



On students

Student: Shall we talk about students? You have different kinds of students coming to study with you and they come from different parts of the world. They are different ages (18-70 years) and some are new to gurukula, while some have been coming here for more than a decade. Can you share your thoughts on this, please?

Guruji: Well, students are always the same to me. I don't see any differences in them. Of course differences are there in their culture, their background, their way of thinking, everything, in the beginning. The students come here for some reason, but they may not know what qualities are required and how to really attend to yoga. That is my job, to help modify and guide. Some students come with a fresh mentality and some with so much stuff in their mind already. If they come with a fresh empty mind, it's easier to connect to them, compared to if they come with many ideas in their head already.

First removing the old patterns, then adding new things. It's a long procedure, but still, preparing students is our job. We cannot really escape from that responsibility and think it's up to the students. We do our job and whatever happens after is not on us - is an easy answer everybody can give. But as a teacher, our role is to prepare students, mold them into which way they fit into their spiritual path. So that's why I've been running this place. But the world is changing. People are changing their nature.

But I don't see so much change in the students' mentality. How 10+ years ago, students are still coming in the same way as in the beginning. Many come for Asana and philosophy, for learning more about yoga. Maybe out of 500 students 10-20 are really committed to yoga and really mean it. You know, that's all I can say. It's less than two 3% even, even less. That's how it goes.

Do you think it's always been like that or is it something new?

They say one in a thousand can really be yogi. I guess it's always been like this. We cannot expect that whoever comes to this Shala should become a yogi. I mean, who are we to say this, our job is just to train and help. But one more important thing is that there should be that urgentness, that desire to really look for the liberation (mumukshutva). That I want yoga. If that is there very strongly, everything will come.

If you see the great texts like Vivekachudamani, Atma Vidya Vilasa and some Upanishads, whenever a student and teacher's conversation happens, there are students who are saying in the very beginning, that they are done with this world. "I am boiling. I am burnt from this world. I really want the truth. Please tell me." Then the truth will appear. So that's why I think that quality is a little bit lacking nowadays, people come with so much stuff. Yoga is just an option for them.

You know, just to do it (yoga, practice) in the morning or in the evening, to be free from stress and anxiety. To experience some peace, which is okay. Maybe time has changed this student-teacher relationship in the tradition.

And yogis also became more compassionate. Teachers cannot expect from everybody that liberation desire. Maybe it's a more healthy lifestyle. That itself is good for everyone. So in that way we teach nowadays. In the beginning it might be difficult to understand liberation-oriented Yoga, but it's the responsibility of the teacher to tell it again and again. The purpose of yoga is not only this external purification, but also to know who you are. That's the highest truth of yoga.

I cannot expect that from the beginners, whoever comes to this yoga shala in the beginning, but afterwards I see everybody turn into this spiritual path. So it means everybody wants that, in a way. So that gives hope, this teaching method works and this path is really good. So that's what pulls us to teach more. So when that percentage becomes less and less, maybe still one, if one is there, that's enough. If you see the history, maybe the yogis in the past have created only one student in their whole life, but that is the one in 1000 for the future. So it doesn't matter how many students you create, but how you create them, how you make them like great missiles or great warriors that can save the spiritual strugglings in the world. So that's why students are coming, and that's why I have said that liberation, deep desire is so important for students.

Compassion is also important. I should not see the students only through their behavior, through their mind or background. I should see them in a more pure way, how they are internally, after the yoga practice, after the philosophy class, in every moment when we live together. Certain moments will be there where I can feel them more, so that I have to concentrate more on that, I have to believe it's more true, not the rest.



And you know, sometimes people behave in a crazy way. Shouting, crying, that one, this one, so many things will happen. As long as they don't lose that wish to know the truth, it's ok. So I am in. I really want to help them.

