Glimpses of the Divine III

Sri Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

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With kind regards, ॐ and prem

Swami Niranjan

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Sri Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna

2014, 2015, 2016

Yajna and satsangs held at Sannyasa Peeth, Munger, Bihar, India, from 7th to 12th September 2014, 2015, 2016

Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

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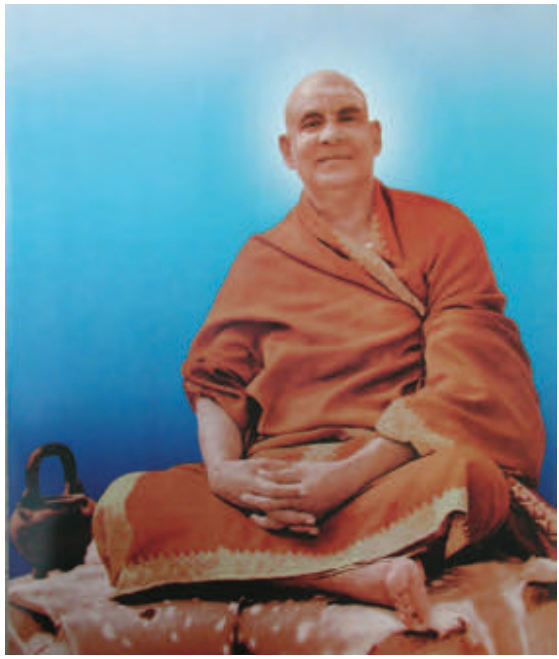
Published by Yoga Publications Trust
First edition 2017

ISBN: 978-93-84753-62-7

Publisher and distributor: Yoga Publications Trust, Ganga Darshan, Munger, Bihar, India.

Website: www.biharyoga.net

Printed at Aegean Offset Printers, Greater Noida



Dedication

In humility we offer this dedication to
Swami Sivananda Saraswati, who initiated
Swami Satyananda Saraswati into the secrets of yoga.

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Sri Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna 2014

Sannyasa Peeth, Munger

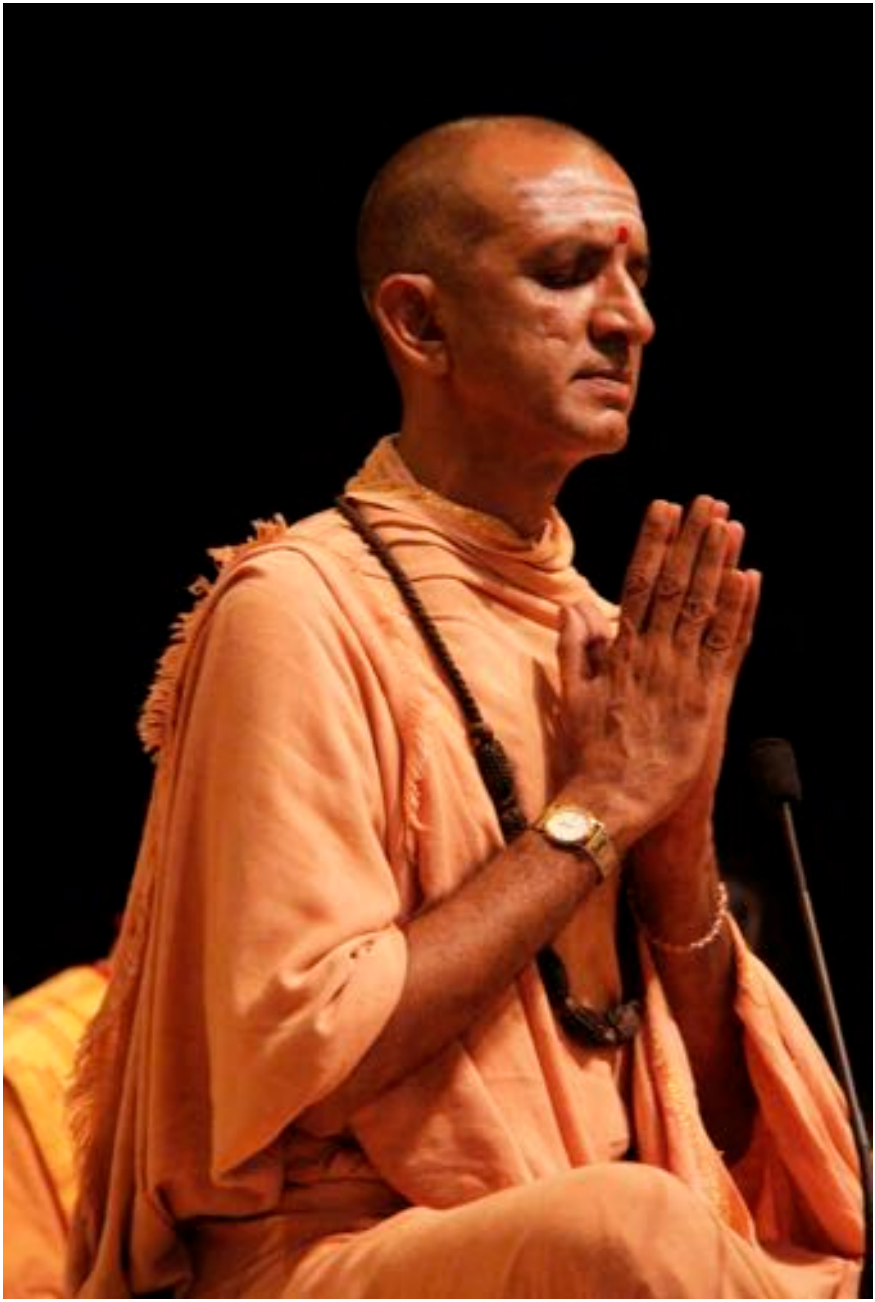
Invoking the Preserver

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati
7 September 2014



Narayana is a form of shakti. Narayana is power. Just as the material elements are known by different names yet they are all fundamentally the same, similarly, different forms of energy – electrical energy, electromagnetic energy, gamma rays, X-rays – are all representations of one energy which is causing the motions in nature.

Just as worldly energy is identified by different names, cosmic energy is also known by different names. In the Indian tradition, the cosmic energy is seen as having three main



functions: to create, to maintain and to transform. Therefore, the three main identities of the cosmic energy are creator, preserver and destroyer.

This cosmic energy is recognized by three names. The common name is God, or Ishwara. God means the faculty or power of generation, organization and destruction: G-O-D. Ishwara means the same: the unchangeable, eternal principle. Different manifestations of this principle are seen and perceived at different times and for different needs. The sustaining power is known as Narayana, the creating power is known as Brahma, and the destroying power is known as Shiva. These are three attributes of the same power.



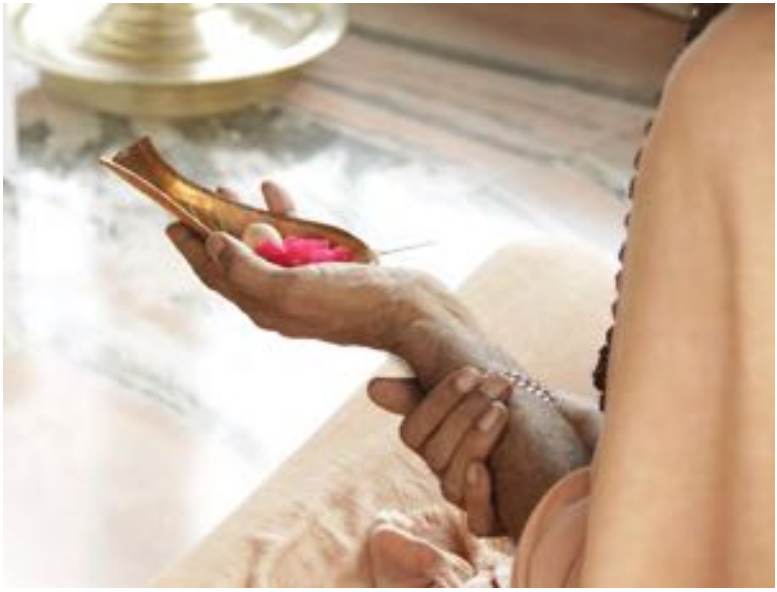
The word 'Narayana' indicates the sustaining, preserving aspect of this cosmic power. In order to sustain, there has to be nurturing. In order to nurture, there has to be consumption, and in order for consumption to happen the right food must be there. All this is taken care of by Narayana. Therefore, he is known as the preserver of life.

Brahma was the cause of your birth and Shiva will be the cause of your departure, but Narayana is the cause of your entire life from birth to death. It is that power which is being invoked here, and this process will begin tomorrow.



Swami Sivananda: Avatara of Shiva

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati
8 September 2014, Morning



Today is Swami Sivananda's birthday. On this occasion we are releasing a CD called *Siva's Spirit*, in which the voices of five generations of disciples can be heard, starting from Swami Sivananda himself, to Swami Satyananda; to us, the third generation; then the fourth generation; and also the fifth generation, the young ones under five. Five generations of disciples have sung the songs of Swami Sivananda on this CD, as the songs that he sung more than sixty years ago continue to inspire us even today.



Swami Sivananda is our paramguru, our satguru, our Gomukh, from where the Ganga originates. Swami Satyananda is our Gangotri, where we all go. So Swami Sivananda is the Gomukh, the source, and Swami Satyananda is the Gangotri, as he has blended the sciences of spirituality and yoga with humanistic qualities to attain excellence in life. They both are our inspirations. We are the followers of the tradition of Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda. It is their teaching that we try to live in this place. It is their inspiration that flows through our veins and arteries. Today we honour this great personality, Sri Swami Sivananda, who in reality was an avatara of Shiva.

In the *Srimad Bhagavat*, there is a reference which says that the next incarnation of Shiva will take place in South India, beside the river Tamraparni, where Swami Sivananda was in fact born. The description in the prophecy of Srimad Bhagavat describes the river, the area, the location where Shiva's incarnation would take place, which correspond completely with the facts of Swami Sivananda's birth.

Swami Sivananda's birth was prophesied not only in the *Srimad Bhagavat*. An ancestor of Swami Sivananda, Appaya Dikshitar, was one of the greatest saints of India and a great devotee of Lord Shiva. One night, he had a dream in which

he saw Lord Shiva manifest in front of him and proclaim, "I will take birth after seven generations in your family." Swami Sivananda was the seventh generation after Appaya Dikshitar.

Clearly, Swami Sivananda was not an ordinary person. Someone whose birth is prophesied in *Srimad Bhagavat* and its indication given to Sage Dikshitar seven generations ago, cannot be an ordinary person. If you look at the life of Swami Sivananda, it is full of the Shiva tattwa. He was a God-intoxicated person; he was someone who lived sat, chit and ananda throughout his life. He was the perfect karma yogi, perfect bhakta, and perfect jnani. Swami Sivananda epitomized every human goodness. Just as Buddha epitomizes peace, just as Christ represents love and compassion, Swami Sivananda represents the goodness of human nature. If you want to know a person who is good through and through, just read the stories of Swami Sivananda, and you will discover what true goodness is. That was his character.

Today is his birthday. He was born in 1886, one hundred and twenty-nine years ago. However, it is not his physical presence that inspires us. It is his presence within the heart, mind and spirit of each one of us that continues to inspire. Today we honour this great personality with our invocations and with the beginning of the Sri Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna.



The Divine in You

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati
8 September 2014, Afternoon

The Blue Brigade

The children in the blue uniform are known as the children of Blue Brigade. They are all under six and have been coming to the ashram since the age of three or four. They come to the children's yoga fellowship and sometimes other children come with them.

These children of the Blue Brigade may be very little, but they enjoy participating in all the activities of the ashram, especially music, kirtan and, of course, dance. They imbibe something, learn something through all this, and they also teach us something, just as they are going to teach us now.





Learning spiritual nursery rhymes

What they have presented is called the dance of Swami Sivananda. The children of the Blue Brigade are the fifth generation of the disciples of Swami Sivananda and they prepared this dance for him. It is a beautiful expression where the entire body and mind are dedicated and devoted to the service and memory of the Divine.

It is also a beautiful song: 'Two little eyes to look to God' – our eyes should always look to God; 'Two little ears to hear his words' – whatever He says should be heard by our two ears; 'Two little feet to walk his way' – we have two little feet to walk the path that God has shown; 'Two little hands to do his will' – we have been given two hands, and with these two hands we shall do God's will. He has given two of everything else, but 'One little heart' by which we can remember Him at all times.

Whatever two he has given is for you to serve Him, and whatever one you have, is for you to hold dear, cherish and protect. This is the message of this song by the children.

The song gives beutiful inspiration, especially to children. They learn the concept of Ishwara pranidhana when they sing it, and it is better than nursery rhymes. The songs of Swami Sivananda are spiritual nursery rhymes which people learn in their childhood and which remain with them till the



end of their days. Not only children but you should also learn and practise these spiritual nursery rhymes.

Fire hidden in the wood

The lighting of the fire at the yajna is the way fire was lit in ancient times. It was not done by using a lighter or a match, but by rubbing two sticks together. This proves only one point: the element of fire remains hidden in wood. Whether it is dry or wet, it is always there. In the same manner, the divinity is always there in you, you only have to make the effort to bring it out.



The Teachings of Swami Sivananda

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati
8 September 2014, Evening



We are here to celebrate the birthday of our paramguru, Swami Sivananda. What is the best way to celebrate it? To remember his teachings and to make an effort to at least understand his teachings, if not imbibe them.

Swami Sivananda was a very special person. The whole world may not know about him, but those who know him, especially in India, recognize him as an avatara. He was born in his physical body in 1886 and left it in 1963. In his lifetime, without him ever stepping out of Rishikesh or his ashram, his teachings to live the spiritual life reached all continents of



the world. This was in circumstances that existed seventy and eighty years ago, when travel and communication were not easy. Today you can travel freely, but there was a time when the borders were closed. In that situation, the teachings of Swami Sivananda travelled far and wide.

In many countries at that time, there were restrictions on spiritual books in the marketplace. Nevertheless, the books of Swami Sivananda would be circulated underground, and people would read and imbibe those teachings. His teachings were sought after as they were practical and simple yet deep, leading one to realize the essence of life and of yoga.

Create positive awareness

The essence of life and the essence of yoga are to be realized. God is a distant reality. You have to realize what you have now, this life, and how it can be nurtured into a beautiful garden. This

was the inspiration that Swami Sivananda gave to everybody. He said, "Do not negate anything in life, not even your limitations and weaknesses, but try to convert everything into a creative strength, into a positive awareness." The process that he mentioned for this was the practical aspect of Vedanta and yoga that could be done as sadhana. He brought in the components of managing the moods of mind, of retaining a positive state of mind, and of becoming selfless as a way to live life.

When you become selfless, you epitomize love, for love is selfless. When you seek love, you are not seeking selflessness in love; you are seeking self-gratification in love. Selfless love is the luminosity that reaches out to everybody and inspires, encourages and strengthens them, gives them a purpose and a vision to achieve in life, and makes them into a model human being. Swami Sivananda was a person who had that luminosity.

I feel privileged to have taken birth at a time when the opportunity exists to live with and know such great personalities. Everyone who has been associated with the life and teachings of our paramguru Swami Sivananda, and the life and teachings of our guru Swami Satyananda, definitely feel privileged and blessed to have known them. After all, in the history of humanity, how many generations get to live in the presence of spiritual masters?





The generations who knew Christ were maybe two or three; beyond them everything was hearsay. The generations who know Swami Sivananda are maybe two or three. The generations who know Swami Satyananda are maybe two or three: those who have seen him physically, who have interacted with him, lived and associated with him. As time passes, that physical proximity, that energy remains as inspiration and memory. It is this inspiration and memory that will continue to motivate future generations. If we can hold true to our own memories of beauty which our gurus have presented, and if they become our inspirations in life, then definitely we can attain spiritual awareness.

Swami Sivananda was an incarnation of Shiva. What was the character of this Shiva tattwa which had taken birth in the form of Swami Sivananda? It was the trait of absolute, pure goodness. Different beings are realized by the traits that they exhibit in life. Enlightened beings exhibit a particular trait which is part of expressing their teaching. Buddha epitomizes peace, Christ epitomizes love and compassion. In the same manner, Swami Sivananda epitomizes all the conceived and unconceived ideas of goodness. That which you have conceived in your mind and held deep in your heart as the ideal, he was that. Those qualities which you have never thought of but when presented to you become powerful forces, Swami Sivananda was those too. He epitomized absolute, pure goodness.

Sivananda yoga

Swami Sivananda's teachings reflect that goodness. He was the originator and propagator of the exoteric yoga. There are three types of yoga. One is the traditional, classical yoga. It is the sequence, the path, the process, the system of yoga. You do hatha yoga, raja yoga, kriya yoga; this is the sequence. That is the traditional, classical yoga, which everybody wants to learn and practise.

Everybody wants to learn asana and pranayama. Then there are people who want to learn shatkarma, mudra,

bandha. There are many people who want to learn kriya and kundalini and other higher yogas, and there is a big majority of people who want to experiment with everything. All these needs are fulfilled in the classical yoga, which allows you to experience yourself, your body, your prana, your mind, your consciousness, your spirit, all the five koshas together: annamaya, pranamaya, manomaya, vijnanamaya, and anandamaya. The system, the practice, the process which leads to the awakening of these five different koshas is the traditional, classical yoga practice.

Then there is the esoteric yoga, indicating different states of realization that you may experience in your journey of spiritual evolution: the deepening of concentration, the awakening of inner faculties and the powers of intelligence and emotions. Esoteric yoga describes the physics of meditation. Meditation is not a practice. There is physics to meditation. It is not simply closing the eyes and forgetting the world; meditation can take you beyond time and space into a different dimension. That is the esoteric yoga, the exploration of the higher nature.

Then there is the exoteric yoga, yoga that you live in your life. Swami Sivananda was the propagator of that yoga. I am not going to describe his teachings, for there are many. He was a prolific writer at a time and age when there were no computers, only paper and ink pens. In those days he wrote two hundred books. The knowledge used to simply emanate from him. I asked Sri Swamiji once, "Did Swami Sivananda ever have the time to read anything?" Sri Swamiji said, "In all my time that I spent in Rishikesh, I never saw Swami Sivananda read anything, but I always saw him write." What he has written includes the essence of every idea, every thought, every philosophy, every religion, every belief system, every literature, every scripture, from Einstein to Sage Vyasa, from science to spirituality. He has covered everything.

The eightfold path of expression

Swami Sivananda always used to say that his principles were eightfold, and he gave us an eightfold path of yoga. The



eightfold path of yoga of Swami Sivananda is the expressive yoga, not the experiential yoga. Experiential yoga is the eightfold path of Patanjali. The expressive yoga is the eightfold path of Swami Sivananda. This is the path of 'Serve, Love, Give, Purify, Be Good, Do Good, Meditate, Realize'. This yoga of Swami Sivananda begins after Patanjali's yoga has been covered.

What is the meaning of serve? Serve the sick, feed the hungry? The essence of service is selflessness; not merely the outer act but what you live and believe. When you live and believe that selfless attitude which allows you to interact with people freely, without inhibition, conditioning, expectation or desire, only then can it be called real service. Otherwise, it is manipulative service; there is always an expectation, if only a pat on the back. Thus it is the selflessness which has to emerge.

When selflessness emerges, love becomes effulgent. When love becomes effulgent, you are willing to sacrifice, as love is sacrifice. Love is not getting or acquiring. Love is giving. A mother can go hungry but she will feed the child the last morsel. That is the sacrifice of love. That is selfless giving.

Giving and sacrificing continuously leads to purification of the soul and the gross mind. When the gross mind is purified, one becomes endowed with good qualities. It is these good qualities that begin to express themselves, and they make you do good. That is how you fulfil your destiny as a human being.

Then, you meditate and you realize a different aspect, a different dimension of yourself, beyond the samadhi of Patanjali: the experience of luminosity. Swami Sivananda proved that it can be done.



Knowledge and Yajna

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati
9 September 2014, Morning



Welcome to the morning session of the second day of Sri Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna. Today, there will be initiation into mantra, jignasu, and karma sannyasa while the havan is conducted by the pandits. Then, a special offering will be made to Sri Ganesha in the afternoon during sahasrarchana.



Jnana and bhakti

In this Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna, the subject of experience and of discussion is jnana and bhakti. Jnana means knowledge and bhakti means devotion. The subject of this Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna is to realize the oneness of jnana and bhakti, although they are two different expressions; one is the expression of human mind, and the other is the expression of human heart. Although physically they seem to be different, in essence, they are one and the same.

You associate knowledge with intelligence, with the intellect, but the knowledge associated with the intellect is the material knowledge. What about the other types of knowledge that exist? The scriptures record a dialogue between Lord Shiva and Narada. Narada is the celestial sage and Shiva is the master of yoga. In history, there have been only two masters of yoga: Shiva, who is known as Yogishwar, the lord of the yogis, and Sri Krishna, who is known as Yogeshwar, master of yoga. These two great personalities, Shiva and Krishna, complement each other, and they are masters of both yoga and yogis. They have propagated, experienced and realized jnana and bhakti. We

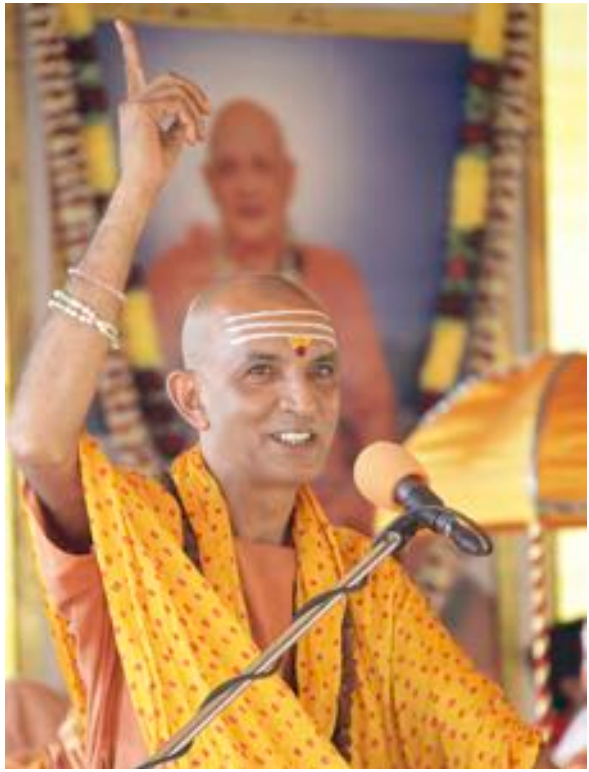
are all novices. We have not realized, we have not come to the conclusion in our life. Instead of conclusions, there are confusions in our life. As long as there are confusions, one cannot achieve any conclusion.

Five types of knowledge

The idea that jnana is bhakti and bhakti is jnana comes from understanding the deeper nature of human life, not through intellectual understanding or intellectual knowledge. The dialogue between Lord Shiva and the celestial sage Narada is a beautiful one, in which Shiva speaks of five different types of jnana. He explains to Narada that the first form of jnana is *adhyatmic jnana*, spiritual knowledge, knowledge of the Supreme Being and of the nature of reality. That is the first description of jnana leading to bhakti that Lord Shiva gives to Sage Narada.

The second aspect of jnana is *mukti jnana*: knowing the methods, the paths, the ways to attain liberation and free oneself from the bondages of life. The third jnana is *yoga jnana*: the understanding and the knowledge by which you can awaken the dormant, hidden potential within you. With the





awakening of this potential, you are connected to the cosmos and the divine. That is yoga jnana, the knowledge of yoga. The fourth type of jnana is *samsara vishayaka jnana*, knowledge that relates to the external world, to your existence in life. The fifth jnana is known as *bhakti jnana*, the way to experience the highest reality. These are the five types of knowledge that Lord Shiva explains to Sage Narada.

Shiva also tells Narada that jnana is complementary to bhakti, since the purpose of knowing is to identify oneself with the divine, with the transcendental nature. Once this knowledge of the transcendental nature dawns, then knowledge becomes bhakti, which is identification with that supreme nature, that transcendental nature. Knowing about it is knowledge, and identification with it and living in it is bhakti.

Knowledge and wisdom

Our guru Swami Satyananda used to say that what one thinks and what one does are two different things. There is no compatibility between one's intentions and actions. Sometimes the intentions are contrary to actions, sometimes the actions are contrary to intentions; they never come together in harmony. Sri Swamiji used to say that this is the nature of the split personality. When thoughts are different from actions, when understanding is different from behaviour, that is a split personality, since you are not able to digest your knowledge. When you are not able to digest your knowledge, when you are not able to live your knowledge, then there is a split between intention and action. This is a common flaw in everyone. The purpose of the dialogue between Shiva and Narada is to reduce the gap between these two states of mind: the wisdom aspect and the devotion aspect.

Knowing, when applied, is called wisdom. Knowing, when not applied but retained as information, is not wisdom; it is simply knowledge. There is a difference between knowledge and wisdom. You know what is right and what is wrong, but do you act according to your convictions of right and wrong? Knowing what is right and what is wrong is knowledge. Not acting according to your convictions, understanding and





knowledge is absence of wisdom. When you live according to the principles that you believe in, then that knowledge becomes wisdom.

The purpose of knowledge is to integrate the human nature and personality, not to create a split between the human nature and personality. When integration takes place, and when all the jigsaw puzzles of the world and mind come together, then that clear picture is the vidya that Shiva is asking Narada to attain. That is the topic of the Narada Pancharatra, one of the literatures of tantra.

Pancharatra tantra

People believe that the tantras are mystical or magical techniques, practices, mantras and yantras. That is an incorrect perception. There are many different streams of thought and philosophies in the tantras. There are the teachings of Shiva, which make the Shaiva tantras. That is one major aspect. Another aspect is the Shakta tantras, the teachings of Shakti. Another stream of tantra is Saurya tantra, the teachings of the Sun. Then there is Ganapati tantra, the teachings of Ganesha, and there is Vaishnava tantra, or the Pancharatra tantra, the teachings of Hari bhakti, Narayana bhakti. These are the five major tantra systems. People generally speak of Shiva tantra and the Shakti tantra, and only few people know about the other aspects of tantra. During this Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna we shall try to understand the salient points of the Pancharatra tantra.

The word *pancha-ratra* means five kinds of knowledge. *Pancha* means five, *ratra* means knowledge. Remember that any kind of knowledge will remove ignorance. Material knowledge becomes the medium for your happiness and prosperity in material life. Spiritual knowledge becomes the path of your spiritual prosperity. Yoga knowledge becomes the path of your mental prosperity. Any kind of knowledge always brings prosperity in life. It is ignorance, the absence of knowledge, that makes one suffer.



There needs to be right understanding of what you know. Knowledge, if it is directed for self-gratification, becomes tamasic. The same knowledge, when used for upliftment, becomes sattwic.

Knowledge is a tool, just like a knife is a tool. What is the nature of a knife? Is it tamasic? Is it sattwic? Is it rajasic? No. A knife is a knife. The person who wields the knife defines the purpose of the knife. A knife by itself is neither sattwic nor rajasic nor tamasic, but if the wielder of the knife uses it to kill somebody, a tamasic act is done. If the wielder of the knife chops vegetables to nourish the body, a rajasic act is performed. If the wielder of the knife cuts an organ of the body to save someone, that is a sattwic application. The knife is not sattwic, rajasic or tamasic; it is the application that defines what is sattwic, what is rajasic, and what is tamasic. In the same manner, knowledge is neither sattwic, nor rajasic, nor tamasic.

It is the wielder, the knower of the knowledge, who uses it in a manner that can be defined as negative, positive, or balanced.

In the centre it is not God, scriptures, knowledge, bhakti, yoga, nothing. The centre is you, the human being. If you can live properly and correctly, then all the wealth of the world can be yours. If you cannot live properly, with the correct attitude, the correct intention, the correct action, the correct thought, then be ready to face suffering until the end of your days. The effort that has to be made is to correct oneself, to correct what is happening right now. If your nature is to do something, then you should be aware that what you are doing should be correct and not improper. Correctness has to come into your actions, into your thought, into your behaviour, into your attitude, into your knowledge. Once correctness comes in, knowledge becomes the tool to transcend the limitations of life and experience the ultimate bliss.

Thus Shiva begins his description of knowledge as adhyatmic jnana. The primary knowledge is spiritual. Although, in people's lives, the primary knowledge is material: history, geography, science, arts, commerce. That knowledge has been given the fourth position by Shiva. The first position is ascribed to spiritual knowledge.





Components of yajna

Soon, the acharyas will begin their aradhana. During the aradhana, the initiations into mantra, jignasu sannyasa and karma sannyasa will be given. Once the diksha is over, the parikrama will begin and you will also receive your prasad. So be attentive to staying, giving, and receiving: these three things. While you are here, you are staying, you are receiving, and you are also giving. These are the three actions you have to perform, and these are the three actions of a yajna.

There are different components of a yajna. Mantra is one component that is used for invocation; it is used to create an environment, a power and a field of energy. *Yantra*, the geometrical figures by which the higher powers are invoked, is another component. On the tables over the stage, yantras have been made using differently-coloured grains of rice. In each yantra, a mantra and its deity has been invoked. These yantras have become sentient yantras now. They have come alive with the invocation of the devata and the mantra.

The third aspect of a yajna is the *havan*, the fire oblation. Fire, in the vedic tradition of yajna, is the vehicle by which

one's intentions reach God. Fire becomes the medium to send an email message from this point to God's mind. Whatever is offered – the mantras, the chanting, the intention, the sankalpa – goes up with the flames to God.

Fire is also an important aspect of human evolution. The first mantra of the *Rig Veda* does not speak of God, atma or paramatma. The first mantra of the *Rig Veda* speaks of *agni*, fire, as the *purohit*, agni as the medium to connect you with the divine.

Fire represents a breakthrough, a quantum leap of human consciousness. When primitive man discovered fire, the human mind took a big jump. From an unprotected environment, suddenly there was protection, there was food, there was light, there was warmth. After millions of years, it is still fire that provides the human race with warmth, light and energy.

There have been certain events in human history that have made us take a quantum leap. The discovery of fire was one. After that, the human mind changed. The discovery of



the wheel was another. After that, the human mind changed. The computer was another discovery that changed the human mind. Electricity was another discovery that changed the human mind. There have been different events in history that have caused quantum leaps from one stage into another. The discovery of fire was the first, and fire is an important aspect of yajna.

The fourth aspect of yajna is *daan*, the giving. Sri Swamiji says, "The word yajna is composed of three different letters: 'ya', 'ja' and 'na'. *Ya* means produce, *ja* means distribute, and *na* means consume." So, ya-ja-na, *yajna*, means production, distribution, and consumption. We are producing good energy, we are distributing good energy, and we are consuming good energy.

The aspect of giving in yajna is not charity. It is the prasad of the yajna. What charity can we give you? We cannot give anything, we are human beings like you. But we can definitely give you the prasad of the yajna to bring wellness in your life. That is the art of giving.

In this manner, there is production, generation, consumption and distribution in a yajna. You are giving and receiving a gift that will open your inner eyes to make you aware of another level of living and existence, where you can be more complete, whole, harmonious, and a little bit happier than you are today.



Accessing the Spiritual Dimension

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati
9 September 2014, Afternoon



Karate: an art of meditation

Today the children of Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal will make a karate presentation. In Munger we have a rule that girls will practise karate and boys will practise mantras. Karate will bring confidence, stamina and strength to the girls, and mantra will make the boys a bit quieter, a bit more harmonious and peaceful.

We started off with this idea, but after a couple of years the girls of Munger became a bit heavy on the boys of Munger. The boys came to me and said, "Swamiji, you know

the Munger boys are famous in Bihar for their strength of character, and here we are being beaten up by our own sisters. It is actually not good for our reputation. Can you also include us in karate?" I said, "All right, under one condition: do not treat this as martial art. Rather, it is an art of gaining sanyam over the body, mind and prana. It is an art of meditation, as this particular technique of karate was developed by Lord Buddha and his followers to protect themselves."

Karate is an ancient Indian tradition. *Kara* means hand, and *hatahat*, to injure. 'Kar' and 'hatahat' together became the word *karate*: 'to injure somebody without weapons'. This



was the technique adopted by Buddha to defend himself in those days of strife and conflict in society. As mentioned, any *vidya*, knowledge, is neither good nor bad. It is the application of that knowledge which makes it either good or bad. Our purpose here is not to teach the children the martial part of the art, but to give them restraint, control, *sanyam*, over the body, the senses, the mind, the perceptions, the responses and reactions, and to become prompt, precise, sharp and alert. It is a dynamic meditation that is practised here by the children of Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal and the youth of Yuva Yoga Mitra Mandal through karate.





Seeking Ganesha's help

Today, a special worship is being offered to Sri Ganesha. This is *sahasrarchana*, a thousand offerings, with the chanting of the thousand names of Ganesha. Along with this, the breaking of a thousand and eight coconuts will also take place. People who have taken initiation today are participating in this aradhana. It is appropriate for the new initiates to begin their spiritual yatra, their spiritual journey, with blessings of Ganesha. Remember, this is an aradhana, a worship, not entertainment, therefore the disciplines must be followed.

For performing the sahasrarchana, you have been given a plate. On the plate is a deepak, rice and a yantra. Place





the yantra in the middle of the plate. Take some puffed rice in your hand and with every mantra, when *Namah* or *Swaha* is chanted, offer five or six grains of puffed rice on the yantra. While you are doing this, one person will be performing sahasrarchana with *durva*, the special grass, and one person will be offering coconuts. I have appointed Swami Gorakhnath to break the coconuts as he has strong arms. He has to break one thousand and eight coconuts, bare-handed.

The coconut represents the head or the ego. The head is hard on the outside and soft on the inside, just like the coconut. The ego is also hard on the outside and soft on the



inside. The human head, the individual ego and coconut, are all part of the same identity. In front of the remover of obstacles, Sri Ganesha, we shall be breaking the coconuts and taking a sankalpa.

Adhyatmic jnana

In the morning we were talking about the subject of knowledge, and the dialogue between Sage Narada and Lord Shiva. In this dialogue, Lord Shiva is explaining to Sage Narada, the celestial sage, different types of knowledge that lead to expansion and development of human consciousness, to realization of the transcendental nature. The first in this sequence is spiritual knowledge or *adhyatmic jnana*.

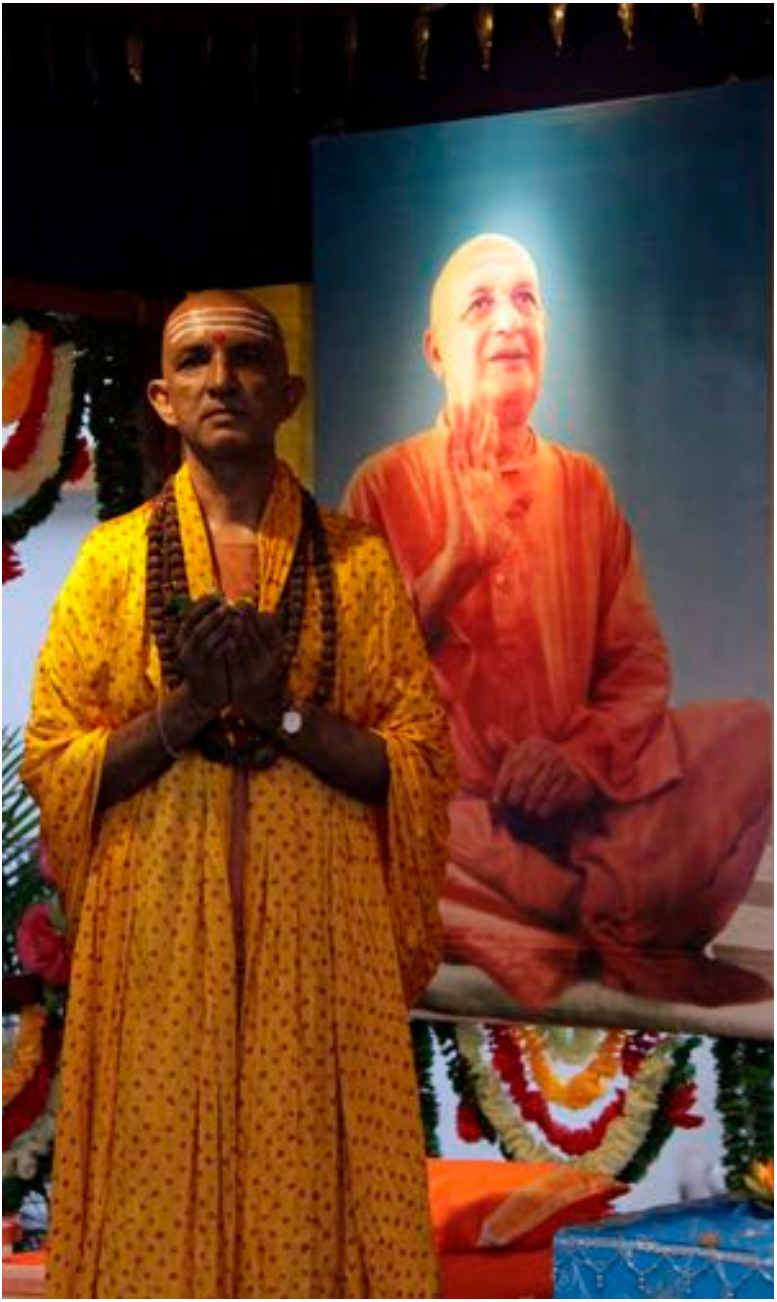




Lord Shiva describes five types of knowledge. Knowledge is not of one kind; there are five kinds of knowledge. The first knowledge is adhyatmic jnana, which means spiritual knowledge. What is spiritual knowledge? Spiritual knowledge is the knowledge of the Supreme Self, the individual self, and the world in which we live the experience of pleasure and pain, degeneration and elevation, involution and evolution. These are the three realities: the Supreme Self, the individual self, and the world in which we live.

The theory of spiritual knowledge begins with an attempt to understand the Supreme. What is the Supreme? The Supreme Self is what people call God. The yogic, vedic and tantric traditions have been clear in stating that God is formless, without attributes, inaccessible by thought, word or deed. It is the permanent reality, the permanent presence of luminosity and sentience.

In that permanent presence of luminosity and sentience, there is fusion and merger of everything in One. Only One exists, and there is nothing beyond that One existence. That is the state of the Supreme, the transcendental Self.



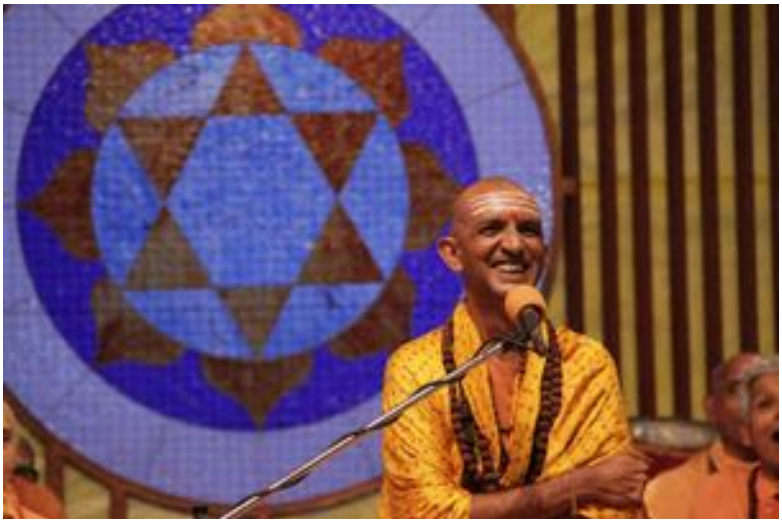
This Supreme Self has been given many names, identities, forms; however, all these names, identities and forms indicate an attribute of that indivisible, indescribable, indefinable Supreme Self.

The Supreme Self is both the container and the contained that exist in the cosmic dimension. In this material dimension that Supreme is identified by name, form and quality. When we use the word Rama, a figure is conceived, a quality is conceived, an attribute is conceived. When we say Krishna, a figure is conceived, a quality is conceived, an attribute is conceived. When we think the name of Kali, a figure, a form, a quality and an attribute is conceived. *Nama, rupa aur guna.* All



these different names do not reflect the Supreme; rather, they are the personification of one highlighted, effulgent quality or attribute. The attribute is that of the Supreme, but as visible, manifest, identified. Once it becomes identifiable by the mind and the senses, it has a name and form. When it is not identified by the senses and the mind, then it is attributeless: 'I am that I am', the singular Self, the higher Self.

We are an emanation of that supreme luminosity. We are existing because of that supreme luminosity within us. The awareness of life is awareness of spirit. We are alive because we have spirit in us. Nobody says, "We are alive because of



the senses." Nobody says, "We are alive because of the mind." Everybody says, "We are alive because we have *atma*, soul, spirit." That soul, that spirit is the same as the Supreme. There is no difference.

You can light a bonfire, and from that you can light a single match. Although the match and the bonfire have separate existences, the fire burning in both is the same in essence, form, strength, quality. One will fizzle out faster and the other will burn for hours. Something that burns for all times – past, present and future – is the eternal. Something that gets extinguished after forty, fifty, sixty, seventy or eighty years is impermanent.

The manifest forms of God allow the impermanent and fluctuating mind to identify with a form, an idea, an object. This manifest awareness is only a temporary awareness, as it cultivates the recognition of that same presence in you. When you transcend your senses and mind, you realize the eternal nature of the same element. You may be thinking of Rama, Krishna, Jesus, Mohammed, the Sun, the Moon, or mantra in your meditation. They are only stepping stones to lead you to an experience of your own universality. Then

these forms and names have no meaning, and you become the totality of experience. That is the formless self, the Supreme Self.

We are the souls which are contained. If you take a glass of water from a tank of water, the water in the glass is limited, whereas in the tank it is an unlimited supply. The water is limited according to the size of the container. This mortal frame that we have is a tiny container. We are microbes in the scheme of the entire creation. Our container is miniscule. How can the information of all the created galaxies, universes and the invisible come inside it in a split second of meditation? Is it possible to ever become realized?

Sri Swamiji used to say, "No, it is not possible to attain self-realization in this lifetime." People would respond, "Why are you saying that? Everybody says the purpose of life is to attain enlightenment. You are the only sannyasi and guru who says 'enlightenment is not possible'." He would say, "Your mind is non-transcendental and God is transcendental. How can you understand a transcendental reality with a non-transcendental mind? How can you understand a transcendental reality with a limited mind?" Sri Swamiji clearly stated that the purpose of the effort in spiritual life





is to develop the capacity to understand and imbibe. Only after one has understood and imbibed can one experience and realize.

