

FACING LIFE

BASICS FOR A SEEKER

A talk by Arun Amin

Script of the recorded talk on cassette.

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FACING LIFE: Basics for a Seeker

A talk by Arun Amin

Side A:

We shall deal with the subject on the basis of the experiences of a disciple and this talk will not be a talk of a scholar who will quote you from various scriptures, cite references from *Vedas, Upanishads* and other scriptures with Sanskrit *shlokas* and quotations. This talk will be at the level of a devotee, a disciple, and whatever we discuss will be on the basis of personal realization. Basically the idea of the talk is to give enlightenment to someone who wants to know more about yoga and more about spiritual life and the occult.

Who are we? And what are we made up of? From where have we come? These questions should come in our mind sooner or later. We are mental beings. We humans begin to ask questions sooner or later on – what is life? If we spend our whole life in total ignorance then may be these questions don't come up at all but all of us in our old age or when there is some tragedy, some accident, begin to think who are we? From where have we come? Where will we go? And what is the purpose for all that we are doing? Fortunate indeed is a person who begins to ask questions at a young age or gets interested to ask questions about higher things by some accident, by some chance meeting with some enlightened one. The number of such persons is few. These are the blessed and the chosen ones.

The most important fact for us to know is that the purpose of life is to realize the Divine. It is most important to note that the

purpose of *our* life is to realize the Divine. That is why we have taken this birth. This is a fundamental fact, a fundamental truth which we have to accept with faith. We have the option, we have the freedom to reject it also. Any spiritual discipline, any yogic technique, cannot be forced on someone. We presume that those who have gathered here have come with that much faith to accept the fact that our origin is from the Divine and from there we take off, with whatever we can convey or express within one hour at our disposal. We will try to compress and give as many details as possible on various aspects of yoga, spiritual life and occultism.

Millions and millions of years ago on this planet there was nothing but a mass of matter. From stones to plants to animals evolved the man that we know of. The soul from the soul world, the psychic world, descends on this planet and enters a body when it is about to be born. Of course, before that also there is life but that is as a spark of Divinity supporting the body. The soul comes with the full knowledge that the moment it comes here it will be covered with layers and layers of ignorance and there will be a lot of suffering; but still a human body, a human life is a must for any soul to evolve. It has been said that Gods, who are having infinite times more power and perfection than man, have to take birth in a human body and go through human experiences to develop their powers.

The purpose of life is to realize the Divine within us. Most of our life is spent in total ignorance. Only when we get a knock or two, or if there is any suffering or pain, do we rush to those whom we consider as wise or we pray a little bit. We never make a sincere attempt to know something of spiritual life at all. We never think of what is behind all that we see. What is in everything around us? Just to exist we spend all our

energies. Then why should we realize the Divine and what is the proof that he wants us to realize Him? Those who want proof, meaning those who do not have total faith, cannot be helped much. If at the end of life there are no incidents, no experiences on the basis of which they think that there is something called higher truth, a higher power, then these people will not evolve as fast as those who practice yoga and are aware of the Divinity in all and everything. This delays their evolution and expansion of their consciousness.

Our origin is from the Divine and the Divine supports us all the time, whether we think of Him or not, and out of gratitude, out of total *samarpan*, total surrender, total *abhipsa*, total aspiration, we must realize the Divine. It is a very difficult and lengthy process. It needs technique, knowledge, devotion, sincerity, all on the foundation of peace. Peace, upon which is everything to be built in yoga.

Yoga means union with the Divine.

At the highest it is *Sat Chit Ananda* (Existence Consciousness Bliss). The realization has not only to be in the mind, in the heart, but also in the physical, which is the most difficult thing to achieve.

Broadly speaking, we have the Yoga of Knowledge (*Jnana* Yoga), Yoga of Works (*Karma* Yoga), *Raja* Yoga (the Yoga of Limited Participation in Life where the mind is the key) and *Bhakti* Yoga (the Yoga of Devotion). *Hatha* Yoga is for the Perfection of the Body, which is the fortress, the castle of our soul, and it protects the soul.

The cross currents, the attacks, the negative forces of modern life makes the man entangled in a vicious circle so that he

never ever gets a chance to think of something which is higher.

What is to be done out of necessity – that is to exist, to fulfill his desires, to achieve something in life: name fame, earning money – all this keeps him entangled forever. In the routine human life, if at all he reaches great heights in worldly achievements, these are transitory.

We do not reject the material prosperity but we need not be so attached to it. If our material achievements do not collapse then our body decays and we have to leave these things behind.