I never push people here that you should do this, should do that. What I can do, I do. I really don't push or force anybody here for anything, The truth is in front of them, how things are here, and it's up to them. Some people really commit very strongly. Some people are on and off. Some people are struggling with this, it's fine. But beyond these all things, we've built a very nice community, a very nice place here. So I'm happy about this, and I'm happy for the students who come here, because I have seen many different shalas, so many different ideas they have about yoga and in different ways they practice. What is yoga for them? I am happy with what I am doing here, and I am happy with what kind of students are coming here. It is so much about how you project this place. We are really doing it in a good way.

For whom this place is? I think this is for everyone, but in a way it's also not for everyone. It's all about the lifestyle routine. How flexibly and happily you can fit yourself into it.

Flexibility (mental) is important for being able to experience deeper spirituality. So that's why I think students keep on coming. They study very, very hard. Many things they've never heard before, never really had any connection in their life even from the past. I'm very happy about what kind of students are coming, practicing and how they are changing.

But it's just the beginning. You know, 15 years I've been teaching here officially. So it's not a proper scale yet to analyze my life or my teaching method. It's a very short period to really teach people, but still it's long compared to some others. In years maybe it can be less, but as the time spent together, it's quite a lot too.

This lifestyle of a student and a teacher living together is a little bit rare. That actually creates a lot of different vibes and the intensity is different. I had this idea that students should learn many things from teachers, lifestyle itself. That's a very important part of Gurukula. At the same time I believe, when students are going through their spiritual purification, doing many spiritual practices, they need some private time for themselves too.

So that's why students have their own room, but they live with others, with the teacher and with other co-students. So it's not like you just live somewhere. No, you are part of this. We eat together, we discuss things together, which means you have less time to think of some unnecessary things. It's fully packed. Before I was teaching so much that you don't have any time in the whole day, but now I think maybe it's enough. Now, I feel like less teaching is okay too, but still, it's a lot compared to some other places, or compared to what I was doing myself before. Consistency is important. It should not be like in the morning you do one to two hours, then nothing the next day.



it's okay in a certain way, but if we want to purify ourselves and progress, then you know, we should really do a lot of practice. If I am committed to this path, then why not? That's why I'm here, that's why this kind of lifestyle. Here in this place, you can see we live a very natural life, nothing artificial. Everything is going on in a natural flow, what we eat, you eat the same. Where we live, you live the same. It's not different from my life, maybe sometimes you get more than me, never really less than me.

So that's the concept of this place. That's how we all did. When I was studying what my Guruji was eating, I ate the same. Sometimes I was getting more than him. That's the way. That's how it should be at the beginning. So we are living the same way, which works. If really wanting to go deeper into the practice and wanting to be an intense yoga practitioner (adhimatri). Many like this, although it takes some time to get used to.

I remember in my first year, we used to have an evening asana practice, too. And I went to the temple to meditate in the morning and evening and chanted in between.



Yes, some years ago, we used to have a three to six weeks period of morning and evening asana practice followed by a long philosophy class. Then we had an afternoon chanting, and then people were studying or reading and maybe meditating or going to temple. So that was a full day and many hours of sadhana in a day.

We have an asana class at 5.30am, some do meditation before or after. Then after shower some do their japa practice (sandhya vandana). Some people practice one hour japa, half an hour japa, maybe. Then breakfast, and then other gurukula duties, taking care of cows, cleaning and washing. They wash their clothes and their room. Then philosophy class is from 10.30am to 1 pm. You know, long hours, then in the afternoon they can read, chant or study. I felt it's too much now to have an afternoon class also, but sometimes I do have some special classes for someone in the afternoon. so I will always be busy. We have a schedule, but nothing is fixed. Everything is going on in a moment, in a flow.

Do you wish to do something more or less in the future or teach differently ?

I don't know yet, I have to see how I feel. You know, we are kind of in the middle at the moment. I'm receiving some new students and I have some really old students coming, too. I have to keep everyone in my mind. If I teach something really intense and a long term text, maybe it's hard for some to connect, if they have not studied previously in a similar way.