First you have to deal with the non-transcendental, limited self. This non-transcendental, limited self in this body, in this identity, is attracted to the sensorial world, as the body is sensorial, the world is sensorial, and you are surrounded by sense objects. There is nothing in this world which can be said to be separate from the sensory awareness. Even your aspiration for spiritual enlightenment is a sensorial and mental desire, not a true, inner, spiritual desire, not yet. It will happen one day. The process has started.

This *jagat*, this world, is the world of maya. Everything that is created is maya. *Maya* means transient, temporary. Everything here changes. The world changes from generation to generation. Your life changes on a daily basis. The cosmos, the galaxies change on a daily basis. We are not in the same spot in the universe that we were one hour ago. We are all moving continuously. There is nothing permanent. Everything is changing and altering. Even your mind, your senses, your intentions, thoughts, ideas; everything

is changing. So where is permanence in this life? Where is permanence in this world? The attempt to realize the truth, the consciousness, and to experience bliss will lead one to the experience of the higher Self. Therefore, the spiritual traditions say, "Devote your time to the discovery of *satyam*, *shivam*, *sundaram*, truth, auspiciousness, beauty. Devote your time to the discovery of *sat*, *chit* and *ananda*, truth, consciousness, bliss." This is the first jnana: the spiritual knowledge of God, the Supreme Self; *jiva*, the individual self; and *jagat*, the material world.

Prasad of sahasrarchana

We now conclude this beautiful sahasrarchana, and I am happy that all of you were able to perform it in the most dignified and beautiful manner, so thank you and congratulations. Now you have also become part of the sankalpa of this Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna, and the sankalpa of the yajna is the sankalpa of our guru, Sri Swamiji, for peace, plenty and prosperity of everyone: all inclusive, none is excluded.



In the next sequence, you will be called in a queue. From your plate of offerings, take the yantra and wear it. Put any remaining offering into the plate, and then one by one come and offer your prasad at the Lakshmi-Narayana Peeth. Do the perambulation and return to your place. After arati, during your departure at the gate, you will receive the prasad of the sahasrarchana: the coconuts that have been broken. This will be the prasad of the sahasrarchana which everybody has done with such focus, intention, faith, conviction and love. When you receive it, know that you are receiving the offering of Narayana and Lakshmi.

Concluding the day

We conclude the program today of this peaceful, vibrant and uplifting anusthana. Yesterday, the event was dedicated to guru, as it was the birthday of Sri Swami Sivananda, our paramguru. Today has been dedicated to beloved Lord Ganesha, who is dear to everyone. Tomorrow, the day will be dedicated to Mother Lakshmi, and I will tell you about her tomorrow.



Mukti Jnana

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati
10 September 2014, Morning



The first type of knowledge imparted by Lord Shiva to the celestial sage Narada was *adhyatmic jnana*, spiritual knowledge. This spiritual knowledge is the knowledge of the transcendental Self, the individual self, and the material world in which we exist as independent, individual beings, experiencing life in all its glory. The understanding of the

transcendental, the individual and the material dimensions; knowing the reality of the truth behind the appearance; cultivating the understanding of the transcendental as well as the gross is the subject matter of spiritual knowledge, adhyatmic jnana.

The second type of knowledge Lord Shiva describes is mukti jnana, knowledge which bestows liberation. What is the knowledge that bestows liberation? To whom does it bestow liberation? What is liberation? These are the three main topics of this particular branch of knowledge.

What is mukti?

Mukti means to free oneself, to allow yourself to be free. Mukti is the state of the free being. Who is the free being? The one who is bound. Who is bound? The one who is born.





Your atma is confined to this body. It is bound in the prison of this body. Just as a prisoner goes to the prison and is kept in a cell, in the same manner, the atma is contained in this body, in the cell of the material, gross elements. That atma must be freed. The process of freeing the spirit from the clutches of the material, gross dimension is the subject of mukti jnana.

What binds the atma? You say and you know that the soul is contained in this body. The body is the container, the binding factor, composed of the five elements, the senses, the five karmendriyas and the five jnanendriyas, the *manah chatushtah* or the mind: the lower mind and the higher mind. A car has many different instruments and parts that have to work together for it to move properly. This body with its many parts is the vehicle for the atma to gain experience. That is how the atma is bound in this dimension.

The state of bondage

In its bound state, the soul has to interact with the world through the mind and the senses. There is an association between oneself and the objects in the world, the sense

objects. A connection takes place between the senses and sense objects. This association becomes the cause of attraction and, eventually, attachment. Attachment is the result of greed, desire and need. I don't have to tell you how many different types of attachments there are. Every type of attachment that you have belongs to the dimension in which you live. It is in this dimension that you have to elevate yourself.

To do that, you have to know the obstacles on the path. The obstacles on the path to liberation are the six 'friends' with which you are born in this life: passion, aggression, greed, infatuation, arrogance and envy. These are the natural products of life.

People ask, "Please teach us how to develop love, compassion and understanding." They don't ask how to develop hatred, anger, jealousy and envy, which means that these are natural expressions of your life, of your existence. It is these natural expressions that you want to rise above to find a better way to interact with the world. In that effort you want to learn how to love, be compassionate, kind and sympathetic. If these positive qualities were your natural expressions, you would not need to learn them.

If you analyze and think about it, the sattwic nature is not your nature. The sattwic nature is not defined by what you eat, at what time you go to sleep, how you dress or how you live. That is your lifestyle. The sattwic nature is a condition, a state of mind, and you don't have it. Your nature, your condition is tamasic. Freedom from tamas can only take place at the end of life.

Freedom from the wheel of life

There is a belief in India that when you leave your mortal frame in Kashi or Varanasi, by the river Ganga, you attain mukti, liberation from the bondage of the gross dimension. It is said that at the time of death in Varanasi, Lord Shiva whispers a mantra in the ear. When you hear that mantra,



identify with it and chant that mantra, you attain mukti from the physical and mental bondages. That mantra is *Om Rama Ramaya Namah*. That is the mantra that Shiva whispers in the ears of people who die in the city of Varanasi; it is the mantra that bestows liberation.

This may be a story, this may be the reality, but the important point is your awareness and intention at the time of death. If your awareness and intention are positive and spiritual – thinking of the divine Self, of your ishta devata, of your guru, of a positive quality which has inspired you all your life – in that state of happiness and contentment, you attain peace. That peace leads to liberation. If you die thinking about your debts and family, about who has come to see you and who has not, and if you worry, 'What will happen to my tribe when I am no more?' then your last moment of awareness is gross. That becomes the cause of your coming back again and again into this world. That is the wheel of life.

It is liberation from the wheel of life with awareness and intention that becomes the foundation for mukti jnana.



Experiencing Freedom

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati
10 September 2014, Afternoon



The topic this morning was the knowledge which leads to liberation, the second type of knowledge described by Lord Shiva to Sage Narada. This second type of knowledge is known as mukti jnana: mukti, liberation; jnana, knowledge. In this aspect of liberation, the question is asked, "What is liberation? Who is to be liberated, and from what is one liberated?"



Four stages of mukti

Mukti, according to the Shaiva concept, leads to four stages of experience. The first is *salokya*, coming into the dimension of transcendence and living there, just as you go to a specific place for a week, a month, a year, or a lifetime. While you are in that place, you live according to its systems and disciplines. Salokya is being in the same dimension, in the same place as the transcendental, elevating yourself from the gross nature to the transcendental nature.

The second stage is *sarshti*, being in the proximity of the transcendental. Here, at the yajna venue we are all together, in close proximity, but when we go away from here, although we are in the same campus, we are in different locations; there is distance, we can't see each other. Close proximity means that you can see each other. A contact is maintained through the eyes and the sentiments; we are all on the same wavelength.

The third is *samipya*, coming absolutely close, right next to that supreme state. The duality, the self-identity is still maintained, 'I am a separate person and this person is different, and I am close to this person.' The personal identity remains, yet samipya, closeness, is there.

Finally, there is *sayujya*, oneness, where the individuality becomes one with the universal aspect. These are the four states of mukti: from being in the same dimension to the final merger and oneness. Thus, mukti is liberation from the gross and establishment in the true, real nature.

Causes of bondage

When you are born in this world of senses and sense objects, the association that takes place causes attachment. Attachment leads to infatuation. Infatuation leads to more craving. It is said in the *Bhagavad Gita* (2:62–63):

Sangaat sanjaayate kaamah kaamaat krodho'bhijaayate;
Krodhaad bhavati sammohah sammohaat smriti vibhramah;
Smritibhramshaad buddhinaasho buddhinaashaat pranashyati.

Close proximity becomes the cause of affinity and attachment. Attachment leads to delusion. This becomes bondage for the spirit, which was free. When the spirit is bound by the senses, sense objects and maya, it loses the awareness of its self-luminosity, the awareness that 'I am luminous'.

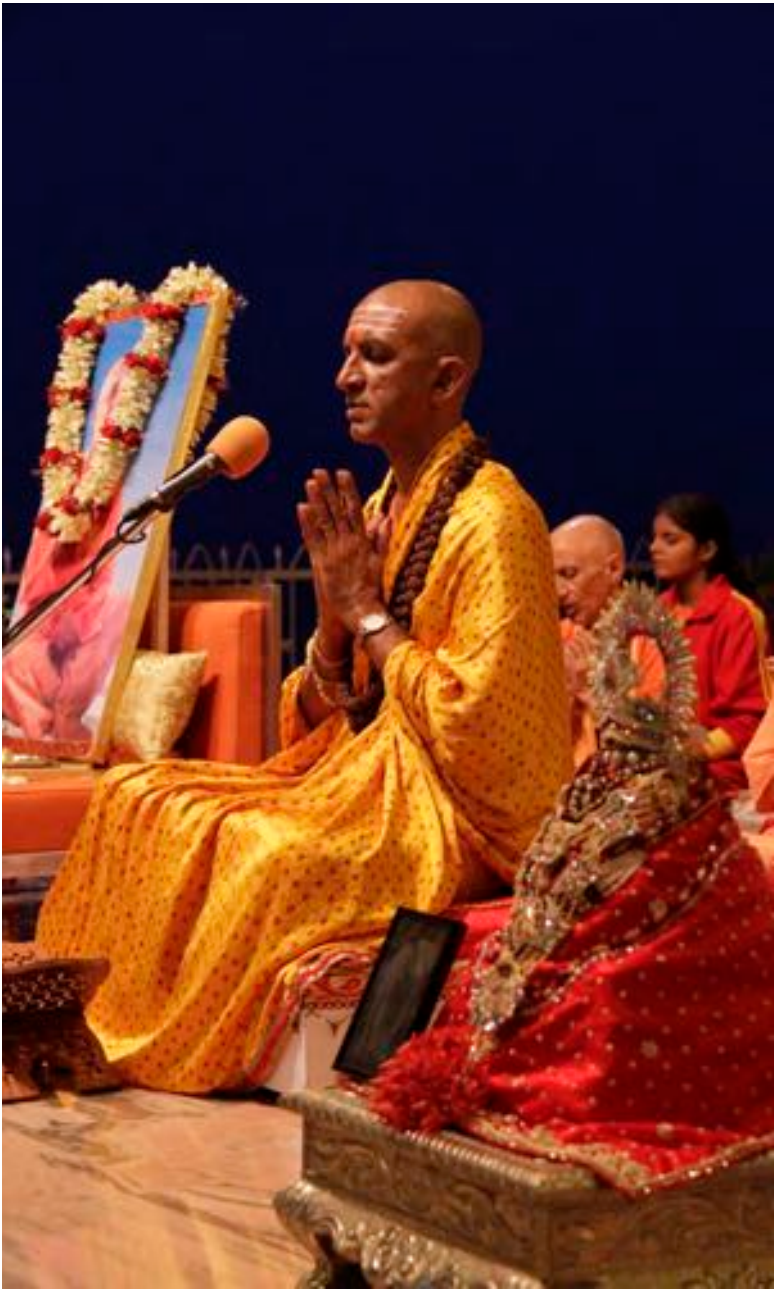


Swami Sivananda, my grandfather guru, used to say, "You are the immortal soul." People would say, "He speaks so well on the theories of Vedanta." How many of those people realized he was speaking directly to them, telling them what their nature is? People take his statement as philosophy, not as an experience or idea they can relate to themselves. If you can relate to an idea and live it, that will lead you to emancipation. If an idea only remains an object of your mental contemplation and discussion, it will become philosophy, not a path for you to walk on. Attachment and infatuation generate more and more desires; desires generate



more and more greed; greed generates more and more passion for acquiring; one becomes more and more material. As you become more material, the luminosity of the self is diminished. That is bondage.

The spirit has to be freed from this bondage of the mind. The spirit is contained in this body and this body is guided by the mind. The spirit is the passenger, the body is the vehicle, and the mind is the driver. You have always followed the whims of your mind. You have never asserted your own will over your mind. As long as you follow the whims of your mind, you are a whimsical person whose mood can change at any time, who can





be happy and sad at the blink of an eye, who can be dejected and elated in a moment and not have the self-awareness or self-control to remain connected with bliss and peace.

Methods of mukti

To attain mukti, the first level is to transcend the identification with the world. What is required for this is focus, awareness and concentration, which you can acquire through mantra, through following the edicts of dharma and moksha, through renouncing those things that bind you and hold you back in the world of maya.

In sannyasa, for example, renunciation is an important aspect. The idea of renunciation is an integral part of it. Whether people do it or to what extent is up to them, but the idea that has inspired the concept of sannyasa is renunciation. If you do not want to renounce in sannyasa, if you still want to have everything, then why take sannyasa? Live happily in the world. If you decide to take sannyasa, then live the ideals of sannyasa and what it represents. Sannyasa is renunciation, letting go of attachments, of 'me and mine', of 'me and my associations', of 'me and my

possessions', of 'me and my expectations and desires', of 'me and my ambitions', of 'me and my needs'. This petty self has to be transcended by renouncing, and the better self, the spiritual self has to be awakened.

Renunciation is only of the gross nature that holds you back in this life. Your passions, your thoughts, your philosophies, your expectations hold you back. Can you renounce all those? Even the family has to be renounced. That is the first step since that is an identification: 'My father, my mother, my brother, my sister are the cause of my attachment, therefore I renounce them.' That is one level. What is really renounced, however, is the negative association with family, the expectation associated with family. When you renounce them, you renounce the idea of 'they are mine'; they simply become part of your greater family. By renouncing the limited family, you adopt a bigger and universal family.

Then, you need to work with the mind. You need to work with the *vasanas*, desires, of the mind and renounce them also. You need to work through the negativities of life and renounce them.



The path of sannyasa is not that easy, and rare are true sannyasins. Many become sannyasins, but out of the many, there are maybe a few, who can be counted on the fingers, who have lived true sannyasa. There are many sannyasins who are highly intellectual but don't live the ideals of sannyasa. There are many sannyasins who are great devotees, bhaktas, but don't live the ideals of sannyasa. They are only renunciates in geru dress, not sannyasins.

Many of you are only renunciates in geru dress and not true sannyasins. You do not represent the true sannyasa ideal yet. What holds you back from living the ideal of



sannyasa? You yourself. You hold yourself back due to some association, attachment, like, dislike or identification. This is what holds you back: an expectation, a desire, a passion, a need, an association.

This is the renunciation that Lord Shiva talks about in the scripture. He does not ask you to renounce the world and take sannyasa. When he speaks of renunciation, he means renunciation in the pure sense of the word. Don't look back. If you keep on looking back, your cravings will remain. If you look forward, new vistas and dimensions will open up before you, which will be much more attractive than what you have



seen and lived in the past. Therefore, renunciation has to be understood in its purest sense: letting go of attachments and associations. This will lead to focus and awareness.

Mantra will also lead to focus and awareness. A third method is following dharma and moksha. Right and appropriate action, right and appropriate behaviour, and right and appropriate thinking constitute dharma. Dharma is a triangle made of *satkarma*, appropriate action; *sadvyavahara*, appropriate behaviour; and *sadvichara*, appropriate thinking and analysis. This is the triangle of dharma. If you live that triangle, you dissociate from the attachments that cause distress and strife in your life.

Make the effort to walk the path of moksha, knowing the pitfalls and avoiding them. When you drive your car, you are aware of the holes on the road and you avoid them. You slow down your speed. In your life, when you see pitfalls, do you put on your brakes? Do you try to avoid them? No, you willingly and happily, in full gear, go straight into the hole, get a big jolt, come out shaking and continue driving. Then you get another big jolt, and you wonder, 'I am driving the car all right! Why am I feeling a jerk?' You are not able to see the holes on the road of your life. The holes in the road of your life are your own creations.

Liberation from these binding factors is the subject of mukti jnana, the second type of knowledge.



Divine Blessings

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati
11 September 2014, Morning



Today, we shall have eight main Narayanas and 100 sub-Narayanas for the sahasrarchana. The eight main Narayanas will offer the special items and the other little Narayanas will offer the little items. Those little items are also very dear to Sri Narayana. Don't think that some people are doing

something greater and some are doing something smaller. No, each item that is being offered is very, very dear to Sri Narayana. Even a leaf of tulsi is dear to him.

Since we are offering worship to Narayana today, Lord Narayana from Jagannath Puri has decided to send us mahaprasad. When it arrives, we shall offer it to Narayana here, then it will go to Ganga Darshan, be received with kirtan and arati, and then distributed to all. This is a special event, and there is a strong link between Munger, Rikhia and Jagannath Puri. There are some siddha kshetras and tirthas of India that are deeply and intimately connected with our tradition, and Jagannath Puri is one of them.



The temple of Jagannath Puri is a famous, ancient siddha temple in Orissa. When our guru Sri Swami Satyananda attained mahasamadhi, without our knowledge or request, the flag of Lord Jagannath on the highest mast in the temple was brought down and the geru flag of Swami Satyananda was hoisted for one day. Never before has the flag of Narayana come down for anybody. Everybody bows down to Narayana, but when Sri Swamiji attained mahasamadhi, it was as if Narayana brought down the flag to receive his devotee,





Swami Satyananda, into his abode. Since that year, 2009, the prasad of Lord Jagannath comes to Munger and Rikhia annually. It has become a tradition.

Something similar also happened at the Kamakhya temple in Assam. When Sri Swamiji left his mortal body, the acharyas of the Kamakhya temple lit an akhanda deepak which is burning till today. If you visit Kamakhya, you can see that akhanda deepak still burning. It will continue to burn for another five years. The sankalpa is that it shall burn for eleven years, and this decision was made by the acharyas and pandits of the temple, not at our request.

This is the connection that Sri Swamiji had with the Divine, with Shakti and with Shiva, and we are fortunate to be the recipient of the grace which we receive through his blessings.

The waters of peace

We are going to have a continuous program today. You are free to move about whenever you feel the need, but don't gossip in the pandal area. This is a place of worship, and an environment is being created here. That peaceful environment gets shattered by the stones of gossip that you throw upon the tranquil body of water. The ripples that are created do not allow you to see the clarity and the reflection of anything. Therefore, be conscious that you don't throw any rock or stone into the stillness of this environment, through your gossip or through your inner games. Learn to be empty.

Empty yourself from the restrictive and the negative for some time and connect with the peace and the beauty for some time. Ultimately, that is what one needs to learn from yoga.

Search for beauty and excellence

Many of you might know about the Chipko movement in India, during which, in order to preserve trees from logging, people used to go and hug trees. The human being, the animate, and the tree, the inanimate, coming together to represent one life-form which cannot be destroyed. As long



as it was a movement with a true intention, it was good. But then, people started to 'chipko' with everything, both the good and the bad in life. When you start chipkoing, attaching, then you do not enjoy anything.

When you sleep, you should learn to enjoy your sleep. When you are in peace, silence and solitude, you should learn to enjoy that peace, silence and solitude. When you are in the company of people, chatting, discussing, debating, then you should enjoy that. When you are walking, you should enjoy and see the beauty in that. When you are working, see the beauty and the perfection in that. Search for beauty and excellence in everything that you do in life.

Don't worry about God. I don't, because I know that God is a distant reality for me. I know that in my lifetime, I will never realize even a fraction of the greatness, the vastness and

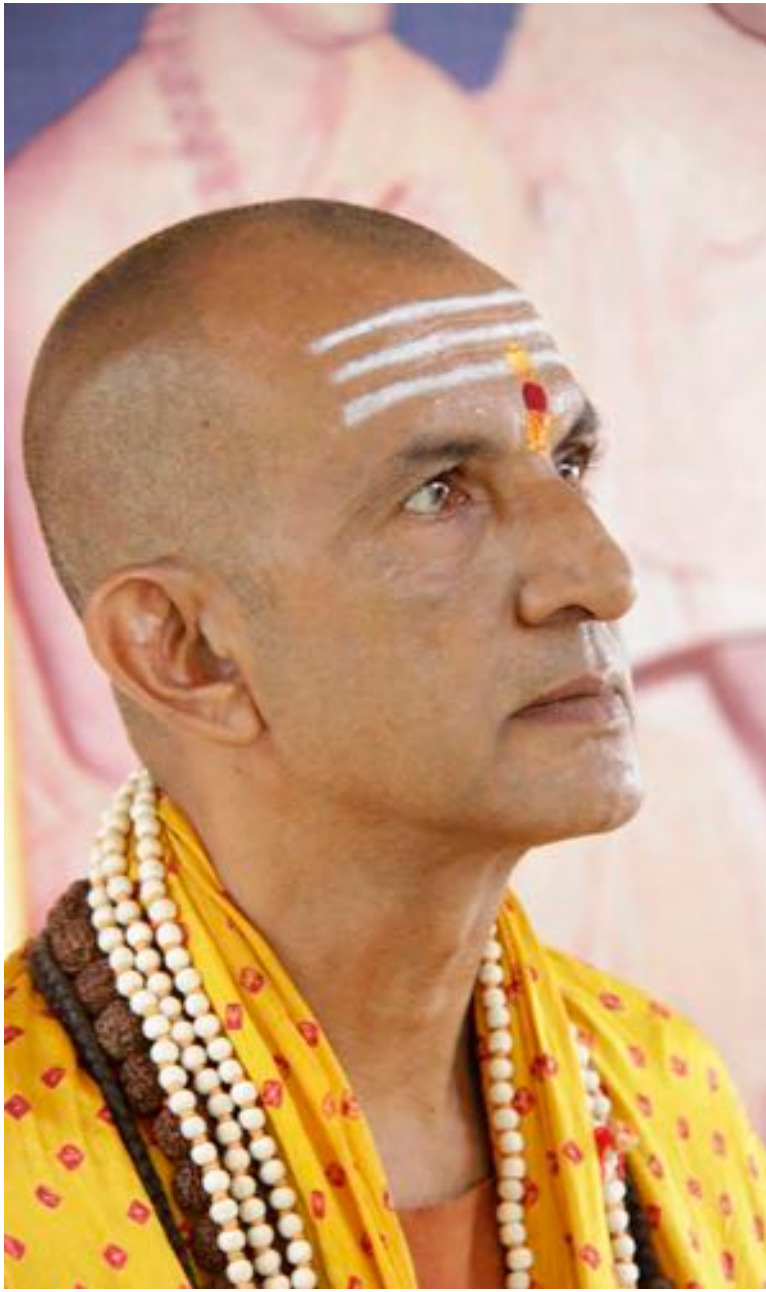




the goodness that God represents. The span of our galaxy, the Milky Way, is approximately 1,00,000 light years across. Human achievement, through its eyes, its technology, its super-telescopes and its computers, has only seen a fraction of the Milky Way, and that is only one galaxy. Millions, billions and trillions of galaxies abound with unknown, huge spaces in between. All this is only imagination and fantasy; we have never seen any of this with our eyes, never realized it. We have created computer models of the cosmos out of mathematical equations, but there has been no direct cognition, no direct awareness, understanding, vision or sight. There is so much that is unexplored in the physical realm. Similarly, there is so much unexplored in the mental realm, in the psychic realm, in the spiritual realm. Can we draw any conclusions from this partial understanding of truth?

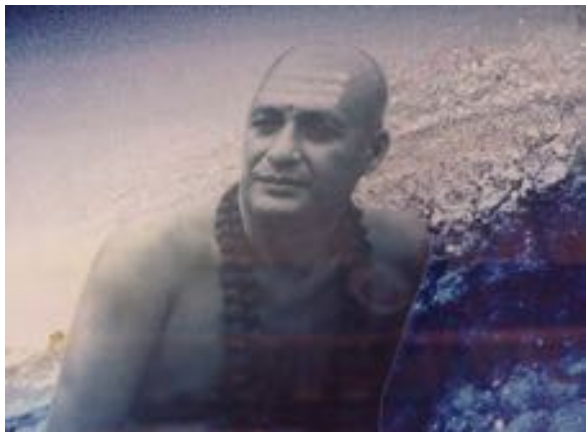
Yoga jnana: developing the expanse of awareness

Discovering beauty and excellence has to be the goal of human life. By connecting with beauty and excellence, you realize the creativity that life offers for your own development, growth, expansion and evolution. This is the subject of yoga jnana, the third type of knowledge described by Lord Shiva to Sage Narada: developing the expanse of awareness. This is what



Sri Swamiji says in his teachings: "You are looking at a limited point now. Expand that vision. From one millimetre, try to see one centimetre. From one centimetre, try to develop the vision of one metre. From one metre, develop the vision of ten metres. Gradually increase the strength of your mind. Cultivate the strength of your mind."

Bringing more dark areas into the luminosity of your awareness is the purpose of yoga, not the practice of hatha yoga, asana and pranayama. Realization of the dimensions of *annamaya kosha*, the sheath of body; *pranamaya kosha*, the sheath of energy; *manomaya kosha*, the sheath of



mind; *vijnanamaya kosha*, the sheath of consciousness; and *anandamaya kosha*, the sheath of bliss, is the discovery of yoga. In this process of discovery, the teachings correspond to kundalini awakening and raising of the kundalini tattwa. That is the real yoga jnana as expounded by Shiva to Narada. Ultimately, the essence and the aim of all yogas is to awaken the kundalini tattwa, the element of kundalini.

Kundalini is the dormant faculty, the dormant energy, which is symbolically represented in our body as a serpent coiled around the Shivalingam at mooladhara chakra. This is only a symbolic depiction of a yogic idea. The idea is that this



kundalini, this shakti, this energy you are experiencing is gross, material. There is no possibility for it to become grosser or denser. However, there is immense possibility for it to become lighter, as visible in the sequence of the elements. Earth is the densest. Water is a little bit lighter, then fire is a little bit lighter, then air is a little bit lighter. Ether is the lightest.

The energy is locked in the densest form in mooladhara. Mooladhara is the seat of your anxiety, insecurity, fears, phobias, of everything that holds you grounded in the world of sense objects and does not allow you to experience freedom, lightness, happiness and contentment. This energy has to ascend. This is the teaching of kundalini yoga, the esoteric yoga, given by Lord Shiva to Sage Narada.

There are four aspects of kundalini yoga. The first aspect is prana shakti. The second is nadis. The third is chakras, and the fourth is the latent power in the chakras, kundalini. An interesting observation is that the sequence begins with prana and ends with mahaprana, which is kundalini. Thus it is an experience of prana at different levels and dimensions. You can awaken that power through kriya yoga, which aids kundalini yoga. The practice for kundalini awakening is kriya yoga. That is the integrated practice.

Before you come to kriya yoga, however, you need to have mastery over the breath. You need to also have mastery over unwavering concentration on mantra; the concentration should not waver for at least ten to fifteen minutes. You should be able to let go of everything, including dire needs and thoughts that can appear at a moment's notice and without your knowledge. You need to protect yourself from the influx of those ideas and thoughts that disturb your concentration.

Third, you need to realize the flow of prana shakti in the nadis. Fourth, you have to know the chakras, the nerve plexuses which create a kind of harmony in the body. That harmony, that pulsation, that vibration is what identifies that particular centre as psychic, as it gives birth to a different behaviour, mood and expression of energy. You can see the plexuses in the physical body, but you cannot see chakras in the physical body. A chakra is a psychic or spiritual plexus. The latent power, the hidden power inside that chakra which has to be awakened and inspired to ascend is kundalini.

Yoga jnana was the third type of knowledge that Lord Shiva gave, relating to kundalini yoga, leading to the experience of excellence and the connection with peace.





Samsarika jnana: creating a better world

The fourth knowledge is *samsarika jnana*, also called *samsara vishayaka jnana* or *laukika jnana*, the knowledge by which you can beautify your environment. Any kind of knowledge always brings good dividends. If you become a doctor, the knowledge of medical science ultimately brings you good dividends. If you become an engineer, the knowledge of engineering ultimately brings you good dividends. Any kind of knowledge, whether it be material, spiritual, even religious, will always bring good dividends as long as you are ready to digest the information.

If you are not able to digest the information, you will have diarrhoea and everything will be lost. If you hold the information back, you will have constipation and that will be painful. You have to learn how to digest the information and make it applicable and useful to your level of understanding and application. This is the job of the sadhus in their times.

Swami Sivananda did this, Swami Satyananda did this. They brought the ancient knowledge into modern life for the needs of people. We have to understand what the needs will

be in the next fifty years. Each plan is made for fifty years, which makes one generation.

Bhautika jnana, knowledge that gives you peace in your relationship to the world, is connected to lifestyle, to living properly. *Achara* is how you live: your routine, the environment at home, what you do when you get home, what you do when you are free, how you engage yourself to make yourself more productive, how you cultivate pleasantness with strangers, affection with near and dear ones, cooperation with equal ones. All this is achara samhita, information on the obligations that one has to follow in different areas and stages of life. It corresponds to lifestyle, to diet, even to what you speak, read, see at home.

What type of discipline do you follow at home? Do you stay up until midnight watching television or do you have a certain routine – 'I will watch television from 8 to 9, then at 9 I will do my meditation, and then go to bed'? Do you watch the World Cup until two in the morning, or do you follow a balanced routine which can allow you to develop into a better person over the course of your life? That is the subject of samsara vishayaka jnana, knowledge relating to living in a better way in order to create a better world.



May the Grace Be With You

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati and
Swami Satyasangananda Saraswati
11 September 2014, Afternoon



Swami Niranjan: Now I request Swami Satsangi to bless this occasion of the Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna. With her good wishes and blessings, we will receive the grace of Rikhiapeeth, the tapobhoomi of our guru, Sri Swamiji, and that will make this yajna complete and whole.

Swami Satsangi: *Namo Narayana! Hari Om Tat Sat! Jai Ho!* You have to now also become familiar with the greeting of *Jai Ho*.

Swami Niranjan: What Swami Satsangi is saying is that *Hari Om* is the mantra of Munger; it is the mantra of yoga. When Sri Swamiji came to Munger, he made the mantra *Hari Om* popular, thus it was associated with yoga. The mantra carried the message of yoga all over the world. When he reached Rikhia, he gave the mantra *Namo Narayana*, as there one experiences the all-pervasiveness of Narayana through 'serve, love and give'. When he mandated the establishment of Sannyasa Peeth, he gave the greeting *Jai Ho* and that is



what Swami Satsangi is telling you about. The greeting of Sannyasa Peeth is *Jai Ho*.

Swami Satsangi: So the greeting has been declared, *Jai Ho*, and it means that victory is certain. Rishis and munis would give blessings with the words *"Vijayi bhava"* – "May you be victorious, may you be successful." Here it has been declared that victory, success is certain. Victory over what? Victory in kindling the flame within us.



The entire month of September has passed joyfully in the service of Narayana. At first Radha-Krishna Jhoolan in Rikhiapeeth, which is celebrated with great pomp and splendour, then Krishna Janmashtami when Sri Krishna took birth, then Sivananda Mahotsav when there was Bhagavat Katha, and now the Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna. So this whole month has been spent in Narayana seva, and a great joy and purification has been experienced by this, because Narayana seva brings about purification.

If difficulties surround us, or if the mind is caught somewhere as it does sometimes, it is caught around something and keeps going around it obsessively, like a bullock going around an oil press, then Narayana seva is the answer. Narayana seva transforms us at every level. Therefore it has been our good fortune that the entire month has been spent in Narayana seva. And the most important aspect of all this is the person to whom it has been dedicated. All this has been done for our paramguru, Swami Sivananda, who was born on the 8th of this month, and he was an embodiment of love.

As Swami Niranjan has told you, whether something is being done in Rikhia or in Munger, the *sankalpa*, the resolve,

is the same. It is one sankalpa, one flow, one current, because there is strength in oneness. Oneness or unity is necessary, not only with your neighbours but also within yourself. One has to create unity within oneself, and this is called atmabhava.

Many people try hard in their lives for success, yet they do not attain it, and sometimes success is achieved without much effort. This indicates that there is a basis for effort. In the *Bhagavad Gita* it is said that there are five foundations for any achievement. One, place; without a place you cannot do any work. Two, time; the timing has to be right. If the time is not right you will not be able to achieve anything no matter how much you try. Third, the person, a person has to be born for a certain work. Fourth, effort, what is called *purushartha*. Along with these four, you need something else. You may have the place, your timing may be right, you have been born a person, you make the effort, yet you may not succeed. Why? Because, as the *Bhagavad Gita* says, there is one more thing by which the effort will succeed and that is divine grace. That is hidden, you are not even aware of it.





How to awaken that divinity? For without it nothing can be achieved. All worship is done for that purpose, whether it is worship of guru, worship of Narayana, or worship of anyone else. You can even worship your own atma, soul. You can worship the God without attributes, *nirguna*, *nirakara*, quality-less, formless. Whatever you worship, it is done to receive divine help to accomplish a task.

In the story of *Ramayana*, when Sri Rama was at the seashore, he prayed to the gods saying, "Please manifest before me, show me a way, I need to reach the other shore." Lakshmana, who was standing next to him, said, "All this will



not do, just shoot an arrow." *Daiva daiva alasi pukara* – "It is sign of laziness that you are calling upon the gods, we do not need to do that, we are strong, let us not waste time calling upon gods, just shoot an arrow." Sri Rama said to him, "Calm down. At first I will pray and if my prayer is not accepted, then we will think of a way, because maybe without it our work will not be done."

When an avatara of God can think like this, then who are we! That is why all this worship becomes necessary; we need to ignite that flame within us and the source of this flame is guru. *Jyot se jyot jalaye jao* – one flame lights another and that flame lights another, and so it goes.

When you leave from here with the blessings of the yajna and return home, don't waste it all away. From the flame that has been lit here, in Sannyasa Peeth, light your own flame within and take it home with you. Nurture it, fuel it, protect it, worship it, and then see the miracles it brings about in your life.

Prarabdha and *purushartha*, gains from past lives and effort in this life, are all very well but you have to create some prarabdha for the next life also. What you are enjoying now is the result of your efforts in your past lives, and you will reap in your next life what you sow now.

Therefore, this worship is necessary, because without lighting the flame within, without giving a form to devotion, without faith, trust, surrender, life is useless. If you have not lit this flame within you in your fifty, sixty, seventy, eighty years, however long you have lived, then your life has been a waste. No matter what you do and where you do it, but do not be lazy about igniting the flame.

Tomorrow will be the poornahuti of this yajna. The tradition that we belong to is neither a *daivi parampara*, a godly lineage, nor a *guru parampara*, a lineage of gurus, rather it is a *shishya parampara*, a lineage of disciples. I have come here as a disciple, and there will always be an effort to be a disciple.

Becoming godly is a distant thing, it is not in one's hands nor something that one can make an effort towards. That is grace, Gurudev's grace. If one can become something in life, then that is only due to Gurudev's grace and this is the truth not just in my life but in your life as well.

If you have been able to make something of yourself in your life, it is only because of grace. As I said, purushartha has its place, effort is necessary, and it must be made, but it is necessary to earn grace. So, may that grace rain down upon you through the medium of this yajna.

May the flame of bhakti be ignited within you.





Remembering Sri Swamiji

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati
12 September 2014, Morning



An offering of dance

We are celebrating Sri Swamiji's sannyasa day today. On this occasion, a beautiful offering has been made with a dance performance of Bharat Natyam by Divyamani. She is a sadhaka of Bharat Natyam and her performances indicate the merger, the fusion of spirituality with dance.

Every vidya in India has been propagated by sages, including dance. The creator of dance is Bharat Muni, and the dance Bharat Natyam is named after him; it means 'the dance of Bharat'. In this manner, the sages have contributed to the development of vidyas, whether medicine, science, economics, or others. The rishis and munis discovered the spirituality behind every gross action, and that is how each form of knowledge was seen as vidya.



The inspiration that guides us

We are coming to the conclusion of this Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna. This mahayajna is the culmination of the third vision and the inspiration that our guru, Sri Swamiji, has provided us with. His first vision and inspiration was that of self-transformation, and the path he guided us on was of yoga.

His second inspiration and vision was to connect with each and every one in the purest sense of the word – pure love and realization of the underlying oneness of all – through yajna. This is the connection between the individual and the cosmos, and how the cosmos is reflected in each one of us.

The third vision and inspiration is the attainment of the right samskaras that can nurture us so we may experience beauty, truth and everything that is useful for the development, growth and evolution of our lives as human beings. These are the three inspirations and visions of Sri Swamiji.

The Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna is part of this vision of our master, whose birthday we celebrate today and whom



we honour today. With this, we shall conclude the five-day event, and when we leave this place, we shall leave with the inspiration of our guru, we shall leave with the grace of Lakshmi-Narayana, and we shall leave with the good wishes for peace, plenty and prosperity of all. This has been the sankalpa of Sri Swamiji all his life.

It is befitting that today we honour our guru, for the person whom we know as Swami Satyananda was born on the 12th of September 1947. That was the day he was initiated by his guru Swami Sivananda, and from the cocoon a butterfly emerged in the form of Swami Satyananda. The Swami Satyananda we know, his inspiration, his grace, his light, his wisdom, took birth on this day. It is that personality whom we honour today. We offer our shraddha to the memory, the presence and the grace of our guru, which is eternally with us. It is his inspiration and teaching that we are trying to live, it is the direction he has shown that we are trying to walk. This is the objective and aim of our life.

As part of the tradition, we dedicate ourselves to follow and fulfil our dharma with sincerity, seriousness and commitment. Through this, we can imbibe the teachings of the tradition and live them, thereby fulfilling the aim that was given to us through the mandate: *Atma deepo bhava* – "Become self-luminous."



Offering Our Pranaams

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati and
Swami Satyasangananda Saraswati
12 September 2014, Afternoon



Swami Niranjan: Thank you for participating in this uplifting and inspiring Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna. Now we request our guru sister, Swami Satsangi, to speak her auspicious words on Sri Gurudev.

Swami Satsangi: *Namo Narayana*, it has been a most blissful experience to be here. Haven't you all felt the bliss?

Such wonderful moments only come to the fortunate: to be here on the banks of the Ganga, in such an auspicious place, amidst the chanting of such beautiful mantras, in



such lovely surroundings, all dedicated to Gurudev. To say anything about him is like offering light to a flame.

How can one offer light to one who is himself a flame? We are offering to him that which he has himself given to us, given to us unasked. Maybe we are not even deserving of it, maybe we do not have the ability to receive it, but still he has given, like Lord Shiva gives on being asked even if one is undeserving. He says, *"Tathastu!"* – "So be it." Our Gurudev is like that.

What can one say about him? It is very difficult to talk about him, there are no words. One can speak on all the subjects in the world, but what can one say about one's own guru? Only that guru comes into your life when you are in need of bhakti. Just as when you need money in your life you try to find it, whenever you need education you seek it, in the same way when you need to grow in spiritual life you look for a sadguru.

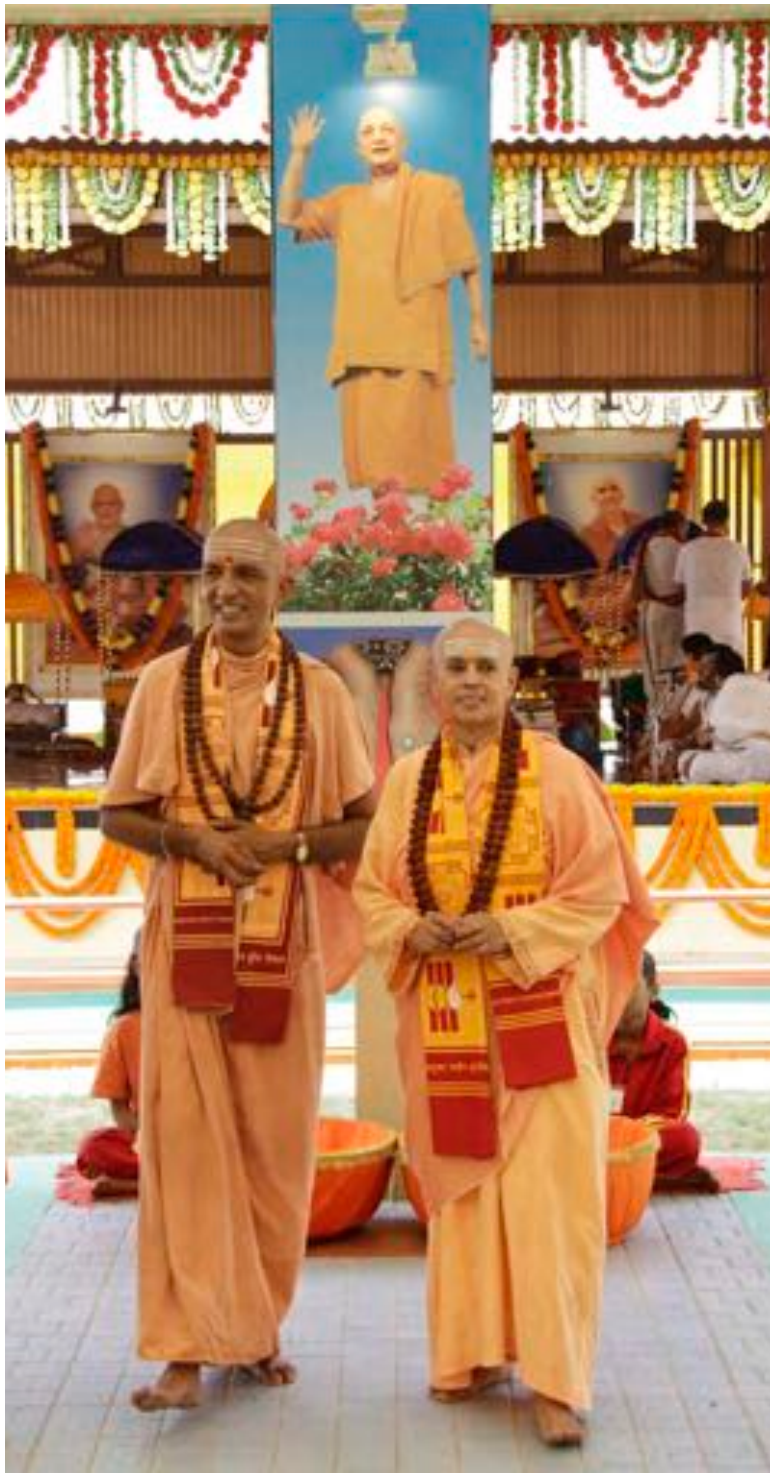
Our Gurudev could give everything, whether dharma,

artha, kama, moksha. He had the ability to do so. No matter what you came for, you would receive it because he had that power, and yet he was so simple in nature. Everyone has seen that. Simplicity defined him; the clothes he wore, his lifestyle, the way he lived among people until he retired into seclusion for tapasya, you cannot imagine that sitting here. He would say, "I live in people's hearts, whether they know it or not." One understands the meaning of this gradually, because there is infinite shakti in guru. Whatever you want, guru can give you. This is the truth.

