

Amanaska Yoga (Tat Tvam Asi Meditations)-FAQs:

Q: What kind of benefits have people derived during the previous retreats?

The participants who come to these retreats come from various religious and spiritual backgrounds, they come basically because there has been a break-down in the life journey - in one sphere or the other - married or professional life, economic adversities, death of loved ones, disease, addictions and perversions, humiliation, infidelity, exploitation or loss in personal relationships, family disunity, spiritual seeking, the quest for liberation or *moksha*, etc.

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By turning inwards and by learning the *yogic* skill of *self*-Knowing, life comes to undergo a radical transformation. As a result of the calming and silencing of the *self*, the old problems fall away and you come upon innocence, sensitivity, clarity, peace, compassion and that precious jewel of *prajna* (spiritual intelligence). Then, day to day living feels entirely different. Let it however be noted that there will not be the dawning of the new life, without negation of the *self*. So long as we insist on living the life of the *self*, these problems may never end. And even if they do end, they are bound to leave their tormenting scars. It goes without saying that the vanishing of all of life's problems may not happen, the very first time we attend this retreat. As *self*-Knowing and learning are the keys, as we discover these keys to the spiritual life, the past falls away from us and there will be freedom, which is our birth right.

Q: Will I be able to come out of my habits after participating in this retreat?

It seems to me that generally human beings only wish to avoid a problem, such as an addiction or any other so-called bad habit for example. Rarely do we see an individual taking an entirely different line, namely one of compassionate understanding of what the problem is all about. *It is more important to compassionately study a problem, rather than to somehow get rid of it.*

In these retreats, we have the opportunity to look within, to see how we as the *self* are functioning, both within ourselves, as also in our outer relationships. When there is *self*-Knowing, we will be amazed to discover that we have never really compassionately looked at the *self* and its interminable problems. In doing this, we will be awakening to our own sorrow and then also to the sorrow of humanity. Then, the old question of wanting to get rid of the so called bad habit, undergoes a transformation, in that we would have given up the old tendency of wanting to put the problem or habit under the carpet. Guilt, shame, all of these

belong to the *self*. In being fortunate to look at the problem with compassion and awareness (*self*-Knowing), as a mother would care for her infant, the whole of life would have changed-but not in a pre-meditated direction. The basic problem seems to be that our education in our schools and colleges, and even the spiritual and religious education are entirely bereft of *self*-Knowing, this is the tragedy of our lives.

Q: Will I get spiritual experiences, vision of God, etc. during this retreat?

The essence of the retreat is *self*-Knowing, from which will arise the calming and silencing of the *self*. I maintain that spiritual experiences mean nothing, they are like dreams which come and go, they may be exciting or ecstatic, they may give you a peep into some exotic worlds of consciousness, but intrinsically, they are not of transformative value.

It is much more important to understand the *self* and be fortunate to have the *self* fall silent. In *bhakti yoga*, these experiences do have a certain halo, but in *jnana yoga*, and *self*-Knowing belongs to this approach, they have no special sanctity. All the great *Advaita* masters have in fact de-emphasized such mystical experiences and instead they have placed the utmost emphasis only on enquiry, *Atmavichara*. In these retreats, the emphasis is on *self*-Knowing, not on securing some grandiose experience. Even if these experiences do befall some participant, that is never a milestone in *self*-Knowing.

Q: Do I need to change my religion or my current spiritual path?

I like this question. The problem with the West is that by and large, they have thrown out their religion (Christianity) from their lives, ever since the so-called age of enlightenment (14th to 16th century CE), as the new movement of science and technology took over the function of religion(at least they thought so). They called this the apotheosis of science and technology. However, it is completely absurd to imagine that man can live without religion and the life of the spirit, or that science has opened our eyes to such an extent that we no longer need the wisdom of religion. So, in so far as the West is concerned, seekers, by and large, especially if they are of an intellectual inclination, do not have any religion in the first place, so the question of changing one's faith or religion does not arise. However, it is my intention through *self*-Knowing and the calming and silencing of the *self*, to make Western seekers, rediscover the lost treasure of their religion.