Old students really have practiced for a long time and they need something more. I really need to think in future how it should go on, but this year we have also separate timings for new and old students. In December 2025 I will teach a one month course of the foundational philosophy like the Indian philosophies, vedic culture, traditional studies and yoga sutra. For January and February of 2026 we'll go deeper into advaita vedanta text called Ashtavakra Gita with old students. But for some time I just keep this rhythm that we are open for everyone at the same time. Old students can find their way, I'm not really bothered about them so much, because I have given a lot to them and I have prepared them. If they really want to go deeper, they already have everything they need. It's a matter of how they use it. So it looks like I should give more importance and time to new people, I have given the same importance to them also when they came. But it also depends on my practice, my path and how I feel.

So I will change the routines if I have to, but I strongly believe that every day at least a few hours of philosophy is good. When you study, that impression really helps you a lot. It creates strong samskara, which is really important for yogis. I think that discipline and lifestyle is how we bind relationships with teachers and students. That's very important.

That gives a tool or the skill for the students of understanding how to read and study. It's not like I just ask a question and I get an answer immediately. It doesn't go like that. To really understand, it takes time and questioning. After this sutra, the answer might come after 10 sutras or 100. Time will give answers to all our questions. Whenever we read the sutra, we can understand the verse through commentators' opinions. The answer is there, but am I ready to receive it? Maybe, at the moment, it doesn't look like an answer to me. Still it's a doubtful thing. So it's all about how much purity I have inside. Now I teach more with my experience, also how I see these, all things. So then it's more effective than just following someone's opinion. So I can just take one step down, in my level, I can tell this. It can be connected more to the students. So in this way, students also understand that it takes time. It's all about the habits. It takes time and once they accept and spend time in this spiritual path, I think everything will be solved, all doubts will be cleared in time.

Are there any particular texts you would wish to teach?

Yes, I wish to teach many things. I would like to teach all the Upanishads, especially with Shankara commentary.

So maybe after one or two years, I will definitely start, it's a long process. It takes one or two years, maybe, but still, it's a good thing. And I want to teach Bhagavad Gita again. When I say this, people laugh.

(He has taught full Gita already three to four times and just finished teaching Gita to a group of local people in kannada language which took six years)

I really like it, maybe 100 times more in my life. And maybe also Brahma sutra. After Upanishad, maybe we can go through some small works of Shankara and different philosophies, Buddhism even. I mean, there are so many things to learn just for myself and then teach. I feel like when I teach, I learn more. So in this way, I see it's just spending more time learning and teaching allows that.

It's not only how helpful it is for them, that I am very sure of, but it's really helpful for me. Maybe that's the biggest reason why I teach here. Yoga Sutra I like, but it looks very primary now. In the beginning it's important to teach. But Gita and Upanishads, these I like more nowadays. And Vairagyashataka and Uddhava Gita.



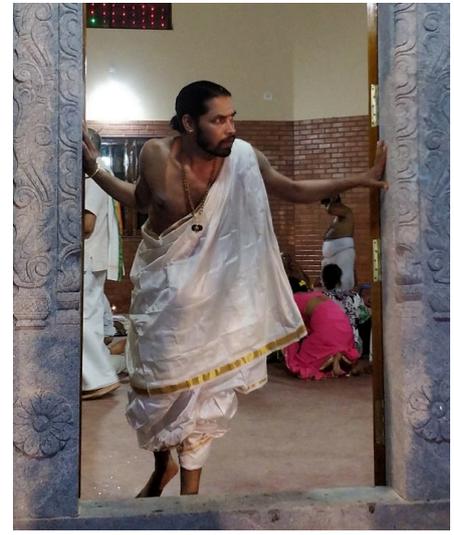
And different practices you want to teach?