It is the sannyasa day of such a guru that we are celebrating today. You celebrate birthdays, Father's Day, Teacher's Day, Valentine's Day, you celebrate different days for different things. This is the most important day in a person's life, when they take sannyasa. What is the meaning of sannyasa? Sannyasa means a state where you do not exist solely for your own sake anymore, you have surrendered yourself.

For example, if you were to put one lakh rupees into a trust for the blind, then you cannot take it out if you are in need of money after some time. You have 'sannyased' this





money, you have dedicated it, surrendered it to the blind. That is the meaning of sannyasa. A sannyasin's life is for the welfare of others, a sannyasin takes birth for the good of others, his life is dedicated to the good of others. However, all this is merely theory, we only talk about it and hear about it. It is a very far-fetched idea for us. Can we live a life like what our Gurudev has shown us: yogi hokar jag me jeena – "to live in the world as a yogi"?

Is it possible to live happily in every circumstance, amidst sorrow, amidst worry? He demonstrated that with his life. He would say, "If you want to be worried and anxious, fine, but let the worry and anxiety be for someone else, not for yourself. Worry for someone else's sake; that way you will not get high blood pressure, diabetes or asthma. You will sleep peacefully at night." All that he did was for others. The yoga revolution, his whole life was a revolution, it was not an ordinary like ours. We wake up in the morning, wash, sometimes we are happy and sometimes we are angry. His life was not like that. His life was totally dedicated, every moment of it, every action of it was surrendered to his guru.

All that he did in Munger was dedicated to his guru, all the yoga work was not for himself, for either his own glory or to sustain himself. Had that been so, he would never have left Munger. All that he has done in Rikhia was not for the attainment of siddhis, not for attaining anything at all. He was a siddha from birth, at the age of six he was aware of the soul. Imagine being aware of the soul at age six! You probably do not even have any recollection of that age, but he had soul-awareness, he was a siddha from birth. He did not really need to do the austerities like panchagni and mantra sadhana that he did in Rikhia, he did those to show a way – a way to improve one's life, a way to do good deeds, a way to plant the seeds of good samskara, not only for oneself but for others, for society at large, and for the world. His family was not only the ashram. When he arrived in Rikhia, the whole universe had already become his family and he was established in everyone's hearts.



When Sri Swamiji took mahasamadhi, everyone felt that he had become all-pervasive, he could be felt everywhere. From different parts of the world, people wrote to us of their experiences: people who had known him, people who did not know him at all, everybody experienced it. Sometimes a great event takes place to reach the pinnacle of yoga, and that is called yoga samadhi. It is not a sad event but a happy one, and we should all be proud that Sri Swamiji attained yoga samadhi, because this is not an ordinary achievement.

He began his journey in Rishikesh. Rishikesh was his karmabhoomi, where he performed *nishkama karma*, selfless service. Not the kind of the karmas that you do, he did selfless work, digging a hill to channel water to the ashram, walking miles to buy supplies for the ashram, living on alms, sleeping in the open. He lived that life. You cannot imagine it, but you should bring it to mind from time to time, visualize it as clearly as possible, and that will purify you. One does not even see that lifestyle today or the one that he led in Rikhia, a life of tyaga, a life of vairagya. The light that illumined him at that time was not human, it was certainly divine. That was an indication of his coming attainment, because when panchagni is performed it is to establish contact with another dimension, therefore it is called the heavenly fire.

You are on a plane of existence. Can you establish contact with another plane of existence? At most you can call New York on your phone. There are many planes of existence called *lokas*: bhuloka, bhuvarloka, suvahloka, tapoloka, siddhaloka, anandaloka. There are so many lokas, but can you contact them? Through the medium of panchagni this contact manifested itself through an experience when he was in Rikhia. Therefore I am saying that his life was not an ordinary one, it was extraordinary, and it is our good fortune that he lived amongst us.

Sri Swamiji's gifts to us is our life's wealth, our bank balance, and you should invest it well. Sri Swamiji did not think only about his own time; he thought far ahead. All that he did in Munger, he had thought about it in his previous birth, he had that capacity. All the institutions that he established in Rikhia, he had thought at least fifty or sixty years earlier. He had said that it was his dream to live in a village and serve the most needy, this was his long-cherished dream. So he thought far ahead, he was not like us who think only of the present, he thought of aeons ahead and he had also prepared for the time when he would take yoga samadhi. So, together, we should all thank him for this.





Do you know what it is that we have to thank him for? I will tell you what we have to thank him for: for giving himself to us in the form of Swami Niranjan. I know I am going to be in trouble later for saying this, but I feel it is necessary because the hand that we all now hold for support is Swami Niranjan's. Sri Swamiji has said, "Niranjan and I are two bodies but one soul." So, on his sannyasa day, let us once again remember the flame that was amongst us. His life is indescribable, indefinable, but the saints and great souls always leave behind a path, a great light, an illumination, which can overcome the darkness that we may feel upon their passing. So let us all offer our pranaams to the light that he has left for us.

Namo Narayana





Sri Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna 2015

Sannyasa Peeth, Munger

Maintaining the Sankalpa

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati
7 September 2015



Hari Om Tat Sat and welcome to everyone. Today was supposed to be the rehearsal day for the Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna, but the plan changed. The yajna was to begin tomorrow and continue until the 12th, but somehow it was willed that it should begin today. While everyone was away, at 12 noon we started the whole procedure. Therefore,



when everyone arrived here in the afternoon, the pandits are already chanting. What you are witnessing is not a preparation but a full invocation.

In the silence, solitude and peace of Paduka Darshan, with nobody present here, the yajna started. Even the pandits were surprised. They said, "We had not planned it." I was surprised, that was not our intention, yet everything started in a full-fledged manner, so now we are witnessing the beginning of Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna. Soon the fire will be lit and the havan will commence.

I asked the pandits, "How come this beginning happened today? Did we miss any calculation or timing?" They checked their calculations and everything was correct, but tomorrow



there is a flaw in the astrological time. To overshadow that flaw, the muhurta, the moment, that is auspicious was chosen today, and that was the siddha yoga muhurta. Siddha yoga means 'all obstacles will be overcome'; it is the perfect moment when everything becomes auspicious and there is no opposition, when everything is in harmony. That was the muhurta when we started the Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna today.

Silent sankalpa

God willed that the yajna should start today, therefore only a few of us were present for the first invocation, and there is a



reason. This year, during the Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna, another ancient yajna will be performed here, which has to have a sankalpa that is not heard by anybody. When the pandits chant the mantras at the commencement, they chant the sankalpa also. If people are present, it becomes known to everybody. Therefore, it was a preordained event that there was nobody here when the murtis were installed and the deities invoked.

It was the most beautiful beginning. There were no expectations in the air, only peace of the river and silence of the space. The sankalpa was taken amid this peace and silence. It was one of the most powerful moments of my life, totally isolated and disconnected from everything. There were no thought waves interfering, only perfect harmony.

So, welcome to the inaugural day of the Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna.

Following the mandate

When Sri Swami Satyananda gave the mandate of Sannyasa Peeth, he told me to revive the ancient traditions of India as well, and substantial efforts have been made in that direction.

For the last two years we have performed certain ancient yajnas in Munger which were last performed during the age of Sri Krishna around five thousand years ago. Since then, those mantras have never been chanted, as the whole civilization was destroyed after the Mahabharata war. After all these centuries, they are again being chanted on this planet in Munger.

The ancient yajna that we shall be performing during this Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna has a unique style. In this, the general public are not able to hear the mantras, as the mantras are not chanted aloud but whispered. It is a different style of chanting. Only the pandits and those on the yajna vedi will be able to hear the mantras.

Subject of satsangs

The subject that I am going to tell you about during this Lakshmi-Narayana is an interesting one too. As sannyasins we are Shaiva, yet our conduct is that of the Vaishnava.



For those who do not have the classical understanding of sannyasa, this will not mean anything. Those who are aware of the traditional values of sannyasa, will understand this subject better.

Sannyasa is a Shaiva tradition but the code of conduct is Vaishnava. Our object of contemplation is the image of Shiva but our code of living follows the disciplines of Vaishnavism. This is the subject that will be taken up on this occasion at Sannyasa Peeth.



Dedication of Chhaya Samadhi

On the 12th there will be a special program: the dedication of the Chhaya Samadhi of Sri Swamiji in Ganga Darshan. It is the replica of Sri Swamiji's samadhi in Rikhia, and represents the presence of the spirit of Sri Swamiji in Ganga Darshan for eternity. After I am gone, after all those people who have known Sri Swamiji have disappeared, the Chhaya Samadhi will be the connection with the shakti of Sri Swamiji, the sankalpa for which he lived and to which he gave his life.

This will be the energy that will connect both Munger and Rikhia. This Chhaya Samadhi, the reflection samadhi or the shadow samadhi, will be inaugurated on the sannyasa day of Sri Swamiji, 12th September, and that will be the highlight of the Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna this year.

Once again, welcome, and participate joyously, happily, and take care of your health. Be happy and bring happiness to other people by looking after yourself and being responsible for yourself.



Lighting of fire

We have completed the ritual of creating fire by rubbing two sticks together; it is created in the most natural way possible without the help of any chemical or external agent, as the ancient people used to do to produce fire. Now this fire will be installed in the vedi and the procedure of yajna will begin. The final worship of the three peeths is also being done along with the installation of various deities and cosmic energies.



Three powers for three sankalpas

It has been a good beginning to start one day early, as it means that we have one extra day to be in this environment. Today is like a bonus, a day which was given suddenly, with the instructions: "Start the Lakshmi-Narayana Yajna now, I am here." That was the command of the commander-in-chief and we had to listen to that command.

The Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna is a continuation of the sankalpa that has been followed here in previous years. In 2009, Sri Swamiji said to me to establish Sannyasa Peeth, to bring the spiritual samskaras and the understanding of sannyasa to the ordinary people in a manner that allows them to integrate and apply these spiritual principles in their day-to-day life. Along with this, Sri Swamiji also gave the instruction that the invocation in Sannyasa Peeth will be of Lakshmi and Narayana. It is an interesting combination that Sri Swamiji has given.

When he established the Bihar School of Yoga in 1963, he devoted the institution to the cosmic power Saraswati. The presiding deity of the Bihar School of Yoga and the yoga movement is Mother Saraswati, and the foundation day of the Bihar School of Yoga is celebrated on Basant Panchami, which is the day dedicated to Mother Saraswati. At that time she is honoured and invoked in the unmanifest form of Sri Yantra. Sri Yantra is not the symbol of Durga, Kali or Chandi; it is the symbol of the unmanifest cosmic shakti, and all the cosmic shaktis are contained in the Sri Yantra.

Saraswati does not come alone, she comes with Brahma, but Brahma is invisible. He is the creator, and only the power of Brahma continues to be seen, as everything is still being created. Our life is being constructed, created and guided by the action and wisdom of Brahma and Saraswati, and that is yoga.

In Rikhia Sri Swamiji gave Chandi and Shiva to transform life, to destroy the old and give birth to the new; for alleviation of poverty and emergence into prosperity. That transformation is possible through Chandi and Shiva.

For Sannyasa Peeth Sri Swamiji gave the symbol of

Lakshmi and Narayana, since they are the powers of sustenance and nourishment. Your encounter with Brahma is at the time of birth only. Your encounter with Shiva is at the time of death only. However, for all the eighty years of your life you are encountering Vishnu, or Narayana, and Lakshmi. You are being nourished and sustained, you are living through the power of Narayana and Lakshmi.

It is a beautiful distribution: Brahma and Saraswati in Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth, Shiva and Shakti in Rikhiapeeth, and Vishnu and Lakshmi in Sannyasa Peeth; the creator in Yogapeeth, the sustainer in Sannyasa Peeth and the transformer in Rikhiapeeth. These are the three identities that our guru has given us and we are proud to be part of that inspiration and do that work, as it brings happiness and joy, upliftment and inspiration, and gives a new direction to our own efforts in life.

Hoisting the yajna flag

At the commencement of the yajna, the flag of Sannyasa Peeth and the flag of Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna were hoisted. The flag is the announcement that the proceedings have started, and now the energy is active here. Now we shall have arati and then we conclude for today.



The Journey Towards the Spirit

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati
8 September 2015, Morning



Today we begin the Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna officially, along with the celebration of the birthday of our paramguru Sri Swami Sivananda. This period of Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna is a special period, as it begins on the 8th of September, which is the birthday of our paramguru Swami Sivananda, and it concludes on 12th September, which is the sannyasa day of our guru Swami Satyananda. From birthday to sannyasa day is an auspicious journey. The physical birth takes place at home amid family, and the sannyasa birth happens in the ashram with guru. Both births are being celebrated here: the physical birth of Swami Sivananda and the sannyasa birth of Swami Satyananda, the physical birthday and the spiritual birthday.



Tradition of Shaiva, conduct of Vaishnava

Sannyasa is the spiritual birth and the birth of the body is the physical birth. This yajna takes place between the two, an indication of the human journey from being born in the body to the journey towards the spirit, to be born in the spirit. This is the subject of the Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna as well, as Lakshmi and Narayana are the two powers who are responsible for our continuation in life from birth to death. The energy, the vibrancy, the peace, the prosperity, everything that we experience in our journey from birth to death, happens due to the energies of Narayana and Lakshmi.

For spiritual aspirants and sannyasins, this understanding is important. Although as sannyasins we belong to the tradition of Shiva, our greeting, our sadhana and our effort is not of the disciplines of Shiva but of the disciplines of

Narayana, Vishnu. For example, our greeting *'Hari Om Tat Sat'* is a Narayana greeting; it is not a Shiva greeting. The greeting *'Namo Narayana'* is a Narayana greeting; it is not a Shiva greeting. *'Jai Ho'* is not related to Shiva, it is universally applicable. Therefore, although we are initiated as sannyasins in the tradition of Shiva, our sadhana, our traits, our personality is shaped by the culture of Narayana. What is that culture of Narayana? It indicates the journey of a human being from taking birth in the material life to taking birth in the spiritual life. So, Shiva is the ishta devata but Vishnu is the sadhana.

Revival of ancient vidyas

Today in the morning we will be conducting four different activities: the invocation of Lakshmi, the invocation of Narayana, sahasrarchana of Lakshmi and sahasrarchana of Narayana. In the afternoon, after bhajan, kirtan and satsang,





we start the ancient yajna which is being performed on this planet after five thousand five hundred years, and that ancient yajna belongs to Narayana.

When Sri Swamiji gave me the mandate to establish Sannyasa Peeth and to work to revive the spiritual samskaras and integrate them with human society, at that time he also gave the instructions to revive the ancient sciences which our rishis and sages had developed and which have been forgotten today; to again make them applicable and useful to society at large. All the events that have happened so far in Munger have revived the ancient knowledge of the rishis in a modern environment. Every year when I conclude the panchagni sadhana, an ancient Shiva yajna is conducted,

which was last performed by Arjuna before the Mahabharata war. After a gap of thousands of years, that yajna was again revived in Munger. The second ancient yajna is starting this year in the form of the Narayana Astra Yajna.

The mantras of Pashupatastra were chanted aloud and everybody could hear them. However, the mantra of Narayanastra will not be heard by anybody as they will be whispered. At that time even we will not be here on the stage, all the sannyasins will go down to the pandal; they will not be listening to the mantras. The mantras will be audible only at the yajna vedi. Nevertheless, you will be the receiver of the energy of those mantras, you will be the witness of the shakti of those mantras, and that is the tradition of the performance of this anusthana. You will not hear the mantra, yet it will be invoked, chanted, whispered. It is a ritual with a strict discipline and that is the Narayana shakti.

Invoking the atmic source

What do we all want in our life? To go back to our pristine condition; free from every taint, every superimposition of maya. To return to that pristine condition, we require to invoke the shakti of Narayana.





In Munger, Swami Satyananda has established two traditions: the tradition of Brahma and Saraswati is Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth. Yoga is dedicated to Saraswati and Brahma, and on a plaque in Satyam Vatika, the sankalpa and the prayer to Mother Saraswati is inscribed. In Rikhia, he established Chandi and Shiva. For Sannyasa Peeth he gave the instructions to instal Lakshmi and Narayana. Thus in Munger we have two seats: Lakshmi and Narayana in Paduka Darshan, Brahma and Saraswati in Ganga Darshan. In Rikhia we have Shiva and Shakti. This was the vision, the sankalpa of Sri Swamiji: to use the energy of the three great cosmic powers for everyone's spiritual upliftment.

Your own efforts lead you nowhere. How much are you going to fight with yourself? You cannot deal with your own negativity, frustration, jealousy, selfishness, arrogance and ignorance, so you do need some help, you do need some intervention. From where is that help is going to come if it doesn't come from around us, for everybody is in the same boat. It has to come from some other source, a pure source,

and the source that is pure is the atmic source, the source of the spirit. It is in the spiritual dimension that these powers exist and are invoked from.

A thousand offerings

Now we will begin the chanting of sahasranaam, the thousand names, and the sahasrarchana, the thousand offerings. This is a simple yet powerful practice of invocation. You have received a paper plate and the image and yantra of Lakshmi-Narayana. In the first part, when you are making offerings to Lakshmi, place the image of Lakshmi-Narayana on top, and in the second part when you are making offerings to Narayana, put the yantra on top. One hundred people have been selected from different countries and states of India for participating in this offering, and eight more people are making special offerings. These offerings will be collected, and on the 12th given to each participant of the yajna as prasad of the Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna.

Your sankalpa, when you begin the sahasrarchana, should be for the welfare of the entire human community. Not individual welfare, not 'me and my family' or somebody who comes to your mind who is sick. If you make such a sankalpa,



I can assure you it will not fructify; no selfish sankalpa will fructify. The sankalpa here today is for the entire human community. Everybody is part of that community. You have to feel that you are part of the human community, not of just your family unit. With this in mind, we make the offering for the welfare, health, peace and prosperity of everyone.

Being part of humanity

The sahasrarchana has concluded and two thousand offerings were made, one thousand by the representatives of the cosmic power Lakshmi and one thousand by the representatives of the cosmic power Narayana. Within you is also the same cosmic power. Therefore you are also the representative of the intention of humanity to discover peace, solace, support, encouragement, affection, prosperity and contentment. What you have done today, although it is a simple and innocent act, means a lot to the yajna. So thank you for being the representative of humanity today.



Experiencing Purity

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati
8 September 2015, Afternoon



Beyond yoga

The invocation of the Narayanastra has now commenced. The work for the development of the ancient sciences to bring happiness, joy and fulfilment to the human community is a different process from yoga. Therefore this was never done in Ganga Darshan, rather a separate environment has to be created where the ancient arts can be revived. Fifty

years after the establishment of yoga, we are focusing on the establishment of Sannyasa Peeth. This is a step beyond yoga.

For yoga you have to go to Ganga Darshan and for the cultivation of spiritual samskaras you will have to be in this campus. There is a clear separation and distinction between the two. The subject of yoga is purely practical, scientific, physically and psychologically applicable. The other is spiritual, and the spiritual essence is extracted from the ancient traditions that predate all established religions, whether Christianity, Islam, Buddhism or Jainism. We go back to the ancient vedic times when religions did not exist, but laws did exist to ensure that an individual was spiritual in conduct, behaviour, thought and lifestyle.

During the vedic civilization, the spiritual awareness permeated society, just as in this modern day and age it is the material awareness that permeates the consciousness.





In vedic times, it was the spiritual awareness that permeated the human consciousness, even though people were involved actively in the day-to-day affairs of home, family, society, country and the world. This is a beautiful aspect of the vedic civilization where the material and the spiritual are not seen as separate. We are not trying to bring back the ancient civilization; we are trying to look into the teachings that inspired the ancient civilizations to attain greater heights than what we are able to attain today.

Through Sannyasa Peeth an effort is being made to revive the ancient tradition of wisdom, lifestyle, behaviour, morality and ethics. These create a better world by fostering a virtuous and positive life, in which one has the inbuilt ability to deal with the negative, the stressful and the distracting situations, and explore the human creativity to attain the luminosity of the self.

This Narayanastra ritual, which is going to take place now, is one of those ancient rituals which was last conducted during the age of Sri Krishna at the time of the Mahabharata war. The power of this invocation is such that anybody who stands against life is destroyed. The example of this is given in the scripture of *Mahabharata*.



Drop the weapons

During the Mahabharata war, when the Kauravas were losing, they used the power of this mantra as a weapon against the Pandavas and their army. Sri Krishna was on the side of the Pandavas, and he advised them to drop all arms, surrender their arms, remove their armaments, become naked. He said that once they did that, this weapon would become ineffective, it would not be able to kill anybody. This is the story. If you analyze and understand it in a positive, constructive frame of mind and not as mythology, then what do you find in this story? That if we become naked in front of God and drop every kind of pretension, every kind of idiosyncrasy, every kind of mask, then in that pure state there is recognition of the real self. If anything covers the body, then the purity is covered and not visible.

Just as the body covers the mind, the mind covers the purity of the spirit. You know that the spirit is pure, but the actions, the attitudes, the behaviour and the understanding in life is all crooked and distorted, and you are subject to

anger, passion, hatred, greed, jealousy and infatuation. With all these expressions of the mind, you are never able to experience the purity of the self. This situation is anti-life, as it does not allow you to discover your own luminosity, your own pure nature. The mind becomes an impediment to discover the dimension of the spirit. The mind keeps you grounded in its own dimension and does not allow you to rise beyond it into the dimension of the spirit. The mind is the weapon against God, since the mind always takes you away from that purity and luminosity, subjecting you to the attractions and hypnosis of the material world.

The Narayanastra mantra, in the tradition, is used to pacify and calm the mind, so that the mind is not against the discovery of luminosity and vibrancy in the spiritual realm. A balance is created between the external life and the spiritual life. The power of the Narayanastra is to still and subdue the ego and the negative expressions of the mind, so that you are able to drop all masks, become naked, realize your true essence and discover your own luminosity.

The Narayana Astra Yajna has started already, the pandits are chanting those mantras, but they don't have the





microphone. As per the system of this particular invocation, only the chanters are to hear what they are saying. The public, which is the witness, does not understand what is being pronounced and chanted. Yet there is an experience of the energy being generated by the pandits while they are chanting.

Swami Sivananda: like Jesus, Krishna, Rama, Buddha
On this day, the founder and inspirer of our tradition, our grandfather guru, Swami Sivananda was born. He was born on 8th September 1887 and left his body on 14th July 1963.



His life was an incredible one. He was born in the family of a powerful saint of South India, Appaya Dikshitar, who belonged to the Shaivite tradition, who was a follower of Shiva. This saint had a dream one night, in which he saw the image of Shiva appear before him and say, "I shall be born in your family seven generations from now," and in the seventh generation, Swami Sivananda took birth. Thus, Swami Sivananda's birth was prophesied, and it can also be found in the scripture *Srimad Bhagavat*, written thousands of years ago. There is a beautiful passage in *Srimad Bhagavat* saying that on the banks of the Tamraparni river in South India, Shiva will incarnate.

Right from his childhood, Swami Sivananda displayed samskaras that were not ordinary, but entrenched in a spiritual perception of life and humanity. He became a medical doctor and went to Malaysia to serve in a plantain factory. There also, while living as a medical practitioner, he displayed a rare compassion, kindness and generosity. Those who knew him there say that he had time for everyone, no matter when they went to him. His office hours were not limited to eight hours in the clinic, but twenty-four hours, day and night, people were free to knock on his door and take his advice and treatment. Nevertheless, he lived the life of a medical doctor; his sannyasa samskaras had not yet called him until one particular incident took place.

A visiting sannyasi gave Swami Sivananda a small booklet called *Thoughts on God*. Receiving that booklet was the catalyst





for Swami Sivananda to leave his thriving medical practice and walk the path of sannyasa. He gave away everything in his house as charity to the fellow workers of the factory, bought a ticket back to India, landed in Madras, went to the railway station, called one of his friends there and said, "Please carry my good wishes and affection to my family, I am not going back to them. I am leaving them for good since a greater family is calling me." Saying these words, he left and never looked back. Then he came to the Himalayas.

Everything that happened with him was miraculous. He arrived in Rishikesh searching for his master. He was tired, so he sat down under a tree and closed his eyes. While he was resting under the midday sun, suddenly he felt a shadow crossing his face. He opened his eyes, and saw a sannyasi standing before him. The sannyasi asked, "What are you doing here?" Swami Sivananda answered, "I am searching for a guru." The sannyasi said, "I am your guru, I am here to initiate you." He initiated him into the Dashnami order of sannyasa under that tree, giving him two geru dhotis and the name Swami Sivananda. When Swami Sivananda asked, "What should I do now?" he said, "Purify yourself,

meditate and realize." These three words were taken by Swami Sivananda to his heart and soul. He lived his life following the instructions of his master, whom he never saw again in his lifetime. He had seen his guru for only ten minutes at the time of initiation, yet the connection was so strong and powerful that it established him in the highest realization of spiritual life and he became world-renowned as Swami Sivananda.

Once I asked Sri Swamiji, "What was Swami Sivananda like?" for I have never seen him. I had darshan of Swami Sivananda as a child, but I was too young to have any memory of it. He blessed me but I don't recall that moment; I sat on his lap but I don't recall that moment. So I asked my guru what Swami Sivananda, my grandfather, was like. Sri Swamiji replied that he was like Christ, very kind, compassionate and caring. He said that he was like Krishna, very practical, he knew how to apply knowledge in the right place at the right time, he lived practical wisdom. He said that he was like Rama, he knew what he could do to help others, he knew what his limitations and boundaries were, and he respected those limitations and boundaries yet they did not deter him from expanding continuously. He said that Swami Sivananda was like Buddha, he was the epitome of peace; anybody who came to him with a confused, conflicted, angry or agitated nature, would instantly fall silent, become quiet and peaceful in his presence.

I asked Sri Swamiji which trait he saw most highlighted in Swami Sivananda, what did he perceive as his innate quality. He said that everybody has an objective in their spiritual life; some people have the objective to be self-realized, some people to meditate and attain samadhi, some people to express their creativity, some people to discover peace. Each one has an aspiration according to their choice and like. In the life of Swami Sivananda, the effort was to attain internal purity, harmony and balance. That is what he tried for in his life, and that was the instruction he gave to all his followers and disciples: try to cultivate the faculties of head, heart and



hands through yoga, explore the faculties of intelligence; feelings, sentiments and emotions; and action, involvement, participation and creativity. Discover the possibility and the potential that lies in head, heart and hands, and live a life in which you do good to everyone.

Swami Sivananda's principles were to serve, to love, to give, to purify, to be good, do good, to meditate and to realize. These were the eight principles that he followed in his life, starting from serving to loving, to giving, to purification, to being good, to doing good, to meditating, and then ultimately realizing the oneness in everything and everyone. To come to this point, all his efforts and sadhanas were towards attaining inner purification.

This is what Swami Satyananda said to me about Swami Sivananda, and after this I never asked him again. He had given me all the answers about his guru and my grandfather; he had told me everything about him in these little sentences.

When I reflect today on the life of Swami Sivananda, I see that he lived a life of purity, integrity and honesty, he lived a life of compassion, kindness and love, and he lived a life which was practical, ethical and spiritual. From him our tradition comes forth. He is our inspirer, the grandfather who laid the foundations for discovering divinity in our material life, and it is his birthday we are celebrating today.



Appreciating Life

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati
9 September 2015, Morning



Welcome to the second day of the Lakshmi-Narayana Maha-yajna, which has had the most auspicious beginning. Narayana willed it to commence on the 7th and the first invocations were done in complete silence and solitude, with only Narayana and Lakshmi, the pandits and myself. There were no other frequencies disturbing the waves here.

What you are emitting from your mind is waves, your thoughts are in the form of waves, your emotions and feelings are in the form of waves. There are pranic waves, electromagnetic waves, bio-plasmic waves, and there are also mental waves. When a thousand people are thinking, there are a

thousand interferences also. That day, without any interference, the installation was done and the sankalpa was taken.

Another auspicious sign manifested yesterday. After the conclusion of the yajna in the evening, there was an interesting formation in the sky. The clouds were in the form of a roaring lion, with the sun in the mouth of the lion, so that the sunrays seemed to be coming out from the mouth of the lion. It was as if the yajna mantras were being chanted from the lion's mouth. It was beautiful, and an indication of the power and effect of mantra.

Yesterday we also celebrated the birthday of our paramguru, Sri Swami Sivananda, and he is the source from which our tradition starts. Swami Satyananda was a disciple of





Swami Sivananda, he continued the teachings, he propagated and developed the teachings, but the source of the teachings that we follow is Swami Sivananda.

The teachings of atmashuddhi

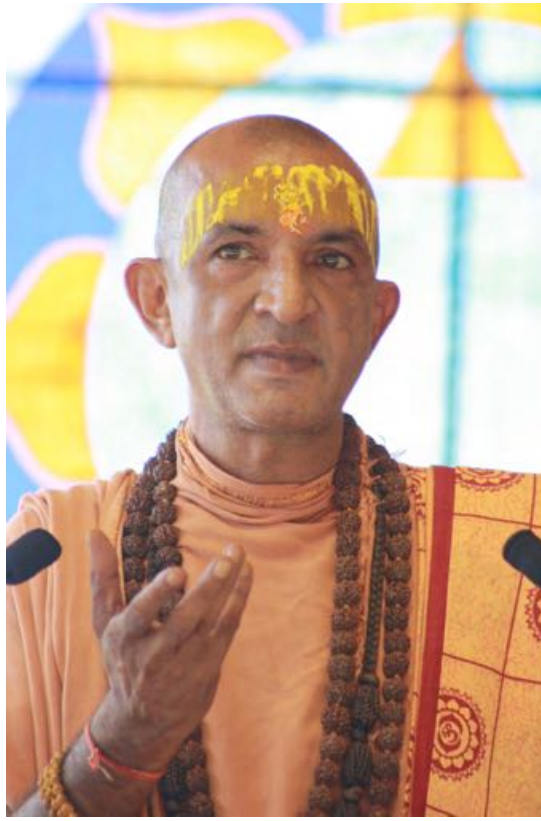
Swami Sivananda had only one aim in life. When people come to spiritual life, they have different aspirations. Some come with the idea of attaining moksha, enlightenment, self-realization, some come with the idea of experiencing samadhi, some come with the idea of encountering God in their dreams. Everybody has a different idea of what they want to experience as their spiritual attainment. Swami Sivananda made a very simple sankalpa for his life. He wanted to experience *atmashuddhi*, purification of the self.

Why did Swami Sivananda choose atmashuddhi, self-purification, as the aim of his efforts in yoga and spiritual life, why not self-realization, God-realization, samadhi or moksha? If you think about it logically and study the sequence given in the scriptures as well, then you will discover that the main focus of a sannyasin and a spiritual aspirant is to cultivate the state of purity inside, and not to search for God.

A blind man may have the desire to see the sun, but that is not his need; his need is to acquire sight. Once the sight is acquired then he will be able to see not only the sun but the entire creation in its multi-coloured glory. Need and desire are two different things. The need is acquisition of eyes and then the desire to see the sun is fulfilled. In your life, you put desires first and needs second, and you chase your desires without having the skills to attain them. You don't have the eyesight but you want to see the sun, and you go from ashram to ashram, guru to guru, hoping that you will get instant shaktipat, instant peace, instant moksha.

Nothing in life is attained instantly. That is not the nature of creation. In creation, everything takes time to grow, develop and mature. We are part of that srishti, that prakriti, that cosmic nature, so nothing is instant. Even God, when he incarnated as



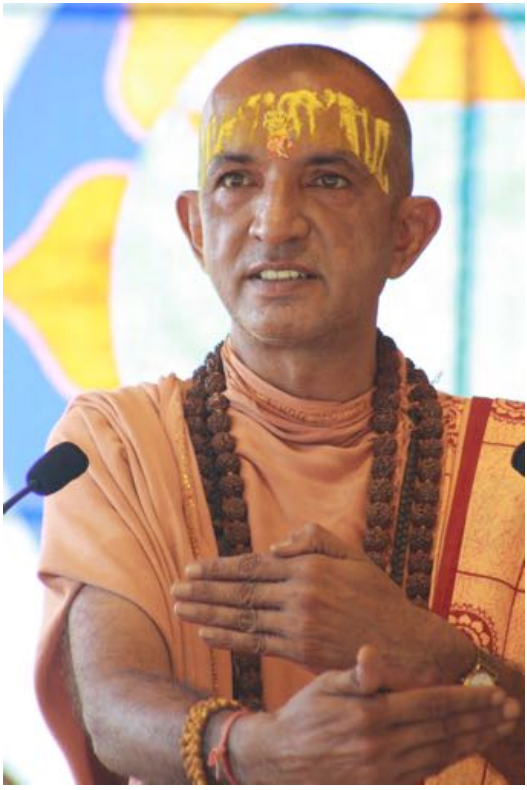


an avatara, had to live his age. He did not come as the Lord Almighty from day one. He lived the life of a child, a young person, an adult, and when the destiny unfolded, then he became active. Until then he was an ordinary person.

In the same manner, in your search for spiritual awareness, you have to give yourself time. Giving time does not mean that you let go of efforts. Efforts have to be continuous and constant. If you plant a seed in the ground and take it out every day to see if it is sprouting or not, then the seed will never sprout. If you leave the seed in the ground, water it and provide other nourishments on time, then it will eventually sprout one day. If you keep taking it out every day to look at it,

it is not going to sprout ever. The same principle applies with your spiritual effort too. Your intention, sankalpa and effort have to be cared for. That is where the focus has to be, in doing things at the right time, in the right manner, and not in what you can achieve by doing. Therefore it is said in spiritual life, "Don't have any expectation, but persevere in your effort."

Don't have any expectation, don't connect with the vasanas of the mind, the desires of the mind, but know that 'This is my aim and I have to keep on walking', and keep on walking, making the right effort, doing the right sadhana, having the right intention and the right attitude. That is your achievement. Moksha is not your achievement, but correctness of attitude, action and behaviour is your achievement. The rest happens spontaneously.





This idea and instruction was given by Swami Sivananda. He said, "Self-purification is a must for spiritual growth." With this, he took the idea of yoga to another level. His philosophy begins with 'serve'. The second precept is 'love', the third is 'give', the fourth is 'purify', the fifth is 'be good', the sixth is 'do good', the seventh is 'meditate', and the eighth is 'realize'. These comprise the eightfold path of Sivananda's yoga. If you can understand this sequence, you will discover that it comes after the yoga of Patanjali.

Patanjali's eight limbs consist of yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana, and samadhi. After this attainment, this transformation of the human personality, the interactive nature is seen in the teachings of Swami Sivananda. First you improve yourself and then you come out to serve and improve the outer environment. To do that, there has to be attainment of shuddhi, purity.

Purity takes place at many levels: physical, psychological, spiritual, as well as social. Before understanding the idea of purity, one has to understand what is impurity. Impurities are identified in Sanskrit as mal and vikara. *Mal* means dirt and *vikara* means altered condition of the natural quality.



Levels of impurity

Physical impurity

The vikaras that change the harmony of the body, the health of the body, have been identified in Ayurveda as *tridosha*, the three humours: vata, pitta and kapha. *Vata* is gas, *pitta* is bile, and *kapha* is mucus. These three, when not in harmony with each other, give birth to an altered, disturbed physical condition which leads you to experience illness and disease. The tridosha have to be balanced at the physical level to attain purification.

The second aspect that has to be balanced at the physical level is diet, for what you eat makes you what you are. The spiritual traditions have classified diet in three categories: sattwic, rajasic and tamasic. Tamasic is that which makes the body and its systems sluggish, lethargic and dull. Rajasic is that which stimulates the body, the nerves and the organs. Sattwic is that which maintains the harmony of the body. Therefore, sattwic diet is recommended so that there is a feeling of lightness, vitality, vibrancy and health.

The third is the cleansing of toxins from the body through the hatha yoga practices of purification. The accumulated toxins affect the behaviour of digestion and other organs

such as the pancreas, the kidneys, the liver. Therefore, detoxification of the body has to happen through hatha yoga. This is the physical component of attaining purity.

Psychological impurity

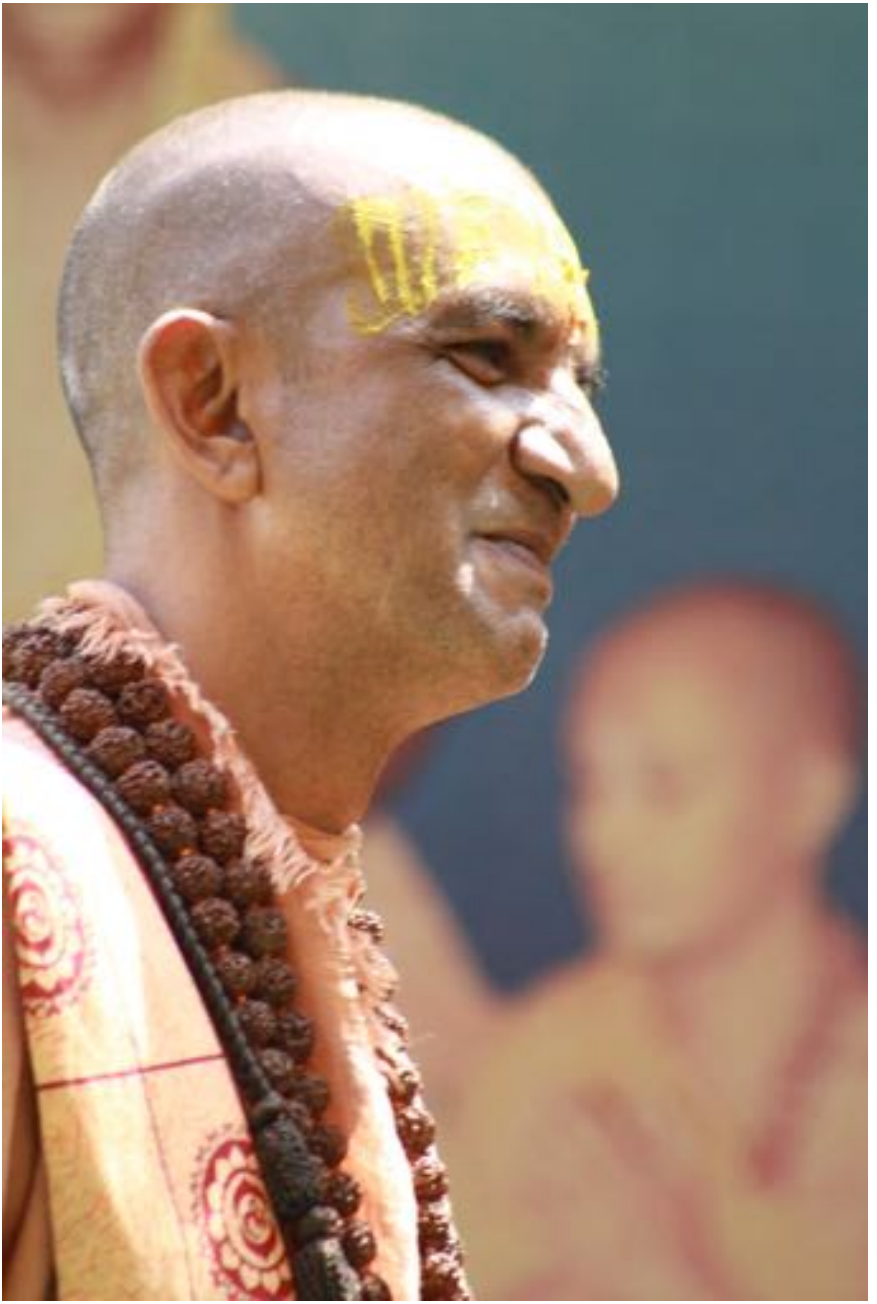
What taints your psychological personality? The six 'friends' with whom you were born: *kama*, passions and desires; *krodha*, aggression and anger; *lobha*, greed; *moha*, infatuation; *mada*, arrogance; *matsarya*, envy and jealousy. These conditions disturb the harmony and purity of mind, emotions and sentiments, and you are expressing these six conditions every moment.

Sometimes you are angry, sometimes dejected, sometimes happy, sometimes unhappy, sometimes envious, sometimes cranky, sometimes you blindly push your own ambitions and agendas. You are never in control of your destructive mental behaviour, which is the cause of inner psychological and mental disturbance.

Spiritual impurity

Spiritual impurity is defined by the expression of the wrong *samskaras*, impressions. With the right samskaras there is spiritual development and with the wrong samskaras there





is spiritual deterioration. Most people are in the dimension of the wrong samskaras. In this material dimension all samskaras are material and not spiritual. All connections are external and not internal, all search for happiness and peace is external and nothing internal. The samskaras are associated with the senses and desires, so there is no clarity between what is samskara, what is desire, and what is action. This is a psychic and spiritual crisis. The luminosity of the spirit is covered and tainted by these gross material samskaras.

Follow the sequence

The peace and harmony of the mind is tainted by the influence of the six associates of the mind, the purity of the body is affected by not knowing how you can live a better life, and these conditions accumulate the mal and vikara. Mal is the dust that covers the surface. Vikara is the impressions, ideas or behaviours that change your perceptions and deteriorate them so they are not positive anymore, instead they become destructive, tamasic and negative. With this condition in life, one hopes to attain enlightenment? In this state you will never attain any benefit of yoga.

I have been involved with yoga for over fifty years, and I have seen meditators meditating for decades, I have seen yoga practitioners practising their asana and pranayama for decades. If I ask them whether they have developed any ability to control the spikes in behaviour, they reply, "No." They are still subject to the same stresses, tensions and frustrations of family, society, body, mind, ambition, desire, greed, everything. They have not been able to connect with the spiritual nature.