So, total importance to this should not be given. Along with our daily regime we should have another track – a parallel track, the spiritual track.

It is said in various systems of self discipline that it takes thirty years for a man to transform his nature. So, we must have patience and put time on our side.

Material needs have to be met. It is a very old method – old system – which we need not repeat – the method of ascetic rejection. This method is of course admirable, but if we become totally ascetic then we reject the material power. Divinity is also in all material things. All the material things that surround us have the Divine in them. Therefore, material life should not be rejected. It is said that during the times of Buddhism and Jainism rejection of the material power, drove away the material prosperity from India – from this part of the world – and the prosperity went to the West where they are now trying sincerely to know: What is yoga? What is higher life? What is consciousness? What is spiritual life?

Nowadays we hear of a lot of negative happenings here and there. This tends to depress us. Depression means going back several steps and putting ourselves in the hands of hostile

forces which attack us, use us. Hostile means those forces who have turned away from the Divine – turned against the Divine. These forces take advantage when we are depressed. When we are discouraged they enter in us and take away our spiritual achievements. They delay our progress. They try to drive us away from the spiritual path. They want us to leave our *sadhana* – our seeking. A *sadhak* (a seeker) has always to be on guard, but he should not lose faith in himself. There is no going back once you come on the spiritual path. There should be no going back. If we fall we should try to rise to greater heights. There is always the help of the *guru* – the guide – if one has a guru. The Divine is always supporting us – all throughout – and however painful, however discouraging, however difficult the circumstances around us, without losing faith we should keep on moving to the goal of realizing the Divine.

One of the things that we have always to guard against is fear. The fear that we will not be able to progress in yoga. The fear that if we are doing yoga we will lose whatever we have in this material world. All these fears keep us moving in circles. Fear makes us take backward steps and drives us out of this path of aspiration, rejection and surrender. Our life appears to be fragile, insecure, full of suffering, pain and violence and above all there is this constant fear of war. All this can be dealt with a firm will, a calm attitude, with sincerity, purity and total faith that His grace will protect us.

One has to be on guard and watch with whom one is dealing – the company one keeps. We have to keep away from people who lead a negative life. These people with whom we must deal minimum are those who are violent, always gossiping, wishing ill of others and speaking against the higher values of life. These people tend to lower the consciousness of all

around them. We cannot avoid them, but if we must deal with them then we should deal only to the extent required.

The most important thing for a sadhak to remember is not to overlook protection. Protection is priority number one. Whatever progress one has made over the years can be lost in a few weak moments. There are forces in the world who want to delay our progress in evolution. But this should not frighten us. There are a number of techniques to call helpful Divine beings to help us and protect us. Above all, there is the grace of the guru – the grace of the Divine.

One of the methods is to do *Japa*. *Japa* means a repetition of a *mantra*. A *mantra* is made up of spiritual or occult words arranged in a particular meter to produce certain sounds and vibrations to create a desired effect and rhythm. The words of a *mantra* – of course have a certain potency and are charged with power.

Each *mantra* has a presiding Divine being who is invoked by recitation. These Gods and Goddesses come to our help. *Japa* generates power. *Japa* should however be done to help us evolve further for transformation and progress in *sadhana*. Besides, *Japa* protects the body and the soul. Some prefer to do a special *mantra* composed by oneself. Some take quotations from the *Bhagwad Gita* or from the Vedas. Recitation of God's names like those of *Shree Krishna*, *Shree Rama* or *Lord Shiva*, or any *mantra* given by the guru is tremendously beneficial. One can also chant the name of Christ or Buddha or whatever one believes in.

This brings us to an important aspect of *sadhana* and that is – do we do this *sadhana* on our own or with the help of a guru? It may not always happen that we have a guru first to initiate us

and tell us what has to be done. If you are really sincere in your sadhana, you will come across a guide or a guru who will help you. A guru takes you in his consciousness and even though a human guru may have his limitations these limitations do not prevent us from receiving benefit from him. A guru guides, protects and gives us his love. To have a guru for most of us is a necessity, and if we do sadhana with our personal effort then even if we make tremendous effort, the progress is slow. This is because individual effort and our capacity have limitations.

We have talked of the evils of the society and also this haunting fear of war. There is also this violence, the dirt in present day politics clouding our mind with depression, making us lose faith and making us shaky. What do we do? What attitude should we have?

First, about war. War means destruction. During war one should try to remain as peaceful as possible and keep faith alive that one will survive. If a nuclear war takes place, however advanced one may be on the spiritual path, one cannot save oneself. In a calamity of such a nature when the destiny of an entire section of humanity is involved, until control over material is achieved, one cannot protect one's body from such a destructive power.