In India and in the East the situation is quite to the contrary, here seekers have become stagnant at the milestone of faith. While religion is certainly an

integral part of their lives, rather than being alive and creative, it is slumbering, so to speak. Belief and faith may be strong in the East, yet there is also a true spiritual bankruptcy, in the sense that *self-Knowing* is nowhere to be seen. Religion can be ‘understood’ in any society only when that society still has sufficient belief, faith, and understanding of what religion is all about. Fortunately in the East, such belief, faith in religion and understanding of religion is somehow still alive. Yet, there are human problems, there is tremendous inner darkness, confusion, sorrow. It is *self-Knowing* which is missing. And when *self-Knowing* comes into the life of seekers in the East, it will only make their dormant religion, come alive in an authentic way in their daily life. Here too then there is no threat of losing one’s faith or one’s religion. On the contrary, *self-Knowing* will reveal the heart of their religions—whether this is Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Christianity, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism, Shintoism, Islam, etc.

Regarding your spiritual path, it depends, what the *self* is seeking on any path. From my point of view, there can be no deep spiritual life, without *self-Knowing*. *It happens often that we have to change our spiritual path, especially when that path is unsuitable to our temperamental make up.* For each seeker the path is always unique and for million seekers, there will exist million different paths. Every true seeker will find his own path sooner or later.

Most significantly, *self-Knowing* is a *nascent and virgin* continent, completely unknown to the *ancient and time honored* continent of all the world religions. In this sense, to whichever religion you belong, *self-Knowing* will be a *sine qua non* for your spiritual life.

Q: I am not a Hindu. Will this retreat suit me?

If your religion is self-sufficient to you, why would you look for solace or salvation outside your religion? Participants come to this retreat, because they are more interested in resolving their problems, rather than having an allegiance to their religion, just out of what we may call, ‘loyalty’. If you are a Westerner, with an intellectual disposition and with no religion that is actually functional in your life, you may have no hesitation in exploring to see if this path of *self-Knowing* will prove beneficial to you. You have to make up your mind, whether it is the resolution of the problem by any sensible teaching, which is more important, or it is your faith in your ancestral religion which is dysfunctional in your life, which is more important. You have to make an intelligent choice.

Q: What are the restrictions being imposed during and after the retreat in terms of food habits, life-style?

Fortunately in our modern world, there is considerable awareness about right eating and right food. At the retreat, vegetarian food is strongly recommended, even though, the venue being a beach resort, other kinds of food will also be available. Even after the retreat is over we recommend vegetarian food that is healthy, balanced and nutritious. The reason is that, if a spiritual life is to be cultivated, *sattvic* vegetarian food would be the ideal choice.

Q: What is expected out of me to be part of this retreat?

You will have to read all the literature available at the websites

www.tat-tvam-asi.org www.amanaska.yoga and prepare yourself in the manner that will be suggested to you through periodic bulletins and e-mails.

Q: Why is this retreat conducted (a) from individual's perspective (b) from social perspective?

Man is a social being, as well as an 'individual', so both aspects have to be examined closely. You will then go on to discover that the individual is a myth.

Q: Many such spiritual retreats are happening throughout world. What is special or new in this retreat?

This retreat is based on the *as yet undiscovered power* of *self-Knowing*, as originally taught for six decades by the illustrious master Sri. J. Krishnamurti. However, the *self-Knowing* that is taught here will be in a different vein. It does certainly belong to the original *genus* of Krishnamurti's *self-Knowing*; yet at the same time, it is also (for those who care to examine in greater detail), another *species* which may be seen to belong to the same *genus*. While Krishnamurti, who has been the 'Columbus' in this vast field, has opened the gates of *self-Knowing* for the very first time in human history; there is also much work which remains to be done, by way of actual applications and exemplifications.

Whereas the master Sri J. Krishnamurti consistently turned his back on every kind of traditional teaching, I do not take that line at all. To bring home the *chintamani* (*wish yielding gem*) of *self-Knowing* in an efficacious manner; after travelling with the master Sri J. Krishnamurti for a considerable distance and imbibing his teaching; as a researcher dedicated to truth alone, I was obliged to

consciously break from his main stream at a certain point and then move in a different direction, invoking Hindu mythology, Vedic astrology and some other *moksha shastras* of *Sanatana Dharma*, so as to enliven and bring home the *chintamani* of *self-Knowing*, into suffering lives.