Yes, yes. But the thing is, I sometimes feel like practices can be a little bit culturally related. I don't want to force anyone to be part of the culture I belong to. Yoga is beyond culture, I strongly believe. But at the same time, if somebody can see these practices beyond culture, as a spiritual practice and if it helps them, then I teach. Some spiritual practices I teach for my close, long term students with whom I have this faith that they don't see it in a cultural way,

Rituals like Puja and Homa (fire ceremonies). They are really good. And when you really understand them and practice it, maybe you see it. It's beyond all culture and everything. It has its own impact, because practices are our thing, you know, which holds us in the path? So from time to time some longer practices are needed. So I will introduce different practices, for sure. Let's see how much time we have, how this goes.

What are those qualities of the students that you really value as important? You mentioned already having an empty and fresh mindset and being ready to learn and receive. What is necessary to be a good student and to really experience yoga and go deeper?

You see, there are a lot of students' qualities listed in the shastras. So I'm not going there, I'm just talking about my experience, what works and what doesn't. Whenever a student comes here I observe if they really have an interest in spirituality. That's very important. Or do they come here just to try something. Spending time here in Gurukula means I don't want to waste anybody's time, and they should not waste my time also. Deep interest is really very important. Second, there should be humility. If humility is not there, I wait.



I can wait years and years. I am not in a hurry. But if they are in a hurry they should understand who is in a hurry. That's why teachers are always very relaxed and take so long because they can wait. So I think humility is very important

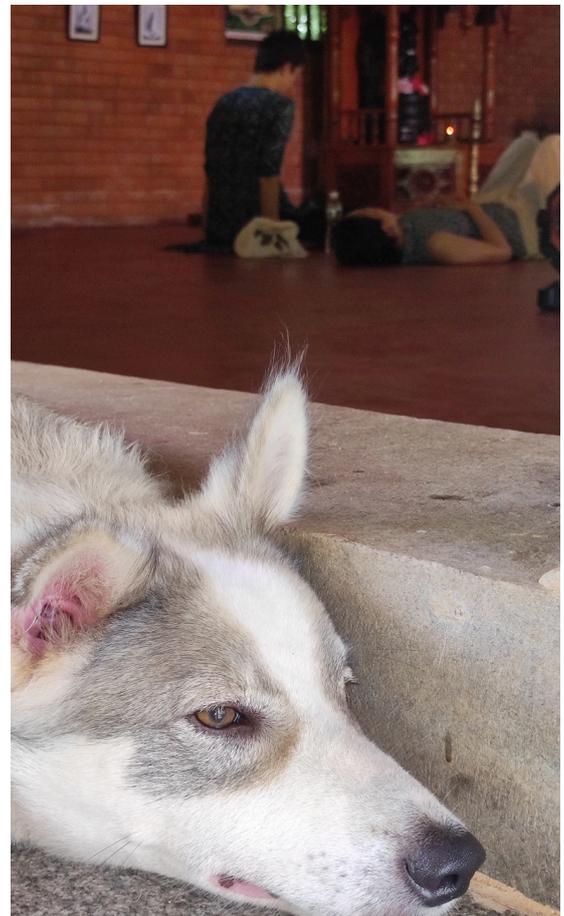
With arrogance you cannot build a relationship with the teacher. Humbleness is such an important quality, because how deeply you become humble and can surrender to the knowledge and to the practices that much faster you grow and no one can stop you.

And the third one is very important, patience. One should be ready to give time. It doesn't happen like you come here for one month, and then you know this place and it's a nice place or not a nice place. You can't decide like this, you need time. So these three things are needed if somebody wants to become an intense yogi. Those four qualities (Sadhana Chatushtaya - viveka, vairāgya, śamādiṣaṭkasampatti and mumukṣutvam) we cannot expect nowadays, but at least these three are really necessary, to connect with them. After, when we have a connection, we can build something. To connect with humility creates space and with patience and time, we will have time to build. Not in a hurry.