However, Sri Aurobindo has repeatedly mentioned that there will not be a world war of the nature as was seen some decades ago. He has assured us that the world will not be destroyed.

How does one plan one's life under all these circumstances? By yoga – by yogic sadhana. One should chalk out a life long plan to progress and prevent stagnation in sadhana.

We have to tap our own resources and awaken our latent powers and energies.

Let us devote a few minutes every day for reading the scriptures and works of various great souls and *avatars* like Sri Aurobindo, Sri Ramakrishna, Swami Vivekananda, and The Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram. Any book that gives us light and guidance; anything that builds our faith and confidence and gives meaning to this life. Let us try to put into practice their teachings.

Reading a page or two every day with concentration is a must because we are mental beings and we need spiritual food for our minds regularly.

Sometimes it might appear that though one reads one doesn't understand fully; but after a time new cells grow in the brain due to regular reading and we will understand better. Initially, we understand by feeling and then after a time we understand better with more mental clarity.

Along with *satsang*, reading, japa, we must also say a prayer. We must pray, feel – aspire and then talk with the Divine that He may guide us in our daily activities – in all the little things we do. First we must pray for peace. Peace, that is the foundation upon which everything has to be built. You must constantly ask for peace. You cannot make much headway in yoga without peace. All your spiritual activities have to be given some time, and you can always find time to do these things when you travel, when you get up, when you are about to sleep, and on other occasions when you are all alone or even in a group. Initially, secrecy is preferred; later on, let your interest in yoga be made known and your knowledge poured out spontaneously. Do not display. Do not look for being

noticed or admired! Fame and ambition in yoga lead to a fall. In such a case yoga is a fire that burns!

In spite of hectic activities, problems, pressures of work, we can state from experience that there is still time available for yoga. Later, as you purify yourself and progress, the grace descends concentratedly and the road widens – circumstances change in your favor.

Meditation also helps. Certain systems insist only on meditation. However, meditation is a part of yoga. Meditation is partial concentration. One can meditate for two or three times a day. Let us practice it twice a day: when we go to sleep, or when we get up, or at whatever time suitable to us.

In meditation you may close your eyes and think of a subject. You may think of peace, bliss, vastness of the sky. Visualize the sea – the calm of the sea with so many activities going on under the surface. When you begin to meditate you notice unwanted thoughts and petty thoughts come to your mind. Like, if you are looking at the sky and the birds are flying from this side to that side. In the same way, thoughts are in the skies of your mind. You see them from a distance and you can push them out.

The goal of meditation is to draw in the higher force. Your goal is to draw in the higher force by meditation.

(End of Side A. Continued on Side B)

Side B:

The force, the higher force or consciousness or energy, is like an electric current flowing from up to down. It vibrates within your system. You get an illusion as if your body is rocking a little or sometimes even as if you are in water and are swimming. The force gives you energy, joy, bliss, contentment and peace. It gives you the poise. Preserve the force for maximum time and experience detachment.

Your daily program should include *satsang*, prayer, *japa*, meditation, besides a good human act. At night review the entire day. You will be surprised after a certain time that in spite of having a heavy schedule of working with all the problems of city life, you will still have found an hour or two to do yoga. This time can be increased if you want to pursue sincerely your sadhana.

There are people who are working sixteen hours a day without a holiday and still they find hours to do the *kriyas* – the practices – for their sadhana. Put all your will and pray for the grace. Every moment counts. Be vigilant and progress in your sadhana.

As you progress in your sadhana, you get spiritual experiences even at the initial stage. This is because you have crossed from this physical world to another world. It is like going from one room to another and you see the things of another room. You see white light, colors, smell fragrances, experience deep peace, joy or you feel that your height has increased and sometimes you hear beautiful music too! Or, you may have visions. You may see a temple, a lamp, a light. All these should not make you feel superior. These things happen to you to establish you in your sadhana. Sometimes, outwardly it may

appear that nothing is happening but inside some changes are taking place. Something is growing, something is blossoming, something is unveiling itself, and suddenly you find a change. In reality it – the Divinity, the energy – was there all along but you were not able to feel it, its growth – manifestation – in you. This is the beauty of the sadhana – the *leela* – the play.

So one has to have faith, patience, perseverance, and courage. A sadhak, a seeker, has to face several difficulties on the way. Those who cannot face the difficulties of this world cannot face the difficulties of yoga at all! This is not to discourage us, but the difficulties of this life, the problems of this life are only of this world, whereas in spiritual life we have to deal with so many forces and powers both visible and invisible. Armed with sincerity, humility and faith one can go all along, unharmed with the grace of the Divine, if one is not pursuing yoga with ambition and not thinking of having great powers; otherwise, yoga is a fire that burns. Beware of ambition and temptations to display.