They are practising meditation yet they are not connected with the spiritual nature, they are practising yoga yet they are not aware of the spiritual nature. Therefore everything becomes an external act and no change takes place internally. That is the situation of spiritual aspirants all over the world, and it is because they don't follow the sequence that has been given.

The process that has been defined is clear: first you have to experience purity inside, then you have to give direction



to your intention, and then you have to focus on the journey which you undertake to develop that spiritual awareness. This is also the teaching of Swami Sivananda.

Beyond the physical yoga

Swami Sivananda was a practical person, therefore he said to his disciples and sannyasins to give yoga to society at large, to teach them asana and pranayama, hatha yoga, raja yoga, mantra yoga, nada yoga, kriya yoga, kundalini yoga, as practices. However, he also said that these yogas are not going to help anyone manage their daily life, as they have to go one step beyond the practices, beyond the physical involvement, to an awareness of their internal behaviour and nature.

Today there are so many yogis practising yoga, but most of them are not aware of their inner behaviour and nature. Many try to impose a sense of holiness and purity on themselves yet they have never worked on themselves. Recently, the International Day of Yoga was celebrated in which two hundred countries participated. It was a big event. When I ask the teachers who were teaching yoga on the International Yoga Day, "What is yoga?" they tell me

the philosophy of yoga. That yoga is the means of attaining perfection and enlightenment in life. Then I ask them, "How much have you studied of yoga?" They say, "Well, the best known book is the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali." I say, "You did not answer my question. I asked: how much have you studied of yoga, not which book exists on yoga." They say, "Oh, we know of Patanjali's yoga but we have not read it." Then I ask them, "How much yoga do you do?" They say, "Oh, we do a little bit of asana, a little bit of pranayama."

Finally I tell them, "You are talking of a philosophy that yoga leads to perfection. You don't know the subject matter of yoga since you have never studied any book, you have only heard of one book by Patanjali. You are teaching and practising only a few asanas. Yet you expect to attain the result that Patanjali has spoken of? You expect your students to attain that high realization that you speak of, but you don't have the faintest idea how to attain it, so what kind of a yoga teacher are you?"

The contradiction in aspirants

That applies to all of you also. You are in the same boat, you talk philosophy, you practise asana and pranayama,





and you have not studied any book on yoga. This is an illogical approach, and therefore you have not been able to experience the benefits that yoga speaks of. There are rare people who are willing to follow the discipline of yoga, but many who are willing to follow the whims of the mind.

People come to me and say, "Swamiji, can you give me a sadhana?" I give them a sadhana, and after three months they write saying, "Along with the sadhana you gave, I have been doing this and this, and I am not receiving the right experience or benefit which I was expecting." I tell them, "You haven't done what you were asked to do, so please do not ask for my advice."

This is the big problem with yoga aspirants and spiritual aspirants. They all want realization without managing their minds and emotions, and without attaining that internal purity, whereas Swami Sivananda made it a goal of his life to attain this *shuddhata*, this purity.

Seven stages of purity

Purity is attained in seven stages. It is not one concept, there are seven levels of purity.

1. Shuchi

The first level is known as shuchi. Shuchi is derived from the Sanskrit root 'shuch', from which also comes the word 'shoka'. *Shoka* means sorrow, so the root of shuchi, the first level of purity, and shoka, sorrow, is the same. What is the meaning of this? What is the similarity between purification and sorrow? *Shuchi* is to be interpreted as the process that removes sorrow, it has to be seen as a method to remove sorrow of any type.

First there has to be an intention to remove the sorrow, and then to remove any kind of discomfort arising from the presence of impurity. If your digestion is affected and your stomach is churning in circles, the first experience is sorrow. You say, "My stomach is aching. What do I do?" That identification gives you the experience of sorrow. The identification with pain and suffering brings in sorrow, and shuchi is elimination of this sorrow.

2. Nirmal

The second level is nirmal; *mal* means impurity and *nir-mal* means without impurity. At this level you have to make the effort to remove the impurity which is present. It is something you are able to see; for example, when you walk into a dirty room, what



do you do? You pick up a broom and clean the room. You are seeing the dirt, you are seeing where it is accumulated and that is the area you are cleaning. That is known as nirmal, removal of impurities which are there in you at present.

3. Vimal

The third level of purity is vimal. 'Vi' is a prefix meaning 'opposite', so *vimal* means cultivating the opposite of the impurity. It is like the cultivation of *pratipaksha bhavana*, the opposite thought. If there is impurity, then don't identify with the impurity but with the opposite of impurity, the good. Don't go towards the bad, but cultivate the opposite which eradicates the bad as it emerges as a quality. That is vimal, the third stage.

4. Shuddhi

The fourth is shuddhi. *Shuddhi* means to create a state of inner purity, balance and harmony. The good that you identified in vimal has to be deepened now. It is like expanding the ratio in nadi shodhana. When you practise nadi shodhana pranayama, at first you do the ratio 1:1, but later on you develop it into 2:2, then 3:3, 4:4. In the same way, you keep on gradually enlarging that state of purity, and that is shuddhi. It is not enough to remove it once and say, "I have cleared it." You have to enlarge that feeling of purity and take it into other areas of your nature, behaviour, mind, expression, sentiment, thought. That is the fourth state: shuddhi, shuddhata.

5. Vishuddhi

The fifth level is vishuddhi. Vishuddhi is also a chakra. From shuddhi in the fifth level, we come to vishuddhi. It indicates that now a specific clearing has to take place. First the general clearing was done and now specific clearing has to happen. That is the fifth level of purity.

6. Pavitra

The sixth level is pavitra. The word 'pavitra' has the same root as the word pavak, which means fire. *Pavitra* means





purification and *pavak* means fire, so just as fire burns everything, in the state of pavitra your prana shakti burns all the mal. Your mental energies burn away all the negativity, they become luminous like fire and remain unaffected by whatever is happening.

The word *punya*, virtue, also comes from the same root as pavitra and pavak. This is interesting, as the state of purity in pavitra is more sattwic in nature. When the form of purity becomes more sattwic, then you become virtuous in life. If sattwa does not come into life then you are not virtuous, you are clean but you are not yet virtuous, you still have the same traits and mind-set to deal with. Virtue is a positive, optimistic behaviour of the mind, in which you are expressing the best of yourself. That is *pavitrata*, the sattwic clearing. Pavitrata is an experience; in previous levels an effort was made to attain purity, but now purity becomes an experience.

7. Ujjwal

The seventh level of purity is *ujjwal*, which means bright, shiny, luminous, squeaky clean. Here the personality becomes bright and shiny.

These are the seven levels of purity as indicated in the spiritual traditions. The methods of perfecting each level also exist, but right now we are only defining the levels so you may understand that merely eradicating something from the mind is not attainment of purity, but working through all the subtle expressions and dimensions of human nature leads you to the experience of luminosity and purity.

This was the attempt of Swami Sivananda: to experience purity in his own life as mandated by the rishis and yogis of the past and as instructed in the scriptures. In the life of our paramguru, we do see that purity. Ultimately, that is the purpose: we have to go back to our pristine condition and remove all the superimpositions, all the masks that we put on. We have to discover our pure and pristine nature, not the tainted nature. The discovery of the pure and pristine nature is realizable with the attainment of purity and not through asana





and pranayama, not through pratyahara and dharana, not even through meditation. This was the teaching of Swami Sivananda.

Worship of life

From this year, two yajnas are happening simultaneously during the time of Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna: the Lakshmi-Narayana Yajna and the Narayana Astra Yajna. According to the story in the Mahabharata, the Kauravas invoked the power of Narayana to destroy the Pandavas and shot the missile called Narayanastra, the weapon of Narayana. The missile started destroying everything and everyone. Sri Krishna advised the Pandavas, "Don't fight it, just drop all your weapons, remove your body armour, remove your head armour, become naked, and you will be saved. The Narayana astra attacks people who it finds holding arms in front of

it and willing to fight it." The entire army of the Pandavas put down all their armament and armour, then the missile became ineffective, and they were saved.

If this story is linked with life, then what do we find? Narayana represents life, and anybody who is anti-life is an enemy of Narayana. Anybody who wants to destroy life is an enemy of Narayana, and he destroys them. It has been said:

> *Jale Vishnu sthale Vishnu, Vishnurvishnu parvat mastake,*
> *Jwala mala kule Vishnu, sarvam Vishnumayam jagat.*
>
> Lord Vishnu is in water, Vishnu is in the earth, Vishnu is on the mountaintop and Vishnu is in the flames of fire. Thus this entire universe is indeed pervaded by Lord Vishnu.

Vishnu represents the idea of life, and if you want to destroy life, then you have to confront Vishnu.

In your life, what are the arms that are anti-life? Ego is one arm that does not allow life to express its own nature, creativity, samskaras and karmas. Agitations of the vrittis is another one, as they don't allow you to focus on something beautiful. They keep distractions around you so that you are





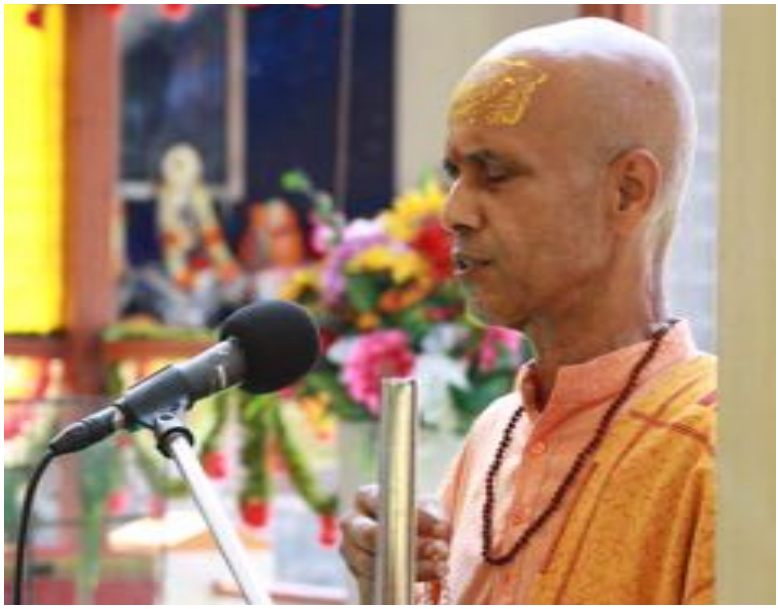
never able to focus. These are the negative traits of mind which are anti-life. The negativity, the tamasic behaviour, the jealousy, the hatred, the anger that you have for other people, the frustration and guilt that you have for yourself, these are all anti-life conditions. Due to these, you die a premature death.

If you are able to maintain a peaceful nature and mind, then life enhances, as you are worshipping life. You are not worshipping the thorns that prick your life, you are worshipping the beauty, the Satyam, the Shivam, and the Sundaram. This is the aim of human life: the discovery of *Satyam*, *Shivam* and *Sundaram*. The truth, auspiciousness and beauty inherent in life has to be discovered. Anybody who is against these three is an enemy of Narayana and Narayana destroys them.

The only way you can survive the onslaught of Narayana is by dropping everything that you have on you, throwing up the arms and saying, "I surrender," you are naked, "I surrender, I have nothing on me." Then Narayana says, "All right, you have nothing, you are living your life untainted, continue in that manner, without putting on different colours and masks to look different, be your natural self." That is the state of purity, and the purpose of the Narayana Astra Yajna is to take one closer to that state of purity.

You are here for three hours, so remember that you don't have to remain seated during the entire procedure without moving unless you want to. That is your choice. It is not a compulsion of yajna. In yajna, everything is free. You can move around, walk,sing, dance, but do not gossip. Maintain your silence. We are in an environment of invocation and worship, therefore maintain your silence and focus, and at the same time be free.





Cultivating positive seeds

We have completed the performance of Lakshmi and Narayana havan, done with the chanting of *Sri Sukta* and *Purusha Sukta*. These two invocations are two of the most ancient vedic invocations, and their chanting bestows happiness, peace, prosperity, contentment and *saumyata*, sobriety.

Now the Narayanastra havan will begin, which will invoke the shakti of Narayana. The shakti is the weapon to alter, change and transform. The old has to be eradicated for the new to come forth. The shell has to break open for the new sprout to emerge. People don't want to break their shell yet they want the sprout to emerge. That is the hypocrisy of human life. However, with the grace of Narayana this also becomes a natural inclination, vritti and intention. That is the power of the Narayanastra mantras, to cultivate a positive seed in the dimension of the deeper mind that allows one to experience the three qualities of Satyam, Shivam and Sundaram. These are the inherent qualities of Narayana, and the connection with these is the purpose of life and of sadhana.

As per the tradition of the Narayana Astra Yajna, when the pandits chant the mantras of the yajna, you will not be able to hear it. At that time we will do a mantra anusthana with the mantra *Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya*. This will be your sadhana to be part of the yajna sankalpa even if you do not hear its mantras. We will do three malas of the mantra: one for Lakshmi, one for Narayana, and the third one for the shakti of Narayana which is being invoked. Follow the speed and the rhythm when you chant, focus on the vibration of the mantra, and make a silent prayer for acquiring the grace of Narayana to enhance the beauty and creativity in life.

The purpose of mantra

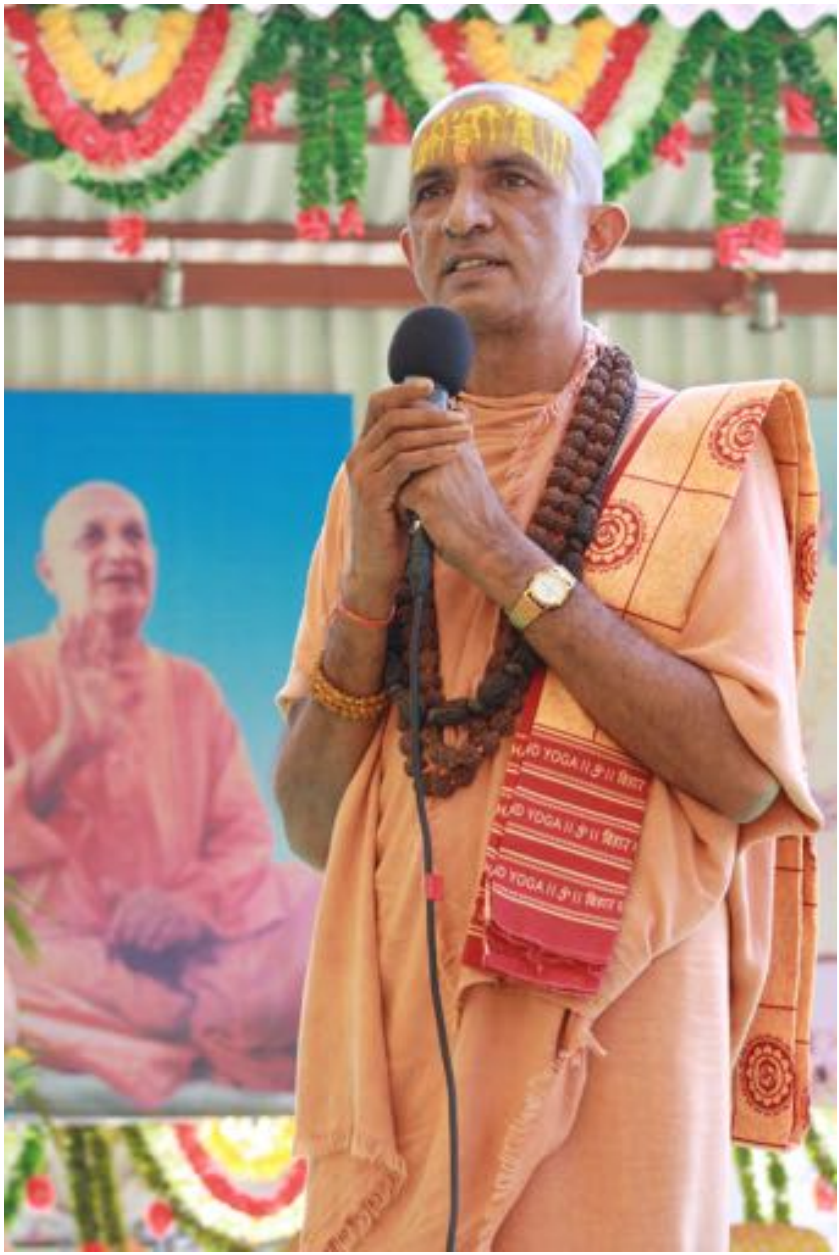
In the yogic spiritual tradition, mantras are used as internal practices, but in the Indian religious spiritual traditions, mantras are used as external practices. This does not negate or accept one or the other form of application of mantras, rather it is an indication of the two aspects of mantras. One aspect is to manage the agitations of the chitta vrittis and the other is to create a form in the consciousness of the power that is being invoked by repeating the mantra.



What is a mantra? Mantras are made up of vowels and consonants, which independently have no meaning except that they are part of an alphabet body. Language first begins with letters which have no meaning at all. Then these letters combine, the aksharas combine, to create a word. That word defines a meaning to the collection of letters, and then it is spoken through speech. If speech were not there, the word would not be spoken.

Speech emerges to vocalize, to express the intent of the word through the combination of consonants and vowels. When the speech vocalizes the word, an image is created in the mind. The idea which was there in the word is transferred to the mind as an image, and you see the image of the word. For example the word 'animal', a-n-i-m-a-l. These are all consonants and vowels, separately they don't mean anything, but together they create an idea: animal. Yet, that idea is not experienced until you say it through your speech. Then it creates an image in your mind of an animal. Therefore, what is spoken is a flow of consonants and vowels coming together to create an idea. As you speak, they create an image, an identity; they give you an awareness of a quality, a form, a name. This is applicable to mantras as well.

When you have been through this process and continue chanting the mantra, it intensifies the density of mind. What do I mean by the phrase 'density of mind'? Right now there is air all around, but you cannot see in which direction it is flowing. If you light an incense stick and hold it, the smoke will provide the indication of the flow of air. The current, the intensity, all this will be known when you see the smoke moving in the air. In the absence of the smoke, although the air is moving in different patterns, you are not seeing it. What makes the flow or the current of air visible? A denser form of air, which is smoke. In the same manner, right now the mind is in a state of dissipation, the vrittis are all active, they are pulling from one sense object to another sense object. As the vrittis pull you, an idea, a desire, a need, an awareness, an understanding is created.





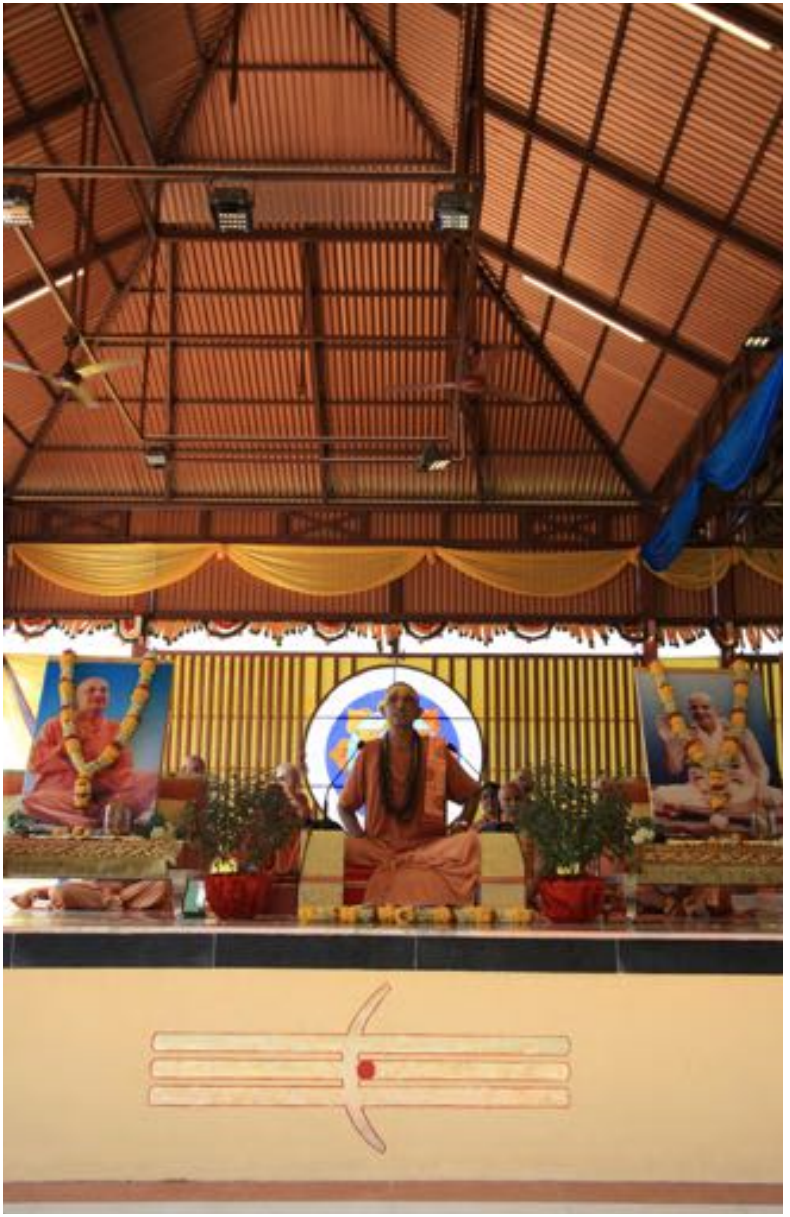
There is so much happening in your brain every moment. You don't even realize the amount of information that is going in your brain every second. A lot is filtered out before you become aware of what you have observed, received, understood and experienced through your senses, brain and mind. There is a big gap between the moment of experience and the moment of realization, due to the filtering. Billions of things are being processed every moment and you are aware of one, two or three. That is the dissipation of vrittis, and you have to catch that mental activity so your mind does not go from one thing to another.

The mind moves from one sense experience to another for the satisfaction of the senses. When you experience a sense object, you are identifying with it. The moment you identify with a sense object, you are seeking sensory gratification. There are people who seek sensory gratification from guru, not spiritual gratification. There are people who seek emotional gratification or intellectual gratification. Each person seeks gratification in an area they believe will give them some happiness, some fulfilment. Therefore the connection that you have with your God or guru is to seek gratification in areas where you lack it.

You think you are spiritual, but you are not. You are only seeking gratification. If you were spiritual, you would be connected with each and every person with love and compassion. How can that spirituality remain confined inside you while with other people you are cranky, angry, jealous, hateful, and not able to communicate? In such a state if you say "I am spiritual," it is a fallacy. Spirituality is not an individual, personal and internal experience. Spirituality is an expression of what you become. If you are cranky the whole day, you are an expression of what you have become. If you are jealous the whole day, you are an expression of what you have become. If you are compassionate and kind, you are reflecting what you have become. If you are happy and joyous, you are reflecting what you have become. Therefore, ask yourself: do you want to be a bad reflection of life or do you want to be a good reflection of life?

Mantra helps in discovering this by pacifying the mental jumps from one sense object to another sense object. For the ten minutes that you focus on your mantra, perhaps five times your mind disappears and you lose awareness of the mantra, but an effort is definitely there so that the mantra binds your mind and keeps it focused. The agitated chitta





vrittis become more peaceful and quieter. For a moment in those ten minutes, you experience a different you, a peaceful you, which you have not felt even in your sleep. Even in your sleep or when you go to bed at night, your mind is agitated. However, when you are practising your mantra, your mind is focused for those ten minutes. Agitations are cut by ninety percent. You experience the ten percent in the form of missing the moment: suddenly you realize that you have gone someplace and you forgot to do your mantra, so you pull yourself back and again become aware of the mantra. Then



again you realize that you have gone someplace else, and again you pull yourself back. In this way, mental pacification, *mananat trayate*, happens through mantra.

Mantra also gives form to that power which is being invoked. If you say the mantra *Om Namah Shivaya*, the combination of the vowels and consonants is such that it is creating the image of Shiva, and creating an emotion, a feeling, in connection with Shiva. When you chant it, you develop the imagination or visualization of Shiva in the form of auspiciousness and perfection, in the form of

a power that transforms your lower life into a higher life, your material life into a spiritual life. If you say the mantra *Om Namo Narayanaya* or *Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya*, the collection of the consonants and vowels has created an idea. As you say it, that idea, that energy is taking shape in your mind. Sometimes you can even see the shape in the form of light, luminosity, angel, guru, deity, an abstract image or an experience. Then people say, "I had that beautiful experience once, but I am not having it anymore."

At that moment, everything had converged together to give you that beautiful experience, and that convergence of mind does not come about because you will it, but because there is strength in it to experience and express the Satyam, the Shivam and the Sundaram. There is appreciation of beauty and not possessiveness of or demanding beauty. There is appreciation of goodness, but not demanding that 'this goodness be directed only to me'. There is appreciation of truth, not that it becomes a medium to separate you from the person who has told you the truth.

Thus, you have to become aware of the effect of the mantra, the passivity of the mind, and allow the emergence of the positive, the sattwic expressions of your deeper mind. Don't block it by superimposing your ambitions, thoughts and ideas. Allow it to develop, then your feelings will become universal, unconditional and pure. Your thoughts will become universal, unconditional and pure. Your expressions will become universal, unconditional and pure. That is the effect of the mantra, if one follows it in the right manner.

Here we are seeing two applications of the mantra: the internal and the external. The internal is to pacify. The external is to invoke and give form to the concept, to the sankalpa, to the power of the mantra. When you chant the mantra sitting where you are, it supports and intensifies the mantra at the vedi.

So now we continue with the mantra sadhana and offer it to the power of Narayana, the transformative and the sustaining power, the positive and the constructive power.

A Thousand Offerings

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati
9 September 2015, Afternoon

Now we begin the *sahasrarchana*, the thousand offerings, while we chant the thousand names of Lakshmi and the thousand names of Narayana. With each *Swaha*, we make the offering.



The positive intention

While the sahasrarchana was going on, for some time nobody came to me, and I was able to be with my own thoughts, as I watched and observed all of you. I was watching the people who were doing the sahasrarchana, the children sitting in





their places, the guests who have come from long distances, I was watching the expressions on the faces, I was watching the intensity and the attentiveness in the aradhana, and hats off to all of you.

Those people who are totally averse to heat, who are used to the comforts of air-conditioning, they were sitting here, in the sun, in the heat, chanting, listening, offering, singing. What is that if not your conviction, if not your belief, if not



your faith! And that is certainly salute-worthy. That is the spirit which has brought you here, whether you are actively participating or just a witness, a child or an elderly person.

The intention that brought you here is the intention of positivity and purity, the intention of identifying with the

spiritual nature and experiencing another environment. In whichever way you define that intention, it is definitely different from the normal materialistic intentions and inclinations that you normally have 364 days of the year. This is the conviction, the belief, the learning, the understanding that we are all trying to acquire, and that faith, that belief automatically makes one bow down the head to all of you, so a very special *Hari Om Tat Sat*, for being what you are, right now. When you come to me with your problems, anxieties, worries, hang-ups, phobias and insecurities, that is another story, but right now what is visible is the positive aspect that is being radiated from you, the spiritual nature with which you are identifying, and that is a beautiful thing to see.

Now that the archana is over, the offering is made, you will be guided to the Lakshmi-Narayana Peeth. The mothers will offer the red vermillion, sindur, in front of Lakshmi. The males will offer the chandan, sandalwood, in front of Narayana. Then we do parikrama and arati, and conclude the day.



New Beginnings

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati
10 September 2015, Morning



We shall begin with the invocation of Lakshmi and Narayana, and after that will be the anusthana of Narayanastra. During the Lakshmi-Narayana invocation, while the *Sri Sukta* and the *Purusha Sukta* are being chanted, initiations into jignasu will be given. Tomorrow initiation in mantra will be given.

Being serious, sincere and committed

Previously the sannyasa initiation that was given was yoga sannyasa: you were given the initiation and told to propagate yoga, you were not told to live a sannyasin's life. You could

wear the geru clothes if you wanted to. It was your choice. You decided to take karma sannyasa or poorna sannyasa and involve in yoga. That was the mandate that Sri Swamiji gave us too. However, with the establishment of Sannyasa Peeth, the whole system is being looked into thoroughly and carefully, since now propagation is over and we have to be sincere, serious and committed to whatever we do. If it is sadhana, we have to be sincere, serious and committed to that; if it is sannyasa we have to be sincere, serious and committed to that; if it is yoga we have to be sincere, serious and committed to that. These are the three words that we have been following since the World Yoga Convention.

In some time we shall have the right training program and system for karma sannyasins and poorna sannyasins as well, so that instead of flirting and exploring on the fringes, they can dive deep into the tradition and explore the ideals and the concept of sannyasa and spiritual life.





Re-organization of yoga and sannyasa is what I have been engaged in since the conclusion of the World Yoga Convention. An announcement was made at that time that the age of propagation is over, and now we have to develop yoga as a subject of life. In this context, after becoming free from active participation in the Bihar School of Yoga and involving myself in the development of Sannyasa Peeth, we have started to conduct some specialized programs and courses to go beyond the regular practice of yoga and explore the depth of yoga.

Most people limit their yoga to a little bit of asana, a little bit of pranayama, yoga nidra when they are tired, and meditation whenever they feel like it. So far, that has been the effort put into yoga by everybody. Now we have to make an effort to explore yoga more deeply and seriously. Sannyasa Peeth has given the opportunity to look into the other dimensions of yoga that are not commonly known, but are needed by the public and society at large.

We have started a program that is held twice every year, the Adhyatma Samskara Sadhana Satra, a nine-day training program for a selected group. The information given during

the Adhyatma Samskara Sadhana course is being published in the series of books called *Yoga Chakra*.

The first book in the *Yoga Chakra* series has been published and it is an important book of the Bihar Yoga tradition, as for the first time it defines the *yoga chakra*, the wheel of yoga, as taught by our guru Sri Swami Satyananda. Sri Swamiji spoke of yoga as hatha yoga, raja yoga and kriya yoga for practice and self-development: hatha yoga for the body and prana, raja yoga for the mind, and kriya yoga for exploring the consciousness and experiencing the spiritual effulgence. All the five koshas are dealt with in these three yogas. Then he spoke of the expressive yoga: karma yoga, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga. For these yogas, for the first time the sequence and the process is being defined.

Many people say, "We don't teach jnana yoga in Satyananda Yoga." You are wrong, we teach jnana yoga but not in the manner that you expect it. You expect self-enquiry in the form of, 'Who am I?' You won't get an answer to that since you don't know who to ask the question. You are asking your tainted and conditioned mind, 'Who am I?' so you won't get the right answer ever. You should ask the free mind, 'Who am I?' then you will get the answer. You should realize that there are progressions and stages of jnana yoga, as well as of bhakti yoga and karma yoga. All the six yogas constitute the wheel of yoga as taught by Swami Satyananda, and understanding them in this perspective is the next generation of yoga teaching. With this, we are developing the prototype for the future development of yoga.

The second book in the *Yoga Chakra* series is in relation to the cultivation of spiritual samskaras in life, in which the foundation is that of yama and niyama. When the terms 'yama' and 'niyama' are used, people think of Patanjali, presuming that he was their discoverer and exponent. However, yamas and niyamas existed before Patanjali and they are many more in number than what is listed in the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali. Books like *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, *Hatharatnavali*, the Yoga Upanishads and others describe





many other yamas and niyamas. These yamas and niyamas relate to lifestyle, whether with respect to hatha yoga, raja yoga, bhakti yoga, karma yoga, jnana yoga.

Every yoga has its own set of yamas and niyamas which help in fulfilling the aspirations of that yoga. Maharshi Patanjali did his thesis on raja yoga, so out of the complex body of yamas and niyamas, he chose only those which he felt were relevant to the attainment of raja yoga. Other yogis have also discovered and applied yamas and niyamas in other yogas. These are being explored now, with *Yoga Chakra* being an attempt to understand the level beyond the physical yoga, indicating the future direction of the teachings of the Bihar Yoga tradition.

Other training programs are also being conducted, such as the one-month Progressive Yoga Vidya Training to take the yoga training and teaching to another level. Only selected people are being allowed into these trainings, as these are not meant for people to open a yoga centre for commercial gain. Only those who have given their life to yoga, who make every effort to live yoga, who have committed themselves 100

percent, are being invited to become the first group of yoga teachers of the new generation, starting this year. This rule does not apply to all the yoga programs that are conducted at BSY, but only to the programs that I conduct myself. There I allow only those who I feel are the right candidates.

Many people have been rejected, and they should not mind it. If your name is not on the list, then you don't have to be sad or angry, rather you should make an effort to improve yourself so that the next year you can again apply. If you are rejected, then again make an effort and apply again after two years, one day you might be accepted. Non-acceptance does not mean that I don't like you. There are many people who think like that, 'Oh! Swamiji doesn't like me so he is not accepting me', no, non-acceptance means that you have to work hard to achieve the first level which will qualify you. Before you move on to the next class, you have to pass one class. I know which class everyone is in, as I have been dealing with each one of you whether for fifty years or five years or five months. Everybody is in my sight: how much they do, what they say, how they live. I have observed this for the last forty years and therefore I am being selective now.





Another program of Sannyasa Peeth is Chaturmas. It is a two-month period of intense activity in sadhana, personal life and social life. It starts from Guru Poornima and goes on to the full moon of September. This is the period of the Indian monsoon, and it is the tradition for all sannyasins to stay in one place during this period and focus on their own spiritual sadhana and also contribute to the welfare of society. For the first time in my life, after having retired from the administration of BSY, I am conducting Chaturmas, and the Lakshmi-Narayana yajna is part of this Chaturmas sadhana.

During the Chaturmas, we have had exposure to various spiritual traditions of the country. There have been several programs in which many artistes and exponents were invited. We have had satsangs where respected sannyasins from different places spoke on spiritual subjects and scriptures. Musicians and singers from different parts of the country have sung and played spiritual music, as the tradition of music in India has always been spiritual. The western influence has come only in the last thirty years or so, but prior to that music here was not pop or rock or jazz, the music here was always spiritual and classical, sulabh. Even

the dances are an offering to God and not meant for self-entertainment. During this period, the people of Munger and everyone else present is exposed to the spiritual culture of the country. For two months, we see the variety that exists here, and there is an effort to understand and incorporate the ideas that are presented in one's life, to make life more beautiful. It has been an intense and active period, providing a glimpse into the spiritual culture and the discipline that the spiritual culture involves.

People don't understand the significance of discipline, but without discipline, organization and a system, nothing moves on this planet. Even God is not undisciplined, nature is not undisciplined. When there is indiscipline in nature, there is destruction; when there is indiscipline at the cosmic level, there is dissolution, *pralaya*. When there is discipline, organization and systematization, then everything functions





and flows smoothly, allowing each one to complete the journey. Otherwise it is panic everywhere, and that does not indicate following the spiritual way of life.

Mantra movement

The three mantras, *Hari Om Tat Sat*, *Namo Narayana*, and *Jai Ho* represent the three sankalpas given by our guru, Sri Swamiji. The first mantra, *Hari Om Tat Sat*, is the mantra of the yoga movement; it is the mantra he gave to yoga. In Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth this is the mantra that is effulgent, no other mantra. Then he gave the mantra *Namo Narayana* to Rikhiapeeth to represent the fruit of his sadhana, the culmination of his sadhana in *atmabhava*, the ability to see oneself in others, the ability to see the eternal spirit in others. To Sannyasa Peeth he gave the mantra *Jaya Ho*. This is the victory of the effulgent self. Once you become effulgent through your own effort and conviction, faith and motivation, then this mantra will represent your achievement and attainment.

Now we commence our mantra sadhana, the chanting of *Om Namo Bhagavate Vasudevaya*, two malas offered to Sri

Lakshmi-Narayana and the third mala to the Narayanastra. While we are chanting the mantra, the pandits are invoking the power of Narayana with their mantras. So while the pandits are engaged in their own invocation, we shall also engage ourselves in our invocation of the spirit of Narayana.

From bhogi to yogi

There is a statement in the *Bhagavad Gita* by Sri Krishna that yogis perform karmas leaving aside attachments for inner purity: *Yoginah karma kurvanti*, yogis perform actions, *sangam tyaktva*, leaving aside attachments and expectations, *atma shuddhaye*, for attaining inner purity. In this particular statement, three ideas have been conveyed: the first idea is that of a yogi, the second idea is leaving aside the attachment, and the third idea is attainment of inner purity. Sri Krishna does not say that a *bhogi*, a worldly person, should leave aside attachments to attain inner purification. He uses the word





'yogi'; a yogi performs actions, leaving aside attachment and expectations, for attaining inner purity.

Bhogi is the person who is involved in the gratification of the senses, in identification of sense objects and possessing sense objects. They follow their own destiny of pain and pleasure, suffering and success, which is social, professional, familial and personal. By using the specific word 'yogi', Sri Krishna indicates that the person who was once involved with the world has come to the understanding that this is not the only path for me, this is not the only life for me, but I can look at something else. That self-awareness which brings in the idea, the inspiration and the motivation to change yourself and adopt a path different from that which you have followed all your life, which inspires you to associate with people with whom you have never associated before in your life, is the beginning of the life of a yogi. This change, this self-awareness which connects you with something different in life, and which indicates a process of wanting to experience and realize something different, is the turning point in the life of a bhogi. It takes you towards yoga, and you then strive to become a yogi.

At first, the yogi is a beginner and has to perfect hatha yoga only. At the beginning, the yogi is only a practitioner and has to perfect hatha yoga only. For ten years you can be practising hatha yoga as a yogi, following the yamas and niyamas of hatha yoga, and not living the yamas and the niyamas of raja yoga, kriya yoga or other yogas. You can still live the life of a yogi, which will be better and more balanced. When you begin to live an aware life, without needing to change anything, that is the first stage in the life of a yogi: self-awareness.

This self-awareness is important, for without self-awareness you will never be aware of your likes, dislikes, happiness, pain. It is the self-awareness that makes you aware of what you are experiencing, and then you decide how to respond to that situation, to that moment which you are experiencing. That may not necessarily be appropriate, as you have not come to that level yet. You are only working at



the physical and gross level to attain a bit of harmony in your annamaya and pranamaya koshas through hatha yoga.

Only when you rise above hatha yoga and come to the other yogas that you become aware of the subtle events that alter the perceptions of the mind. When you enter into raja yoga, then you are becoming more aware of your mental behaviour, of your thoughts, feelings, sentiments, emotions, desires, strengths, weaknesses, ambitions and needs. You are analyzing them, observing them, managing them, criticizing them, rejecting them, accepting them, building them. All that happens in raja yoga at the mental level where you



are trying to pacify the vrittis. At this point, when you become a raja yogi, when you begin to work with yourself, with your behaviour, your mind, your instincts, desires, thoughts, stresses, anxieties, and so on, then focusing of awareness becomes part of the mental expression. The conditions of mind that help manage the agitated vrittis are cultivated, and at that time there is a deeper awareness and involvement in yoga.

You have to be a hatha yogi before you can become a raja yogi. Then, before you become a kriya yogi you need to be a good raja yogi with a good head, with good screws



and not loose screws. The screws have to be tightened in raja yoga, only then can the psychic awakening in the realm of consciousness take you beyond the mental experience into the spiritual dimension. In this way, by gradually cultivating self-awareness, and then by managing the mental behaviour, you become a yogi.

The mind is connected with the sense objects, and it is the mind which is experiencing the attachments and expecting gratification from the actions that the body has performed. It is that expectation which creates an association of false identity with people. The body and mind are involved in this identification, but the spirit remains free from it. You latch on to the body, you latch on to the people you consider your own, you latch on to objects that give you some source of satisfaction and happiness, and that is the beginning of attachment and association.

Therefore, the more you pacify your vrittis and become more stable, the less attached and more responsible you become. Less attachment makes you more aware of performing better deeds and therefore you become more responsible and accountable for your actions. You want to do your best and you only have this moment in time to do your best.

Through self-observation and by managing the upheavals of the vrittis, attachment is reduced. When the upheavals of the vrittis reduce, you experience a feeling of balance, harmony and peace. When this develops into a state of mind even with eyes open, and not only with eyes closed, then that is the state of atma shuddhi or inner purification. This is the journey that Sri Krishna has described for a yogi.

From bhogi become a yogi, self-aware, and decide to become better, happier, more creative, more luminous, more peaceful and more knowledgeable. That will lead you to lessen association with sense objects, which will lessen your attachment, which in turn will lessen your expectation. With the lessening of the expectation, there will be peace and harmony, bringing you closer to inner purity.

Open Sesame

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati
10 September 2015, Afternoon





The sahasrarchana will begin now with the chanting of the thousand names of Lakshmi and Narayana. Today the offering is of rice and til, sesame. Rice will be offered to Mother Lakshmi and Narayana will be offered sesame, as

he has to say 'Open Sesame' to your heart. If you have read the story of Alibaba and the forty thieves, what does Alibaba say when he comes to the gate of the cave? "Open Sesame." You are offering the sesame to Narayana, so he may open his gates for you to enter. Usually you pray, "I open my gates so you can enter," but here the *prarthana*, the intention is the other way around: "Open your gate, so I can enter."

In honour of guru

The culmination of the Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna and the anusthana of Narayana Astra Yajna will take place on the 12th, and that is an important day. The prasad of Lord Jagannath will be received here on that day, coming all the way from Jagannath Puri in Orissa. It comes here undertaking a journey of 1,200 kilometres. Every year during Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna, the grace of Lord





Jagannath comes to us in the form of his prasad. When we conclude the yajna here on the 12th, then in the evening the *lokarpan*, dedication, of the Chhaya Samadhi, the reflection samadhi, of Sri Swamiji, our master, our guru, which has been constructed in Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth, will take place.

In the life of our master, three places play important roles: Rishikesh, that was where he emerged as Swami Satyananda; Munger, this is where he worked to fulfil the mandate of his guru Swami Sivananda; Rikhia, where he worked to establish the path of the sannyasa tradition and where he left his body. In Rikhia is his actual samadhi and here we have created a monument to him in the form of this reflection samadhi, which has the subtle presence of Sri Swamiji.

Today you and I know Swami Satyananda, today there are people who know who he was, who have interacted with him, known his inspiration, known how he worked. The future generations will not know all this, they will only hear stories but they will not know Swami Satyananda, and they will not know Swami Niranjan. We will be fading memories in the minds of people fifty or sixty years hence. At that time, what

will keep the connection of spirituality and yoga alive in the organizations that have been established by him? His own sankalpa, his own sadhana, his own life which he dedicated to his guru and to God, and that is represented in the Chhaya Samadhi. Fifty or a hundred years later, that will be the centre which will connect Rikhia and Munger as one entity.

