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The

Rational

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by C.S.S. Latha

He shows you your true potential-what you are not, yet what you could be! Meet Sri Jaggi Vasudev, spiritual jet age guru, who fascinates the devoted and the rational equally, with a scientific and logical explanation for most of the spiritual practices he prescribes. No wonder, the new age yogi has a big presence in the Middle-East (Lebanon), Europe and United States (where a huge state-of-the-art ashram is coming up over an area of 90 acres). His *Dhyanyatra* to the Himalayas with mind blowing guided meditation sessions, the adoption of 500 villages in Tamil Nadu under a project called 'Rural Rejuvenation,' a wellness center in the news for its miraculous healing instances and his signature Isha School with a specially drafted curriculum by the guru himself-Sri Jaggi is a trendsetter in many ways. Today, Sri Jaggi headed Isha's quarter million volunteers across the globe are

known to execute commendable service to the society.

And yet, the guru is shorn of all the traditional razzmatazz. A modern mystic, Sri Jaggi doesn't see why a spiritual guru can't sport jeans and play dodge ball with the meditators. At Isha, sports, dance and music are an integral part of spiritual seeking. Sri Jaggi talks with colour and precision. In a freewheeling chat with *Society*, Sri Jaggi explains his take on yoga and good living.

What do you think is the reason for the revival of people's interest in yoga and its popularity among the younger generation?

The interest in yoga is not new; young people have always opted for it. But because of the media attention, more and more people seem to be opting for it like never before.



This is because of the high level of stress people are undergoing the world over. People are anxious and neurotic and whatever methods they have been using to handle their fears and internal turmoil like going to a disco, or for a drive or climbing mountains have all worked to some extent, but they do not offer a solution to these problems. So looking towards yoga is a very natural thing. Actually, in the *Patanjali Yoga Sutras*, the first chapter is just half a sentence, where he says “And now, Yoga!” You tried everything - money, pleasure, etc., and when you realize nothing really works, and nothing leaves you utterly fulfilled, you arrive at the conclusion; “And now, Yoga.”

You are popularly known as the ‘Rational Guru.’ It is said spirituality begins where science ends. How are you able to rationalise an abstract subject like spirituality?

Spirituality is neither abstract nor is it a subject, it is the very basis of your existence, because when you say spirituality, you’re talking about yourself. So, you are the subject, you are not an abstract existence, you are real. Since you are not able

to grasp these dimensions of life through your logical perception, you’re calling it abstract. Spirituality is essentially about you, not what you have gathered, which includes your family, property, qualifications, mind, body, and the likes.

There is a difference between the *pranayam* you teach and the *pranayam* taught By others. Are there different methods to it or there is just right and wrong yoga?

Prana means your vital energy, *yam* means to gain control over that. Here, we call these systems as *Shakti Chalana Kriya*, which means it is the science of being able to move your energies the way you want. Without having mastery over one’s own energies, if you talk about pranayam, it is just bookish knowledge. Unfortunately, a large amount of *pranayam* in the world is fundamentally from the book.



The yogic texts are a *sutra*, which means a thread, just like the one that holds a garland. You don't wear a garland because of the thread; you wear a garland because of the flowers that it holds. But without the thread, there is no garland. Similarly, the yoga *sutras* just provide that thread, allowing every master to develop his own kind of garland, depending upon what is the immediate requirement of the people around him. But some people are just teaching the thread without understanding that you have to make a garland out of it. Nobody wants to wear the thread, isn't it?

What are the repercussions of learning yoga from an amateur?

Improper yoga can cause a lot of problems. Proper yoga is a subjective dimension. This cannot be learnt or taught objectively. You will see the same practices being done worldwide. Here at Isha Yoga, people are doing the same simple practices, but look at the level of their experience, they're in completely altered states of energies, doing the same simple practices, because there is a subjectivity to what is being taught.



“Once you stand in public, accusations are a normal part of life. I don't see why it should shake or unshake people, and if it's shaking them up, it's good. After all, if your spirituality is something that is so fragile that it can shake and collapse, it's better it collapses today than tomorrow.”



“The creator is functioning from within. So if the manufacturer of the body is sitting inside this body, if you have some small repair job to be done, should you go to the local mechanic or the manufacturer? The whole thing is about invoking the manufacturer to function.”

