



# Yoga Chakrodaya

Munger Yoga Symposium 2018



Book 1/3

Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India



Yoga Chakrodaya  
Munger Yoga Symposium 2018

*With kind regards, ॐ and prem*

Sriani Niranjan



# Yoga Chakrodaya

Munger Yoga Symposium 2018

*A commemorative volume (in three books)  
of the Munger Yoga Symposium,  
held at Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth,  
Bihar School of Yoga, Munger,  
from 20th to 28th October 2018, including discourses  
given by Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati.*



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

© Bihar School of Yoga 2019

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, transmitted or stored in a retrieval system, in any form or by any means, without permission in writing from Yoga Publications Trust.

The terms Satyananda Yoga® and Bihar Yoga® are registered trademarks owned by International Yoga Fellowship Movement (IYFM). The use of the same in this book is with permission.

The purpose of this book is to provide relevant information regarding yoga practice; it is not a practice book and it is not to be used for teaching oneself or others. All yoga training is to be learned and practised under the competent guidance of a person well versed in the practice. It is the responsibility of the practitioner to choose the teacher and the manner in which the classes are being conducted. Bihar School of Yoga is not responsible in any way for the individual's choice.

Published by Yoga Publications Trust

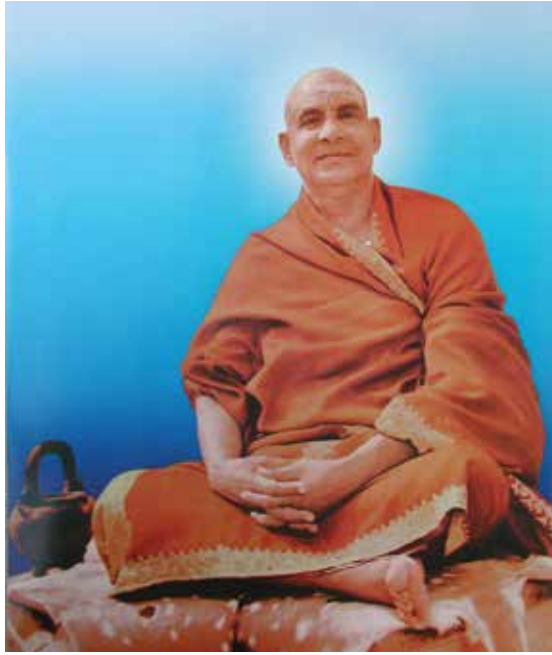
First edition 2019

**ISBN: 978-81-940805-1-0**

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

Website: [www.biharyoga.net](http://www.biharyoga.net)

Printed at Thomson Press (India) Limited, New Delhi, 110001



## Dedication

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



# Contents

Yoga Chakrodaya: Munger Yoga Symposium 2018 *ix*

## **Satsangs on Yoga Chakra**

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

*20–24 October 2018, Mornings*

|                                           |    |
|-------------------------------------------|----|
| Revival of Yoga Chakra: The Wheel of Yoga | 7  |
| The First Two Spokes of the Wheel         | 14 |
| Third and Fourth Spokes of the Wheel      | 25 |
| Fifth and Sixth Spokes of the Wheel       | 37 |
| Coming Full Circle                        | 52 |

## **Sessions of Inspiration**

*20–24 October 2018, Afternoons*

|                                     |     |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| Connecting, Imbibing, Expressing    | 63  |
| Yoga Bhava not Bhoga Bhava          | 88  |
| Deepening the Experience            | 119 |
| The Fundamentals of Satyananda Yoga | 143 |

## **Satsangs on the 2nd Chapter**

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

*25–27 October 2018, Afternoons*

|                                        |     |
|----------------------------------------|-----|
| Stepping into the 2nd Chapter          | 171 |
| Relaxation, Awareness, Concentration   | 183 |
| Pratyahara: Doorway to the 2nd Chapter | 189 |

## **Imparting Yoga Vidya**

*25–28 October 2018, Afternoons*

|                        |     |
|------------------------|-----|
| The APMB Classes       | 199 |
| The Yoga Nidra Classes | 212 |
| The Swadhyaya Sessions | 224 |
| The Meditation Classes | 229 |
| The Concluding Message | 235 |

