

SATSANG: THE UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT LIFE TRULY IS

Satsang is a Sanskrit word, combining two syllables - 'sat' meaning truth and 'sang' meaning to be in association with. But, in order to answer, "What is satsang" in a more relevant way, there needs to be a deeper exploration into what is meant by truth and why do we seek truth? The enquiry into truth reveals another significant question: what is freedom and how to unfold freedom in our lives? Truth and freedom are one and the same because to associate with your true Self is to live a state of freedom.

FREEDOM

All that lives wants to live in freedom. You can recognise the desire for freedom in every aspect of life; no man or woman accepts oppression; a child's spirit breaks under domination; a dog becomes aggressive if he is constantly tied up; a wild animal fights against being captured; even a plant's roots struggle to find their way through rock in order to expand and grow. Freedom is our true nature, but what is true and what is nature? In order to know what is true, we have to first look at what is nature?

FREEDOM FROM NATURE

Nature is bound to follow the law of birth, increase, decrease, and death. Nature's elements constitute your body, and therefore, the body is bound by its laws. Your thinking mind is in association with the body, the forms, and events of nature. If you rely on the changing body and the mind's ever fluctuating nature to bring about a state of freedom, you will get frustrated and ultimately feel unfulfilled. Yet having this remarkable body and thinking system, it is possible to live a state of liberation. Your true Self encompasses the physical and yet is never bound by the physical.

Life is the indestructible power that animates the body and therefore is forever free from creation or decay. Life is not bound by change, not bound by time or space, not bound by cause and effect, not bound by thoughts, ideologies, concepts, memories, feelings, experiences, imagination, or any aspect of nature – gross or subtle.

FORMLESS

Life is formless and yet its all-permeating power allows all things to be. Life is unchanged by that which exists within it, so it neither accepts nor rejects any thing or any phenomenon. Life is the very source of nature and yet cannot be destroyed by the weight of the earth, the heat of the sun, the wind that blows, the oceans that waver, the lightning that strikes, or the clouds that

rain down. Life is not insulted or appreciated by words or their meanings. Life is not made less or more by the appearance and disappearance of matter. Life remains undivided by boundaries, unchanged by time, undisturbed by the birds that fly or the planets that revolve in its vast expanse.

FORM

Customarily, when we introduce ourselves, we describe the body as I. We describe the qualities of the body, where the body lives, what work the body is engaged in, and the relations and possessions that 'belong' to the body. But at the end of the day, sitting alone, what are you thinking about? Are you engaged in the mental summary of your day, recalling conversations, events, and experiences you had? Or maybe your mind is busy projecting into the future, busy with what this body and mind will do, should do, or should not do. But who are you when you are not in relation to your body and thinking mind? Who registers the events, the changes, and the varying thoughts and feelings? Who will you be when your mind dissolves into sleep, and who will you be when you wake up in the morning?

TRUTH

Truth is unchanging; not an idea; not a position; or a stance. Truth is the subtlest power, like space, finer than can be seen by the physical eyes, felt by the hands, or grasped by the conceptual mind, yet it is. Truth is the underlying, impersonal dynamic force that animates the personal I. Truth and I are synonymous. Being whole, Truth includes the body and mind and yet remains always free.

A DEEPER REFLECTION ON WHAT IS SATSANG?

We have all observed what happens when you place an ice cube in a glass of water. We do not ask, "Where did the ice cube go?" We know that the true nature of ice is water. The ice cube is shaped due to the process of freezing. In the same way, our personal identity is crystallized from all our learning and experiencing, but just as water is never modified by ice, our original I remains unchanged.

The limitation of ego consciousness compels one to engage in an unending struggle to promote or defend one's self image. Satsang is when a group of people, who wish to discover their true nature, gather together to expand their individual sense of self beyond the limitation of only associating with the body and mind. Those who are drawn to satsang recognise the struggle of body identification and the grip of the ego identity. Deep within, at the core

of our Being, we know a pure state of I, because every night we surrender to this all-permeating state of existence.

The dialogue in satsang is rooted in *Adwait Vedant*, non-dual wisdom. It is a conducive environment to melt the limited mental view of the personal I (the ego), and to realise that you are already whole, complete, and thereby free. You, in truth, are never bound by the acting body or by the thinking or feeling mind. This truth unfolds to be realised in meditation and from the dialogue exchanged during satsang.

THE PURPOSE OF SATSANG

The purpose of satsang is to dispel the mind's conditioned view that has limited the Self to associate only with the small ice cube, the individual and therefore vulnerable I. When the frozen identity melts, it realises it has always been water; it has always been the ever present Self.

What we are seeking is already there; it is the seeker, not that which is sought. The benefit of satsang is the emergence of freedom from the mind that is constantly striving and entrapped in a never ending struggle to attain. When the personal I is melted into your true Self, the inbuilt nature of confusion, worry, and doubt is quelled, and in its place emerges the lightness of Being - free.

So, close your eyes, and take some time away from the mind's involvement with the personal I. Let the grip of the body, mind, and ego identification release, and allow your vast, ever powerful, ever present store house of energy, strength, courage, joy, love, and wellbeing overflow and drench you in the knowledge and truth of who you are.