If you're just looking for a little physical well being, doing a few simple asanas may help you. But yogic systems were not created as therapy, yogic systems were created as a means to manipulate and alter your energies in such a way that the very foundations of your life change. And when one aspect of your life changes, there must be somebody ready to offer that next aspect to you. And if the person does not know what's the next aspect, there could be a problem. It can cause physical, and mental imbalances. So, if one wants to learn subjective dimensions of life, at least that little period that they spend in learning must be in a very, very committed atmosphere. In uncommitted atmospheres and loose atmospheres, people should neither teach yoga, nor learn yoga.

Is Isha Yoga a fusion of *Patanjali Yoga Sutra* and Gautama Buddha's Soonya concept?

See, when you talk about fusion, if two bits are there, you can fuse them and try to make something out of it. These are not bits. Whatever Gautama is saying is a whole by itself. Whatever Patanjali is saying is a whole by itself too. You neither add, nor take away anything from whatever Patanjali has said, nobody can. Is it a fusion between this and that? Not at all! It's got nothing to do with Patanjali, it's got nothing to do with Gautama, but it's got something to do with life that's on now. It was on then also, they also happen to speak about the same things, because then too the same life phenomena were on. So whatever

we speak, somewhere there are bound to be areas where we seem to be repeating what they're saying, but this is not a fusion of this or that. They spoke out of a completeness within themselves, I am speaking out of a completeness within myself, and in no way can it be contradictory, nor has it to be in the same words, and in the same ways.

Do you feel the (Kanchi) Shankaracharya's episode has shaken the faith of the people in spiritual leaders?

I don't think so. Public figures being accused of wrong doings is not new. Once you stand in public, accusations are a normal part of life. I don't see why it should shake or unshake people, and if it's shaking them up, it's good. After all, if your spirituality is something that is so fragile that it can shake and collapse, it's better it collapses today than tomorrow. At least you know you haven't found anything worthwhile. If you have tasted spirituality in its genuine form, then it won't shake no matter what happens.

Legend has it that Buddha had produced 10,000 *Arahath*'s of fully enlightened individuals. You have been disseminating yoga for the past 20 years, your take.

What is my number (he laughs)? We don't have enough fingers to count. It depends on what one's understanding of enlightenment is. In terms of exalted states of energy and consciousness, we have created many. I'm not good with my arithmetic, so I don't count.

Your wellness center is reputed as a place where miraculous curing happens. What exactly is it about?

The uniqueness of Isha Wellness Center comes from a deep sense of yogic understanding. We are using ayurveda, *siddha*, homeopathic, and other systems, but the most important part of this wellness center is that there is a deep dimension of yoga involved in it. Yoga, not necessarily in terms of practice, but yoga as a possibility, a certain energy state and a certain inner experience.

The fundamentals of the wellness center are just this. When you were a child this body was so small, now it's become this big.



“Without having mastery over one’s own energies, if you talk about pranayam, it is just bookish knowledge. Unfortunately, a large amount of pranayam in the world is fundamentally from the book.”

Nobody stretched it from outside obviously. The creator is functioning from within. So if the manufacturer of the body is sitting inside this body, if you have some small repair job to be done, should you go to the local mechanic or the manufacturer?

The whole thing is about invoking the manufacturer to function. If he functions, he who created this whole body, can’t he fix a few things? He definitely can. So wellness center is an opportunity for people to allow this dimension to function within them.

What does the *Dhyanalinga* do to a person who visits it?

Dhyanalinga is unique in its energy, the way it is. It can impact a person on all levels; physical, mental and energy wise—above all it’s an initiator of meditation. It initiates a person on the level of his ethereal body.

A certain transformation begins, a certain sowing of the seed happens, which naturally find its way through the process of life. If one creates a conducive atmosphere it’ll find its way very quickly; if one doesn’t it’ll take its own time, but once a person sits there, a certain spiritual seed is sown into him, which cannot be touched by whatever activity he undertakes. Even the very process of life and death cannot destroy that. It is always there, waiting to grow.

But it also has immense physiological and psychological benefits. It is also very good for people who are influenced by certain negative energies. It is doing miracles to people who come with too much fear, anxiety and the likes. *Dhyanalinga* is a vibrant energy form and being in its presence has immense benefits on all levels of life. «