## **The Experience and the Learning**

|                             |     |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| Impressions by Participants | 239 |
|-----------------------------|-----|

## **Yoga Chakra in Motion**

*The Kaleidoscope of Events*

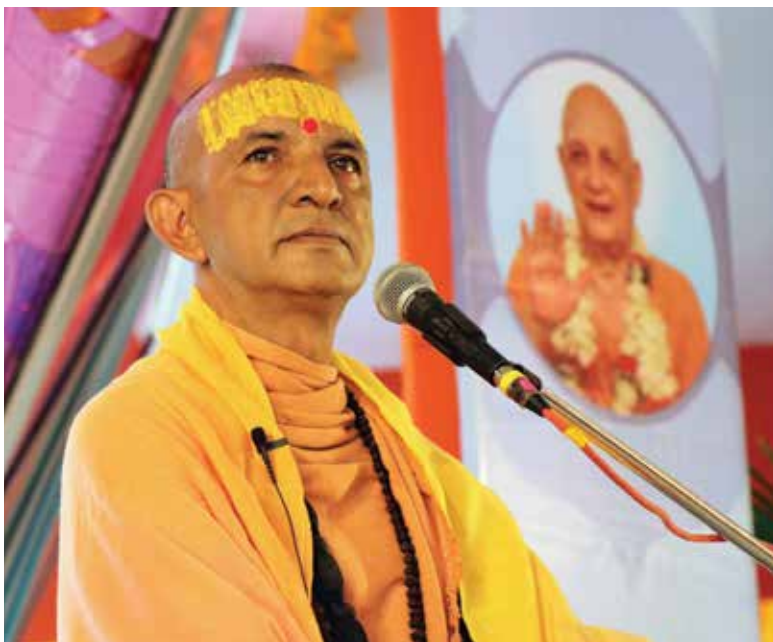
|                                 |     |
|---------------------------------|-----|
| Satyam Yoga Yajna               | 299 |
| Satyam Akhand Kirtan            | 304 |
| Satyam Yoga Prasad              | 306 |
| Satyam Darshan                  | 308 |
| Satyam Yoga Drishti             | 310 |
| At Annapoorna Kitchen           | 312 |
| Country and State Presentations | 314 |
| Conclusion of Yajna at Akhara   | 317 |

## **Evenings at Car Park**

*25–28 October 2018, Evenings*

|                                              |     |
|----------------------------------------------|-----|
| Samskara and Samskriti                       | 325 |
| Learn to Apply                               | 330 |
| Music of the Manganiars                      | 333 |
| Connecting with Nature                       | 334 |
| Launch of Bihar Yoga in Cyberspace           | 335 |
| Tribute to Mother Ganga and Darshan of Vibhu | 340 |
| True Glory                                   | 357 |
| Thank You, Swamiji                           | 360 |
| Vision of a New Fellowship of Yoga           | 362 |

# Yoga Chakrodaya: Munger Yoga Symposium 2018



The Munger Yoga Symposium was the stage for launching the ‘2nd Chapter of Yoga’. At the World Yoga Convention held in Munger in 2013, Swami Niranjanananda had announced that the first chapter of yoga of the Bihar School of Yoga, the fifty years of yoga propagation, had come to an



end. The second chapter begins with the aim of deepening the understanding and experience of *yoga vidya*, which contains the whole wisdom of yoga with its philosophy, application, its aims, methods and practices. This is achieved through training, not through a general class of hatha yoga. It requires seriousness, sincerity and commitment on the part of every yoga aspirant.

Since the World Yoga Convention, Swamiji has been developing the second chapter through new trainings and programs at Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth. The new programs present the practices and principles of yoga from the perspective of the original intentions of yoga. They allow aspirants to experience the transition into a new dimension where yoga ceases to be a practice and evolves into a sadhana and a lifestyle. It is this sankalpa, intention and effort to deepen the experience that becomes the connection with yoga vidya. During the Munger Yoga Symposium 2018 Swamiji announced that the inspiration and vision of the new direction was to live 'yoga from moment to moment'.

