the limited in you, so that the unbounded can face the world.'



Has the cultural prospect created so much trouble amongst your followers? It can be quite a trouble if not represented properly. That is why we handle it as a science. We employ it only once in a while when the situation allows it, and when we want to enrich it. Culture here is like a cushion that decorates the chair,

arises within you. Then once again the whole body takes the form of a linga\ellipsoid. The final form is also a linga (way to the beyond). You must have seen it in movies, when a person dies, an egg-like illuminated object arises from the body, which is in the shape of an ellipsoid. That's a linga.

who were not interested in any science, grew and sustained themselves on the strength of their emotions, and built temples all over the country. But temple building is a very deep science that involves tapping of various energy centres for sadhana. So all kinds of fanciful lingas came about, and science took a backseat. Dhyanalinga is a very

unique possibility, because it involves all the seven chakras. In a way, it is the highest possible human being, like Shiva with his energies at its peak, in the form of a coiled snake on top of his head. In theory, it is possible to give him a human body (only the energy body, not the physical or mental). But this is very complex and involves too much work to be worthwhile. We have laid the foundation to create Shiva himself, but not built its structure because it was not necessary.

So, how will people benefit? Just by sitting there?

Dhyanalina is a temple of silence. No rituals, no offerings. Even if you don't know meditation, you will invariably become meditative in a few minutes. People spend hours there without realising! The Dhyanalina fundamentally instigates people to meditate without instruction. It is a subjective science and has to be alive.

One thing about Isha Yoga is that it is a live process. To teach a seven-day programme, it will take a person four to five years of intensive practice and training. On an average only 20-25 per cent of the total number of people finally graduate to become teachers. We reject others or absorb them in other areas of operation.

I can train people for various programmes in just a week or two, but it will just wear their lives out. To teach them the subjective dimension, one should teach their body, not just soul. In the Isha Foundation, the yoga taught is not different; but is transferred into the live form. This is the beauty of Isha Yoga and its limitation too. We maintain the limitations because we don't want to become another dead process.

So how do you choose your disciples?

There is no set pattern. I decide by looking at a person. Isha Yoga has no particular form. Divinity is not something you learn or believe. Since birth, your body has grown constantly and is functioning within you. It's a natural state. I call it 'inner engineering' because every individual is seeking to become infinite or divine.

You are not media crazy. You don't invite exposure. Are you living in exile?

I am not in exile. Our hands are always full with spiritual work. I don't need the press or media to do things.

What are your hands full with right now?

We have taken up social projects like social support. In rural India, people need a different strategy. They have lived in poverty, but that has not squashed them because they are strong and robust. In the villages of Tamil Nadu, 60 per cent of the population has failed to develop to their full physical stature because the nutrition value has gone down. With subsistence farming, they had very little money, but certainly ate good food. However, with the government stressing upon the cash crop system, they may be reasonably well off, but cannot have nutritional food. Hence, the body and mind does not grow to the full potential.

But even the NGOs are doing similar work. How are you different?

When a spiritually realised person takes up this kind of project, he knows what to do. Many of the NGOs are not even aware of their mission.

Maybe they do it to be happy. But they are not realised. Though you have to admit that everybody is useful in one way or the other.

So, what next?

Our target right now is to reach one billion people and spread the message of healthy living. The cultural status of these villages has been uprooted by the market economy. Modernism has touched them, but not gone anywhere near them. Hence, they have gone into depression.

We have comprehensive programmes to rejuvenate human spirit. These include yoga, crafts, sports, etc. We work in certain parts of Tamil Nadu with a quarter million volunteers. We organise volleyball (for men) and throwball matches (for women). We have recently launched mobile dispensaries, and also cultivate herbal tea gardens. We have 40 active yoga teachers there too. People have given up alcohol, drugs, smoking and cinema. There is a new kind of enthusiasm amongst the people.

To oversee the proper functioning of our programmes, we have nominated 500 youth volunteers for every 1,000 people.

We encourage organic farming, where every acre can hire six to seven people, thus providing employment. We encourage children to go to school and also teach them and the elders the importance of afforestation. We have also undertaken a project to plant five million trees, in the light of Tamil Nadu's growing threat of deforestation.

-With inputs from Roohi Saluja and Jayita Ekka

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