The Chhaya Samadhi is a special creation. Underneath the ground, a time capsule has been placed containing the photographs, clothes, publications and history of Swami Satyananda and the Bihar School of Yoga. It has been time-locked for fifty years and will open when the Bihar School of Yoga celebrates its 100th foundation day. When it is opened, everything that has happened until today will be known to the people of that time. Some of you might still be around to see that event unfold before your eyes and then you will remember what was said today. That is the story of the Chhaya Samadhi, the eternal link connecting the two places with the spirit of *tapobal* and *yogabal*, the strength of yoga and the strength of austerity. These two are represented in the samadhi of Sri Swamiji.

When I thought about how I can honour him by creating this reflection samadhi, then the image that came to my mind was that of a diamond, for he was the polished diamond. His guru had polished him and he shone like the sun, illuminating the lives of many. Even after his samadhi, he continues to inspire, guide and illuminate the lives of many through his teachings and the inspiration that we receive from him.

The diamond reflects sunlight in all directions, and in the same way, his life reflects the wisdom of the ancients in all directions. The diamond is also surrounded by a lotus and that is the aim of his mission too: the opening of the lotus, as the lotus represents consciousness. Thus, the Chhaya Samadhi is a combination of diamond and lotus, honouring our master. The dedication ceremony will take place on the 12th, and that will be the highlight of this Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna.

Sanatana Dharma and Yuga Dharma

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati
11 September 2015, Morning



There have been two traditions in the Indian civilization. The ancient one, is known as the sanatana tradition, the *sanatana dharma*, the eternal dharma of humanity. It is the most ancient of the spiritual traditions of the world, and the foundation of the yogic tradition as well. The other is identified as the *yuga dharma*, or the dharma which belongs to a particular age and time and it is revised, altered and changed. Under this come the different systems of belief which are identified as different



schools of thoughts of Hinduism, such as Shaivism, Shaktism, Vaishnavism, Buddhism, Jainism. They are all considered different sects.

Religion and spirituality

The spiritual journey in life has been associated with religion by many people. In reality, religiosity and spirituality are two distinct ideas. Religion is connection with your higher nature whom you call God. There is a feeling of 'me connecting with something up there, which is transcendental, beyond me, that I identify as God'. It is your connection with this idea which you say is God that becomes religion, whereas spirituality is the cultivation of the positive strengths of life. Ultimately it is spirituality that plays an important role in the human journey to become enlightened. Religion only gives a focus of a presence which is higher than your life here.

The religious behaviour tends to be aimed at this higher source for the eradication of all difficulties and ills in life, and there may be no effort to cultivate the good and the positive in life. There is only prayer and offerings, going to temples







and churches, seeking solace, miracles and solutions from that source. With the idea that God is out there and you are seeking help from God, you start searching externally for how to connect with this idea of God that you have. The systems and rituals that emerge to connect with this idea of God externally become religions of the age. On the other hand, the eternal effort that every human being makes to cultivate the positive and the creative in their life is the sanatana approach.

You are aware of religion now, of Christianity, Islam, different streams of Hinduism, Buddhism, Shintoism, and others. Prior to the advent of these religions, what was the philosophy that guided humanity for many ages? What was the philosophy or religion at the time of the avataras in Satya Yuga? What was the philosophy and religion at the time of Rama in Treta Yuga? What was the philosophy and religion at the time of Krishna in Dwapara Yuga? What was the philosophy and religion at the beginning of this age of Kali Yuga? Now, five thousand years into Kali Yuga, what is the situation? Think about it and you will discover the true understanding of spiritual life and the meaning of religious behaviour.



The vedic lifestyle

In the age of the avataras in Satya Yuga, in the age of Rama in Treta Yuga, in the age of Krishna in Dwapara Yuga, and at the beginning of Kali Yuga, there was only one idea of spirituality. That idea was being good and virtuous, and following all the dharmas in life, fulfilling all the obligations and commitments in life. That was the life that people lived, without adhering to any specific form of belief.

This lifestyle developed into what is known as the vedic lifestyle in this part of the world. The vedic culture did not propagate worship of one, did not identify one omnipotent God as the main figurehead of humanity. Rather, it appreciated the presence of life in every aspect of creation.

Just as life is present in your body, in the same manner life is present in plants, in minerals, in nature. The greenness of the leaves indicates the life of the leaf. The taste of water represents the life in water. The heat of fire represents the life in fire. The sentience in you represents the life in you. In this manner, the ancient seers experienced life in every aspect of creation. For them, no aspect of creation was to be neglected, not even the dirt from the broom, as it was part of nature. There was respect for and cooperation with everything





and everyone. Everybody worked as one unit to achieve the aspirations of their life, which was the experience of luminosity and peace, prakashatva and shanti. *Prakashatva*, luminosity, is the sattwa nature, and *shanti* is peace from the turmoil of the environment in life. These were the two aspirations of human civilization in the early days.

All the efforts that were made were to improve one's lifestyle by cultivating the good, the beautiful, the auspicious and the pleasant, and eradicating the evil, the restrictive and the destructive. That is how people lived in the past. This culture was a spiritual culture. It was not a material culture. There was an awareness of one's own aspirations in life. There was an awareness that 'I need to discover my peace and luminosity' and everybody worked for that. Just as today people work for finance and other resources to survive, in those days people used to work for discovering purity and

peace in life. That is sanatana dharma, the eternal dharma that people in this part of the world have followed.

Development of religions

Later on, when powerful figures came, who had attained a type of realization and who were known as the masters of the age, they gave certain ideas. The followers of those masters further down the ages changed these ideas and theories into religious theories.

Buddha was not a Buddhist, the tirthankaras were not Jains. The Vaishnavas, the Shaktas, the Shaivas, the different schools of thought and sects that developed over a period of time, do not represent the sectarian identity but the journey that began from the point where the originators were, as sanatanis. The experience of one master became the guiding principle for the followers, and therefore it became a sect and later on evolved into religion.

Buddha practised yoga. He practised sadhana. He propagated meditation. He propagated self-observation, introspection and rectification. He made one aware of a state of mind beyond the material where one can experience





peace, in the state of nirvana. His experience guided many other people to come to this point of realization of their own luminosity. However, after the death of Buddha, his disciples made his teachings into a separate philosophy, a separate school. Religion was created by the followers, not by the master.

The same thing happened with Christianity. Christ was not Christian. He was a Jew. He lived a spiritual life. He did not proclaim, "I am establishing a new identity, a religion called Christianity." He said, "Have faith in God and help others. Be a good Samaritan. Live a happy, pious, helpful life. Live a life of service, love, compassion and kindness." These were his main teachings. Many years after his death, in Constantinople, Christianity was established. With that, the teachings of Christ changed. He did not teach Christianity; he taught a simple principle of yoga: live happily.



The one principle: be happy

That is also the principle that we follow. If you can remain happy for twenty-four hours of the day for one day in your life, you have made it. Can you remain happy for one whole day, twenty-four hours, without frowning, thinking ill of anybody, criticizing or gossiping, just being content, happy, fulfilled and joyous? Can you be that for twenty-four hours? Why not? Why are you unable to maintain your happiness and positivity for the whole day? Think about it. What distracts you? What disturbs you? What diverts you? You are not being asked to be like that for all your life. In eighty years of your life, can you be happy for one day?

That is the effort that you have to make in order to realize your own inner nature and the behaviour of the mind. You have to make the effort to be in control of yourself, and not allow your best intentions to be damaged by the inputs from your mind. You want to be happy, but your mind damages that intention. After ten minutes of repeating to yourself, 'I will be happy, I will be happy, I will be happy', you get the news of a problem, and your happiness goes out the window and for two hours you are in a state of anxiety. Then again

you realize that you have to be happy, but you say, 'Today I can't because I have so many problems. Tomorrow I will make the effort. When I have no problems then I will make the effort.' What kind of thinking is that? Happiness has to be discovered in problems. Shanti has to be discovered in ashanti. Health has to be discovered in sickness. Balance has to be discovered in distractions. That is the effort that you have to make but you forget, and this is the effort of sanatana dharma.

Sanatana dharma reminds you continuously and constantly that there is a better part of yourself, there is a better aspect of yourself. Just look into the mirror, smile, and you will see a better person smiling back at you. Just as you see yourself reflected in a mirror and recognize that it is you, in the same way when you experience peace, happiness and contentment within, you will recognize that it is also you. Finding that happiness for twenty-four hours is what I call 'the Niranjan challenge'. If you succeed in my challenge, you will attain the highest state as desired by the sages of ancient times. If you don't accept my challenge and continue to live





the way you have been doing, you will never be able to fulfil your own cherished dreams.

You have to make the effort to become happier each day. If you are happy today for ten minutes, tomorrow try to be happy for one extra minute. The day after, add another minute. Every day, keep adding a minute. How many years will it take to come to twenty-four hours of happiness? The point is, it is possible. The enlightened beings are that.

Enlightenment is not the knowledge in the head about God. Enlightenment is the presence of happiness and peace in life. You can be totally ignorant about spiritual matters and God, and yet be enlightened as you are free in your heart and mind. There is peace, happiness and contentment in your heart and mind. That is sanatana dharma, of which yoga is a part.

Yoga as part of sanatana dharma

If someone says to you that yoga is part of the Hindu religion, please say to them, "Sorry sir, you are wrong. You are slightly deviated from the facts. Yoga is not part of Hinduism. Yoga is part of sanatana dharma." Sanatana dharma is what allows the opening of the human faculties, the development and expression of the human qualities, which is also the basis of yoga.

Swami Sivananda said that integration of the faculties of head, heart and hands is yoga. He did not say that attainment of God is yoga. He said that integration of the faculties of head, heart and hands is yoga. Anything that happens after that is a bonus. If you are able to meditate, it is a bonus. If you are able to become quiet and peaceful, it is a bonus. If you are able to become creative, it is a bonus. What you need to do is to cultivate the faculties of head, heart and hands.

A blind man may desire to see the sun, yet it is only a desire. Similarly, you want to be realized, it is only your desire. That is not your need. The need of the blind person is to acquire eyesight, not to see the sun. Once the blind person acquires the eyesight, he can look at the entire creation, not only the sun. In the same manner, your need is not self-



realization. That is only an ambition, an idea, a thought. Your need is to improve the life which you are living for the seventy or eighty years that you are here. This improvement can take place with the cultivation of the faculties of intellect, emotions and performance. When these become positive and pious, then you are living the sanatana dharma.

With positivity in your life, your spiritual growth takes place sequentially, systematically and progressively. This is the sanatana culture: connecting with the goodness within and all around. This culture was lived by the ancient rishis and yogis. They have inspired the spiritual tradition with the purpose of again experiencing and realizing the sanatana culture in our life. You can belong to any religious denomination, yet you can experience the sanatana dharma awakening within you, for that is a qualitative and transformative process to discover your own strengths and abilities which are creative and uplifting.

Working on twofold purification

What is of utmost importance in any spiritual effort is attainment of purity. This purity is twofold: external and internal. The vedic and yogic traditions speak of two





shuddhis, *bahya* and *antar*. External purity relates to the body, environment, household. Internal purity is of thoughts, emotions and psyche. There is the external purification connected to the body, attaining a balance between the three doshas: vata, pitta and kapha, wind, bile and mucus. When these three are disturbed then the body experiences disease; the ease of the body is disturbed.

Then there is purification relating to the environment where you are, the place where you live should be clean, properly ventilated and hygienic. You see this in the ashram. It is clean because we follow the niyama of yoga, the yogic discipline of shuchi. Cleanliness of the body and the environment is of utmost importance and the first stage of purification.

The second stage of purification is internal. This relates to removal of the masks that are put on the mind and the spirit, which are known as *vikaras*.



Establishment of dharma

According to mythology, Narayana comes down from time to time to establish dharma. This dharma is not morality, ethics, ritual, or faith and belief in God. Dharma is attainment of purity and removal of vikara. For that, God has to appear as an avatara from time to time. The purpose of establishing dharma is to remove the distortions that exist in a personality, in society, in the environment. The distortions, vikaras, at all these levels are removed when you practise dharma. The vikaras in thought create negative thinking, vikaras in behaviour create negative action and behaviour harming other people.

Narayana or Vishnu comes to remove these vikaras from society, from individual life, from family life, from social life, from national life, from global life. That is the purpose of an avatara. The purpose of an avatara is not to come and destroy people. The purpose of an avatara is to remove the vikaras that have formed in the minds of people, that have formed over intentions, over *dharma* and *nyaya*, the appropriate and the just. When these vikaras are eliminated, dharma is again established. Therefore, the elimination of vikaras is known

as elimination of evil tendencies. With the removal of evil tendencies, happiness comes into society. People become happy, and follow the path of natural justice. Sanatana dharma is the path of discovering the natural dharma and natural nyaya which uplift an individual in all dimensions.

Internal purity

The purity of the internal self begins with thoughts. Just as there are niyamas to be practised externally for maintaining external purity, yamas are for maintaining internal purity, internal behaviour. Shaucha, santosha, tapa, swadhyaya and Ishwara pranidhana are the five niyamas according to Patanjali, and they are external. However, satya, ahimsa, asteya, aparigraha and brahmacharya are internal yamas. One helps improve the external environment and the other helps improve the internal environment. The niyamas and yamas are used to create this difference in the existing





condition. When this difference is made, then you walk the path of enlightenment, and that enlightenment is the discovery of the better you, the luminous you. That is the idea of sanatana dharma.

The eternal music

Tomorrow is the culmination of the Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna and the Narayanastra anusthana. Tomorrow is also the sannyasa day of our guru, Sri Swami Satyananda.

Sannyasa day for a sannyasi is the real birthday, for a sannyasi takes birth again from the womb of guru into the dimension of knowledge on this day. The old self dies and a new birth takes place. The old name, the old identity, the old family, the old environment are renounced. You become dead to your poorvashram in every respect , and a new you is born from the inspiration of guru into the world of knowledge.

Tomorrow we shall dedicate the Chhaya Samadhi, the reflection samadhi, at Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth, to Sri Swamiji, so that his spirit, his energy, his wisdom, his sankalpa, his karma, his purushartha can continue to guide and lead the activities of yoga, service and spirituality even when we are gone.

The link between Munger and Rikhia is his samadhi, since samadhi is the final attainment of yoga. When you can cast aside your body wilfully and direct your consciousness to ascend to the higher realms, it indicates that now you have transcended the body awareness and become one with the cosmic awareness and the cosmic power. Having awareness is one thing; it is 'I am aware that I exist'. However, when I become one with the cosmic power, then I become That, and then I can also transcend the limitations of the physical body. This is what Sri Swamiji showed. His final attainment of yoga was over matter, over his soul. The ability to wilfully make the pranas, consciousness, mind and spirit leave in the state of samadhi is the apex and fulfilment of yoga, indicating absolute oneness and mastery.

It is that power, that shakti of yoga which will keep all of us connected. It will keep the sankalpas and the efforts connected for the future generations when we become fading memories in the minds of people. With the dedication of the Chhaya Samadhi, we shall conclude the gathering of the Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna.



It is a gathering: so many people come together from so many different walks of life. What inspires them, moves them, brings them here? Certainly not the buildings or the place, not the people, not even me, but the inspiration that they see here emanating through the efforts of Sri Swamiji, and they feel inspired by that teaching. That is why they come to this far-flung place of Munger. Those who come have a serious intention to participate, imbibe, learn and experience. Therefore it is a gathering and not an event. So, thank you to all of you for what you represent here, and this is the strength of yoga as well.

This is the strength of the teaching of yoga as well. One should identify with the teaching. Teachers come and go, the instruments can change. One flute can be broken and another made, but the music which is played by a flute does not die with the breaking of a flute. It continues to resound in the spaces until another appropriate instrument is found to give sound to the melody that already exists. When the right instruments come and the sound is heard continuously, then that is known as tradition.

We are all part of a tradition, as tradition indicates that there is somebody who was willing to learn, who learnt, and is willing to teach what he learnt. Out of the many who came, somebody lived the teachings. Out of the many who came and left, somebody made the effort. Out of the many who came and made the effort, somebody was more persistent. Such a person becomes the carrier of the teachings, the wisdom and the inspiration of the masters. When this teaching and learning becomes an unbroken flow, then it is known as tradition.

We belong to a tradition. We come here to learn, know, imbibe, experience and participate, with a hope and an aspiration. That is the spiritual aspiration, that is the inner hope, and that is what has to be protected. That is the sankalpa, the seed which will eventually sprout when you go through the process of learning, imbibing and experiencing. Therefore, just allow yourself to be. The more you allow yourself 'to be', the more you will 'become'.



Yoga and Yajna

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati and
Swami Satyasangananda Saraswati
11 September 2015, Afternoon



Swami Niranjan: The children have welcomed Swami Satsangi on behalf of everyone and on behalf of Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna. Now it is my turn to welcome her, and I welcome her on behalf of Sannyasa Peeth.

Swami Satsangi: I am very, very happy to be here; not just happy, I am delighted to be here today.

Yoga and yajna are a potent combination, and the practitioners of yoga have to realize that. The same awareness that you are trying to awaken through the practices of yoga, that effort is intensified through yajna. You have to also know

that yajna is a means of distribution. It is not just for attaining something or the awakening of awareness, but it is a means of distribution, distribution of blessings.

Yajna is a marketing strategy for distribution of blessings. In this day and age, a marketing strategy is most important. If you have to deliver blessings to New York or Hungary or



Bulgaria, how will you do that sitting on the banks of the Ganga? Through yajna. That is what Sri Swami Satyananda is doing. Before taking mahasamadhi, he said, "Wherever there is yoga there should be yajna. They are a very good combination."

We have been attending this yajna every year and it has brought bountiful blessings in all our lives. So thank you Swami Niranjan. We should be thankful to Swami Niranjan for this beautiful celebration on the banks of the Ganga.



The Sankalpa of a Sage

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati and
Swami Satyasangananda Saraswati
12 September 2015, Morning



Swami Satsangi: Sitting here by the Ganga in Paduka Darshan, the memories are all coming alive, of the time spent with Gurudev in Munger.

Living with him was an unfoldment each day, of a new sankalpa, a new ideal, a new value, a new principle. Every day was a teaching, not with sermons or satsang, but just by



the way that he lived, the way that he thought, his priorities, what he gave importance to. It is the sankalpa of Sri Swamiji that you see in Ganga Darshan and in Rikhia. This sankalpa was unfolding even at that time.

Sri Swamiji's sankalpa was not a limited one; it was a universal sankalpa. Even to think about it, the mind boggles. It was not related to one time or one place; it was related to something more universal. That was evident even at that time in Munger.

The most important thing in life is sankalpa. That doesn't mean that today itself you just get up and make a sankalpa. Sankalpa has to be well-thought, well-planned, well-executed. In fact, many times we make a sankalpa which is more than we are capable of undertaking.

We simply do not have enough energy to fulfil the sankalpas that we undertake. The sankalpa of Sri Swamiji was not of that kind. It was like a missile that is bound to reach its destination. However, even a missile, a satellite sometimes needs an additional support, an energy, to go further into space, and that is called shakti. A shakti is required to fulfil the sankalpa. Without shakti you cannot do anything. You

cannot perform even the minutest task of passing your examination or looking after your home. You cannot think, you cannot act without shakti. And the most important point is that shakti is only available, only possible, only becomes abundant in one's sankalpa and in one's life, when there is unity, *ekata*. Therefore we have to think about unity, not the individual but unity. We have to think of a united sankalpa.

One has to align oneself with a universal sankalpa such as that of Sri Swamiji. You have your individual sankalpas no doubt, but don't limit yourself to that. By aligning with the sankalpas that are universal in vision, you seek prosperity, plenty and peace for everyone, not just for your own tribe, family, society, nation, or even your own world, but for the entire creation, every dimension. That is the vision of Sri Swamiji: peace, plenty, and prosperity in all lokas, beginning with this one because here is where all the trouble takes place.

Remember that Gurudev's sankalpa was not only of a sannyasin; his sankalpa was of a disciple, of a paramahamsa, of an avadhoot. He had many sankalpas. We limit ourselves to one sankalpa for our whole life, but his sankalpas kept evolving and he kept revealing and revealing, and there are many more that are yet to be revealed.



There is no force in the world that can stop the fulfilment of the sankalpa of a siddha mahapurusha, as Swami Satyananda was, as Swami Sivananda was. But the question is, how much can we contribute to the fulfilment of that sankalpa? You can contribute by becoming one with it. To become one with it you don't have to become something but you have to become nothing. In Hindi there is a word, 'nihatta', nihatta bano, become unarmed, drop all your weapons. You are helpless, you can do nothing.

The day you realize you are helpless, you have nothing, you are nobody, that is the day you will be granted the grace, the strength, the positivity to fulfil the sankalpa, not before. Till then you will get whatever measure you can sustain. After all, energy can be dropped right now like a bolt of lightning, but will you be able to handle it? Most people will not be able to. Therefore, don't just pray for grace, also pray that you are able to sustain it, you are able to hold it, you are able to balance it.

I am a citizen of Munger. I am not a guest here. I was born here in Paduka Darshan and then my sannyasa ceremony took place in Ganga Darshan at the havan kund. So I am a citizen of Munger, and it is part of my hard disc.

Today each one of us should take the sankalpa to align more and more with the teachings which we receive in abundance. There is no use just paying lip-service to it. Today you have to also take a sankalpa that the vision of a divine light, a universal light, a universal individual, made by a universal sannyasin who does not work only for himself or his creed, should bear fruit further. That is the sankalpa of Gurudev. We should all have a universal vision. We should all have a divine vision. We should all have love for one another. We should all have kindness for one another. We should all serve one another. That is the sankalpa with which we should align ourselves at Sannyasa Peeth today, for the blossoming of all the sankalpas of Gurudev.

Sitting here at the Lakshmi-Narayana Yajna we see a beautiful flower emerging. A beautiful thought, a beautiful idea, a beautiful force, a beautiful energy is emerging from the banks



of the Ganga. And therefore, if this sankalpa of Gurudev appeals to you, attracts you and you see great insight in it for a better world and a universal vision, then align with it, align with it.

My heartfelt thanks to Swami Niranjan for having made all this possible. I never say thank you to him because we are not used to praise, we are not brought up in that tradition. We are used to doing our duty, we don't hanker after praise. If it comes , we appreciate it but it is not necessary. So I never say thank you because I know that he knows that I am thankful for all that I have received and in abundance, I have received things I could not have imagined, from my guru, from my association with Swami Niranjan, Yogapeeth, Rikhiapeeth and Sannyasa Peeth. But today, I am saying thanks to Swami Niranjan, for always being there for us.

Swami Niranjan: Swami Satsangi has declared herself to be a citizen of Munger, so now we make it official. We give her a T-shirt, which says 'Main yoga nagari ka nagarik hoon' at the front and 'I am a citizen of the city of yoga' at the back, for Munger is known as the city of yoga.

Swami Satsangi: I am proud of that. *Namo Narayana*.





Swami Niranjan: Thank you Swami Satsangi, for your inspiring words, message and the guidelines that you have given. She did not give a lecture or talk, but she pointed out the vision, the ideas, and the sankalpas that our master had and has, and which will be seen in the future as well.

In order to live the mandate of the guru, people say there has to be surrender, yet they don't know the meaning of surrender. Surrender is a feeling of inner purity, inner connection, where doubts and questions do not exist. Sri Swamiji states, "When I placed my head at the feet of my guru, Swami Sivananda, I knew that he was my guru. I had no questions. I had no doubts. I knew I had found my master." That is surrender, and that experience of surrender can only happen if the intention is pure, if the mind and the heart are pure.

It is purity that we have to strive for, not realization, moksha or emancipation. Purity comes through involvement. As Swami Sivananda said, 'serve', involve yourself; 'love', express yourself; 'give', offer yourself. Purify is the fourth, attain that purity. Only after the purity is attained, you go from the external to the internal which then becomes 'be good, do good, meditate and realize'. Therefore purity is like the



gateway between the outer and the inner. The more calm and peaceful you become, the less doubts and questions you have, the more you imbibe the teaching and the energy, the better you receive the transmissions of the master. You don't have to be in the presence, you can be anywhere in the world. The presence plays an important role, but there are some people in whose life presence is not necessary until it is required.

Purity has to be the aim, and that has been the topic of this Lakshmi-Narayana yajna. We have been talking on the subject of atma shuddhi, on cultivating the right attitudes and mindset to effectively express ourselves and to be a positive contributor to society. The first step has been taken to understand it.

Dedication to a disciple

Today is the sannyasa day of our guru, Sri Swamiji, and he has shown us what yoga truly is, in both a practical and a spiritual manner. He established the Bihar School of Yoga and dedicated it on the day of Basant Panchami with a prayer to Mother Saraswati. The presiding deity of the Bihar School of Yoga is Mother Saraswati and the sankalpa of Sri Swamiji for the Bihar School of Yoga says, "O Mother, it is your wisdom which will spread through this light of deepak which

is being lit here today." And Saraswati does not come alone. She comes with Brahma, though Brahma is the back-seater and Saraswati is the driver. So the Bihar School of Yoga is dedicated to Saraswati and Brahma.

Then Sri Swamiji went to Rikhia and there he installed Chandi and Shiva, and they became the medium to bring a positive and qualitative transformation in the lives of people. They became the medium to eradicate the absence, and to make one fulfilled at physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual levels. The destruction of the old and the emergence of the new, in individual lives and in society, is the act of Chandi and Shiva.

For Sannyasa Peeth he gave Lakshmi and Narayana, as they represent the continuity of life, and sannyasa is the continuity of a parampara, a tradition. In this way, Sri Swamiji installed all three: Saraswati and Brahma in Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth, Chandi and Divyalinga Shiva in Rikhiapeeth, Lakshmi and Narayana in Sannyasa Peeth.

It is a beautiful vision that we see in this: his external participation for the development and uplifment of society, and his internal effort to cultivate the positive and the divine,





to connect us with the spirit of the cosmos, and have a focus in each place. This is just the tip of the iceberg, for he continues to work even now. For some reason, Swami Sivananda also recognized an innate ability in Sri Swamiji, and what was that reason? The guru wishes to find somebody who can become one with the spirit of the guru. There may be many disciples, but the one who becomes one with the guru is rare, and guru waits for such an individual. Ramakrishna Paramahamsa had many disciples but when he met Swami Vivekananda, the first sentence that he said was, "I have waited so long for you." Swami Sivananda had many disciples, but when Swami Satyananda was leaving Rishikesh to fulfil the mandate of his guru, Swami Sivananda said, "There goes my real successor who will spread the light of Shiva in the world."

When Swami Sivananda met Swami Satyananda, and Swami Satyananda placed his head at the feet of his guru, Swami Sivananda said, "Ohji, we have to work according to plan." If in the first encounter the guru says to a disciple, "We have to work according to plan", then what does it indicate?

That maybe in this life it is the first encounter but we have been together before, and I've been waiting for you to come. And now that you have come, work according to the plan that was made in the last encounter, and which you had started on. This was the guru's acknowledgement of the disciple.

A guru does not acknowledge a disciple by making him sit on a chair. The guru acknowledges the disciple by seeing the innate ability of that individual to carry forward the teachings of the guru. To such a person the spiritual power is transmitted. You know the story of how Swami Sivananda transferred himself into Swami Satyananda in the ten minutes of the kriya yoga shaktipat. The hard-drive of Swami Sivananda was replicated in the hard-drive of Swami Satyananda and they both became the same. You could no longer say which was a copy and which was the original, as they had the same purity and the same substance.

Swami Satyananda reflected the luminosity of Swami Sivananda by remaining a disciple till the end of his days. His feelings for his guru are reflected in his statement, "The most cherished moment of my life is when I surrendered myself to



my guru." You think of achievements as the most cherished moments of your life. The day you receive your degree is a cherished moment for you: "I took sannyasa on this day. I received my degree on this day. This is my certificate."

You identify with achievements and our guru identified with letting go. That is the difference. Due to that attitude of discipleship which he had all his life, he reflected the teachings of Swami Sivananda just as a diamond reflects the light of the sun in all directions in many different hues. You see the light in different shades, hues and colours as well. That was his life, that was his nature, his character. The Chhaya Samadhi reflects that. It is also in the shape of a diamond, reflecting his character, his traits as a sannyasin, as a sadhaka, as a shishya, as a siddha.

The diamond in Chhaya Samadhi is enveloped by a lotus flower, and the lotus symbolizes consciousness. A siddha who has awakened his consciousness lives in that state continuously. That is how we honour the connection with our master for all times to come. It is also a link between Munger and Rikhia. When Swami Satsangi and myself are no longer present, then it is the shakti of the Samadhi, the shakti of yoga that will provide inspiration and luminosity to the future generations, the future work and the future establishment. It is with this sankalpa that we shall be dedicating the Chhaya Samadhi.

Spirituality and religion

We were discussing a subject yesterday: the nature of religion in the time of avataras, during Satya Yuga, during the time of Rama in Treta Yuga, during the time of Krishna in Dwapara Yuga, and now. In all the three ages of the past, history indicates that there was never any organized religion. All the organized religions came up only in the age of Kali, in the last five thousand years. Prior to that, what was the form of religion? Religion did not exist, rather its essence – spirituality – existed, and this spirituality was evolving and progressive.





All the thoughts on spirituality did not emerge from one mind at one time, they emerged over a long period of time through the minds of many people; through the experiences of many people. They became the collections of knowledge and vidya, of thoughts and ideas which were not formalized into religion. The spiritual seed was the first seed to emerge as a question in the mind of every person.

Imagine the scenario when the first human group, individual or family walked on this earth and they looked around. What did they see? They saw the sun, the moon, the stars, nature. At that time, what did they think? 'What is all this, from where has all this come, who is the creator of all this, who is the maker of all this?' That thought developed into a question: 'Who made me? Who made this tree? Who made the sun? Who made the moon? Who made the stars? Who made everything that I see? Who made everything that I consume? Who made everything that I live on? Where is that person? Where does he live?' This first image of God was a universal image, for he was seen as the maker, the creator of the entire universe and not as an individual. There was no form, no shape, but a power which was the source

of creation, which was the source of life and manifestation, and that power was conceived by the rishis as the thousand-headed Narayana:

> *Om sahasrashirsha purushah. Sahasraakshah sahasrapaat. Sa bhumin vishvato vritvaa. Atyatishthaddashaangulam.*
>
> The Purusha, the Supreme Being, has a thousand heads, a thousand eyes and a thousand feet. He has enveloped this world from all sides and has even transcended it by ten angulas (inches).

This Narayana was in the universal form, the *virata* form. It was the first understanding of a universal controller which developed as an idea in the first human being and in the first community. Later, the same universal nature was seen as divided in three powers: the power of omniscience, the power of omnipotence, and the power of omnipresence. These three became the highest rung of the ladder, which connected you with the cosmic presence of the shakti. From these three attributes emerged the concept of the trinity: Brahma who is all-knowing or omniscient, Vishnu who is all-pervasive or omnipresent, and Shiva who is all-powerful or omnipotent.





The first represented generation, the second represented organization, and the third represented destruction: G-O-D, Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva.

When this thought evolved, the trinity further organized in the next stage as demi-gods and goddesses. They were responsible for the local domains or areas, the local *brahmandas* and *kshetras*. They were told to maintain the organization and order in one particular area. When they encountered problems, they always supplicated to the trinity to help them out of their predicament, and the trinity always came down to help them overcome their problems and difficulties.

From the concept of demi-gods came the creation, since where they had to rule, the area that was assigned to them was a form. It was the creation, the *srishti*, both the manifest and the unmanifest, the visible and the invisible: the lokas that are visible through the senses and the lokas that are attainable through the mind, the lokas that are realizable once you identify with a higher vehicle, the spirit. There are different levels of lokas and there are different levels of creations. The universe is not seen as one, but there are many universes, there

are multiverses. To think that ours is the only verse is a wrong concept. If there is one, there is bound to be others too, and if there are others then there will be many more too. That is the concept of *asankhya brahmanda*, infinite universes.

From this creation, the visible and the invisible, came the creation controlled by time: *kaala*. Now the thoughts on kaala emerge, and the limitation of life experience comes in. The ideation of kaala related to how much we live, the lifespan of a tree, of a star, the sun, a plant, an animal, and so on. Along with this came the idea of the obligations that one has to fulfil within this kaala, within this period. Kaala also determined the beginning and end of life.

Time limits the experience of object in space. When the time is up, the object has to disappear; and when the time is there the object is there. This is an interesting development in creation. Up to time is the subtle movement, then comes the manifest creation, incorporating and involving the tattwas or elements and *gunas* or qualities. The permutation and combination of tattwas and gunas create their confinement in time or their life.





Once they are confined in life, there is a complete genealogy of that life. Our forefathers contributed not only to our life but also to the wisdom that continues to guide, inspire and motivate our life till today. Our knowledge pool is not our creation, we are contributors to that, we are all contributors to that pool of water, everyone is throwing one glass of water in the well. Some people throw a few drops, some people throw no drops, and some people throw a bucket, but everybody is passing through the well and they know they have to throw water into it. Those who throw buckets become the leaders of human wisdom, intention, purpose, mind and heart. They become the sages, the seers who inspire us to achieve the best in life.

That is the tradition which is seen in the genealogy of the contributors to the development of human society. These people are remembered as their ideas are carried forward, multiplied, developed and expanded upon. Once this genealogy determines the character, the trait, the knowledge, the wisdom and the content of an object, then the idea comes in of the individual experience and the broader cosmic

experience, the jiva and the atma: the bound soul and the liberated soul. The soul in bondage is *jiva* and the liberated soul is *atma*. It is this liberated soul which has to discover its own nature, not in the confines of a created form but in its own subtle, natural, energetic form which is cosmic, so it becomes one with paramatma. The joy, the sorrow, the good, the evil, God's will, self-effort, heaven, hell, duality, non-duality, polarity, all these things relate to the efforts of the individual manifest soul.

These were the ideas of spiritual life in the past before the advent of or emergence of any organized religion. A person who could explain this was identified as a guru and those who were learning from the guru were identified as shishya. This is how the spiritual ideation developed in the age of Satya, Treta and Dwapara, until Kali Yuga set in. All this ideation was known as the *Bhagavat dharma* or *sanatana dharma*, the eternal principles.

Sage Vedavyasa, who was a prominent figure in the Indian history and was able to witness future events and times, saw





that society would deteriorate after the Mahabharata war and therefore he codified and wrote everything in the form of historical collections, Itihasa Granthas, in the form of *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata*, in the form of Puranas, stories of the past ancestors, in the form of *smritis*, the teachings one receives from the masters orally and which are memorized and passed down, in the form of *shrutis*, direct teachings that one hears from masters or a higher source. In this form, Sage Vedavyasa codified the knowledge into Vedas, the collection of knowledge of the seers, and gave them a written form.

Then the Kali age dawned. The ideations changed into formal conditions, the teachings of the guru to a disciple were constructed by the disciple according to their own needs. The followers became a sect, the sincere discipleship became a sectarian identity. Later on, this developed into a belief system of its own which incorporated adherence to that particular

belief by every other person. This was called a religion. Religions are creations not of the masters but of the followers.

Masters did not create any religion. Buddha did not create Buddhism, he was a Hindu. His sadhanas were vedic and yogic, the path that he adopted was vedic and yogic, the teaching that he propagated was vedic and yogic, the techniques that he taught, like vipassana, are part of the yogic system. It was many years after Buddha's demise, in Rajgir, that Buddhism was formally given a shape with the patronage of the Magadha empire.

Christ was not Christian, he was a simple person, living a good and helpful life, and he wanted everybody to do that: contemplate, be a good Samaritan, believe in God, reach out to others. That was his basic philosophy. He lived that life and he taught what he lived. Christianity was formally established with the help of the Roman empire many years later in Constantinople. Therefore religions are always created not by the founders but by the followers. The founders live a pure, simple and natural life, knowing the things they know and living that knowledge. You also know many things but you don't live them. They did. That was the sankalpa, the aim, the direction of their life. That is





what Swami Sivananda did, that is what Swami Satyananda did. That is what their life inspires us to do: to live what they lived, not just associate with it, think and talk about it and say, "How nice." We have to come back to the ground reality of earth, know the pain and suffering, and know the effort, and make the effort to overcome pain and suffering, and that is the spiritual teaching. That has been the ideation of the past age and civilizations which today have been interpreted as sectarian teachings.

As sectarian teachings, one particular part has been highlighted and identified as the mainframe of thought. However, the best principle to follow in life is what we see in the lives of Sri Rama and Sri Krishna: maryada and prem. *Maryada* means perfect expression, not imperfect behaviour, not imperfect thinking, not imperfect action, but perfect expression in every respect. It means not going beyond the limits and not being under the limits either, corner to corner with utmost perfection, never spilling over. That is maryada, and to live it is the nature of Sri Rama. The nature of Sri Krishna is *prem*, love,

love that is unconditional, love that is like sunlight, radiating equally on everyone. To have this experience is the inspiration and learning we receive from our masters.

This is the whole story about the development of spirituality and religion. Spirituality began with the first idea of trying to discover 'What is that universal power that created all this?' The second idea along with this was: 'What are the qualities of that universal power?' The third idea that followed was: 'What is the form of that universal power? The trinity: Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva.' Fourth: 'They control the subtle powers, the lower powers.' Fifth: 'The lower powers, the demi-gods, are assigned locations, the *vyakta* and the *avyakta prakriti*, the manifest and unmanifest creation.' Sixth: 'Whatever is created is subject to time, kaala, which defines life.' Seventh: 'In life polarity or duality is experienced, and the effort has to be to overcome the polarity and duality, which is part of the concept of matter and the time the matter lives for.'

All this knowledge is imparted by the knower to the person who wants to know. They are known as guru and disciple, and there the rolling of the ball should stop, it





should go no further. However, in Kali Yuga all these ideas were formalized and given structures by different people. Different sects and traditions emerged from these ideas, and they were identified as religions. Thus Kali Yuga is the age of religions, as stated in Tulsidas' *Ramayana* as well. He says that in Kali Yuga, everybody will become a guru, everybody will propagate their own philosophy, everybody will try to extract the maximum mileage from another person. What will happen in Kali Yuga has been defined by Tulsidas in the 'Uttarkand' of *Ramacharitamanas*. If you read it, you will be surprised at how accurately he describes it all.

In this gloom of human civilization, there are still many luminous points which continue to bring light and life to people. I feel privileged to be born at a time when I have seen and been present during the lifetime of many good people on earth. Not only Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda but also Ramana Maharshi, Anandamayi Ma, Bhagavan Nityananda, and so many other great saints and sages. To live in this time, and to observe their lives from the





sannyasin's perspective, and to derive learning from that has been the most important aspect of my life. My guru inspired and guided me in that path and continues to do so. We are fortunate to live in these times and to be exposed to the teachings of so many contemporary masters, not just those long gone. This is what we celebrate when we celebrate the sannyasa day of our guru.

Conveying happy feelings

We have concluded the poornahuti, marking the final offering of this Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna, with a prayer for the fructification of the sankalpa of Sri Swamji which has brought all of us together here, with a prayer for you to grow in the light of guru and in the grace of God. If you do that by imbibing and living the teachings, trying to attain purity in thought, speech and action, then you will definitely feel the grace of the yajna, you will definitely feel the grace of guru and God.

The yajna is formally over, and before we depart I would like to express my happy feelings to all of you for being

present here during this Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna. The best form of thanks is to see people happy and to make others happy, and for that you don't need to have gratitude towards anything or anybody. Happiness brings joy and smiles in the lives of so many people. Happiness can make people forget their problems too.

I will tell you something and you try it. In the morning, when you encounter a stranger, give him a big smile, and continue on your way. You have changed the day of that stranger! The whole day he will be thinking, 'Who was that person who looked at me and smiled in the morning?' He will be compelled to think of you and your smile the whole day long, and he will be compelled to tell others about you and your smile. That is the intoxication of a smile. You should try it. Whenever you get an opportunity, especially in front of a frowning stranger, give a big smile and go on walking your way. Don't look back. Let him look at you for as long as he can, trying to figure out who you were, but you don't look back. You brought a smile and happiness in the life of



another person, and your purpose is fulfilled. You brought the memory of happiness in the mind of a person and your purpose is fulfilled.

This is what Sri Swamiji did. He brought happiness into our lives and he continued walking his own path. He did not look back. He continued creating his own path where no paths existed. He inspired others to create their paths when they lost the awareness of the highway on which they were already walking. That has been his sannyasa life in which he lived many other lives. As Swami Satsangi mentioned, he lived many other sankalpas along with his sannyasa sankalpa. He attained the apex of everything. When he became an avadhoot, he attained the apex of that stage. When he became a videhamukta, he attained the apex of that stage. When he became a siddha, he attained the apex of that stage. When he became a yoga inspirer and teacher, he attained the apex of that stage. Whatever he applied his mind to, to experience, realize and become, he attained that due to his unflinching commitment to his guru, to God, and due to the seriousness and sincerity towards the fulfilment of his own commitment. This is what we celebrate today.

Hari Om Tat Sat
Namo Narayana
Jai Ho!



Chhaya Samadhi: Dedication of a Disciple

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati and
Swami Satyasangananda Saraswati
12 September 2015, Evening





Dedication to poornata

Swami Niranjan: The creation that you are looking at is the Chhaya Samadhi dedicated to our Gurudev, Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati. He took mahasamadhi in Rikhiapeeth on 5th December 2009 and on 6th December he was given bhusamadhi there and placed in the lap of Mother Earth. This Chhaya Samadhi is a reflection of Sri Swamiji's Samadhi in Rikhiapeeth.

The day he took yoga samadhi, the energy of consciousness within his physical body became one with the universal consciousness and energy. We had only read about how in ages long past, rishis, seers and gurus liberated the pranas from their body at a time of their own choosing, how siddhas had mastered control over the elements and could choose the time and place of leaving their bodies. We used to think of these as tales of times long gone and had not imagined that we would have the privilege of witnessing anything like that first-hand. However, Sri Swamiji accomplished this pinnacle of yogic

attainment, and that was due to his dedication as a disciple and surrender to his guru.

Sri Swamiji was born in an ordinary family, but he was gifted with rich samskaras and there was a definite purpose to his life. That becomes evident when we look back upon the life he led. The Swami Satyananda whom we know, took birth in Rishikesh; his guru, Swami Sivananda, was his father, mother, mentor, everything. His true life began in Rishikesh in his guru's ashram and not at the home of father and mother. The remarkable qualities that he carried within his soul were instantly recognized by his guru, who took the special disciple under his wing. In the shelter and care of the guru his true potential unfolded and he became a swami, a master of karmas.