How does one know whether one has made progress on the spiritual path, in yoga and in sadhana? One finds that one reacts less and less than before. A sort of detachment is noticed, a certain degree of peace and calm is noticed about the person. If not throughout the day, at least at certain times, because the level of consciousness even for advanced sadhaks does not remain the same throughout the twenty four hours in a day. It fluctuates. Therein lies the interesting part of the sadhana. We have to try constantly. We have to struggle and we have to make a sincere effort to keep our consciousness higher and higher. It is a struggle of joy and surrender.

There are constant ups and downs. This should always give us the required humility.

A realized person, a yogi has an atmosphere of peace around him. Those who have only occult powers have some sort of tension around them because these occult powers are the powers that divide. You feel something exciting about them. Excitement subsides or subdues. Excitement confuses. A spiritual force has peace, bliss, an unmoving concrete power of strength and a solid block of contentment. It gives you a definite feeling of detachment. There are many occultists who help others with their occult powers. There are selfless occultists who use their powers in the service of society. There are others who want to display.

All realized people – all saints, all yogis – when they achieve *siddhis* (i.e. realization), that is, when they embody certain powers, then not only material powers but also occult powers come to them on their own. These occult powers are different from those occult powers that divide. These are spiritual occult powers you get in yoga that you do not ask for. Those who do not ask for anything are the real children of the Divine; others are of no value. Those who practice certain rituals to get powers for fame, money or hold over other people – these people with ambitions – they have a fall. Such people succumb to actions which harm others. One should know how to discriminate and one has to be on guard and avoid such exploiters.

Is there anything like black magic? Yes, there is! And there are people who practice it. It is not superstition. If black magic is directed against anyone who has an unshakable faith and peace then even though the black magic force will go towards him, it cannot enter his house or harm him. The force goes back to the one who sent it and it boomerangs! White

magic or the spiritual force protects. A guru's grace, mantras and prayer books like *Hanuman Chalisa* help and protect.

Who are the Gods? The Sun God rules this planet – this solar system. All the Gods and Goddesses come from the plane of Overmind known as *Adhimanas*, which is a step down from *Atimanas* i.e. Supermind. These Gods have infinite times more power and capacity than human beings. The Gods are limited in their powers in that each God or Goddess has a certain aspect of the Divine. Some have love as in Shree Krishna. Some have compassion, sacrifice, *tyaga* as in Shree Rama. The Goddess Saraswati symbolizes knowledge and organization and Mahakali has *Rudra* power that destroys the evil within and without. Lord Ganesh symbolizes protection and knowledge.

If you sincerely pray to these Gods and Goddesses they immediately respond and help you in your sadhana. Those who aim at the highest in yoga aim at the supramental which is beyond these Gods from the plane of Overmind.

When you have decided and accepted a guru who has a consciousness wide enough, high enough, pure enough to help you, it is advisable not to change from one guru to another; otherwise, there will be confusion.

Yoga means union with the Divine. Yoga means serving the Divine which is different from serving the world or humanity. Does not humanity consist of human beings and is not the Divine present in all human beings? It is easier to serve the humanity under the garb of serving the Divine to satisfy one's ego. These are subtle things and we mention these for clarity. This does not mean that we should stop from serving our fellow humans. All these acts are welcome. These should be

encouraged but with the understanding that these are at the human level. Such activities heal the wounds of the society.

We have our own strange ideas about yogis. Yogis and spiritual persons need not always be impressive. They may be simple but not simpletons. Yogis are not fools. We should not try to cheat them. If they do not allow us to exploit them we should not turn against them. We may have a spiritual person who may be crude or strange from outside. He may not be impressive in appearance and need not have etiquette, manners, or behavior as per our expectations, for these are all on the surface! The real people hide their golden qualities and powers behind outward limitations. Watch their actions. They are ever ready in the service of the Divine. Such persons when asked to go to a battlefield and sacrifice their lives will gladly do that. A yogi may receive a call to withdraw from society and he will not see anyone. It is easy for our petty human minds with prejudices to make wrong conclusions by appearances. The power of intuition grows in those without prejudices. Those with inner power know who is what. We have no right to pass comment on someone unless we have gone beyond him.

Because of certain godmen who may have gone astray a larger number of godmen and yogis need not be looked at with a suspicious eye. Those who are the real people do not need certificates and recognition from us.