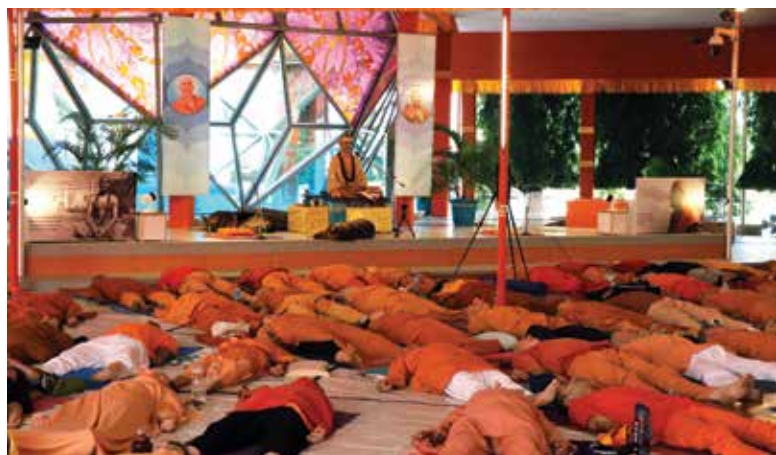
Yoga aspirants involved in teaching Satyananda Yoga gathered at the Symposium. Over a thousand delegates from 40 countries and 22 states of India participated. They were experienced yoga teachers whose dedication and involve-



ment with yoga has not only enriched their lives and the lives of their students, but maintained their connection with Satyananda Yoga over decades.

From the 20th to 23rd, during the mornings Swamiji gave satsangs on the 'Yoga Chakra', the wheel of yoga, with its six spokes or branches of yoga. It was Swami Sivananda who initiated the idea of integral yoga, a combination of various yoga branches to develop and enhance the faculties of head, heart and hands. Sri Swami Satyananda gave this vision the shape of a wheel, or the yoga chakra, with the same purpose of bringing about a qualitative change in the lives of aspirants through yoga. The Symposium launched the original yoga chakra of Sri Swamiji with a clear exposition, a wide range of application and a practical path to experience and live the vidya.

In the afternoon sessions senior acharyas and the resident sannyasins of Ganga Darshan shared their experiences and insights into yoga over their years of association. Their personal recollections of experiences with Sri Swamiji and his teachings, described the training they had received in all aspects of yoga from asana and pranayama to raja yoga to kriya yoga, from karma yoga, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga to awareness and discipleship.



From the 25th to 28th, the Symposium comprised of hatha yoga, raja yoga and jnana yoga. The focus of asana was the development of multiple awareness; yoga nidra returned to its original form as developed by Sri Swamiji; a new understanding of pratyahara changed the experience of well-known practices; and the guided swadhyaya meditations introduced the practical application of lifestyle yamas and niyamas to enhance the quality of one's life and being.

Swamiji's satsang concluded each day. He emphasized the perspective, attitude and awareness necessary to be involved in the transition into the second chapter. Connecting to yoga vidya, making yoga a sadhana and living yoga as a lifestyle are teachings that constitute the direction and aim of the second chapter.

During the Symposium, a range of other activities were conducted to strengthen the connection to yoga vidya through personal understanding and experience: A yajna was conducted in Akhara that filled the environment with mantras of auspiciousness. The yajna created an energy field which supported all the activities at Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth, providing the foundation and energy with which the second chapter could begin in the most positive and uplifting manner. The akhanda kirtan united the worldwide



yoga family with song and dance; the Yoga Drishti theatre offered a 5D experience of the kundalini shakti and Satyam Darshan showed videos of the gurus' teachings spanning decades of the Satyananda Yoga tradition. At Satyam Yoga Prasad, the entire library of BSY publications, DVDs and CDs were available as Prasad in a gesture of unlimited giving of yoga vidya for all to take home as a source of inspiration and guidance.

In the evenings, representatives of several countries and states of India made presentations on the development of Satyananda Yoga in their respective regions. In the spirit of fellowship, they spoke of their small beginnings and the achievements made over the years. Musicians from Rajasthan moved everyone with their traditional bhajans, devotional music touching and uniting the hearts of those present. The children and youth of Munger made stunning presentations on the theme of nature which ended with the inspirational request to all to help protect the environment.