And deep interest is really leading the path and the journey starts. So that's why, without having these three major pillars, I think you're not building the base of yoga. These are really the basic pillars. So those things I can expect, nothing else.

So if somebody is very humble and wants to learn yoga, if they are ready, you know, ready to do anything, I can spend years and years with them. No problem. That's why I'm here. And most of the people who come here have these qualities and that's very beautiful. That's why I like to teach.

Some people say that I can connect with people and some say, why I'm doing this in a small limited way. Why don't I really do it in a bigger way? Like social media, YouTube, TV channels. Many people have actually invited me to TV channels, to give every day some lectures and become this one, that one, but it doesn't go like that. I know where it leads me after some time, it has its benefits but more strugglings. That's why I don't like that. If somebody is really looking for the real thing, they will find it.



Every year we have new students coming here.

Yes, and they are very committed, also very nice students, which is nice. And even if I die tomorrow, if I close this Shala tomorrow, I will be so happy. I always feel I've done a good job. I created some nice students.

They will continue, no problem. Spirituality will continue. Somebody raised their hand for me and really helped me to get up and in the same way my students will help others. So we are not taking all the responsibility on our shoulders, everything moves in a proper way. So these three, I think the patience and humbleness and the deep desire in the path of yoga, three is enough nowadays. You know, all the rest comes later, slowly.

What are the challenges that students may have when they come here and go deeper into the path? Are there differences in the beginning and after years of practicing?

When students come here, in the beginning, one to three months they feel really nice and good. Then at some point, it starts to be a little bit heavy when you actually go deeper. First they are dealing with the effect of the problems, not the cause of the problems. So maybe they were stressed or feeling emptiness in their life. They really want to know what yoga is. They start finding more answers and stress is gone. They are more relaxed. Asana is really good. But when the root cause of the problems start to appear like ego, attachments and deep impressions, that is what has to be changed. There you stop. There you struggle and that can be really hard for everybody. So you start to see your own problems in a rude way. You have jealousy that you can see now, you become really not capable of accepting it. You were thinking like, No, I'm a really good yoga practitioner, but then you have anger.

Maybe you've been noticing it before, but now with all these methods, time and classes you see more. So now you have to deal with these things. It becomes harder. Deeper struggling happens because you have to change yourself, deeply with your ego. To deal with your own strugglings, own karmas, your own impressions and character.

After some time you know more, can relax more and go on with steadiness and the support of practices. You fight for some time. It may be months, it may be years. We fight with it, on and off. We deny it so many times, suppress it and move on in life. But again we come to that until we don't deal with it. You know, you cannot go deeper. So you start feeling tired of the same, "how long do I have to fight like this?" you might ask. "Let me go through with this then". You know, that's the way. There is no other way. When you feel like this and start to deal with it, maybe then your path is something different.

You are becoming a different yogi.



Then we can call you really a practitioner of yoga. In the beginning, the effect of problems will be solved, not the cause of the problems. Some can stay a long time in that illusion of roaming around the effects and not going into the real root cause. Just staying on the surface. It's a bit sad, but who are we to say, it's their karma. When you start to deal with your real cause of the strugglings, you realize it's not somebody or something else, it's all about you. It starts to be more clear that you have to deal with your own ignorance, anger, ego, jealousy, illusion, greed and whatever qualities (inner enemies) are there. So here more relaxation, humility and strength is needed and more time.

When we start experiencing the cause of our suffering and our ego, it helps to have a teacher or somebody as a support who can accept us. We are hiding things because we are not accepted. So when that somebody is there who can still welcome you and move on with us, then this is the very big point that allows the path to really open and we can go deeper and faster. We can actually work with these things when we have that kind of neutral and unconditional universal or spiritual love and support.



