



So Ham: I AM That ~ David Life

Date: Sept 8, 2005

Focus: Shri Brahmananda Saraswati

Setting: Class Talk

Place: Jivamukti Yoga New York

Do you all know who the Aseens were? They were esoteric mysterious Hi we have New Orleans in the house they were a mysterious group of esoteric practitioners in Israel. It's said that maybe Jesus in his disappearing years was living with the Aseens. They formed little communities and lived discreet lives of spiritual pursuit. They took a lot of baths. When you visit their places there are bathing holes all over the communes where they would take I think three or four ritual baths every day and immerse themselves. They wore white clothes, they were vegetarians and some of the Aseen gospels were extracted from the official Christian bible later to be discovered at Nag Hamadi. Anyway some of the very early teachings of Jesus were preserved by these people. And there aren't many of them left around but they're all still here walking around in spirit form informing us.

We're going to chant #37 but you don't really need a whole chant book for that. I'm afraid the rest of the words we're going to sing aren't in there but you'll be happy to know the rest of the words are in English. So Ham is the only one that's not in English.

(chanting)

OM

So Ham, So Ham, So Ham, So Ham

So Ham, So Ham, So Ham, Shiva Ham

I am not this body, this body is not me

I am not this body, this body is not me

So Ham, So Ham, So Ham, Shiva Ham

I am not this hairdo, this hairdo is not me

I am not this hairdo, this hairdo is not me

So Ham, So Ham, So Ham, Shiva Ham

So Ham, So Ham, So Ham, Shiva Ham

I am not this outfit, this outfit is not me

I am not this outfit, this outfit is not me

So Ham, So Ham, So Ham, Shiva Ham

So Ham, So Ham, So Ham, Shiva Ham

I am not this ipod, this ipod is not me

I am not this cell phone, this cell phone is not me

I am not this apartment, this apartment is not me

I am not this mind, this mind is not me

I am that I-AM, I am that I-AM

So Ham, So Ham, So Ham, Shiva Ham

I am that I-AM, I am that I-AM



If Brahmananda Sarasvati had one slogan I guess you'd have to say it was know that I-AM the ocean of awareness, vibration beyond body and mind, beyond words.

Who can tell me what I-AM means to you? What are we knowing when we know I-AM?

(Student: "I am God") I am God. That's kind of abstract. Can we bring it more down home?

(Student: "I exist prior to description")

He's been studying. That's a pretty good definition. I exist prior to any description. I'll go for that description. That makes sense to me. So the method for knowing who you are is to find out who you are not. That's what we just went through an abbreviated form of. So what you do is you look at your whole life, you look at everything about you, and you think if I took away the ipod, would I still be there who I am? Even though your ipod has your special selections from the universe of musical sound, you aren't there. In the same way if you took away your hairstyle, if you went out today and shaved all your hair off, would you still be there? Yeah. So you can say I'm not the hairstyle either or if you don't have any hair, if you went out and grew a lot of hair. Either way it works. And you can experiment with all these things freely if you like. Go right out after class and get your head shaved and see if you're still there afterwards and I'll bet you're still there. And on and on you can go.

People have all -- it's like I am blank -- like fill in the blank. I am a man, or I am a woman, or I am a Buddhist, or I am a Hindu, or I am a Catholic. But the point is you take away anything that's filling in that blank and you still remain so none of those descriptions are really about you. They're add-ons. The trouble is we start to identify with the add-ons and not to identify with who we really are. So we become an American, or we become a Brazilian or we become an angry person or we become a sick person. I am sick that's my identity. And I'm holding on to it, OK? Because I want people to pay attention to me because I'm sick, OK? And we start to vest ourselves in that identity and build our whole world around it and sustain it in every way in fact we'll fight wars over it. Most of the wars have been fought over what's in that blank. Not who's really fighting the war, but what the blank part is. And I'm sure you can all figure that out for yourself.

So Shri Brahmananda's advice for life is to know I-AM. Know your pure existence before any descriptive words. Then you know for us, we're very active people, we use our bodies a lot. All of you do. Well a lot of people use their bodies a lot but we're kind of obsessed with it. We like saying prayers with our whole body. So we can start to think that it's the body that is who we are. But you can do the same experiment with body parts. If you chopped off your hand and you threw it over on the other side of the room, where are you? Are you in the hand over there or are you in the rest of the body that's sitting here? And then you could chop off a foot and throw it over there and ask the same question where am I? If I'm this body then I must be here and there because I am the body. Or you know we really fall in love of course with our face. But the same thing could happen the face let's say could somehow be taken away. And the question is would you still be there. Of course you would, of course you would. If the skin was somehow taken off and the pretty looks were gone, of course you would still be there. Take away your mobility, you can take away a lot of body parts and still be alive there and still be a conscious being so when you go through this in your mind and you start to narrow it down it starts to become more and more evident that you are an entity temporarily inside this vehicle, visiting let's say, and you're also a stranger to yourself. You don't know that being. And this life is your only chance to know that being. Or the next life that you get.