We must keep away from people who are all the time busy trying to run down spiritual people, yogis, godmen, and those who have come to help society. If we are not convinced let us leave them alone. Otherwise, we become open to hostile forces.

So, recapitulating once again, from the first day when we got interested in yoga, either out of curiosity or knowledge or by accident or any selfish purpose, we will progress if we are sincere. Slowly purification takes place by the triple method of aspiration, rejection, and surrender that has been shown by Sri Aurobindo. Those who choose the Divine are chosen by the Divine according to The Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram, and it depends on an individual's capacity, previous life's karmas, effort and soul's maturity. So many factors, that will help. Some get stuck halfway, some remain stagnant, some go across, some go far ahead; but all one has to remember is to keep on plodding.

Sri Aurobindo said that one should be able to meditate in a battlefield. Sri Aurobindo's writings are not a teaching or a revelation but a direct action of the Supreme – of an avatar who has done it and shown it in a body like ours.

A daily routine over the years of meditation, concentration, reading, satsang, japa, prayers and a good human act and also every day reacting less and less and stepping back from all the activities in which one is participating, whether one is totally in *grihastashram* (householder) or whether one is in a totally hostile atmosphere, helps one make a headway in yoga.

In the olden times the guru used to test his disciple-to-be by giving him a test. If he failed in that test he would be called after many years for initiation. Today, the circumstances are much easier. One need not go to the jungle and one need not do the penance which was done earlier, like standing on one leg in a river for days together or starving oneself. One need not do that because great yogis like Sri Aurobindo and others have said that such asceticism does produce good results, but it

is not the complete thing. The result is only partial; one need not torture the body which is the fortress of the soul.

How does one contribute to the world? It is by transforming oneself rather than worrying about changing others. An individual is a center. A family consists of several persons yet we say such and such person is the head of the family. The Mother of Sri Aurobindo Ashram preferred to call the father or head of the family as a "center" of the family who gives inspiration, guidance and who would bring about harmony between all members. He would be the center of the whole family, the ideal family, in pursuit of yogic discipline. If one wants to pursue the spiritual path then the best way is not to marry, but it may not always be possible to keep away from marriage. Maybe we needed marriage. One need not suppress the desire to marry if one cannot overcome it. Desires have always to be sublimed. They need not be crushed because later on the desires return with double the force. So, one can fade out the routine animal life – that side of the marriage – and husband and wife can be hand-in-hand a team of companions on the path of sadhana and illumination. One can give the best spiritual guidance or any other kind of guidance to the children by setting an example. This does not mean when they are there you behave in a certain way, but you do not do certain things which are negative or not conducive to the normal growth of yourself and those around you. If any negative element is absent in you it is very rare that such a thing can ever enter in your children.

Education also need not be for getting a certificate. Outwardly, it may appear that education and procuring a degree should be followed by a job. There are hundreds and thousands of children who have studied in Sri Aurobindo Ashram's

International Education Center, who have passed out from there and have settled all over the world successfully.

Over the years one grows up from childhood to youth. One throws out energy in all exercises, sports, studies, playing games, and one gets married and has children. One gives them education and settles down. Then one finds that one day the thing about which one was afraid is happening to him i.e. the body begins to decay and one knows that sooner or later, after ten or twenty years or so, death is sure to follow. Then that fear comes which should not come because death is one of the facts of life until the immortal body as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo – the supramental body – is achieved. It may take five or ten thousand years but as of now the human body, as it is, should be accepted as a fact – to live a life of seventy, eighty or a hundred years, whatever, in the best possible way. The art or technique of living should not be ignored, to be a good human being should not be ignored, but one should go above that and beyond religion (which is now reduced to mere ceremony and fixed rules) in search of the Divine and in service of the Divine by aspiration, rejection, and surrender.

The aspiration flame goes up and from above the Divine grace descends and blesses us and leads us from birth to death. Now when death is approaching some people know about it. To some people death comes suddenly by accident or by violent means. Then the soul is not in the knowledge of it in advance. We may say that it was destined to be like that but the soul is surprised and in such a case the soul suffers. In such a case, prayer and help from other realized souls is necessary so that the journey of the soul to rest in the soul world is with peace and without pain.

When a person is about to die all the falsehood arises in full swing. At that time it is too late to change the past! That is why we have to minimize our wrong acts and do bhakti, have satsang, react less and less, avoid gossiping and hurting people, save our energies, sublime our desires, keep spiritual company and direct our energies to a goal of Divine fulfillment.

(End of Side B of Cassette)

Note: This is the script of what is on the cassette with a few edits