It may be noted that I am not a disciple of the master Sri J. Krishnamurti, for this master was so much on the *nivritti marga* that he very nobly and rightly wanted no disciples at all—only because masters and disciples are also caught in the snare of the *self*. My *guru*, has been Sri Bhagavan. He contrariwise, is set in a traditional mould. However I have also had to part company with my *guru* w.e.f. 2000, I did this after I discharged my *runa* to my *guru*. With regard to the master Sri. J Krishnamurti, I do acknowledge having adequately slaked my thirst at the well-springs of the teachings that came through the ‘vehicle’ of this master Sri Bhagavan and my late mother. What I do thereafter, has been my sole concern and I do not even seek any ideological affiliation with the illustrious master Sri J. Krishnamurti. Having been ‘saved’ from the ghost of *maya*, by this potent medicine of *self-Knowing* and after my *guru* also contributed his substantial share in exorcising the ghost of *maya*, I have now become the physician, who is administering this medicine of *self-Knowing*, for the salvation of seekers. This is frankly my position today.

Q: What is Advaita? Does it not question the basic faith of Idol worship and praying to God as superior to mortal humans as per most of the religious institutions?

Your question on the difference between the *Atma*, the imperceptible inner Self and the Divine as a *vighraha* (idol) has been eloquently answered ages ago by the illustrious, Adi Sankaracharya. He had already pointed out that the Hindu religion exists in two tiers. A lower tier, for the spiritually underdeveloped, in the form of an ‘externalized’ God, the objectified form of the *Atma*, and a higher tier, in the form of Self-Realization or *Atmajnana*. One is expected to gradually grow in faith and understanding; starting with the lower tier and maturing in the higher tier of *Atmajnana*. Since it is a question of spiritual development or progression, there is no conflict between the two. *Atmajnana*, is the deep understanding and digestion that one is the *Atma*, or the Divine Self, which implies that the individual *self*, was only a persistent delusion or *maya* for many decades! *Advaita*, means, not ‘two’ realities, namely that of the seeker and that of the Divine, but one only.

Q: I am a good person. I don't harm others. I live my life normally. Life is going on smoothly by and large. Still, do I need a spiritual path?

Who do you think is going to answer this question? Like, you must eat when you are hungry, and only then you will ask for food, it is very much the same story even regarding the timing of spiritual appetite. A time will come, usually in the wake of misfortunes, when your life will be plunged in the darkness of grief, then not even the gods in the temples will save you, at that time, it will be initiation into the spiritual life, through *self*-Knowing, that will prove to lead you to salvation (freedom or *moksha*).

Your question actually arises from a resistance to opening yourself to the spiritual quest. You want to keep your pleasures, magnify and intensify them-this is the work of the *self*, for this is all that the *self* is capable of doing, seeking pleasure and avoiding pain. However, this life of the *self* will also inevitably break-down, sooner or later, and be taken away from you-it is at that point that the spiritual seeker in you will be truly born.

Q: Is it a 'must' to have a Master / Guru in a spiritual journey?

Depends, there is no uniform rule that will have a universal validity. In my case, I had to move from one master to another, till I found that, I need nowhere to go, as Home is where, I am already perched! To be at the feet of a master is good, till one learns humility, service, honesty. But when *prajna* is awakened, through *self*-Knowing, the *mumukshu* is capable of 'walking' Home, all by himself. This means, till the awakening of *prajna*, you would be fortunate if you have a *guru* to guide you. The strange thing is that the *sthitha prajna* (one in whom the *prajna* is stabilized), will soon find out that he does not need to 'walk' far to come Home, as he is already in the final state-this will be his shocking discovery.

Q: I don't know Sanskrit. Also I don't have much knowledge about Hinduism. Will it hamper my understanding during the retreat?

The teaching in the retreat is highly systematic, step by step, it is an inward journey, each of you will take by yourself. It is not based on belief or faith, rather it is based on understanding. Teaching will be in the form of Qs and As, delivered into the earphones of your headsets. At any point in the unfoldment, the flow can be stopped, for asking questions and for seeking clarifications. Knowledge of Sanskrit is not necessary for finding salvation or *moksha*. This teaching is based on *self*-Knowing, as already explained. Moreover, you can work with this teaching, both before the retreat, as well as after the retreat. The intention and urgency to know yourself, to know who actually you are, is the one and only qualification.

Answers provided by Sankara Bhagavadpada, Questions prepared by Trustees of Tat Tvam Asi Trust (Sri Sambasiva Ramanananda and Ms. Devika Dorai) and other seekers.

www.tat-tvam-asi.org, www.hinduworldastrology.net and www.amanaska.yoga