When he had completed his time in Rishikesh, Sri Swamiji moved on to begin work on the mandate given to him by Swami Sivananda to spread yoga 'from door to door and shore to shore'. His karmabhoomi became Munger where he fulfilled





guru-adesha, the karma of yoga propagation. In order to do this, Sri Swamiji offered himself totally to that goal, setting aside all personal aspirations and ideals. That is the true meaning of discipleship and surrender.

After completing his mission in Munger, Sri Swamiji established himself in Rikhiapeeth where he undertook rigorous spiritual sadhanas. Leading an exemplary life imbued with the ideals of faith and surrender, Sri Swamiji ascended the crests of spiritual life. Having reached his goal, he relinquished his mortal existence in 2009, and his physical body was placed in the lap of Mother Earth in Rikhia. Thus, in the Samadhisthal at Rikhia his embodied form is enshrined. While here at Ganga Darshan it is his dedication, devotion, surrender and offering to his guru that is enshrined. In this way, the light of his karma and his tapasya are reflected at the Samadhis in both places created by him.

I had the good fortune of meeting a great mahatma during my tirtha yatras and when he heard that Sri Swamiji

had taken mahasamadhi, he closed his eyes for a few moments and then said, "In this age, no other sannyasin has been able to live all dharmas and fulfil all karmas in the manner that Swami Satyananda did. He is the only sannyasin of such calibre who has lived in the present times." These were the words of spontaneous praise from a great saint himself.

It is true, for we have seen these attributes in his life: his hard work, his faith, his knowledge, his sacrifice, his surrender, his simplicity, his straightforwardness, his love, his gentleness . . . the list is endless. What can I say about my guru, with what words can I express my feelings about the one because of whom my entire life has meaning and purpose?

Today, on 12th September, his sannyasa day, we dedicate the Chhaya Samadhi to our beloved guru. We dedicate it to the *poornata*, the fullness and completeness, of his life.



Diamond in a lotus

Swami Niranjan: The form that you see before you is that of a diamond within a lotus. This image, this design, this idea and creation is 108 percent a product of my mind and it represents my thoughts and feelings about my guru. It is not an architect's design. No way! In this ashram no architect has made any design. Even this seven-storeyed building, if you see the architect's design and the structure that was finally built, they are two different designs altogether, as Sri Swamiji changed everything. In the same manner, everything here is an input of a sannyasin's brain, not an architect's idea. For, behind everything that you see here, there is a reason, a purpose, an intention and an interpretation.

It came as a vision: the shape of a diamond covered by lotus petals. Diamond and lotus represent two completely opposite qualities. The diamond is the hardest rock and the lotus has the softest petals, and they indicate the life and achievement of a sannyasi. In Sri Swamiji's life, I saw both these qualities, the clarity of the diamond and the softness of the lotus. These were his two main traits: transparency and unconditional love, brilliance and a gentle, warm smile.

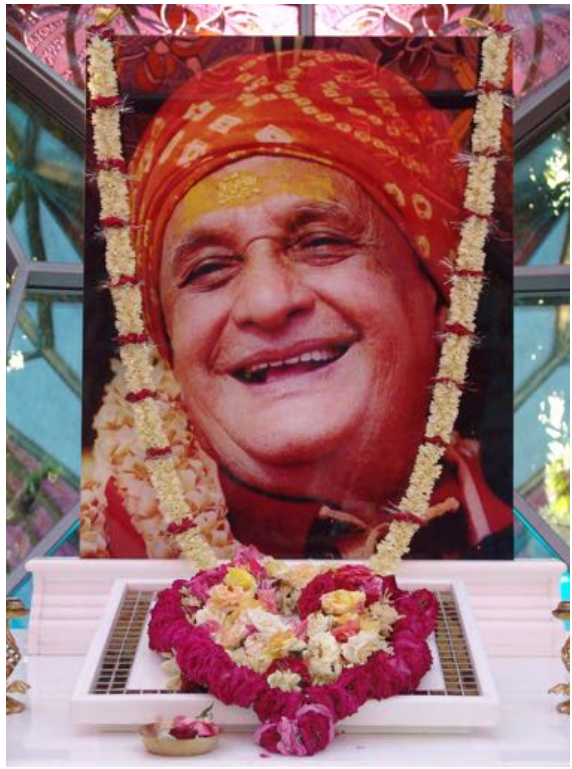
What is the quality of a diamond? It is transparent and flawless, refracting the light that falls on it, enhancing and transforming it into many colours to radiate and disperse them all around. The same light that is falling on everything equally, when it falls on a diamond becomes more beautiful, colourful, attractive, inviting, inspiring, and you see the hidden colourful beauty of the light – and that was my guru. The nature, the character, the personality of my guru is like that of a diamond. He showed us the beauty in everything. Every day we discovered something new about his aspirations for other people and what he wanted done for future generations. All the wisdom he had was radiating in different hues and directions like a diamond, or a prism. The knowledge that was not known was suddenly made visible to everybody as it floated through him in many colours and hues. The understanding of life, of human culture, of yoga,



of spiritual aspirations – all this knowledge was spread in many shades and in different areas of life by Sri Swamiji. That was his quality: to bring the unachievable within the grasp of every individual, to make one see the inherent beauty when the eyes are looking at something else. In his life, through his presence, through his teachings and thoughts, he gave us a deeper understanding, meaning and purpose to our own life. He led us to the discovery of Satyam, Shivam and Sundaram, to connect with that quality and nature within us.

The diamond represents what one can become, what Sri Swamiji became. How does a diamond come into existence? It goes through a process. First, it is just a piece of wood which becomes coal over a period of time, and as the coal is compressed more and more, it loses its blackness and becomes transparent and hard – it becomes a diamond. The journey from wood to coal to diamond is a journey of transformation, and that is known as evolution. You change into something better and new, and when you become the new, you don't maintain your previous identity. You are immersed in that new identity, new life, new consciousness, new state of being. That is the journey of a sadhaka, an aspirant and a disciple. The disciple does not only practise and teach yoga, but also makes the effort to overcome and transcend the lower tendencies and transform them into higher, finer qualities. One is not born pure, one has to become pure. One is not born perfect, one has to become perfect. This is the actual journey that an aspirant and disciple must follow. The culmination of discipleship, therefore, is changing from wood to diamond. Sri Swamiji was able to do it, due to his surrender to his guru and submission to his will, and he became the pure diamond, the crest jewel of his guru's crown.

What is the quality of a lotus? In the spiritual traditions, the lotus is a symbol of consciousness and a lotus in full bloom represents the awakened consciousness. Within the centre of this awakened consciousness, a divine power descends, in whichever form one is able to perceive, understand or experience it; there is a manifestation of light within it.



You might have seen the depiction of divine beings as standing upon lotuses in full bloom. That represents the opening of consciousness. The lotus of the consciousness opens up only when it is freed of all the bindings that hold the petals together. There are rubber-band-like bindings that hold the petals together and do not allow the flower to open. The flower does not have the strength to fight against the binding pull of the rubber band, it is tender. Therefore, although the potential is there to come into full bloom, the rubber bands do not allow that to be fulfilled. Once these rubber bands, the tamasic bindings, are removed, then movement takes place, and the petals begin to open up, and the beauty, the fragrance, the form, the colours emerge. In that opening, in that state of consciousness, the cosmic



and universal shakti descends. The divine energy plays its *leelas*, enacts its games. That is depicted as a god or goddess standing upon a lotus: consciousness having reached its ultimate point of evolution.

The consciousness of siddhas, enlightened beings, is also fully awakened. Sri Swamiji attained that state, because of his dedication to yoga, his devotion to guru, and because he was sincere, serious and committed to what he felt was right. He dedicated his life to that, and it launched him from an ordinary human being to the state of a siddha where he became the master of the elements and matter, and that attainment was seen in his mahasamadhi.

The lotus represents yet another quality. Though spending its life in water and mud which try to sully it, it remains unaffected by them and instead spreads its beauty far and wide. In the same way, a sadhu takes birth in this world,

rises above the mud of desires and lives with an attitude of detachment like the lotus. No matter how much water or mud splashes on it, its petals and leaves remain unaffected and reflect only beauty and light. This is how our guru lived. All those who have had the opportunity to live with him, learn from him and imbibe his teachings are a witness to this fact.

Thus the symbols of diamond and lotus were used to create this monument to honour him and what he represented in life. It is dedicated to the fullness and brilliance of Sri Swamiji. It is also a symbol of our aspiration – to become like a diamond and a lotus. And if we cannot become a diamond, we can at least become plain glass, which is as transparent as a diamond.

The idea of the Chhaya Samadhi has now taken a living form and today it has been offered to humankind. To the people who have contributed towards making it a reality, I offer my heartfelt thanks.



Birth of an inspiration

Swami Niranjan: So how did the genesis of the idea of Chhaya Samadhi take place? You know that I handed over my administrative duties to the third generation in 2008 and then, with the World Yoga Convention, concluded all my other obligations to the Bihar School of Yoga. Prior to that, however, the members of BSY said to me, "Before you leave, we would like you to create a memorial to Sri Swamiji so that the future generations can receive inspiration." I thought, 'Yes, why not?'

I discussed the subject with Swami Satsangi, and the same night both of us had similar dreams, in which one word was heard: 'chhaya-samadhi'. The next day we shared the dream; it was clearly a message from Sri Swamiji himself, "Create a Chhaya Samadhi in Munger, a reflection of the samadhi in Rikhia, so I can be present there also."

Before Sri Swamiji left Munger in 1988, he had said to me, "If I come to Munger, it will not be in the physical body and not as a guru; it will be in a different form." Therefore, when the thought and inspiration of the Chhaya Samadhi





came, it was intuitively known that through this medium he will always be present in Munger, where he dedicated his life to the service of his guru and to guru's direct mandate.



Bridge between Rikhia and Munger

Swami Niranjan: I had also been thinking about how Munger and Rikhia will be linked with each other when Swami Niranjan and Swami Satsangi are no longer here. What should link both places? The idea again came: samadhi, to have a mirror of the Samadhi of Sri Swamiji here. The word 'chhaya-samadhi' again came to my mind. *Chhaya* literally means 'shadow'. Sri Swamiji attained samadhi in Rikhiapeeth and that is where his physical body is placed, but then every physical body casts a shadow when it stands before the Sun. Therefore, the shadow of that samadhi is this, and thus the name 'Chhaya Samadhi'. It is the extension of that here.

The shapes and other details of the two Samadhis may be different; in Rikhia it is in the open, under the infinite





stars as Sri Swamiji wanted, while here the crystals create the ambience of infinite stars, galaxies and suns. However, the feeling of the presence at the Samadhi in Rikhia and at the Chhaya Samadhi is exactly the same. Whenever one goes to the Chhaya Samadhi it is like being in front of the Samadhi in Rikhia. That same feeling and energy are now at both places. That will ensure the connection.

The Chhaya Samadhi is a relationship, a bridge between Munger and Rikhia. There are three places related to Sri Swamiji: gurubhoomi, karmabhoomi and tapobhoomi. He took birth in the gurubhoomi as Swami Satyananda, in the karmabhoomi he followed and fulfilled the mandate of his guru, and in the tapobhoomi he achieved the pinnacle of sannyasa. The Chhaya Samadhi will play the role of a bridge between the karmabhoomi and tapobhoomi, the two places that were created by him.

Being in the presence

Swami Niranjan: With the inauguration of the Chhaya Samadhi, it is as if Sri Swamiji has come to stay at Ganga Darshan. It is not just a beautifully-designed structure; inside you can feel him, his presence is palpable. Previously he used to come and go, and give indications of the comings and goings. Sometimes his bed would be unmade, or he revealed his form to some people, others had other experiences. Now, he has come to stay.

For me this is the most satisfying feeling, that what we have created is not just an empty shell of steel and glass, void of feeling, rather it is infused with his presence, his energy, his vibration. This gives the certainty that the light, the energy and the guru tattwa that are enshrined within will guide the direction of our paths. And I pray that I will have the opportunity to serve this guru tattwa again.



Capturing time

Swami Niranjan: An important feature of the Chhaya Samadhi is that it contains a time capsule. Inside the capsule are all the books written by Sri Swamiji, by members of the Bihar School of Yoga, and by everyone who has contributed to its growth and development; the CDs and DVDs that hold the record of Sri Swamiji's work and activities; a selection of Sri Swamiji's personal items – watch, bag, cup, mala, etc. In fact, the entire history of fifty years relating to Sri Swamiji's life and work has been put in the capsule, with the instruction that it be opened to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Sri Swamiji's mission. Then it will reveal the treasures that were accumulated in the first fifty years – the wisdom, the knowledge, the work and its growth; the personal items that belonged to our master, all still in pristine condition. The contents of the capsule will be an inspiration for the future generations who will again receive directly the items used by him, created by him and dedicated to him. It will be a most memorable moment in the lives of those present when the time capsule is opened.



The Time Capsule Contains:

- Books written by Sri Swami Satyananda, Swami Niranjanananda, Swami Satyasangananda and other members of the Bihar School of Yoga over the 50 years of its history.
- CDs and DVDs produced by the Bihar School of Yoga.
- A collection of Sri Swami Satyananda's personal belongings.

Recommitting to the yogic vision

Swami Niranjan: With the dedication of the Chhaya Samadhi, the residents and sannyasins of Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth and those connected with Sri Swami Satyananda and his mission, vision and inspiration will make a sankalpa.

With the World Yoga Convention the work of propagating yoga came to an end. Now we need to consolidate the work and become stable in our efforts, our life, our sadhana, our seva. We have to become serious, sincere and committed. We need to find a goal, an aim to live for and to work towards as a group, as a community, as a sangha. The sankalpa, which is based on the founding samskaras that Sri Swamiji developed for the propagation of yoga, will guide us towards this. Without a sankalpa and without adhering to it, there cannot be any direction or clarity. This sankalpa will guide the principles, the



actions and the teachings of yoga at the Bihar School of Yoga from now on.

The sankalpa statement is being kept in the Chhaya Samadhi, and the residents and sannyasins will have an opportunity to go in, offer their pranams and read the sankalpa which upholds the principles Sri Swamiji lived for and dedicated his life to. They will have the choice to sign their acceptance to live that sankalpa. That will be their oath, their sankalpa as a sannyasin, to commit themselves with sincerity and seriousness, with joy and happiness, to the vision of their guru. There is no compulsion to sign, but for those who do, it will indicate their recommitment to the yogic vision of Sri Swamiji, which is manifesting and flowering at the Bihar School of Yoga, Ganga Darshan.

The present and the future generations of Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth will follow these sankalpas, so they can live up to the yogic principles that were propagated, inspired and lived by in our tradition, by Sri Swami Sivananda and Sri Swami Satyananda. If we are to follow in their path, then let us also make the first attempt, the first effort to live according to the code of conduct they have lived. That will be the fulfilment of our discipleship.

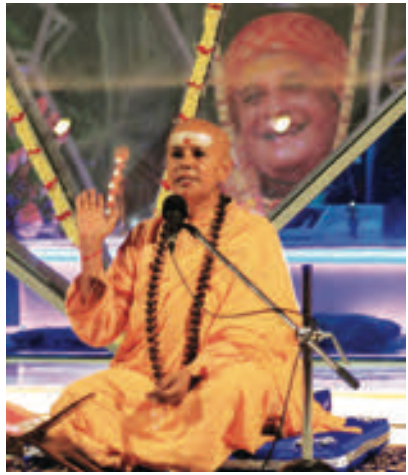


Purity enshrined

Swami Satsangi: This moment is a historic one, for me it certainly is. It will go down in history as the moment when a disciple created a wonder of the world and offered it to his guru with faith and devotion. This is the pure devotion of a disciple you see here.

Sitting here made me feel poetic, it brought out devotion in me. Drifting memories, beauty, poetry . . . it brings out tender emotions. After all, what is a monument? It is a creation in time and evokes a certain sentiment in the people who behold it. Such pure sentiment! The purity, the devotion, the love, the perfection comes forth as soon as you behold it, and that is the importance of this monument.

It is of great consequence to have this Chhaya Samadhi at this time, a befitting offering to our Gurudev on his sannyasa day. It is important, apart from sankalpa, to have continuity. If there is no continuity, the sankalpa will just die and cannot be fulfilled. And this monument is also that – a symbol of continuity, because as the time passes and changes, this monument will act as a very deep and profound reminder of the person who brought all this about. And I am really happy and very, very privileged to be part of this moment. And we thank Swami Niranjan for this great creation.



Keeping the flame alive

Swami Niranjan: Before Sri Swamiji took mahasamadhi, he made the promise that he will return. A person who can consciously and wilfully leave the body can definitely keep such a promise too. When he will return, now or later, tomorrow or after a hundred years, that is known to him. In the meantime, we must keep alive the flame that he had lit.

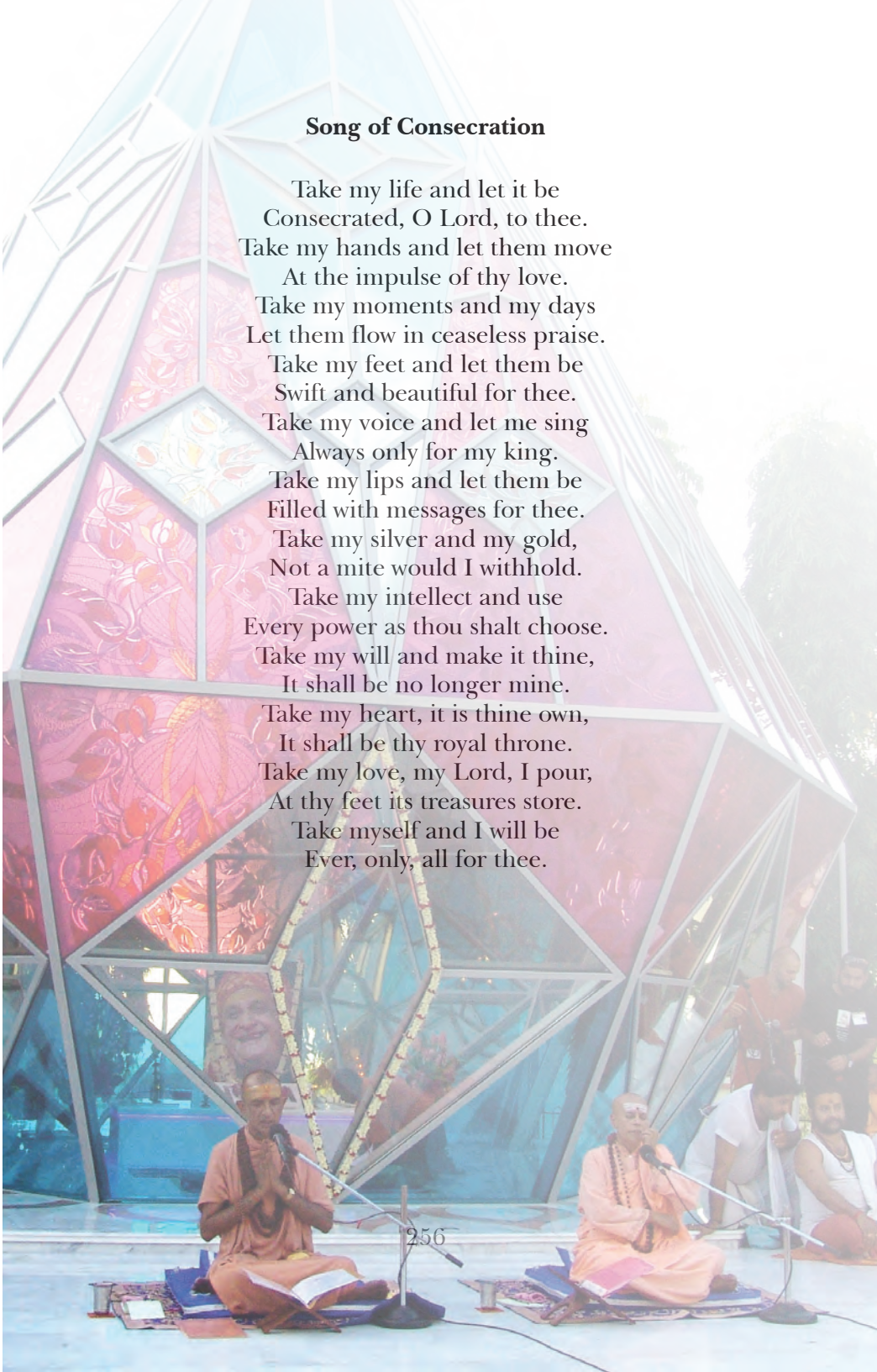
When our efforts are fulfilled, when our time comes to go, and when the memories of Swami Satsangi and Swami Niranjan are fading in the minds of people, then at that time, his presence here in the Chhaya Samadhi will guide the future aspirations and hopes of sannyasins and spiritual aspirants. And we pray that when he comes again, he gives us another opportunity to serve him and the luminosity that he brings with him.

This is our prayer at the Chhaya Samadhi, and with this prayer we dedicate it to our guru, Sri Swami Satyananda, who is the star of our eyes, the diamond of our heart, and the lotus of our lives.



Song of Consecration

Take my life and let it be
Consecrated, O Lord, to thee.
Take my hands and let them move
At the impulse of thy love.
Take my moments and my days
Let them flow in ceaseless praise.
Take my feet and let them be
Swift and beautiful for thee.
Take my voice and let me sing
Always only for my king.
Take my lips and let them be
Filled with messages for thee.
Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold.
Take my intellect and use
Every power as thou shalt choose.
Take my will and make it thine,
It shall be no longer mine.
Take my heart, it is thine own,
It shall be thy royal throne.
Take my love, my Lord, I pour,
At thy feet its treasures store.
Take myself and I will be
Ever, only, all for thee.





Sri Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna 2016

Sannyasa Peeth, Munger

The Tradition of Yajna

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati
7 September 2016



In Munger, there are two different organizations. One is the Bihar School of Yoga, which is in Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth, and the other is Sannyasa Peeth, which is in Paduka Darshan, the premises we are in right now. These are two separate organizations with two different mandates and directions.

The only thing common between them is that they are the inspiration of our guru, Sri Swami Satyananda, and I am also common to both of them. Beyond that, the aspirations, the direction, the training, the program, the discipline, the system, everything is different. One has the yogic disciplines



and the other is developing the sannyasa disciplines. One is fifty-three years old and the other is six years old. Therefore, do not confuse the two.

Gradually, the development and construction is taking place in Paduka Darshan, which will allow people to participate in the different activities of Sannyasa Peeth, while the yoga activities in Ganga Darshan will go on. When Sri



Swamiji was giving me the guidelines and the mandate of Sannyasa Peeth in 2009, he said, "As my blessing, I am asking you to conduct a Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna in Sannyasa Peeth every year." I said, "Why yajna?" He said, "Just as the Sat Chandi Yajna is held in Rikhia, there will be a Lakshmi-Narayana Yajna in Sannyasa Peeth." Therefore, from 2011, this event commenced, when there was nothing here; it was a



barren piece of land. Since then it has become the inspiration for Sannyasa Peeth and the medium to convey the blessings of the tradition and the gurus.

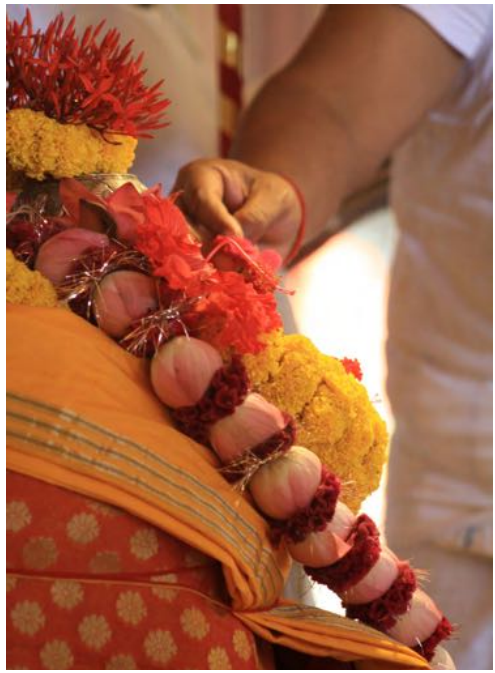
Yajna: invoking the formless divinity

What is a yajna? Yajna is an ancient ritual, which is not religious, but pre-religion. In India we have had two distinct periods of the development of spirituality and religion. The first period was vedic. During the vedic period, there was no idol, no statue, no form given to anything divine, the only invocation was the mantra. Mantra was invoked on any object, such as coconut, betel nut, water or other manifest objects. Thus, in the vedic time, spirituality was just invocation: invocation of the cosmic energy into a material object.

Yajnas belong to the vedic period and therefore you don't see any form in a yajna. What you see is only altars on which rice, betel nuts, coconuts and other items are placed. There is no statue or idol of any kind. There is no form of any kind. Only mantras are invoked and through the invocation of mantras, the divine energy is concentrated on the object in which it is being invoked. After the fulfilment of the sankalpa

or aim of the yajna, the energy is again sent back to its transcendental realm. It is not allowed to remain here. That is yajna. It is the most ancient, one may even say primitive, form of invoking divinity, predating every other human concept. The only idea here is to invoke a cosmic power to help one progress, prosper, develop, grow and evolve in life. This was the first level of spirituality, where the mind is not bound by a form, symbol, idol, statue or figure. Instead, the understanding of the divine is abstract, cosmic and universal, and invocation of that cosmic universal power is to aid growth and progress at both material and spiritual levels.

When the vedic culture declined, and there were no teachers who could adequately convey this concept of the transcendental nature, then emerged a new culture: the pauranic culture. With the advent of the pauranic culture, the divinity was given a shape and form. It was visualized in a particular manner and named: this is Shiva, this is





Brahma, this is Narayana, this is Krishna, this is Rama. Each aspect of divinity was visualized in the image of the person who discovered that aspect, and they became the forms representing divinity. With form came ritual, and form and ritual together created religion.

Form and ritual create religion. The absence of form and the presence of only the process is the vedic tradition, the vedic way of thinking. That is also yajna, where the transcendental is invoked without the imposition of any form or figure. The problem is that you know the names and you identify the names with a figure. From that perspective you believe yajnas to be religious, but in principle and in process they are not. If you remove your own concept of Shiva, Narayana, Rama and Krishna and only focus on the transcendental nature, then that becomes the invocation of yajna.

The purpose of yajna, as given by the vedic seers, is to spread peace and prosperity. In vedic times, when a yajna was conducted, everybody in society knew that something good is happening and they should participate in it. No invitations were ever sent, only information was given out that such an event is taking place. As people believed in the

goodness of the yajna, they would throng to the yajna venue. The people who conducted the yajna would offer gifts to the participants as prasad of the yajna. Prasad means something that is auspicious and happy, and brings auspiciousness and happiness in one's life. Through the giving of prasad, the aim of the yajna is fulfilled, which is happiness, prosperity and peace for all.

The invocation at a yajna is done through the medium of mantra. People are able to participate in the listening of the mantras, even if they cannot understand them. The mantras are in ancient Sanskrit, which most people don't understand. However, by focusing on the drone of the mantra one begins to feel its vibrations, and then one can merge the mind with that vibration and experience the effects of the mantra.

There are two levels of human experience. The first is when you are active in material life, in family, professional and social life. When you are attending to all this before the age of fifty, the halfway mark, your aim and focus is stability, prosperity, comfort and acquisition of skills to progress and prosper in life. When you retire, then what is the aim? For many the aim becomes tourism, but the aim should be mental peace and contentment. After retirement there is always the



question, 'What do I do now, what next?' The anxiety that builds up due to this has to be counter-balanced by peace. The cravings and desires that continue to goad the mind have to be balanced by contentment, and a new direction given to life. You have to be able to complete the material in the first half of your life and the spiritual in the second part of your life. Spirituality comes in the second part of your life while the materialistic acquisition of skills, knowledge and prosperity comes in the first half.

Yajna becomes a means to introduce you to the second component of life. You don't have to make any effort here, you have to only come, sit, listen and feel. You don't have to perform specific postures, meditation or pranayama, nobody tells you to hold your breath in this manner, to hold your nose in that manner, or contract your abdomen in this manner. Rather, it is immersion in the mantras that allows you to separate yourself from the material and connect with the spiritual.

The word 'yajna' is made up of three different words: *ya* means production, *ja* means distribution, and *na* means enjoyment. It is the production of the good, both external and internal. It is distribution of the good, both external and internal. It is the enjoyment of the good, both external and internal. This is the meaning of yajna.

Lakshmi and Narayana: powers of life

Who is Lakshmi-Narayana? Narayana is the principle that governs life. Brahma is the principle that governs birth and Shiva is the principle that governs death. You interact with Brahma when you are taking birth. You interact with Shiva when you are departing from this world. However, during the span of your life from birth to death, you are under the guidance and control of Narayana, which is the life-force.

Every night you go to sleep. How do you rest assured that you are not going to die at night and will wake up the next morning? That is the Narayana factor: the belief in life. However, after the age of eighty, as you are getting closer to the Shiva factor, the Narayana factor becomes less. Every



night when you go to sleep, you begin to worry, 'Will I get up tomorrow morning or not?' When you do wake up the next morning, you thank God by saying, 'Oh, I am still alive. My medicines have worked, my oxygen machine has worked, my injections have worked. I am still alive.' The closer you go to the Shiva factor, the fear of death sets in. The further you are from the Shiva factor, there is enjoyment and indulgence in life. Thus Narayana is the life factor, the power through which you live.

The shakti of Narayana is Lakshmi, the prosperity factor. Without prosperity, you can't even get a piece of bread. Prosperity and life, Lakshmi and Narayana, both go together. There is need to improve their presence, to improve the quality of life, both the material and the spiritual, and therefore this invocation is taking place.

During the first year of the yajna in 2011, about five to six hundred people participated. The second year it was two to three thousand people, and from the third year it has been five to six thousand people. They come without any publicity, without any information, only one line: 'The date of Lakshmi-Narayana Majayajna is from this to this.' That's all. There is no invitation, only information. However, as people believe in the goodness, they come.





Three invocations

In this Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna, three different invocations are being conducted. One is of Lakshmi, who represents prosperity at both material and spiritual levels, as both are required to survive in life. Even to have a cup of coffee, one needs to have resources. Even to clothe the body, you need to have resources. Without resource, life cannot grow, evolve, or progress. Life and resource are two parts of the same coin. The material resources are required for surviving in the material world and spiritual resources are required for surviving and growing in the spiritual world. They both enhance the experience and beauty of life. Mother Lakshmi represents this prosperity, at all levels.

The second invocation is of Narayana, who represents the experience of life in the form of *sat*, *chit* and *ananda* – truth,



awareness and bliss. These are the two powers that govern our life. The third aspect of this yajna is the invocation of the consolidated shakti, which is the weapon of Narayana. Why is a weapon used? To remove, destroy or change something. Similarly, life also needs a weapon in order to succeed in its journey, and that weapon is known as *Narayanastra*, the weapon of Narayana.

The weapon of Narayana

There is a story in the *Mahabharata*. The Kauravas, who were fighting the Pandavas, sent a missile – the Narayanastra – against the Pandavas. That missile was destroying everything on its path. The Pandavas had no countermeasure to stop it, so they went to Krishna for help. Krishna said, "That missile is attracted to those who wear armour and hold weapons in their hand. The missile is directed against those who, in their arrogant warrior nature, are willing to confront it. In order to not be affected by the missile, drop your weapons. Throw them away. Remove your armour. There should be nothing between the missile and you, no barrier, no protection. Become naked and it will not hurt you." The Pandavas followed Krishna's advice, removed everything metallic from their body and thus rendered the missile useless, as it was attacking the metal: the armour, the helmet, the weapons

made out of iron and other metals. Once they dropped every weapon used for protection, the missile was rendered useless. Thus Krishna saved the Pandavas and their army.

The weapon that was launched against the Pandavas was the Narayanastra. What is the significance of this weapon? What is the armour in your life? The arrogance, the egotistical tendencies, the stiffness of mind and heart, the rigidity of mind and heart: the ego. Ultimately, the ego is the barrier between the individual and the divine. One can transcend the mind yet not experience the divine. One can enter into samadhi yet not experience the divine.

The ego stands as a barrier even in the life of masters, and in the life of ordinary people and demonical people. All three groups are subject to the influence of ego. Those with demonical tendencies have tamasic ego, the dark ego. The common people, the masses, have rajasic ego. They wish to attain self-esteem, self-prestige, self-identity. The positive and pious people, the yogis, have sattwic ego: awareness that 'I exist'. Thus ego is there in each and every one, whether in a tamasic, rajasic or sattwic form, and that is the barrier between the individual and the divine.

The shakti of Narayana breaks that barrier, it kills the individuality. As Swami Sivananda used to say: "Kill this



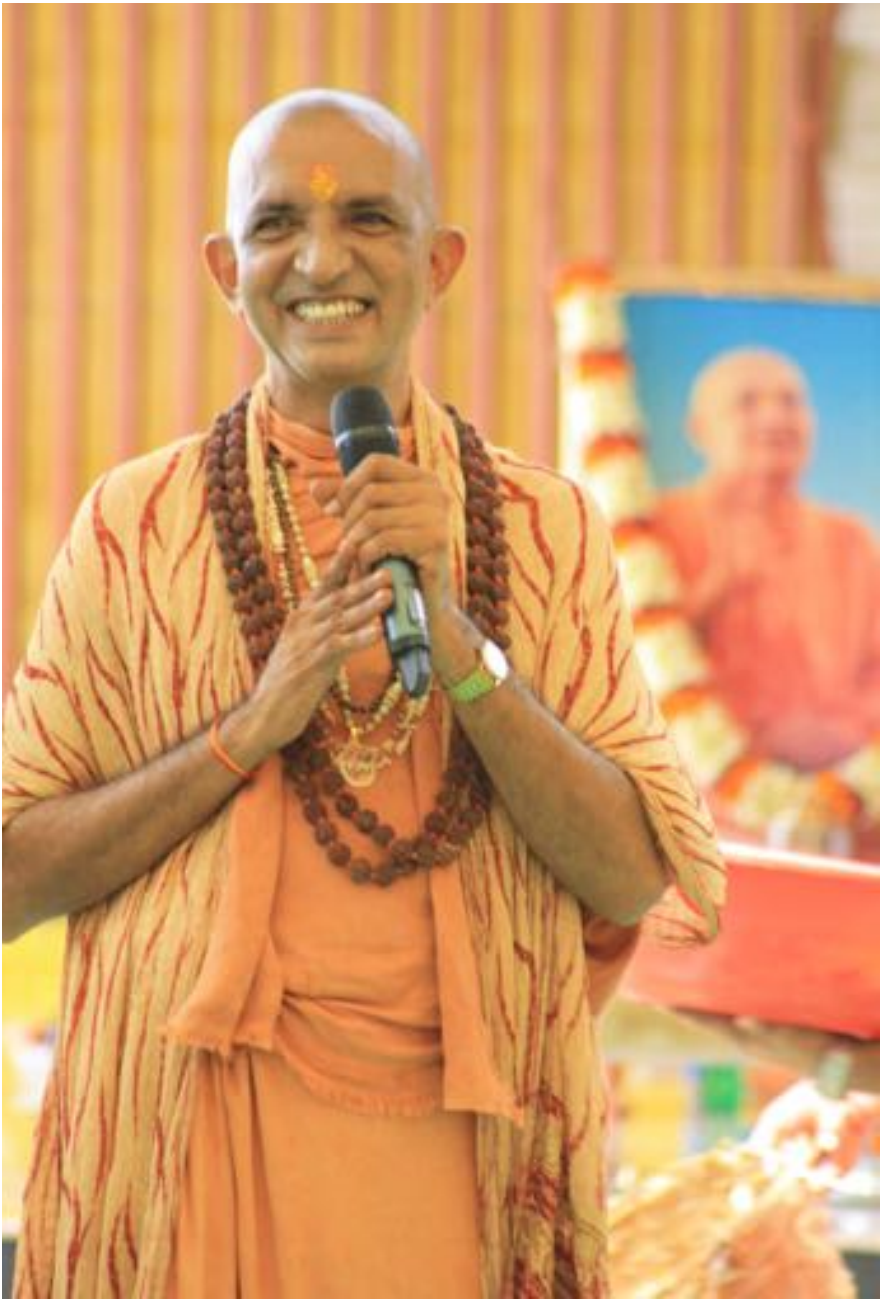
little i, die to live, live the divine life." This little 'i', which is the barrier in life, is destroyed by the power of life, by the shakti, the weapon, which enhances the experience of life, which nurtures the beauty of life: understanding, support, cooperation and positivity. That is the power invoked through the Narayana Astra Yajna.

These are the three processes that will take place during this Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna: invocation of Lakshmi, who represents the material and spiritual prosperity, the goodness of life, the resourceful life; the invocation of Narayana to experience the expansiveness of life, the beauty and truth of life; and the invocation of the weapon of Narayana to help us overcome the last barrier of ego.

In the three processes that will be conducted, you will be able to hear the Lakshmi invocation, you will be able to hear the Narayana invocation, but you will not hear the Narayanastra invocation, as that will be not on the microphone. In the tradition of this invocation, only the performers are supposed to chant it and hear it, not the public. Therefore, during the invocation of the Narayanastra, the mikes will be turned off, and we shall be chanting other mantras while the invocation takes place at the yajna vedi.

Reviving lost vidyas

The Narayanastra invocation was last performed on this planet five thousand years ago. After that, this science was lost. In Munger we are trying to revive these lost sciences. For three years now, at the conclusion of my panchagni sadhana, a special yajna is conducted which was lost to human memory. It was revived by us in Munger after a gap of about five thousand five hundred years. This is the Pashupata Astra Yajna, invoking the weapon of Shiva. The weapon of Shiva destroys the blockages of Brahma granthi, Vishnu granthi and Rudra granthi, the three psychic knots, in one go. This is the subject of spiritual science. People only know of asana and pranayama, a little bit of yoga nidra and a little bit of meditation, and they think they will attain enlightenment by





practising these. It is not going to happen. There is a science of spirituality and there are many facets to it. Invocation of the weapon is one aspect.

Similarly, before Guru Poornima another ancient yajna was conducted for the first time this year, in which we invoke the power of the creator. It is the Bramha Astra Yajna, to allow new and positive creations to take place in life and to stop all that distracts and disturbs the mind from attaining its goal. All the obstacles that the human mind is subjected to are stilled and new earth is created in which you can again live your life in a happy manner. There is a new creation, a new dimension in the mind, another loka.

These are three rare yajnas, which even in the ancient times were not common. They were performed only by the rishis and munis of the time, not even by kings or emperors, only by seers, sages and sannyasins, as they would use this power for the benefit of everybody's enlightenment and happiness, and not for the expansion of their own personal kingdom.

Sri Swamiji had given the instruction to revive these ancient traditions in Sannyasa Peeth. These yajnas are not part of the Kali Yuga culture, they are part of the age before Kali Yuga: the age of Sri Krishna, the age of Sri Rama, and the age when the world had just emerged from its yoga nidra, its slumber, and realized its existence.

We don't publicize these yajnas, as they are not for entertainment but for sadhana. Only sadhakas are permitted in these yajnas. Therefore, out of two thousand, only two hundred may be selected and allowed to participate in the Pashupata Astra Yajna and the Bramha Astra Yajna. In Narayana Astra Yajna, it does not matter, as you don't hear the mantras.

These are aspects of the sadhana and the effort of the sages to bring peace, plenty and prosperity into the world. They are not done for entertainment, 'Oh let us go and see what is happening.' People with such intentions are not allowed. Only those who are well-versed in the lore of yoga are allowed. Not those who practise asana, pranayama, mudra, bandha and yoga nidra, but those who have an understanding of the subject of yoga, and they are the ones who will be benefited by participating.

These ancient yajnas, which are being revived in Munger, are eventually going to become the answers for the ills and problems everyone faces in life. Each of the three yajnas cater to a different aspect of human nature and life, and they also support each other to allow an integrated awakening to take place. Sri Swamiji gave the mandate to bring to light the lost vidyas for a reason: they are a potent tool of development, growth and evolution, and can help us create a better world.





Upholding the Vidya

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati
8 September 2016, Morning



Today we begin the Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna officially, and today is also the birthday of our paramguru, our sadguru, Sri Swami Sivananda Saraswati.

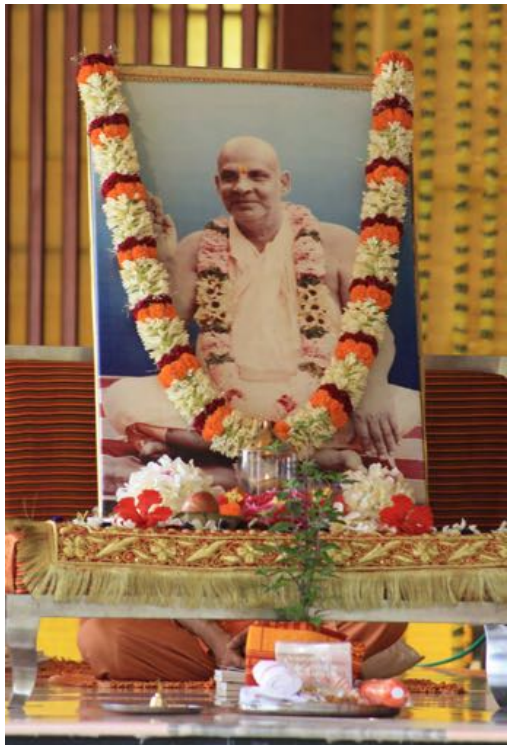
In the yogic tradition there is only one sadguru and the rest are gurus. The sadguru is one from whom the mission and the vision begins. In our tradition the mission of yoga and spiritual life began with Sri Swami Sivananda. It is his inspiration, his training, his teachings that his direct disciples and the subsequent generations of disciples are bringing to human society for growth, evolution and upliftment.

Sri Swami Satyananda, our guru, was a disciple of Swami Sivananda, and he propagated the vision and the mission given to him by Swami Sivananda. Therefore, what we see

here today is due to the grace of Swami Sivananda. It is his inspiration and his vision that we are all connected with, and our guru Swami Satyananda was the catalyst to bring us within the fold of Swami Sivananda's inspiration and vision. We are grateful to these two luminaries, who have shown us a path to integrate the material and the spiritual dimensions in our lives.

The material and the spiritual

Sometimes people say that spirituality and material life do not mix and merge, and that is also right. Just as day and night are two different experiences, in the same manner, the material mind and the spiritual mind are two different minds. Nevertheless, you don't have to be one hundred percent spiritual to realize spirituality in your life. You can be





one percent spiritual, and that is the beginning of realizing your own spiritual nature, your own spiritual being. That one percent awareness of your spiritual needs can be developed into two percent, ten percent, twenty percent and eventually one hundred percent.