At the conclusion of the Symposium, Swamiji said: "I see the culmination of *vibhu*, interconnection, here this evening. I believe this is the outcome of the Munger Yoga Symposium: that the global community has become a stronger community in the yogic and spiritual dimension. That is due to your

belief and understanding of yoga and spiritual life. That is due to the fact that you have come here and shared a vision.”

In giving us the Munger Yoga Symposium 2018, Swami Niranjanananda opened the window into a new landscape of living yoga. Those nine days were an expression of *poornata*, fullness and completeness, in all areas. Nothing was missing, nothing was lacking, everything was given in full. With its fullness the Symposium became the mirror that reflected the poornata of the yoga vidya and the yoga chakra.



# Book 1





# Book 1: Contents

## **Satsangs on Yoga Chakra**

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

*20–24 October 2018, Mornings*

|                                           |    |
|-------------------------------------------|----|
| Revival of Yoga Chakra: The Wheel of Yoga | 7  |
| The First Two Spokes of the Wheel         | 14 |
| Third and Fourth Spokes of the Wheel      | 25 |
| Fifth and Sixth Spokes of the Wheel       | 37 |
| Coming Full Circle                        | 52 |

## **Sessions of Inspiration**

*20–24 October 2018, Afternoons*

|                                     |     |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| Connecting, Imbibing, Expressing    | 63  |
| Yoga Bhava not Bhoga Bhava          | 88  |
| Deepening the Experience            | 119 |
| The Fundamentals of Satyananda Yoga | 143 |



# Satsangs on Yoga Chakra

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

*20–24 October 2018, Mornings*





20 October 2018

# Revival of Yoga Chakra: The Wheel of Yoga

ENTERING INTO THE BRONZE AGE OF YOGA



On the occasion of the Munger Yoga Symposium, I would like to introduce you to a term: 'Yoga Chakra'. Those of you who have been associated with the ashram in the last five years have heard it before, but the newcomers need to familiarize themselves with it. *Yoga chakra* means the wheel of yoga. It is not my invention; it is something that our guru Sri Swami Satyananda had thought about when he started the first training of yoga in Munger.

## **The beginnings**

The beginnings of Yoga Chakra go back in history to Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh, 1943, when a young man came to Sri Swami Sivananda and dedicated himself to the service of guru and sannyasa lifestyle. After some time, the guru told this young man, “Go and propagate yoga from door to door and shore to shore.” This was Swami Satyananda’s first introduction to the word ‘yoga’.

Swami Sivananda inspired all his disciples to go out and teach yoga: something that society needed, or would need. He was the first sannyasin to do this; however, he made it clear that the application of yoga is to enhance the qualities and expressions of head, heart and hands. He did not advocate yoga for self-realization or as a practice to be done in seclusion for one’s own emancipation. He gave a practical focus to the subject of yoga by saying that its purpose is to improve the faculties of head, heart and hands. The disciples of Swami Sivananda followed the mandate of their guru, spread around the world and each one became a master in his own right. They gave the world the first glimpse into the vast pictorial canvas of yoga.

Swami Satyananda also travelled throughout the Indian subcontinent for many years to assess the needs of people and society, and how yoga could help fulfil those needs. Eventually he came to Munger.

## **The development**

It was in Munger that Sri Swamiji developed the system of Yoga Chakra, which he taught to the first group of sannyasa aspirants in 1970. Prior to that, he conducted a nine-month yoga teacher training course, in which also the participants were introduced to the principles of Yoga Chakra. It was not a one-month or 200-hour course; it was a nine-month-long course, eight hours every day. Those who underwent that training became pioneers in their own right, such as Swami Devatmananda in France, Guni Martin in Denmark, and many others from Poland to London to Australia to America.

This was possible as they had the full exposure to yoga. They received the complete vision of yoga which Sri Swamiji had developed. Apart from the nine-month course, Sri Swamiji also conducted six-month training programs, in which also people were introduced to the subject of Yoga Chakra.

Based on the needs of people, Sri Swamiji selected six relevant yogas out of the many branches of yoga: hatha yoga and karma yoga, the physical expressions of yoga; raja yoga and bhakti yoga, the psychological expressions of yoga; kriya yoga and jnana yoga, the psychic and the knowing-realizing aspects of yoga. These six yogas form the six spokes of the yogic wheel that Sri Swamiji developed in the sixties.