They tell us that the reason we are here is to know who we really are, partly by eliminating other possibilities. It is through diving deep into those other possibilities that we find out that's not who we really are. That's the whole idea behind the yoga classes. When we find limitations, we just naturally say that's not me because we see these limitations dropping away in a yoga practice. You start a yoga practice and your forward bend looks a certain way and you say *"That's who I am. I'm tight, I don't do forward bending very well."*

But then a couple months later you're four or five inches further down and you realize you made a mistake. That other one who couldn't bend forward wasn't you. And then you think this one is you, the new one. But the yoga practice keeps putting this up in your face over and over again. Because then let's say you get real good at all these asanas and then you hit 50 or 60 or 70 or 80 or whatever it is and things start falling away. And if you think that that was who you were, your whole identity was wrapped up in being the one that could do those amazing contortions, and then you lose that ability, then where did you go? Are you still there? There's a shortcut to all this and that's just to drop all the add-ons and know that I-AM. And you all know that. You know that you exist. Can't you feel right now if you just introspect on it, don't you know for sure that you exist? Or you are not too sure about that. You can ask the person next to you *"do I exist?"* they'll say *"yeah, as far as I can tell, seems to me you exist"*. But they're just looking at the outside maybe. Then you have to know what you're not also. Because forming false identifications is a real stumbling block in this practice. And it was - I just want to talk about it a little bit today because it is one of Shri Brahmananda's primary messages. Know that I-AM and then be it. Be it and let it come through the mask. Let it work through these hands, let it walk through these feet, let it look through these eyes and listen through these ears. But know that that's who you are, you're the one that's looking through the eyes, you're not the eyes. You're the one that's listening through the ears, you're not the ears. You're the one that's dancing through your life. And an amazing life it is. But you're just using those feet to know who you really are. Then you won't be wasting any time here wrapped up in all the roles.

You might think what harm is it to say "I am an artist" or "I am a lawyer" or "I am an actor". There's no harm in it if you know that it's just a role that you're taking. But if your whole identity is wrapped up in it as soon as a critic writes badly about you you're destroyed because your identity was wrapped up in it. You want to be invulnerable? You want to live forever? You already are that way you just forgot about it because you thought you were temporarily something else. The example is often given of an actor whose role in a play is a murderer. Now a good actor does research and gets into their part. But a bad actor identifies with the role so that the bad actor walks on stage opening night and actually shoots another actor on stage because they identified so much with their role as a murderer that they became a murderer. Good actor knows they're always acting. They get into their role, they do it convincingly, but they don't identify with it so much that they become wrongly directed. And the same thing is true of us. I am playing the role of David the yoga teacher right now. And if I start to identify with it too much you'll know it in a minute because I'll start to become self-important. I'll become prideful. I'll become defensive. And you can observe the same things in other cases also. When we are free of all that we are able to perform our roles in life much better. We are able to laugh at our mistakes, we are able to have compassion for our own struggle, we are able to apply our intelligence and our intuition uniquely and creatively to every problem we face, because we don't see ourselves as limited somehow or incapable or too shy, whatever it may be.



So when you do asana practice the idea is to be free from an identification that would limit you and would be judgmental of yourself. *“I did that one bad”* or *“I did this one really good”*. But were you present while you were doing it? Really present having the experience 100% or did you miss it because you were involved in judging it or judging others around you. I think this is where the idea that yoga shouldn't be competitive comes from. It's really a competition who you really are is competing with who you think you are. That's the real competition. And there's no competition in the end.

Any questions?

Does it seem like a good thing to do, to investigate in your mind and your life who you really are? Something worthwhile knowing about? I think it is. You can spend a whole life wrapped up in the drama of this identity or that identity. You could die for it at a young age. And I'm not sure that it's worth it every time. People who suffer terrible disasters, their identity was wrapped up in that home, that closet full of clothes. You know, the car in the driveway, the front lawn, whatever it might be, and it all gets wiped out, but are you still here?

(student: “I'm definitely here.”)

You're definitely here. Not missing, you know?

In fact it's kind of refreshing sometimes to have a clean slate. Can be.

OK. Here we go.