There has to be a balance between your material aspirations and spiritual aspirations, and the Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna is a means to connect with your spiritual life. What you are witnessing here is not religious activity. What you are witnessing here is a spiritual activity. There is a clear demarcation between spirituality and religion. Spirituality pre-dates religious concepts. Religions have come much later in the history of humanity. The form of spirituality before religion came into existence is what you are witnessing here.

In the Indian tradition, there have been two distinct periods. One was the vedic period, the age of the vedic civilization. At that time religions did not exist, but everybody was spiritual. That was the vedic culture. Spirituality was lived in that age without the trappings of religion. Religions evolved much later when the vedic age declined and the pauranic age ascended. It was during this age that the spiritual views, ideas and concepts were given an identity, an



image, a symbol, an attribute, a quality, a definition, a form. That became the beginning of religion.

In the vedic culture there are no statues or images; there is only invocation of mantras. If you look at the central piece where the yajna is being conducted, there is no statue of any deity. All you will see is yantras made with rice and other items, and different objects placed on top of the yantras, such as betel nuts, coconuts, leaves, grass or flowers. Mantras are used to invoke the cosmic energy into those objects. After the conclusion of the yajna, those forces are released back into the cosmos. This is nirakara upasana, formless worship, which is the hallmark of the vedic culture.

When the pauranic culture developed, they gave form and identity to the concepts and ideas that had been conceived by the vedic seers. These forms became the deities and they in turn created different sects and traditions, which eventually became part of a greater religion. In this way, there has been a distinct demarcation between religious behaviour and spiritual aspirations in the past.

For those who see a yajna for the first time, everything looks exotic and different and they feel this is religion. That

is a wrong perception. This is an invocation, formless and attribute-less, with only one intention: to bring peace and prosperity in the life of every individual, so that everyone becomes the recipient of divine grace for development and growth in their life.

Yogapeeth and Sannyasa Peeth

The performance of the Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna is a mandate given by our guru, Sri Swami Satyananda, for Sannyasa Peeth. It is the symbol of his blessings for the mission and the vision that is evolving here in Sannyasa Peeth.

Sri Swamiji established three institutions, two in Munger and one in Rikhia. Munger has the Bihar School of Yoga, or Yogapeeth, established in Ganga Darshan, and Sannyasa Peeth, established in Paduka Darshan. These two





organizations are different. Their practices, aspirations, directions, everything is different. The only thing common between the two organizations is the inspiration of our guru Swami Satyananda and my involvement. If we remove these two, then they are as different as two separate industries.

The focus of yoga is to live the lifestyle of yoga, to practise yoga, to experience yoga, to live the yogic discipline, and the focus of Sannyasa Peeth is to acquire the right samskaras, to experience the spiritual dimension and spiritual qualities.

Sannyasa Peeth is a developing place and whatever is happening here has its roots in the ancient cultures of this country. Here we don't teach yoga, but live the spiritual life. We inspire people to live the spiritual life, to imbibe the spiritual samskaras, which even sannyasins don't have. In order to inculcate the spiritual samskaras, the arrogance of the head has to come out and the innocence of heart has to manifest, only then can one experience divine grace. This

yajna is a medium through which it is possible to bypass the head and connect with the heart. Once you connect with the heart, you can experience many things which you had until now not been aware of or ignored. That is the purpose of this yajna: to connect with the heart, to connect with faith and hope, to become better, optimistic, positive, creative, peaceful and content in life.

Yajna essentials

The Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna has commenced today, 8th September, the birthday of Swami Sivananda, and it will conclude on the 12th, the sannyasa day of Swami Satyananda. Between the birthday of Swami Sivananda and the sannyasa day of Swami Satyananda, we have this program here, so it is an auspicious time.

Today, during the program one hundred people will be called out and they will participate in the Ganesha invocation. They will come to the front and break a coconut before Lord Ganesha, and that will be the first activity of the day. From tomorrow, sahasrarchana will begin for which people will be selected today, fifty women and fifty men, and they will perform the sahasrarchana for all three days, 9th, 10th and



11th. In this manner, many programs will happen each day.

Remember that it is not compulsory for you to sit here for three or four hours continuously, you can stand up, walk around, come back, dance, sing, meditate, be quiet. The only thing that is not allowed is gossip. Maintain the sanctity of this place by being silent and focused.

Flower in a coconut

We have just concluded the chanting of the thousand names of Sri Ganesha, and the anusthana of breaking a hundred and eight coconuts is also coming to its conclusion. Many of these coconuts have a flower inside, and they are being placed before Ganesha. It is a rare coconut that has the flower and they are considered to be most auspicious.

It is a miracle that in a sealed coconut containing water, a flower grows. Somebody must have put it there, and that is Narayana. There is a story about Lakshmi and Narayana. One day, Lakshmi asked Narayana, "Where are you the whole day long?" Narayana said, "I look after everybody. I have to give them food, clothes, shelter, I have to give them everything in life." Lakshmi did not believe him, she thought,





'I will test Narayana.' The next day she caught an ant and put it in an empty box, tied it in her sari, and continued with her activities. In the evening Narayana returned and Lakshmi asked, "So how was your day?" Narayana said, "Well, the same as yesterday. I was busy providing shelter, food and clothing to everybody." Lakshmi said, "Are you sure you have provided for everybody?" Narayana said, "Yes." Lakshmi said, "I challenge that you have not provided for this one?" Narayana said, "I wonder how is that possible." Lakshmi took out that airtight box, opened it and said, "There is an ant here which I have kept tied to my sari since morning, without giving it a single grain. It is hungry and you have not looked after it." Narayana said, "Look again." When Lakshmi looked carefully in the box, she found a single grain of half-eaten rice there, which the ant had consumed.

Just as in an airtight chamber a grain is provided to an ant, in the same manner in an airtight coconut filled with water, a flower grows. That is a miracle.



Our ancestral heritage

When we read Indian history, we find that our ancestors were sages and seers, not monkeys. They gave us knowledge, understanding and ways to experience the higher dimensions of the mind, emotions and spirit. They also lived that life. This civilization was an enlightened civilization when it appeared on the face of the planet. Of course there were the destructive forces as well, but good always prevailed, dharma was always established and justice was always given. This represents a time when people were focused on improving the quality of life and society, and they stood up against the limitations and destructions which were not beneficial for the homogeneous development of human society. The rishis and munis lived and taught the concepts of *nyaya*, justice, and *dharma*, commitment and duty. They were aware of the beauty that life can offer by connecting with the spiritual dimension and they were also aware of the possibilities to improve oneself in the material dimension.

These sages and seers lived a life in which they perfected their own selves and also helped society to perfect its understanding. They have contributed immensely to the

spiritual as well as the material traditions of India. *Rig Veda*, for example, is a treatise on the maintenance of society, agriculture, social norms, disciplines, rules and restrictions. All these topics are covered in it. It is not a philosophical treatise, as people believe it to be; it is a book of knowledge covering many areas of human interaction with earth and society.

Yajna is a contribution of these sages, not the only but one of the many contributions. They had perfected the art of yajna so that it gave them instant and immediate result. This knowledge was lost over a period of time. As per Sri Swamiji's mandate for Sannyasa Peeth, we are trying to revive these ancient spiritual traditions. Since 2013, we have revived three ancient traditions. From the gamut of their contribution, according to the sannyasa discipline and the aspirations of Sannyasa Peeth, I selected three yajnas, which have not been conducted on this planet in the last five thousand years. The first yajna is the Pashupata Astra Yajna, conducted at the culmination of my panchagni sadhana, as panchagni is the sadhana of Shiva.





Attaining Shivahood

History tells us that the sages who in the past have done the panchagni sadhana, attained Shivahood at the end. I believe that, as I have seen that attainment in my own guru, Sri Swamiji. What is Shivahood? It is not becoming God, but it is total control over who and what we are.

Many of you know how Sri Swamiji consciously invoked his own death. He said, "I am going to leave my body at this time." At that designated time, he took a few deep breaths, prayed to God, "I am ready to come, take me," prayed to his guru, "Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve you, to serve humanity and divinity. Give me this opportunity again in my next life; don't delay it, right from my birth I should be in the service of all," then he chanted *Om*, repeated his mantra, stopped the breath, and left, allowing the pranas to ascend to higher dimensions. Physically he was dead, spiritually his pranas were ascending consciously. That is Shivahood: total control over one's departure, the ability to guide the spirit out of the body. It denotes control over the physical or gross elements, and over the mind. It denotes the ability to separate spirit from matter.

Witnessing this, I believe that what the sages say is attainable. They attained it and also described the process they went through and their experience of the same. The Pashupata Astra Yajna revives the tradition of these sages, and the power of that yajna is used to break open the three granthis, the psychic knots, to pierce through *tripura*, the three mythological cities. The three granthis are *Brahma granthi*, the knot of Brahma; *Vishnu granthi*, the knot of Narayana, and *Rudra granthi*, the knot of Rudra. These are the three blockages that hold one in the material dimension of the senses and sense objects. They bind one to time, space and object.

Brahma granthi represents object, as Brahma is the creator. Vishnu granthi represents space, as everything is contained in Narayana. Shiva granthi represents time, *mahakaal*, the eternal time, which indicates continuity or a break. These are the three granthis that are pierced in the sadhana of panchagni and Pashupata Astra Yajna.



Grace of Narayana

The second revival which was started last year is the Narayana Astra Yajna, held during the Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna. It is a yajna in which the mantras are chanted and heard only by the performers. This creates an effect of the mantra which is subtle, and its target is also the most subtle component of the personality, which people don't have access to easily but which everybody experiences: the ego.

In that story of the Mahabharata war, the Kauravas launched this missile of Narayanastra and the Pandavas had no weapon as its countermeasure, and everybody was dying. Now, in the books it says that Narayanastra was a missile that was attracted to metal, so anybody who had any metal on the body, the armour, the sword, the spear, the headgear, the armband, etc., the missile would attack that. Krishna said to the Pandavas, "The only way to save yourself is to remove everything which is metallic from your body. So drop your weapons, become naked, and when you have nothing on your body, the missile will be rendered useless." The entire army dropped its weapons, and that is how they saved themselves.

What does the story signify? What is the barrier between

us and divinity? The barrier is that of the ego. No amount of meditation, asana or pranayama is ever going to destroy that ego. Through meditation you can work with your manas, access your chitta, modify your buddhi, but you cannot destroy your ego. That can only happen if there is grace of Narayana, and that grace comes with the attainment of humility. The more humility there is in people's lives, less there is arrogance, self-esteem, self-prestige and ego. The rigidness, the hardness is reduced. The more humble you become, the more egoless you become. The more ego-full you become, the less humble you are. Ego is on one side and humility is on the other side.

Humility comes when there is trust, faith and surrender, to what you believe in, to who you are, and to what you aspire for. When you begin to trust yourself and believe in yourself, and when you begin to live the best qualities that you are endowed with, then humility comes and ego is reduced. The subtle effect of the mantras and the yajna of Narayanastra is to influence the subtle ego within and destroy it, so that one learns to respect, cherish and experience the beauty that life holds.





Receiving a solid foundation from Brahma

The third revival took place this year. In the week before Guru Poornima, we invoked the Bramhastra, the power of the creator, and that was another beautiful yajna.

These are the invocations of the three weapons, and what is a weapon? It is not an arm of destruction; it is a container of power, *shakti*. That shakti can be used benevolently and also destructively. Sri Swamiji says that a knife is a knife, it is neither good nor bad, neither positive nor negative, neither plus nor minus. It is the wielder of the knife who defines its usage as tamasic, rajasic or sattwic. If the wielder of the knife kills somebody with it, the knife will be labelled as tamasic. If the wielder of the knife cuts open somebody to save their life, that will be considered rajasic. The same knife, used to chop vegetables to make a meal is sattwic, as it is neither harming nor saving anybody, it is merely nourishing you. Does the knife become bad or good by existing? It does not. The knife becomes bad or good depending on how you use it.

In the same manner, these weapons are also concentrated energy, focused energy. When your mental energies are all dissipated, that state of mind is known as disturbed state. When the mental energy is focused in one point, then that

is known as willpower, determination to do something. So the dissipated mental energy and focused mental energy, they represent two different functions of the same energy. In the same manner, the focused cosmic energy becomes the weapon to eradicate the ill, the block, the problem, the difficulty, that the spiritual aspirant is facing and allow the aspirant to grow in the dimensions of positivity and purity.

The Brahma Astra Yajna is dedicated to the creator, Brahma. The function of the creator is to provide the solid foundation for growth, to create new earth where life can emerge fresh. What is created is created, but the same process is repeated in the next creation. Therefore, the purpose of the yajna is founding and creating a new base, which is not material but spiritual, and also to stop the dissipations of the mind and allow it to focus so that it can be functional and useful.

If the mind is dissipated, you cannot even read a single page of a book. By the fifth line you are wondering what was on the first line; the link, the context goes away. Even in normal activities that you do on a daily basis, without focus there cannot be continuity of attention and awareness.

This dissipation does not allow the creative faculties of the mind to manifest. Therefore the chatter of the mind has to



stop, be stilled, made mute. The power of the yajna makes the mind and the senses mute so they do not become the cause of dissipation and disturbance. In that state of stillness and stability, a new foundation is created for the spiritual being to take birth.

Imbibing the higher vidyas

Of the three yajnas, only the Narayana Astra Yajna is a public event, as it is part of the Lakshmi-Narayana yajna. In the others, only serious sadhakas and aspirants are allowed in. These are not programs of entertainment, they are for understanding and imbibing the *vidya*, the knowledge, and applying it. Therefore, even in the Narayana Astra Yajna, the rules of the anusthana are applied: the public cannot hear its chanting. If it was done privately, then those present would hear it as they would be part of that sadhana. However, as it is being done publicly, the sound is not audible.

There are all these ancient systems of thought. One cannot attain self-realization by practising twenty asanas for twenty





years; one cannot even attain clarity of mind by practising a meditation in which the mind goes away from the mantra every two minutes. People who believe they will attain realization by these practices, should know it will not happen. No master has said that you can attain peace and realization with practice of asana, pranayama, pratyahara or dharana. What has been said is that you can attain peace and realization if you practise yoga.

Ask yourself the question: do you practise yoga or do you practise asana, pranayama, yoga nidra and maybe ajapa japa, antar mouna, chidakasha dharana or any other meditative practice? There is a difference. They are yoga practices, they are not yoga. Therefore, you don't practise yoga, you practise limited techniques of yoga.

To attain peace, realization or even understanding, you need to practise yoga and not techniques of yoga. To do that, you have to understand the principles that govern the subject of yoga. These yajnas represent that understanding: the understanding of the higher principles of yoga which relate to energy at the personal, global and universal levels, at the individual, collective and cosmic levels. Bringing forth these ancient connections is one of the duties of Sannyasa Peeth, so that we can see the link between *vidya*, knowing, and *kriya*, performing.



Offerings to Divinity

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati
8 September 2016, Afternoon



This afternoon, we commence with the *sahasrarchana*, a thousand offerings to Lakshmi and to Narayana by fifty men and fifty women. What is offered will be given to everyone later as the blessings and prasad of Lakshmi-Narayana.

Ode to motherhood

Before the commencement of the sahasrarchana, there will be *parikarma*, perambulation of the yajna mandap, so you can have darshan. At the same time, prasad will be distributed. Today, the first prasad will be offered to all the mothers who are present here, as Lakshmi comes first and Narayana comes next in the Indian tradition, which is a matriarchal tradition. The woman is always placed before the man here. You say Sita-Rama and not Rama-Sita. You say Radhe-Krishna, not



Krishna-Radhe. This comes from the ancient vedic culture, where woman always had the prominence place. That should not raise the egos of all women, for the women who had a prominent place in society were special, they were mothers, and every woman is not a mother. The qualities of motherhood manifest when a child is born, and then a totally different set of emotional and mental faculties come alive: love, concern, care, sacrifice, and these qualities are present only in mothers.

Fathers don't have these qualities, fathers don't sacrifice their life for their child as a mother would. The care and concern provided for the child is greater by the mother than by the father. The emotional bonding is much stronger with the mother than with the father. It happens to everybody, therefore the whole human society must respect this quality of motherhood. The vedic tradition respected the quality of motherhood, and that is the nature of Narayana personified in a female body. The care, the concern, the sacrifice, the desire for the wellbeing for everyone is the nature of Narayana.

This is a beautiful blend of the divine and the material. It is like an art in the tapestry of life, which mothers express after they give birth to their first child. Mothers define the beauty of God. Fathers only provide the canvas and the paint brush,

but the mother becomes the painter who gives the mind, the samskaras, the sentiments to the child, and for this she is respected in the vedic tradition. Following that tradition, the first prasad will be offered to the mothers who are present here, to the Lakshmi, the Saraswati and the Shakti.

A thousand names of the formless

We have completed the chanting of the thousand names. You may wonder, how come there are a thousand names of Lakshmi, a thousand names of Narayana, a thousand names of Shiva, a thousand names of the different forms of the divine. These names reflect the vedic culture, where there was no form.

The form has one name, but how do you call that which is formless? You give it a name as you experience it, as you feel it, and therefore what we are saying in these different names is the sentiment of the people who have experienced that pure energy, without a form. That is the vedic concept. Form has one name, but the formless has millions of names, and they indicate your personal experience of that formless.





Diving Deep

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati
9 September 2016, Morning



Welcome to the second day of the Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna. Today's program will include the chanting of the Narayanastra mantras, which will be done in silence here, and during that time we shall undertake different activities, such as mantra japa, satsang, parikrama. Then there will be the chanting of *Sri Sukta* and *Purusha Sukta*, which are the mantras for invoking Lakshmi and Narayana.

I would like to take this opportunity of the Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna to tell you about the recent developments in Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth. The Bihar School of Yoga has been involved in the propagation of yoga for the last fifty years. During this time, although Sri Swami Satyananda



and a few others spoke on many aspects of yoga in their travels across the globe, the general practice was limited to asana, pranayama, relaxation and meditation, since that was the need of the time. Everybody adopted these four aspects of yoga in their life. Then in 2009, in the month of June, Sri Swamiji called me and said, "Now stop your travels and become stable and still in one place. You have travelled the world for thirty-five to forty years, now become stable and work for the development of Sannyasa Peeth and yoga."

I expressed to him my inner thoughts, "Just as you left Munger after your term was complete, can I also leave Munger now that my term is over, and live a free, quiet life some place?" He said, "No, your work with the institution may be over, the next generation is taking care of it. But your mandate with yoga is not over. You continue to work for yoga independently, have nothing to do with BSY, but don't leave Munger. You can get some house in Munger and live there quietly, but you can't leave Munger. You have to continue to work for yoga and for Sannyasa Peeth from Munger."

Therefore I have these two roles at present. One, to experience the yogic sadhana, to develop the yogic

understanding and vidya, which is then taught to people through the aegis of the Bihar School of Yoga. Two, to experience and live sannyasa. These are the two mandates which I have to fulfil in my life.

In relation to yoga, in 2013 we celebrated the golden jubilee of the Bihar School of Yoga, in which many of you participated. At that time it was announced that the first chapter of yoga, the propagation part, has come to an end, as yoga has now become accepted by every culture and society globally. Now our focus has to be to experience yoga personally, not with the intention to teach but with the intention to dive deep into the experience of yoga and discover that peace and realization that we all crave for. That will be the next chapter of yoga.

As I said yesterday, you cannot expect peace and realization with a limited practice of asana, pranayama,



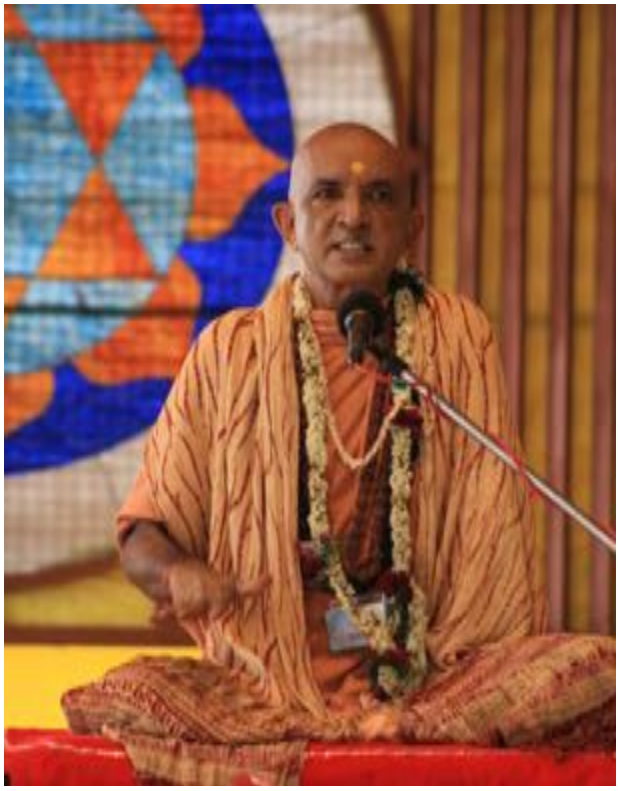
relaxation and concentration or meditation. In order to bring a qualitative change, one has to dive deeper into the principles and practices of yoga and become an open book. For this reason, during the Convention itself, the call was given for seriousness, sincerity and commitment. Then in 2015, the fact that yoga has become a global phenomena became even more evident with the celebration of the International Day of Yoga, and 199 countries were signatories to this proposal in the United Nations. Thus the statement that our guru, Sri Swami Satyananda had made in 1964, 'Yoga will become a world culture', was realized in 2015.



Sri Swamiji was a visionary; he could see it happen. When he made this statement, people laughed at him. They said, how can yoga become such a powerful instrument that it will bring a qualitative change in the lives of people globally? However, this was not the vision of an individual, but of a sage, a yogi, who was able to see the destiny of humanity.

Since 2013, we have been thinking about how yoga can be propagated in the new chapter that is to be written. How can we deepen our experience and go into the higher practices of yoga? In the two years since, 2014 and 2015, plans were made to completely change the system of yoga teaching by





the Bihar School of Yoga, and from 2016 there has been 360-degree turn in the way BSY teaches yoga.

No previous course or program is being conducted now, not even a teacher training course, yoga instructor's course, or health management course. All that is finished. We have moved on. Those courses and programs that were conducted for fifty years are now past memories. From this year an entirely new program has started, with new teaching, training, understanding, practice, theory. I am emphasizing this point, for as yoga practitioners we have to know that yoga is an evolving science. What you did ten years ago is irrelevant today. What you did five years ago is irrelevant today. What you did one year ago is irrelevant today. You have moved

on, but the practices are still the same. Therefore, from this year, BSY has a new avatara. It has written the first page of the second chapter, and it has been a successful transition as well. Instead of yoga teacher training courses and yoga instructor courses, we are now conducting Progressive Yoga Vidya Training to update the old yoga teachers in the style and manner in which Sri Swamiji taught me yoga. I am not saying taught 'us' yoga. I am saying, taught 'me' yoga, for I was among the first group of people who came to the ashram to live here, and he taught us yoga not with the intention for us to become yoga teachers in the future. He taught us yoga so we could experience the benefits of yoga.

When the purpose is to make you a yoga teacher, certain things are taught, and that is limited. Then even your mind is not into experiencing yoga; your mind is thinking, 'How I can become a better teacher, so that people accept and recognize me?' Your mind is in the learning of yoga, so you can inflate your ego later on: 'I am a good yoga teacher. People like me. The more people come, the more money I will make.' That is the reality.

In the last fifty years I have seen few people make the effort to experience yoga. I have seen the majority go out in society,



put out their board and say, "I am a yoga teacher. Come to me." Even a person who has not been trained in yoga, if they are initiated and wear geru clothes, say, "I am a yoga teacher." That does not indicate sincerity on the part of the aspirant. Therefore, the call was made for sincerity, seriousness and commitment, and we are still making that call. It is not just a slogan. It has to become the reality in life, and the approach of yoga training now has to be to deepen that experience.

In this manner, the training which is now being imparted at BSY is deep, and it is restricted to the right candidates. It is not about your association, how long you have been associated for, it is about giving you the best training possible based on the foundation and background that you have.

There are many yoga centres, but Munger is not going to be one of the many yoga centres in the world. It will become the Oxford of yoga, and that is what we are aiming for. Therefore, the entrance requirements are stringent.

Our endeavour is to write the new chapter of yoga, and these yoga programs will evolve further in the coming years. A beginning has been made, but there are many miles to walk still before we come to the end of our journey.



Sahasrarchana

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati
9 September 2016, Afternoon



We begin the sahasrarchana now, and those who are participating in this, will be offering different items to Lakshmi and Narayana. During the Lakshmi sahasrarchana, the mothers will be offering ten different types of items, eight special items and red rose petals. During the Narayana chanting the men will offer eight special items and yellow rose petals.



Receiving Contentment and Peace

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati
10 September 2016, Morning



Welcome to the third day of the Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna. It has been an intense event. Yet it has been an uplifting occasion for those who have been able to connect with the spirit of the yajna.

This yajna is devoted to Lakshmi and Narayana. In every idea of divinity, there is an exoteric aspect, an esoteric aspect, a mythological aspect and a historical aspect. The mythological and the historical aspects are not our subject here. Our focus is the exoteric and the esoteric aspect, the outer and the inner significance of Lakshmi and Narayana.



Lakshmi: goddess of contentment

Everybody thinks that Lakshmi is the goddess of wealth and in India people worship her with the sole purpose of receiving financial gain, in the form of gold, silver, rupees, dollars, whatever Lakshmi wishes to grant. On every Diwali, the festival of lights, she is invoked for that purpose. People believe that if their coffers are filled, they have received the grace of Lakshmi.

This would mean that anybody who is rich has been graced by Lakshmi and anybody who is poor has been cursed by Lakshmi. Of course, that is not the case, and such a definition of her grace is a misunderstanding of her ability and the quality that she represents. Lakshmi is the goddess of prosperity. This prosperity is not only material but also spiritual, mental, emotional, at all levels, in all dimensions. In reality, she is the shakti, the goddess of contentment.

If you analyze the word 'contentment' and apply it in your own life, you will see its value. When you are content, you are at peace with yourself. When there is discontent in you, there is also *ashanti*, absence of peace, in you. Thus, contentment and peace go hand in hand. In the absence of contentment there is disturbance, dissipation and ashanti. When there is

contentment, you feel filled, your heart is filled, your mind is filled, there is no craving, expectation or desire. You are full and that experience of fullness is contentment. That is the grace of Lakshmi, not material wealth.

If you suddenly receive a lot of wealth, your life will be disturbed. You will not be able to sleep at night. You will be worried about investment, thieves, robbers, income tax, and all such things. You will be worried about how to safeguard the money. You will lose your sleep and your life will become dependent on medicines and subject to stress. Will that be a boon or a curse? Instead, if you have just one thousand rupees every day for the rest of your life, you will always be content. You will fulfil the requirements of your day. You will be able to have food, wear clothes, live in a nice shelter and have good sleep, good health, no worry, no anxiety; you can be happy with the little you have. To attain this state of contentment is to follow the path of Lakshmi.





Qualities required to receive Lakshmi's grace

Three qualities are required within an individual to access the grace of Lakshmi. There is a story about Sage Durvasa, famous in Indian history as the angry sannyasin. That is the social label given to him, as he would always become angry if something did not happen as per his wishes and curse everybody, pauper and king alike. Once, Sage Durvasa went to heaven and the message was carried to the king of heaven, Indra, that the sage has come to the gates. God Indra came to the gates to receive Sage Durvasa, and offered him a nice welcome. The sage was pleased with his attention, so he took the garland that he was wearing on his neck and, as a gift of goodwill, gave it to Indra.

Indra, the king of gods, looked at the garland and wondered what to do with it, as it was not a particularly beautiful garland, it was just an ordinary garland: five dead flowers strung on a *nariyal rassi*, coconut string. Indra's vehicle was an elephant: he used to travel everywhere on the elephant. He offered the garland to the elephant who caught it in its tusk and smelt it. It was smelling of the sweat of the

sage, so he threw it on the ground and stomped on it. At that moment, the sage said to Indra, "You welcomed me in the most beautiful manner, I was happy and wished everything auspicious and good for you. That sankalpa of mine was given to you with the mala. The mala is only a material object, it doesn't mean much. It can be beautiful, it can be not so beautiful, but the intention with which the mala was given was the intention to bring goodness and auspiciousness in your life, and you disrespected that mala. You gave it to your elephant. Since you did not accept the sankalpa of goodwill, auspiciousness, peace and prosperity, and rejected that gift, now everything in your life will become inauspicious. You will lose everything since you rejected the auspiciousness that was being given to you."

Therefore when you receive prasad, even if it is a piece of thread, receive it gracefully, receive it with honour and





dignity, for it is not the thread that is important, but the sentiment of the individual. The happy, the good, the positive sentiments of the individual towards you is being conveyed in that. Prasad means that which is given by either God or guru. What you give to each other is not prasad, it is not consecrated. What you give to each other is a gift, and there is a difference between a gift and prasad. Prasad can only be given by two people, God or guru. There is no third person who gives prasad, they give gifts. Therefore, remember that everything that is given to you is not prasad. Prasad means that which comes to you with the good wishes of the divine and goodwill of the guru. Now, the story indicates that Indra, the king of gods, saw only the external object: the five dead flowers in a mala strung on a nariyal rassi, and did not like it.

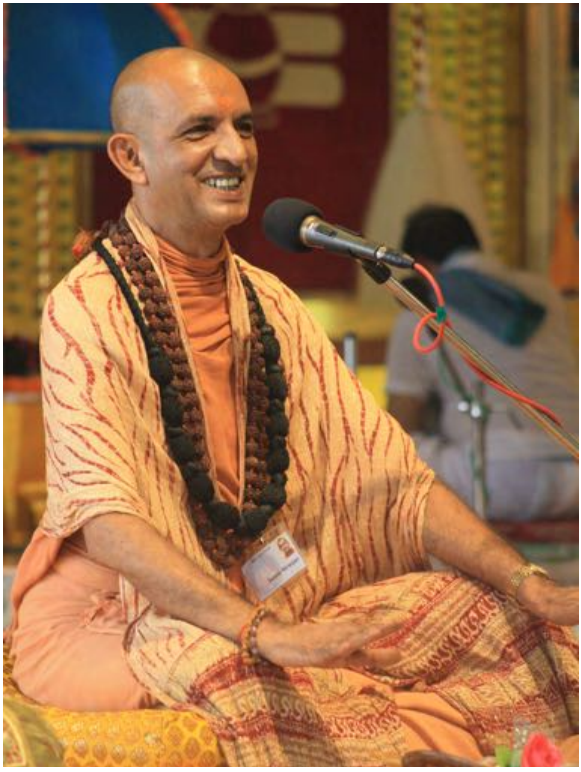
Indra did not see the intention of the rishi, the sankalpa and the goodwill of the rishi. He only saw the external object and threw it away, and that became the cause of his downfall. When you receive something, you also first admire its outer look. If it is sleek, beautiful and shiny, you like it. The outer look is seen first and the intention is ignored, as it always comes second. Some people with that ability can see the

intention first and appreciate it. Other people who don't have that ability don't see the intention and only admire or reject the object. However, there is a way to receive prasad also.

Indra was arrogant, so he did not appreciate what he was given. If there is humility, then there would be greater acceptance and appreciation of what you receive. In order to receive grace, first there has to be humility. Without humility, the ego will always be on the surface, and with humility you will receive the grace. Due to his arrogance, Indra saw the object, not the essence. Prasad is the essence, not the object, and to receive the essence there has to be humility. As you receive, there has to be gratitude in the heart for having received that unique object which is beneficial for your life. It is something that is going to uplift and illuminate you, and there has to be respect for that.

Thus, the first quality is humility, the second is gratitude, and the third is respect. This is the attitude required to develop contentment in life. These are the three *vidhis*, processes, stages, for developing contentment in life. Contentment is not where you just repeat to yourself, 'I am content and happy' and begin to grin at everybody uselessly. That is not contentment. Contentment is what you feel in your heart. Ask yourself: are





you content ever? Ask yourself that question. In your life, in your society and family, with all your ambitions and needs, are you ever content? If you answer truthfully, most of the time in your life you are discontent, and contentment comes only as a glimpse from time to time. Most of the time there is strife, stress, anxiety and aggression. Most of the time there is a forceful drive to achieve that which you have not received. There is always discontentment.

In order to be the recipient of the grace of Lakshmi, the shakti of Lakshmi, it is not just worship or participation in a worship that is enough. There has to be transformation of the inner self also, there has to be reduction of the ego by cultivating humility. There has to be gratitude and respect. These will lead you to contentment, and then you can say,

"Yes, I am the recipient of the grace of Lakshmi," not when you win the lottery.

Narayana: god of peace

The aspect of Narayana also has to be understood in the right exoteric and esoteric perspectives. Who is Narayana? The life-force. In life, everybody is looking for prosperity and peace, *sukha* and *shanti*. That sukha, that prosperity is Lakshmi, and the shanti, peace, is Narayana.

Narayana represents life, energy, the life-force. Therefore life has to be subject to peace, that is the understanding. There has to be peace in life. There has to be peace in life and that peace of life is something that you can have only for a limited time, when you are following the path of dharma and nyaya. Dharma is obligation, duty, and nyaya is natural justice. As long as you follow the path of dharma and nyaya, natural justice and fulfilment of your obligations and duties in a positive, constructive and creative manner, you are following the path of Narayana. In order to understand dharma, the right thing to do, there has to be understanding and knowledge. Therefore Narayana is equated with knowledge and understanding as well.





Qualities required to receive Narayana's grace

The greatest quality in life is not love. It is not compassion or sympathy. It is understanding. If there is understanding, there is love, there is compassion, there is sympathy, there is everything. If there is no understanding, no good will exist. If there is understanding, then good will find its place where it fits, and you will be filled with goodness. That is Narayana. With understanding and knowing comes appreciation for what you are, what you have been given, for what you will be in the future. There is appreciation of life and the desire to improve the quality of life.

When you want to maintain your garden, you have to work hard on it every day. Even when the garden has been created, you still have to go and water the plants every day and trim the overgrowth. If you ignore the garden after beautifying it, after some time the beauty will be destroyed and weeds will begin to grow. As long as you are working hard, making the effort, looking after the garden, the weeds are not growing and only the beauty is visible. When you don't work hard and ignore the garden, the beauty diminishes and the weeds begin to grow, which will eventually cover the entire garden

and destroy it. The continuous effort to maintain the beauty in life is the quality of Narayana, which leads to appreciation of life, the beautiful gift that you have been given.

Appreciation of life is the first step in the discovery of the Narayana element. Once you have discovered the Narayana element, your attitude and behaviour changes, and the actions become positive, better, supportive, cooperative. The entire personality and nature change, and you carry everybody forward together. You begin to support life, nurture life, rather than destroy life.

There are people who go to a drugstore to purchase lifesaving drugs and ask the shopkeeper if he can give them a discount. After coming out of the pharmacy, the same person goes to a wine-shop and purchases an old wine which costs a thousand dollars, but doesn't ask for a discount. People want to pay less for lifesaving things and more for life-destroying things. That is the natural tendency, as that is the inherent tamasic nature. The opposite of this is the Narayana element,



which nurtures and supports, and believes in knowing and understanding.

If there is no understanding, then you can be sure that there is no grace of Narayana in your life. If you have developed even half a percent of understanding, that is the beginning of your journey in the dimension of Narayana. With understanding you can live dharma and nyaya; that is when your actions become appropriate. When the actions are appropriate, then your awareness extends to all realms, both external and internal.

Narayana is always depicted as being in yoga nidra, and yoga nidra is the state of absolute awareness. You are not sleeping yet you are aware of the internal world; you are not awake yet you are aware of the external world. That is the state of yoga nidra. Thus, in the state of yoga nidra in which Narayana is at all times, he is aware of both, the outer and the inner. Narayana is not like us. When we have our eyes open we are totally externalized and when we sleep we totally disconnect. In Narayana nature there is no disconnection yet awareness of the internal world, not awake yet aware of the outer world. That level of awareness in both, the gross and the subtle, the management of inner mind and the external senses, in a harmonious manner indicates the presence of Narayana.

When you react to somebody there is a demon inside you, and when you appreciate and understand somebody, that is Narayana inside you. When you rebel against a system and a discipline, that is the demon inside you, and when you create a structure and a system, that is Narayana inside you.

The experience of Narayana in life happens when you begin to appreciate life and try to beautify and nurture life, not destroy life. When you can appreciate the body and use it properly, not misuse or abuse; when you can utilize the faculties of your mind properly, not misuse those faculties to harm, destroy, destruct, dissipate or disturb, then that is the Narayana tattwa. When there is peace, that is the Narayana tattwa.



The plateau of contentment and peace

The focus in this Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna is the experience of the Narayana tattwa and the Lakshmi tattwa: the discovery of contentment and peace, and finding ways to achieve contentment and peace. I have given you the hint on how to do this. For attaining contentment, develop humility, gratitude and respect. For attaining peace, develop appreciation and understanding, through which the appropriate action and awareness can come about. If you can follow any one of these qualities, that will be the beginning of your spiritual journey.

Contentment is the plateau, anything below that point zero in the negative zone is discontentment, whether mental, physical, sensorial or emotional. When you come to the foundation of contentment and peace, then the pluses begin. The foundation of spirituality is contentment and peace. If there is no contentment and no peace, you will be moving in the minus direction. If there is contentment and peace, you will ascend plus one, plus two, plus three, plus four, and so on. The effort in life should be to come to the point of contentment and peace. That has to be the sadhana. That has to be the focus of your yoga and your efforts to experience spiritual life.



Prasad of Yajna

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati
11 September 2016, Morning



Welcome to the fourth day of the Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna. Today, once the pandits begin their aradhana, the parikrama will commence. In the afternoon will be the conclusion of the sahasrarchana, it will be the last offering, and the offerings will be given to you as we conclude the Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna.

The special prasad of the yajna for the Indians will be a tulsi plant which will be given to all the males, and *akshat*, consecrated rice grains, which will be given to the ladies. Take this akshat home, mix it with other food items and grains in your kitchen, to bring the blessings of plenty, health, wellbeing, happiness and joy in your life. As for the tulsi plant, if you have a garden then plant it there, if you live



in an apartment then plant it in a pot, to bring you health and vitality. The tulsi plant which is being given is not the common basil as it is known in English; it is a special variety of basil, which is antibacterial, antifungal, antipollutant, and also has medicinal value. This is one of the most common herbal medicines used in India by everybody on a daily basis. In unhygienic environment and conditions, it protects the body from the attacks of bacteria and viruses, improves the digestion, and aids respiratory problems and allergies. This is the gift of the yajna.



Another aspect of the yajna that I wanted to bring to your notice is the chanting from the different Vedas. At the conclusion of each day, the pandits chant mantras in different tunes. There are four tunes and each belongs to a different Veda. You can know the difference by listening to the tune. Each Veda – *Yajurveda*, *Rig Veda*, *Samaveda*, *Atharva Veda* – has a different way of pronouncing the mantras. Tomorrow the havan also will be done with the mantras of the four Vedas. So if you keep your ears open to know when the chanting changes, you may receive another insight into the ancient systems.



Three Mantras, Three Sankalpas

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati
11 September 2016, Afternoon



Sri Swamiji has given three mantras to all of us. One mantra is of yoga and that is *Hari Om Tat Sat*. This mantra has always been used for the yoga work, in India, in the ashram and also globally wherever there are teachers teaching yoga. The mantra is used as it contains the sankalpa of yoga propagation, and it became well-known with yoga.

The second mantra that was given by our guru was *Namo Narayana*, and that is the mantra of seva: of serving, of loving and of giving, where you extend yourself from yourself to appreciate the pain, the suffering, the joy and the happiness of others. When you sympathize with somebody in their time of pain and crisis, then it is an indication that you are able to



identify and understand the condition in the other person's life, and therefore the sentiment of sympathy. If there was no identification with the person or the crisis in the person's life, then sympathy would not be there.

Just as sympathy arises when you identify with the pain, suffering and crisis, *atmabhava* arises when you identify with the presence of divinity in life, and love emerges when you identify with the goodness in life. *Namo Narayana* is the mantra that says, "I bow to Narayana who is present in you, the in-dweller of all hearts." You are offering respect to the divinity within the other person. Even if it is your worst enemy, if you see the divinity in them, then your animosity is not there. If you become connected with atmabhava and perceive that divinity in the other person, then you have no problem with them. You have problems when you do not

have that awareness, but you won't have any problem when you don't have that awareness of either being an adversary or enemy, due to atmabhava. Then you connect, you identify with the luminosity within the other person, which is Narayana, and that is the mantra given: *Namo Narayana*.

The mantra of sannyasa is *Jai Ho*. *Jai Ho* means 'victory to you'. Victory to whom? This is the natural expression in the life of a sannyasi, who realizes that 'until now I was believing that I was doing everything, but now I realize that I am only an instrument in the hands of the master magician, and I have been always doing the bidding and living as per the destiny created by my God. Ultimately I am not the winner, ultimately God is the winner', and that is the understanding of sannyasa: I am nothing, I am only a medium through which God does the work, and therefore victory to God.

These are the three mantras that Sri Swamiji gave to his visions. I am not using the word 'mission', we are creating the mission, but for him it was a vision. Thus, tomorrow we will be celebrating the sannyasa anniversary of a visionary, and let us take some inspiration from his sankalpa of dedicating himself for the welfare of all.





Becoming Messengers of Divine Goodwill

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati and
Swami Satyasangananda Saraswati
12 September 2016, Morning



Swami Niranjan: Welcome to the final and the last day of the Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna. On 8th, which was the birthday of our paramguru, Sri Swami Sivananda, we started the Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna. On the 12th, which is the sannyasa initiation day of our guru, Sri Swami Satyananda, we offer the poornahuti.

It has been a happy, fulfilling and continuous event. I don't think people have had any time to rest or relax, as it has been a continuous program for everybody. Congratulations for sitting through it, believing in it, respecting it and honouring

it. This has made the yajna special. Your respect and your honour to the yajna has made it special, as it has been able to create illumination of love and grace, contentment and peace, which are the symbols of prosperity and wellbeing. Lakshmi represents contentment and Narayana represents peace. Your respect and honouring of this event with your sentiments and silence has enhanced and connected everybody, all-inclusive, with this feeling of contentment, stability and peace. I am sure you would have also experienced this.