One of the early sanniyasins wrote an article on Sri Swamiji, which was published in the *Yoga* magazine in 1963. It was titled 'The Hub of the Wheel: Yoga Chakra Kalanidhi Paramahansa Satyananda'. *Kala* means art and *nidhi* means one who is rich, so *Yoga Chakra Kalanidhi* means 'one who is rich in the artful creation of yoga chakra'. This should clarify that the Yoga Chakra is not my creation; I have only revived it.

### **The training**

The training of Yoga Chakra was a complete, sequential and progressive training. The old swamis will remember that in the very first class of asana, we were required to practise and hold a posture for half an hour, doing something we had never done before. The first time we practised sirshasana, we had to stay in that pose for half an hour while Sri Swamiji went around personally to check everyone's posture. The same with chakrasana. He used to guide us thoroughly through each and every asana, and in one session itself we would perfect the practice. That was the training we received. We did not do asanas for five or ten times, just to feel good and loosen our stiff joints. We practised asanas for up to 100 rounds, to acquire the mastery and perfection that Sri Swamiji demanded from us as students of yoga.

Not only asana, but also pranayama: eight hours of pranayama practice, from morning until night, breathing

in, breathing out and holding. Those were the times when a direct transmission was given by Sri Swamiji to the first group of sannyasins and other aspirants who were trained by him during the different courses.

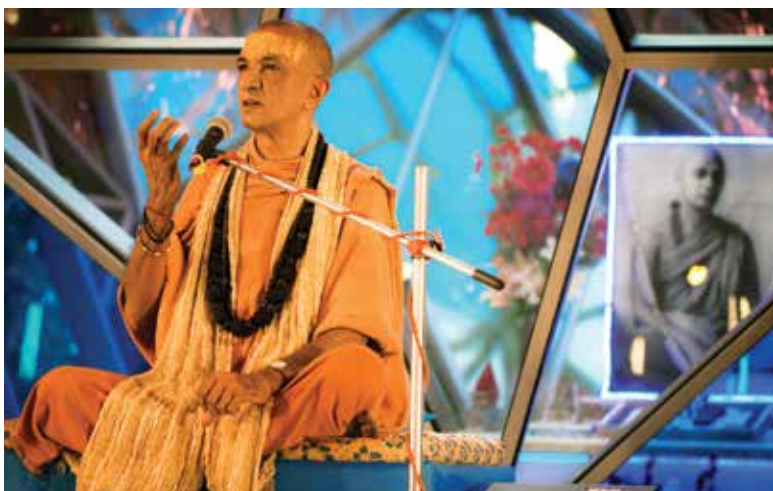
### **Scaling it down**

After the convention of 1973, Sri Swamiji started to travel out of Munger more often, to different seminars, conventions and events. We also travelled with him, always being on the move. Once we did a Madhya Pradesh tour for one month, with a caravan of cars filled with books and sannyasins. We would travel at night, conduct programs during the day, again drive at night, conduct programs in the next location the next day, and on and on we went. That was the flow. For weeks we did not sleep, yet there was no tiredness.

It was during these yoga yatra that Sri Swamiji said that the training that he had given to us was not applicable for people in society. We encountered a wide variety of people: fat, slim, young, old, stiff, loose, diseased, healthy, with problems, with no problems. As he taught this diverse range, Sri Swamiji scaled down the practices of Yoga Chakra to allow civilian society to practise yoga with ease. He started giving them only simple practices of yoga which would help them attain wellbeing in life. This scaled-down version is what is known as Satyananda Yoga today.

### **Satyananda Yoga and Yoga Chakra**

What is 'Satyananda Yoga'? Pawanmuktasana part 1, 2, 3, a series of standing asanas, a series of backward and forward bending asanas, a series of balancing asanas. That is the extent of asana practice that you do under Satyananda Yoga: seven groups only. Nobody does advanced asanas. How many of you do sirshasana, mayurasana, chakrasana or vrishchikasana? Nobody. Everyone is content with eka pada pranamasana. In pranayama, no more than five are practised: nadi shodhana, kapalbhati, bhastrika, bhramari, ujjayi. Beyond that, no other pranayama is done. What



is taught in pratyahara? Yoga nidra, a practice in which you cannot even remain awake and yet you call yourself yogis! A practice which you use to sleep and become more comfortable is not pratyahara. Improving your sleep is not pratyahara. What meditation do you practise? Ajapa japa, antar mouna, possibly chidakasha dharana, and one or two other practices, nothing beyond.