Definitely, I totally agree with that, because that's the biggest strugglings of people. When we start to struggle with our own issues, we feel unsecure, like somebody will find out about me. Who Am I? What will happen then? We need to be there more with them. "No, don't worry. This is how it is." What's going on in you is because of these old patterns. So it's time to think about it and I will be with you. I should help to see where the problem is and what is the root cause. "I'm with you. Let's work together and move on in life. Take your own time. I'll be with you. Don't worry, you are not alone." But It's a very balanced way we have to work. Independency is also important, otherwise it can become too much. Too much dependency is not good either. Otherwise we have to carry unnecessary things. "Think, but I'm with you." There is no compromise with that. But you should really think honestly. Then things start happening naturally, by living together. It also triggers many things in us.

What kind of things your students have been going through in the spiritual purification process?

I think the biggest challenge sometimes with some students is that they can have a strong misunderstanding or even an illusion in their mind about yoga, about the path.

I feel maybe they go away from reality, which is not my style of teaching. I don't create illusion dreams about yoga. I just address the present things and enquiry.

When we can avoid the unnecessary illusions of yoga. What yoga is and can be, they will find maybe in future, it takes a long time and it's a very deep thing. But still, if you are going after some illusions you are creating, that's a little bit concerning. So when they start to do some spiritual practices, some, you know, philosophical things, when they know maybe there can be some time delusion, illusions can be created in the mind. So I am a little bit careful about that. From time to time I say "be calm".

Do you think the importance of philosophy, svadhyaya and the traditional deep texts are so important just for this reason? To stay connected in reality. When we purify ourselves and gain new experiences and insights, the world might open up for us in unseen ways, which can be even overwhelming.

When we have a teacher, a Guru or a mentor and we have the texts, that's gonna keep us on the path. Sometimes we experience things that can be overwhelming or even too much and then we might get lost into that. I believe more in text oriented inquiry than person oriented inquiry. If people follow only talks without the authority from the shastra, then it can be a little bit dangerous. Because the mind and speech can be polluted. So I give respect to texts like the Gita; what Krishna says is more safe, because I am not playing a big role here. Of course, in life I introduce yoga and spirituality, that is maybe more personal and another part. But when it comes to the actual teaching, I think if you want to keep the path and practices more clear and pure, I think you should also follow the texts. It's all there.



That's why I'm saying there's nothing personal I can add here, but I'll be with you, support you. In this way we have to work rather than think I know everything and tell you what to do.

I think more than how they do the actions in their life, I try to understand what kind of concept they have about the action. That's very important. Some people think action is so important, and they do so much. For them yoga means doing all the time. That's the strong concept they have in their mind. It's not about physically what they do, but the concept. We can see a certain stiffness in them. And some people are really flexible, so easy, so relaxed, even lazy. That's their concept; "Whatever happens, happens. Why I have to try too much in the end, is everything maya anyway", they behave.

I believe very strongly that they should work in an opposite field, for a very long time to know the secret, to learn the skills in life. So if somebody is very lazy in their actions, I might pull them or put them in the situation that they have to work and do many things. We should be open.

So it's not about what you do or don't do, but what concept you hold so strongly in life. Openness is important. With openness you are ready to do anything, you are not hesitating. Some might get shaken if they have to do much and some people are always doing. It takes a long time to break the patterns. Maybe if they've been doing it 20 years or more of their life, how can it be changed in two minutes? I just have to wait.

To gain someone's trust takes time. Breaking your own habit, which you believe so strongly from all your life, just because somebody says so and helps you for one or two months, it's not easy. To build that strong trust takes a long time.

It is important to have trust, not only for the one person, but for the whole process. Like this it's all Shraddha, having faith in the process. We need some extra help as we are going against our usual patterns. Shraddha, to have trust and faith, with co-students, friends, teacher or guide. When we have this positive trust, it will be very helpful. Otherwise, strugglings will continue.



A true change takes a long time and guidance, especially with our deepest patterns.

It was a very nice conversation,
thank you so much.

Thank y o u Guruji.