We continue the program today with the invocation of the guru tattwa, to honour the sannyasa initiation day of our guru, and we shall also have the blessings of Swami Satsangi, who is present with us at this Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna. It is an honour that she has chosen this time of the year to be with all of us, especially today, on our guru's sannyasa day.

Jagannath's blessings

Swami Niranjan: An auspicious event has taken place right now: the mahaprasad from Jagannath Puri has arrived here. Every year during the Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna the temple sends the prasad of Lord Jagannath, who is the master of the universe. Lord Jagannath is Narayana; Narayana is the unmanifest form and Jagannath is the manifest form.





Lord Jagannath's prasad is most auspicious. People go from all over the world to Puri to receive this prasad, however, Munger and Rikhia are the only places where the prasad comes to the ashram for everybody, and it is a great honour for all of us. We shall welcome the prasad with the Mahamantra kirtan.

Swami Niranjan: I now request Peethadhishwari Swami Satyasangananda Saraswati, and my gurubandhu, Swami Satsangi, to bless this poornahuti of the Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna and also to inspire us with experiences and anecdotes of our guru Sri Swami Satyananda, on the occasion of his sannyasa initiation day.

Refine your intentions

Swami Satsangi: We are all basking in these beautiful, illuminating, transparent, crystal-clear rays of Narayana. As I entered, I felt transported to a different experience altogether. It is like bathing in very peaceful waters. The mantras that are inundating us from the vedi are so soothing, energizing, rejuvenating, just as Narayana is.



Narayana stands for the one who preserves, rejuvenates, recharges, and that is what we are feeling here. Added to that is the Sannyasa Diwas of Gurudev, and what better conjunction can we have? On the 8th we had Swami Sivananda's birthday celebration. Whenever I think of Swami Sivananda, the thought that comes to my mind is that of the Ganga. I always associate him with the Ganga, the purity of the Ganga. Wherever there is Swami Sivananda, there is the Ganga, there is purity. That is the feeling. So we started with his birth and we end with the Sannyasa Diwas of Gurudev.

As I entered here, I was transported to the time when he was here in the body, and that was such a magnificent time in our lives. He came like a comet, like a whirlwind, like a breath of fresh air in a sultry world. In a selfish world, he sowed the seeds of selflessness, of love, of caring, of giving. He gave ways for us

to uplift and evolve ourselves, for that is the purpose of yajna.

The purpose of yajna is evolution, evolution from a lower awareness to a different quality of experience, which is as real and much more rewarding, gratifying, uniting, transparent, and giving of knowledge. Right now those channels of knowledge are all open to us. We don't experience them as our own channels are blocked. Yajna, through the medium of mantra and homa, opens those blocks within us, the granthis that prevent knowledge, light, unity, love, self-confidence to enter our being. We always feel separation. We feel distance, we doubt, we have suspicion about each another, we don't know how to trust or love.

Love means sacrifice. Who is willing to sacrifice for whom? Love means no demand. Who is not demanding? Everybody is demanding, and that is why you come to the yajna, and





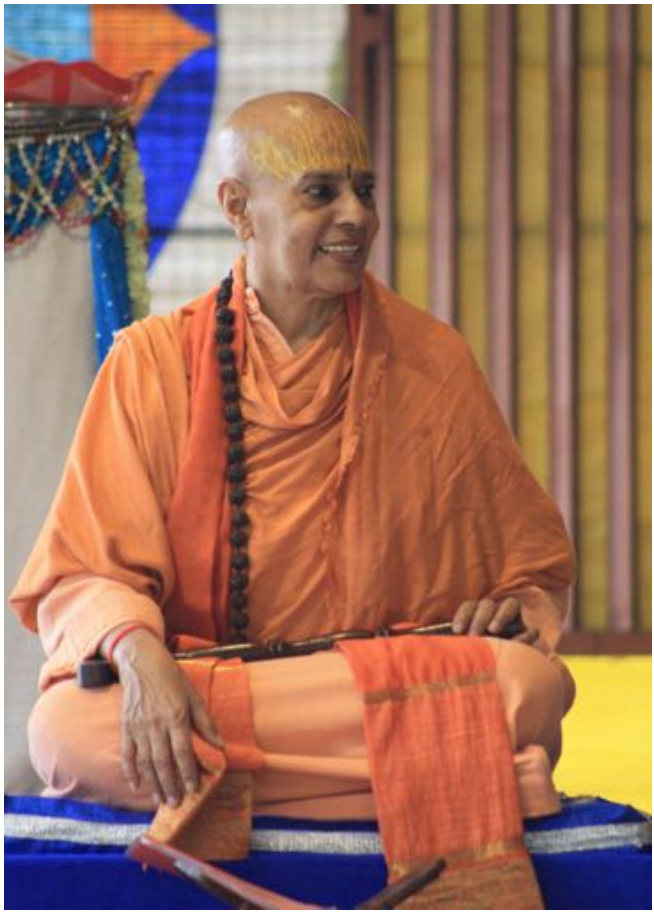
the yajna fulfils all demands. That is sure and certain. All demands will be fulfilled, because mantras always hit the target. They are so precise, they are so full of energy. They are energy capsules.

This yajna, where we are all gathered, is held as an offering to our Param Gurudev, Swami Sivananda, who stood for purity in its absolute sense. He was a *videhamukta*, he had God-awareness even while living in the body. The last ten years of his life he only drank Ganga jala, his body had become so pure. He was someone who could not even think – forget think, thinking is a gross act – on any level, in any



plane, any loka, at any time, in any space, he could never harm or wish ill for any living creature. He had that level of unity; selflessness had become his very nature. We pretend to be selfless. We pretend to be happy. We pretend to be kind, compassionate, loving. We have a lot of pretences, but he was not like that. For him it was his nature. It just flowed out of him. Therefore when we celebrate his birthday and Swami Satyananda's Sannyasa Diwas, you are sure and certain to get the blessings.

These blessings, this fruit that you are aiming for, however, is greatly dependent on one factor. We know the laws that govern us as human beings: the social laws, the



family laws, the professional laws, the cyber laws. You are well-acquainted with all that and you know how to handle all that. But there is another set of laws, which is cosmic, and in order to get the benefit of the yajna, those laws apply. They are not ordinary laws, they are cosmic laws. Therefore, it is not only the act of being at a yajna, it is not only chanting the mantras, there is one more factor and that is called *bhava*, your intention.

What is your intention? *Karmas*, actions, alone don't matter. What was the intention of the act is what matters in the cosmic

laws. Let me tell you, cosmic laws are much more powerful than the laws created in this world. They are sure and certain. They say that there may be delay in getting to God's house, but when you reach there, sure and certain there will be light and knowledge. That is the path that you have to choose, and for that the intention has to be clear. You have to take a sankalpa. The sankalpa is most important. What is your sankalpa? Is it material, is it selfish? Please examine that.

That intention will determine the result of what you wish at a yajna. Therefore it is important that you also think about transformation, *parivartana*. Transformation of how you think and how you feel, achara and vichara. *Vichara* is what you think, and *achara* is what you do. You have to think about that and refine your intention, your bhava. The same act with different intentions will produce different results according to these cosmic laws, which are final. They are final. They are absolute. They are eternal. They are sanatana. You may or may not know them, as the awareness with which you live is limited.

As you come to a yajna, you enter the realm of experience, not just understanding, for yajna is intended for evolution. Yajna is intended to make your life more experiential. You are all the time engaged in a mental pattern, and that pattern





is circular. It goes on like a vicious cycle from one thing to another. There should be times when you are able to break out of that gravity to attain peace, balance and harmony, to attain positive vibrations. You are always revolving in different vibrations, different energy fields, and you are interacting with those. Yajna helps you to get out of that.

Therefore, as we are approaching the poornahuti, the final oblation of this yajna, let us pour in our love, our



devotion, our faith, not our worry, anxiety, tension or hatred. Do not put in anything that is negative, because remember it is the intention that is important in the cosmic law. Pour your love and you will receive love. Pour you compassion and you will receive compassion. Whatever you want from life, whatever you want from this yajna, pour that in and you will receive that. Therefore, pour in the positive. Remember, our guru made a sankalpa not for himself. His



sankalpa was for all of you; for the peace, plenty, prosperity of everyone. All yajnas are held with that aim in mind, that let there be peace, let there be plenty and let there be prosperity. With these words, *Namo Narayana* to all of you and wish you the very best at this yajna on Gurudev's sannyasa day.

Conductors of divine goodwill

Swami Niranjan: We are coming to the conclusion of this Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna. Soon the final oblations will be offered, the mantras will be chanted, the grace will be distributed, the invoked energies will be sent back, and then we shall also go back to our respective places from where we have come.

Coming and going is the eternal law. Whatever comes has to go, and whatever goes has to come. What does this mean in the spiritual dimension? Coming closer to grace and going away of the limitations and unhappiness. *Prasad* means that which brings you happiness, and *dukha* means

that which takes away your happiness. Suffering is that which takes away happiness, and good company is that which brings you happiness. The best company in creation is definitely God's company. Not social friends, not family members, not acquaintances, but our best company is God, and we have been in the presence of that energy, that power, and felt the benevolence and peace of that power. We have received the prasad.

Since you have received the prasad, I would like to thank you for being the conductor of divine goodwill. Once you receive the prasad, you become the conductor of divine goodwill, since what you are receiving here you will be sharing with people around you. You will be conducting the goodwill of the yajna to other people when you share, and they will feel happy. They will be inspired, and whatever you tell them, they will listen to attentively, feeling happy about it. Whatever you give them, they will receive graciously, with the feeling that it has come from the yajna in which you participated. In this way, once you receive the prasad, you become the messenger of divine goodwill. Therefore, congratulations and thank you for opening your heart to be



the recipient of prasad. Ultimately that is what is going to bring about the change that we all desire.

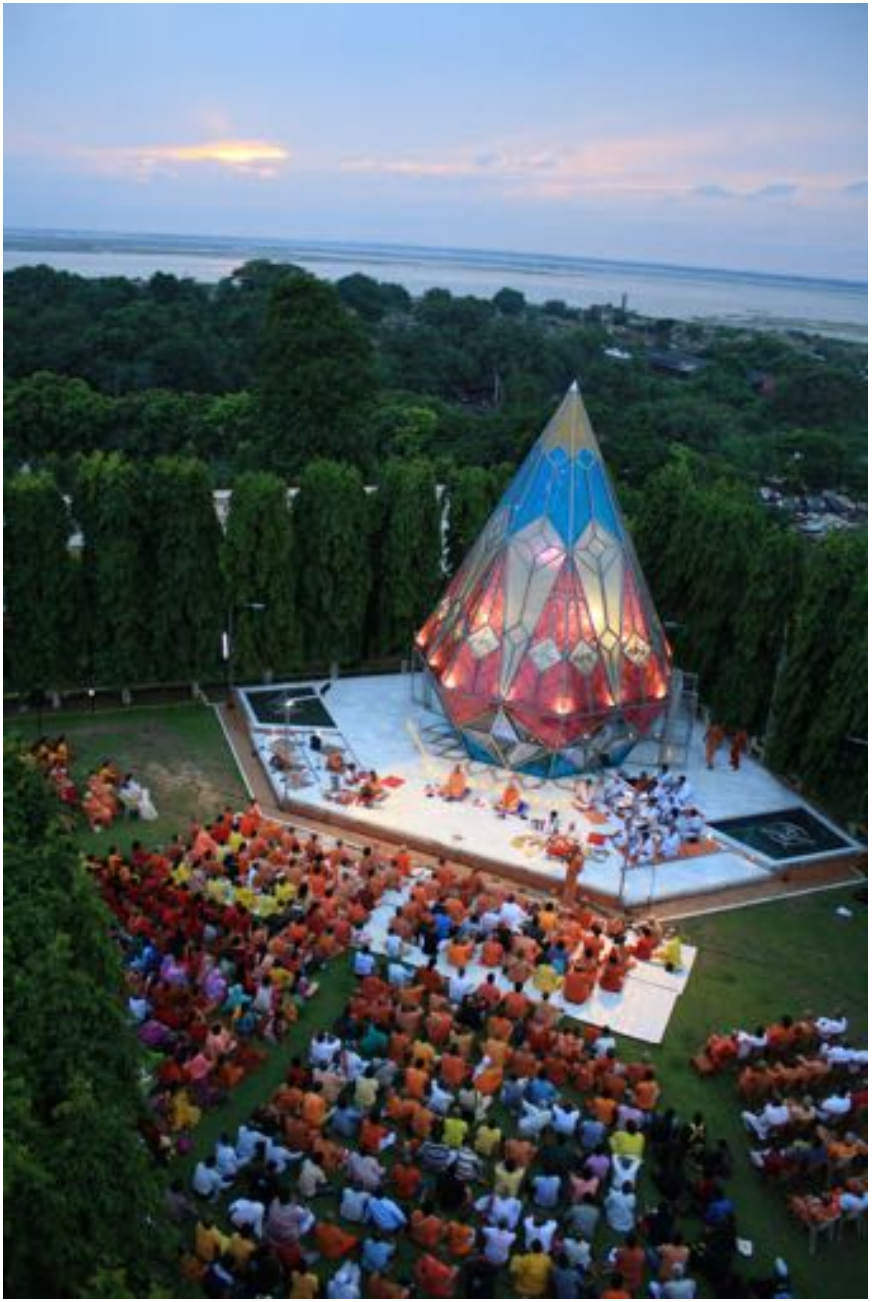
Once again, thanks to all the children of the Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal for organizing this grand show and function. Thanks to all the members of the Yuva Yoga Mitra Mandal, who have been working hard behind the scenes in areas that require more drive, determination and power. Thanks to all the other volunteers, yoga sevaks and karma yogis who have contributed and offered their seva in the ashram and the Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna. Thanks also to all the sannyasins and residents of the ashram, who have been the driving force behind every activity, and of course our gratitude goes to Swami Satsangi for her love and affection.

Wish you all the best in the upcoming days and may you leave this place with the blessings of the gurus and Sri Lakshmi-Narayana. To all of you who have come from far and near, a big thank you from the depth of my heart, for coming here and connecting with the spirit of this yajna. Wish you well and may God bless you.

Hari Om Tat Sat
Namo Narayana
Jai Ho!







Day of Dedication

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati
12 September 2016, Evening



Today is the day of dedication. It was on this day that our guru, Sri Swami Satyananda, dedicated and surrendered himself to his guru Sri Swami Sivananda. Therefore we always remember this day as the day of dedication, as is the wish of Sri Swamiji, for on his fiftieth sannyasa day he wrote to us saying, "This sannyasa day which you are celebrating is not a day of having attained anything. It is the day of giving up everything. This was the day that I surrendered myself finally and totally to my guru. I became an empty slate, on which my guru could write anything that he wanted." For a sannyasin, the sannyasa initiation day is not a day of having attained anything, but the



day when we surrender ourselves to guru and allow him to become the guide of our life.

Nothing much has to be said on this day, as it is an internal, personal feeling of each and every one, how they connect with the spirit of dedication, the spirit of service, the spirit of knowing, the spirit of the guru, the spirit of God. It is an individual experience and expression. It is not that you can copy Swami Satyananda. He lived his life according to his nature, and his nature was not a common, ordinary nature. He had come with a purpose to serve and to establish the spirit of serving. He served through yoga and he also served through giving material things to those who needed them. Whether it was yoga or a material gift, his whole purpose was to reach out to people, to remove the pain and misery from life.

We have gathered here at the Chhaya Samadhi to reconnect with that spirit of dedication. The Chhaya Samadhi is a dedication to Sri Swamiji and his sankalpa, and it represents our guru's nature. The quality of a diamond is clarity, there is nothing in it that restricts the vision, you can see through it, everything is crystal-clear. It is clarity which is important in life, and it is clarity that a saint and a siddha acquires to become a visionary. The diamond represents that transparency, that clarity, that absence of deformity in the stone. None of us can claim to be totally pure without any deformity, but we can say that about our guru, yes, he was like that. He was also like a lotus, and therefore the diamond in the Chhaya Samadhi is enclosed by a lotus. The lotus represents his softness and his luminosity.

Today, let us go back with the inspiration to learn how to surrender. Surrender does not mean giving up one's will, but surrender means accepting God's will. People think of surrender as giving up their own will. That is for people who have gross and materialistic ideas. The real meaning of the word surrender is acceptance of God's will. When we accept God's will, we have surrendered, for then we are living according to the principles and the directions inspired by





God in our heart, inspired by guru in our heart. Therefore it is the day of dedication, of surrender, of connecting with the spirit which is non-material but transcendental and spiritual. It is with this purpose that we celebrate the sannyasa initiation day of our guru. He represents what a person can become through the attainment of clarity, through the attainment of the softness of sentiments and attainment of



perfection in action. These are all the qualities that we see emerge in the form of our guru Swami Satyananda.

On Sri Swamiji's initiation day, we are grateful that he was initiated, for we know him in the form that he was initiated, we do not know him as he was before that. His initiation day is his birthday for all of us. It was today that he was born as Swami Satyananda Saraswati, the person who attained the great spiritual heights and the person whom we love dearly.

Hari Om Tat Sat

Lasting Impressions: Experiencing the Divine

A selection of impressions by yajna participants

More than superhero

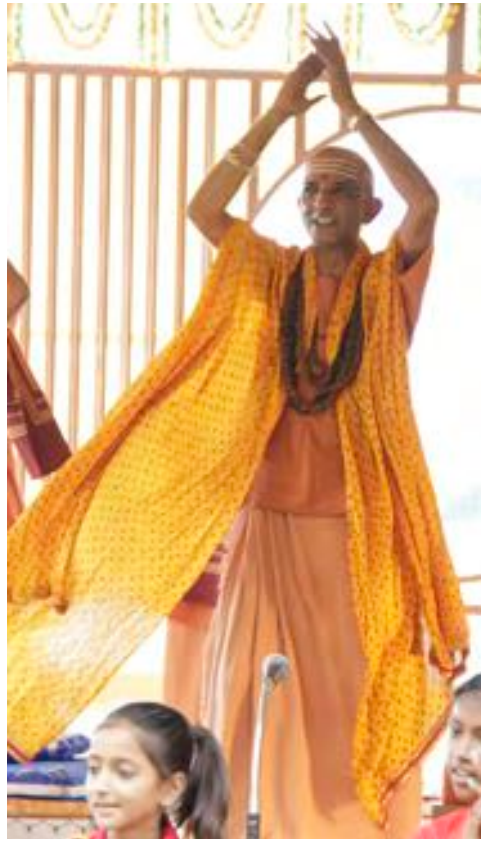
As children we see the world as an awesome and mysterious place where there are no limitations and everything is possible. In the West, children entertain the fantasy of superheroes such as 'Superman', 'Batman' and 'Spiderman', as they embody powers and qualities beyond regular and mundane abilities of ordinary people.

During the Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna, I noticed that Swamiji was wearing a large flowing angavastra, which somewhat resembled a cape, and flew majestically in the breeze as he floated around the grounds of Sannyasa Peeth.

As I observed closely Swamiji sitting bolt upright on his perch in the vedi, with the sunlight shining brilliantly through a stained-glass Shiva yantra, illuminating the sannyasins and others sitting around him, I realized that Swamiji was in fact a superhero in the truest sense of the word.

His super abilities have been cultivated as a result of his seriousness, sincerity and commitment towards yoga and faith in his guru. He does not use physical strength or weapons, but overcomes his obstacles and enemies through the instrument of his mind. His mind is equipped with state-of-the-art faculties such as razor-sharp focus, unlimited knowledge and wisdom, and spontaneous and creative expression in various forms.

Similar to other superheroes, Swamiji is opposed by not just one but six villains, who terrorize billions of people around the globe and restrict them from seeing the truth, beauty and auspiciousness in life.



'Jaded Jealousy', 'Perverted Passion', 'Insidious Infatuation', 'Abominable Anger', 'Gruesome Greed', and 'Appalling Arrogance' are the enemies who assert their negative willpower on others and oppress joy and creativity in life. Swamiji's method of combat is not just to protect humanity, like other superheroes, but to uplift and inspire people to protect themselves – to stand on their own two feet and overcome their own enemies and fears in life.

As children grow up and face the realities of life, the classical western superheroes become irrelevant as they are different from us, and there is no bridge that allows a relationship to take place. Besides, these superheroes

are limited in nature and confined to this physical reality. 'Superman' may be able to fly at the speed of light but he is still restricted to the laws of time and space.

Swamiji however is timeless, and spans multiple dimensions of existence. He is not just a superhero but a superbeing. And even though his being is vast and eternal, we are still able to relate to his experience; as he does not separate himself from us, but lives amongst us, as one of us. And instils within each of us the belief and impression that we are no different from him. And that we too are in fact super.

—Jignasu Nimaichaitanya, Australia

Carrying back the learning

The Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna is about serve, love, give, be good, do good. This is the gift of our guru – Swamiji. If it is a great program, it is because he is a great man, and how lucky we are to be around that great man practising his



teachings, receiving instructions from him, to have contact with him. He shows his teachings to us with everything that he does. And by his grace and blessings, little by little, we are able to understand them. I understood this during the yajna.

The program was very powerful. Even though many of us were not at the venue yet the divine energy was everywhere, in everyone, along with the yajna sankalpa. Everyone was working hard from the heart. No matter what duty they were doing, they were happy with big smiles and full of energy. In the kitchen, in the carpark, at the gate, in the program, everywhere . . .

When I felt this divine energy from the program, the love, the gift from my guru, I asked myself, "Can you take this divine energy, the love present at this moment to everything you are doing and transmit it to everyone?" I believe that if I practise guru's teachings, follow his instructions carefully, he will guide me to attain the different stages of spiritual life, and I will make every effort to do it.

Thanks to Swamiji for this program, for the experience, for the opportunity to improve ourselves through it, for our own benefit and for everyone else's wellbeing.

—*Sannyasi Satyamitra, China*

Blessings of the yajna

We used to live in a small mud hut, which used to pour with water whenever it would rain. We had been living there for many years, so we were adjusted to it. When the roof leaked, we would simply move over to another corner. However, then came along our little boy, Hari Om, and he would cry when he was shifted from here to there at night. So the thought came, 'When we have enough, we will construct a better house.' This thought was going on in the mind for many years. We had no resources, no finances, we had nothing.

Then came the first Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna. Our whole family participated in it. One day, when I was returning home from the yajna, on the way I saw one tractor full of sand

and the driver trying to sell the sand. Somehow that vendor got after me, "Take my sand, take my sand." I said, "For what? I don't have use for sand." However, being the first person whom he had asked for help in the morning, I called up a contractor I knew and said to him, "There is this tractor of sand. If you require it, I will send it to you."

At that time, sand had become very costly. It being monsoon time, the rate had gone high. So the builder gave a ridiculously low rate, like peanuts, and said, "If you ask the man whether he is willing to give the tractor full of sand for 1,900 rupees, I will take it." I asked the tractor man, and he agreed. I called back the contractor and said, "He is ready to sell the sand at 1,900 rupees." The contractor said, "Sorry, I gave a ridiculously low price so he would refuse. I don't need any sand."

Somehow the sand ended up in the plot where our hut was. I just asked him to drop it there. After that, every day, I had to cross that mound of sand, going back and forth to my work or to the ashram. Ultimately I said, "Something has to be done with this sand, so let me start constructing something." Gradually, the construction of the house started. Little by little, it progressed.

Then the second Lakshmi-Narayana yajna came, again something similar happened where I got things at a ridiculously low price, and again the construction gained momentum. Now, I had it in my mind that if the World Yoga Convention happens, I would like to house some delegates in my house. The Convention was two years away at that time.

Every Lakshmi-Narayana yajna, I would get something, add to the construction, and then the work would stop. During the third Lakshmi-Narayana yajna, it was like a miracle: the marble was put, the electricity was connected, the railings were put, the wooden furniture came in, the doors were put, the windows were put, everything was ready twenty days before the World Yoga Convention. And the house was so beautiful that my neighbours were asking if I had received help from the ashram to construct it! In this



way, my whole family's life has been touched by the grace of Lakshmi-Narayana.

—Ashish Kumar Singh, Munger

Great-grampa's mischievous play

The fourth Sri Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna started as usual on 8th September, Swami Sivananda's birthday. The day was devoted to his memory, with the sannyasa trainees and BYMM children conducting havan and chanting stotras, bhajans and kirtans dedicated to him. I was in charge of the sound system.

The day's program moved towards its culmination, with the final item of the day being an elaborate Ganga arati conducted by skilled pandits from Kashtaharni Ghat. The pandits from Tryambakeshwar were just winding up their proceedings when a strange thing happened. The lights on the stage and mandap areas went out. At first sight it seemed like one of those frequent powercuts and I wasn't unduly concerned. The sound system was running on a small UPS and it could easily go on until the generator kicked in.

When a minute went by and the lights were still out, I got a bit worried. I looked in the direction of the gate, hoping to catch

someone's attention and alert them to get the generator started. To my surprise, the gate was brightly lit. All the lights outside the mandap area were fine. I rushed into the sound room and it turned out that the main MCB had overheated and tripped. No matter what we did, we couldn't turn it on again.

Soon Pramod, our ashram electrician, was on the scene. It was pitch dark and working clumsily under the dim light of a mobile phone, he somehow opened up the panel and began trying to disconnect the four main wires and bypass the MCB. What he really did in those tense minutes, only God and Swami Sivananda know. But here is what it looked like from the outside.

The stage lights briefly flickered on and off, and then seemed to settle into a peculiar rhythm. Same with the front, middle and back sections of the mandap. The sannyasa trainees were going to chant *Ganga Stotram* first, but seeing that it was hardly possible to read anything in the now-on/now-off lights, we decided to play a recorded version of the stotram. Just as the stotram started, all lights went off again. All that could be seen were the tall flames coming from the arati!

Meanwhile pandemonium was reigning inside the sound room. Pramod was still fumbling around with the MCB, and our little UPS had begun to sound its death wail. Less than a minute of juice left in its battery! We disconnected all unessential equipment, but it was no more than a drop in the ocean. Just as the *Ganga Stotram* played itself out, so did the UPS.

Now it was not only dark but silent as well. "Pramod, can you quickly run a cable from someplace else and get us power?" He began to rush hither and thither. Muktamantra started to yank out the power plugs from the UPS in order to put them someplace else. The fact that he was trying to do this in pitch darkness in the middle of a spaghetti of fifty odd wires and cables didn't help matters much.

"Ouch!" he suddenly shouted.

"What?" I yelled back.

"I just got a nasty shock. From the input cable of the UPS. Which is off and disconnected from everything else!"

"Don't worry, I myself got zapped a few seconds ago!" I knew it wasn't much consolation. "Don't ask me why or how. Everything defies logic here."

Meanwhile frantic messengers were running up to us. The pandits were waiting, and we should play the Ganga arati NOW. I shrugged my shoulders and said there wasn't much I could do at this point. Just when I had given up all hope, some of the lights (and my hope as well) flickered alive. The lights were dim, but there was some voltage, enough to start the sound system again. And pronto, the arati song started playing and the fiery arati recommenced. The fact that the performance ended with the *Shiva Tandava Stotra* somehow seemed very apt to me.

The program ended, Pramod replaced the MCB in question, and I began testing our equipment and counting



the losses. Three blown speakers. I gloomily mentioned it to Swamiji as he returned to Paduka Darshan later that night after attending the evening program at Ganga Darshan. He smiled and said, "It was his birthday after all. What better way to celebrate it than with disco lights." And he began humming a version of the song that the Blue Brigade had danced to in the evening, "Two little hands to play with the switches . . ."

The full import of his playful remark hit me a day later when I casually talked about the previous evening's incident with a couple of guests. They were under the impression that it was all a well-choreographed lighting display to go along with the arati. My mind went back to the Sri Lakshmi-Narayana Yajna two years ago when Swamiji had cryptically hinted at Swami Sivananda's rebirth, in which case, he would be about two years old now, just the right age to have "two little hands to play with the switches . . ." And after all, why not! His presence had been invoked with such bhava and shraddha that he was bound to come. And when he did come and the turn came to offer arati to Ganga, who in his own words was his "mother divine, who had nourished, comforted, taught the truth of the Upanishads," he had to do his bit in making the arati as grand and befitting as he could. What better way to do that than to have total darkness during arati and an artfully choreographed display before and after, all cleverly hidden by the facade of an electrical malfunction, which honestly I couldn't properly figure out even after a day's worth of pondering.

Until now I had only associated grandpa Satyam with such kind of mischief, having faced it on many a occasion in Akhara on the 5th and 6th. I had experienced so many inexplicable amplifier, UPS, CD player and other equipment malfunctions on those days, that I had stopped analyzing and troubleshooting any problems that arose on those days. I call it the '5th-6th effect', Sri Swamiji's gentle, mischievous ways of reminding us of his omnipotence and omnipresence.

But to see this streak in great-grandpa Sivam's personality, the gentle, generous, compassionate, all-loving sage, was a

revelation. As Swami Venkatesananda summed up about him, "To Siva all work is play and all play is work. His attunement with the Divine Will, his extraordinary sense of humour, and his disarming sense of oneness which he creates in everyone around him, make all his work look like a divine play . . ."

—Swami Sivadhyanam, Ganga Darshan

For the welfare of all

This year's Lakshmi-Narayana Mahyajna was a local event. The majority of participants came from Munger and the surrounding environment. They came to their yajna and were no longer strangers to Paduka Darshan, the proceedings and of course to Swamiji.

It was a touching sight to see the crowd, once hard to control, following instructions with open hearts, settling quietly in their places, attentive to whatever happened on the stages or in the pandal. They absorbed Swamiji's satsangs, the pooja and havan of the pandits, and the performances by BYMM children, the Yuvas and sannyasa trainees with eagerness and joy. Nothing was missed. There was not the usual come-and-go or noisy chatter. Pin-drop silence was the response, even late in the evening during the screening of Satyam.

The daily offerings of the sahasrarchana was done by devotees of long standing and just-initiated aspirants; by



sevaks who had been carrying prasad bags all morning or cleaned bathrooms again and again; by participants who did not have a clue of what they were doing but wholeheartedly made their offerings with sincerity and a touch of awe while others were fully aware of the unique opportunity they were given to connect with the divine. Worship was the bond uniting all and everything at Paduka Darshan.

Every yajna is a means to invoke the Divine. Havan, pooja, aradhana and the sound of mantras are the tools humans use to call upon the divine beings, ask for their blessings and presence. This year the question arose: Do they need to be invoked or are they so pleased with the Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna that they happily come without being asked? Many instances of the Divine at Paduka Darshan had been noted. Before the yajna started, the sky opened to present a perfect Shivalingam formed by clouds with the *tripund*, the three stripes, impeccably drawn by clouds across the blue surface of the lingam.

In the evening of the last day, when sevaks were busy winding up, Ma Lakshmi sat on the flag of Sannyasa Peeth, hoisted high above the Guru Yantra, watching with the eyes of an owl the dismantling of the yajna. Silently, she made sure that all went well before disappearing into the night sky. Truly



the Gods wanted to be at the yajna. They let us enjoy the invocation but surely did not need to be asked. They invited themselves and showered their grace on one and all.

The Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna has become an annual event which subtly influences the environment. For the last four years floods have ceased to create havoc in Munger town and the surrounding land. Farmers are no longer displaced and forced to take shelter in schools or camp in the streets of the town. Animals are no longer dreading the floods which used to threaten their lives or send them into the streets of Munger. No longer do chicken, buffaloes, goats, pigs and cows crowd the streets as unwelcome guests. Crops have been better than ever over the past four years. Lakshmi and Narayana have come to stay. Their presence is felt in many small and not so small ways.

The whole pandal was filled with a tremendous sense of gratitude for this boon, for this yajna which brings peace, plenty and prosperity to all. This gratitude was expressed through glowing faces and eyes, unquestioning acceptance and participation. Their 'thank you' goes to Swamiji who is the heart and soul of the yajna and who makes everything possible and happen.

Land, river and sky, plants, animals and people, gods and goddesses are witness to the steady transformation taking place within each one and in the environment. Their supportive and benevolent presence is the expression of gratitude to Swamiji who creates Satyam-Shivam-Sundaram to manifest for the welfare of all.

—*Swami Yogatirtha, Ganga Darshan*

Reinforced conviction

There are four impressions that stand out from this year's Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna.

The Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna is such a subtle event. Its influence on the psyche is not dynamically, overtly impactful, as is the case in many other anusthanas such as the Pashupata Astra Yajna or other aradhanas and sadhanas.

Yet, the effect is unmistakeably powerful and transformative. I found this subtle force guiding me to be positive and create positive interactions. The result was that even when negative attitudes threatened, I was able to turn them away, and reach into the universal goodness to create new beginnings. The same situations and interactions that had been negative in the past were this time full of positivity.

This provided reassurance that on the spiritual path change for the better does take place, and the energy of sustenance strengthens this changed state and brings it into our conscious experience. It also indicated that we are all growing, and even if we fall and falter, we will get there one day. The Lakshmi-Narayana energy seemed to reinforce this conviction.

Of all Swamiji's satsangs, what impacted me most was when he quoted from the *Bhagavad Gita*, "Adveshta sarvabhootanam . . ." Swamiji has quoted this verse many times in the past, but on this occasion, it was as if the sound of his voice joined two neurons in the brain creating the circuit of adveshta for a moment. For a brief epiphanic moment, it was as if I saw and felt into the heart of the adveshta experience. No, I did not become adveshta overnight, that's a long way to go. But something happened in the way he spoke, in the way he gave his energy, that I had a glimpse of it. The glimpse became the inspiration to make the self-effort to rejoin those neurons, little by little.

When Swamiji led everyone into chanting the mantra *Om Rama Ramaya Namah*, I knew it to be a special invocation, yet it was as if I stood outside the moment. I saw its power move through everyone like electricity yet something prevented me from sharing the moment with everyone. In fact, I thought I hadn't been impacted by it at all. Fifteen days later, on the first day of Navaratri the mantra rang in my head all night long. This clearly demonstrates that when the guru says or does something, he plants a samskara. We do not know how it will flower in our life, but one day it will flower.



A most beautiful moment of the yajna that stands out is when Swami Satsangi said, "We must thank Sri Swamiji. Do you know why? For giving himself to us in the form of Swami Niranjan."

—Swami Yogamaya, Ganga Darshan

Vijayi Bhava!

I was fortunate to have had the opportunity to participate in the sahasrarchana on the first day which was dedicated to Swami Sivananda. It was a magical experience – a unique practice of trataka on the images of Lakshmi and Narayana placed in the centre of a white plate around which soft red petals and kumkum formed an ever-increasing circle, the sweet fragrance of the rose mingling with the turmeric in the kumkum and the thousand names of the Divine ringing around us all.

We were 108 people, 54 women and 54 men, who went up to the new peeth where Lakshmi Ma and Lord Narayana are now installed. The offerings were placed in baskets at their feet after which we performed parikrama of the vedi before returning to our places. The whole process was like a 'moving meditation' and the intensity that such a strong concentrated and collective expression of worship brings was overwhelming.

Among the many moments of epiphany, big and small, tangible and subtle, a few images stand out: Swamiji speaking on the pancharatra tantra and imparting deep truths along with practical suggestions to apply these esoteric teachings in our lives; hands held high; both Swamiji and Swami Satsangi dancing their way into the pandal; the presence of Lakshmi and Narayana having come to grace the yajna in the form of the two rare snakes that were seen in Prasad Kutir; the mantras and arati of the pandits; the mahaprasad that arrived from Lord Jagannath in Puri; thousands receiving the yajna prasad in a seamless, peaceful flow; the joy that pervaded Yoga Vidya dining area in Ganga Darshan; smiles on the faces and in the hearts of the karma yogis, yuvas and the children of the red and blue brigades.

The most precious moment for me during the yajna this year was when the greeting for Sannyasa Peeth was declared: "Jai Ho!" When Swami Satsangi spoke how sadhus and mahatmas bless people with the words *"Vijayi Bhava!"* – "May you be victorious!" I was looking at the vedi which had two large pictures of Swami Sivananda and Sri Swamiji. Both gurus raised their hands in benediction: "Vijayi Bhava!" My hair stood on end. Along with it came the strong directive to



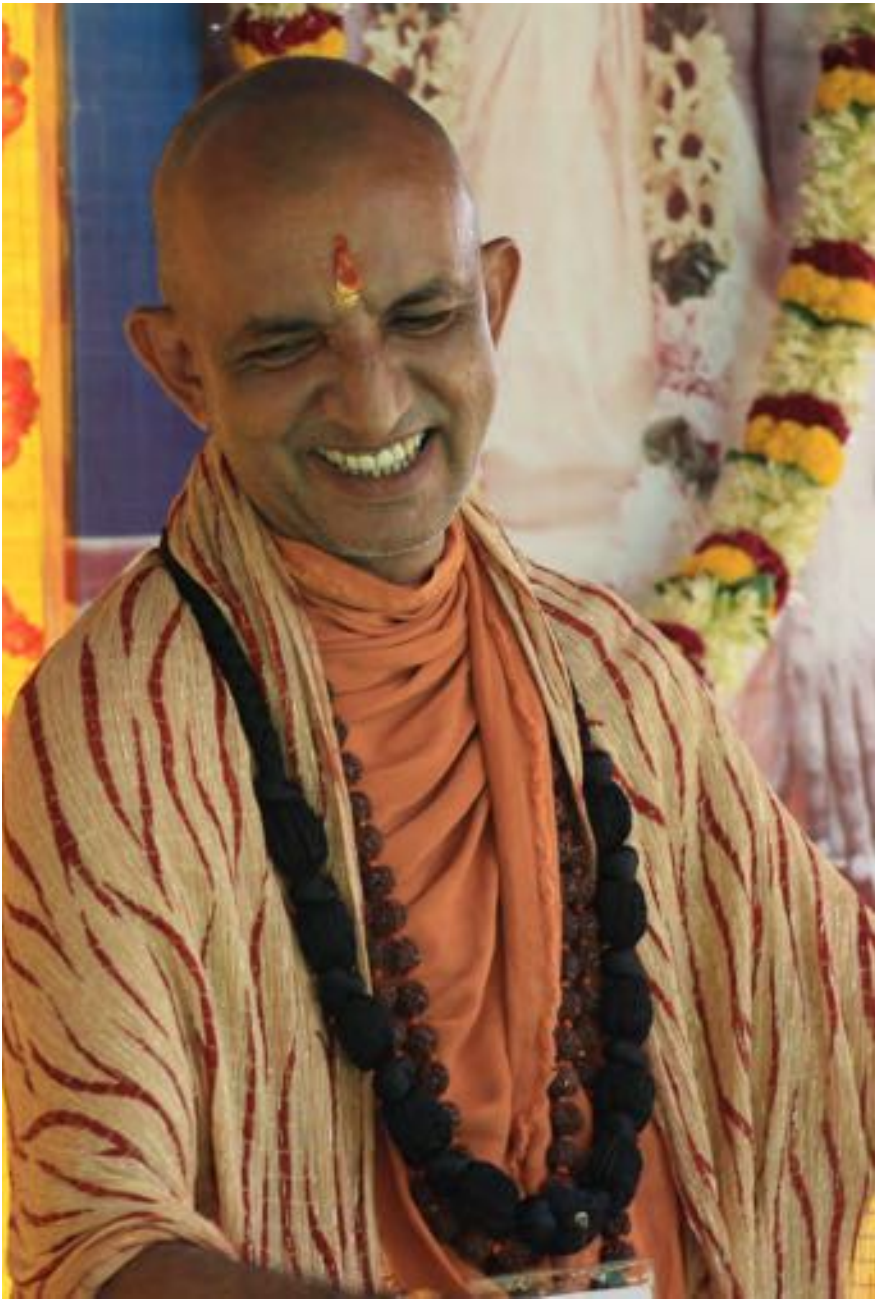
'do our job' of making every effort to overcome our shortcomings so that the Divine can reign supreme in our lives.

Almost ten days after the yajna had concluded, a realization dawned. While elucidating on the different components of the pancharatra tantra, Swamiji had created an opportunity for everyone to participate in an extraordinary experience. During a particular session, I stepped into the pandal as the mantra *Om Rama Ramaya Namah* played out over the sound system. It was first chanted by Swamiji and then, at his behest and invitation, the entire congregation joined him in chanting the mantra eleven times. It stopped me in my tracks. There was an unusual vibration all around: strong yet subtle, clearly audible yet 'other-worldly' at the same time. What was this strange energy? How can something evoke such contrary responses in the same moment?

Swamiji explained that this is the mantra whispered into the ears of those who are taking their last breath along the banks of the Ganga in Varanasi – by none other than Lord Shiva Himself. This is the mantra that confers the power to escape from the cycle of death and rebirth. Seva beckoned and the moment slipped out of my immediate consciousness. Ten days later, the enormity of that experience hit me.

Swamiji had spoken about the death of the 'little self' through dedication, commitment and untiring effort to the path of spiritual evolution; imploring us to break the vicious bonds of the six enemies that hold us down to the lower planes of consciousness. Did the mantra he led us into have within itself the power to help us 'die' to these bonds that tie us down? To plant the nascent seeds deep within our being towards making the effort to rise above our limitations? Was it an opportunity to allow the grace of guru to work its magic in our lives and 'liberate' us from our lesser selves by surrendering to him and following his teachings? The answer is crystal clear: Yes! The Shiva tattwa within Swamiji revealed the mantra, inviting us to surrender and die to the little self within ourselves. *Jai Ho!*

—Sannyasi Sivadhara, Ganga Darshan



SATYANANDA YOGA
BIHAR YOGA

Before his mahasamadhi in 2009, Sri Swami Satyananda gave a final mandate to his successor, Swami Niranjanananda: "Cultivate the lifestyle of creative expression and bring the tradition of sannyasa to the forefront of modern culture." This vision took the form of Sannyasa Peeth, an institution dedicated to instilling the spiritual qualities that allow an individual to live a creative and positive life. Swami Satyananda further specified that the presiding deities of Sannyasa Peeth will be Sri Narayana and Sri Lakshmi, the sustaining forces of the cosmos, and an annual yajna must be conducted to propitiate them and receive their blessings. Thus, in September 2011, the first Sri Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna was held at Paduka Darshan, the seat of Sannyasa Peeth in Munger on the banks of the Ganga.

Glimpses of the Divine III: Sri Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajna, is a collection of the talks and satsangs given by Swami Niranjanananda and Swami Satyasangananda during the Sri Lakshmi-Narayana Mahayajnas held in 2014, 2015 and 2016. It also includes impressions by participants of the yajna. The booklet takes us back into the special moments of the yajna, allowing us to relive the inspiration and blessings received therein, to reconnect with the energy of the gurus and to remember the presence of divinity.

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ISBN :978-93-84753-62-7