You practise a few components from the entire structure of yoga, and this has been identified as Satyananda Yoga. What you do not know is that beyond these is the whole system of Yoga Chakra. Satyananda Yoga is at the forefront for the general public who want to have the experience of physical and mental wellbeing, rest, relaxation, concentration, ease of body and mind. For all that, Satyananda Yoga is the appropriate technique; you do not need anything more. However, to realize yoga and to experience the positive, qualitative and spiritual benefits of yoga, you have to come to Yoga Chakra.

In the yoga propagation era, the scaled-down version of Yoga Chakra by Sri Swamiji became Satyananda Yoga. In these fifty years, many people were exposed to yoga yet nobody advanced beyond the Satyananda Yoga group of

practices. Many of them became yoga teachers and started training their group of students in Satyananda Yoga. Those students trained the third generation, they trained the fourth, the fifth, the sixth, and now the original training is diluted. The original intention and spirit of Sri Swamiji when he gave these teachings have been diluted by the misunderstanding and misrepresentation of yoga, as each teacher makes certain modifications in the system, and ten generations later the purity is completely lost. In fact, the majority of those who call themselves Satyananda Yoga teachers have not been trained by the Bihar School of Yoga or Swami Satyananda or Swami Niranjan.

### **Entering into Bronze Age**

In 2013, during the World Yoga Convention it was made clear that the age of yoga propagation is now over. The Stone Age is gone, we are entering into the Bronze Age. The age of yoga propagation was the Stone Age, and exploring and experiencing Yoga Chakra is the Bronze Age.

Yoga Chakra is not for teaching, please remember this. It is for understanding, experimenting, experiencing, living. That is the next step. This was explained during the World Yoga Convention, that now we have to look into yoga with commitment, seriousness and sincerity. Those three words indicated that now you have to change your own understanding and vision of yoga: not use it as a vidya that helps support your life in society, but experience it as a vidya that helps transform your life for the better while you live in society.

### **The wheel**

Yoga Chakra consists of three complementary pairs of yogas: hatha yoga complements karma yoga, raja yoga complements bhakti yoga, kriya yoga complements jnana yoga. They make the six spokes of the wheel of yoga: Yoga Chakra.

A wheel is never static. It is always rotating, and the rotation of the wheel means advancement. By the time one of the spokes makes a full circle, the wheel has gone forward,

whether three feet or one metre. Thus, Yoga Chakra indicates a progression of yoga.

### **The path ahead**

Today you have a picture of the Yoga Chakra and how different it is from Satyananda Yoga. I have also clarified what is Satyananda Yoga. Although a scaled-down version of Yoga Chakra, it is still much in need, as it provides complete wellbeing to an individual who is not looking for spiritual solace and guidance, only physical and mental wellness. Therefore, by learning about Yoga Chakra you are not ignoring Satyananda Yoga. That will continue to be the mainstay and its training will continue for others. However, for yourself, your experimentations and realizations will begin with Yoga Chakra.



21 October 2018

# The First Two Spokes of the Wheel

HATHA YOGA AND KARMA YOGA



The training in yoga that was given to us by Sri Swami Satyananda from 1963 to 1973, for ten years, was of the complete *vidya*, science, of yoga. After 1973, when we started to travel out, we came across many new concepts with which we were unfamiliar. Example: hatha yoga for us meant a process of purification, whereas in the West hatha yoga was seen as a practice of physical exercise. Observing the prevalent concepts and mindsets, we also had to change our vocabulary to suit that understanding. There was a big

gap between our understanding and theirs, therefore the concepts and practices had to be adjusted so that everyone could understand them and benefit from them.

Sri Swamiji scaled down the yoga training and teaching to something basic and simple that people could follow. Not all the asanas of hatha yoga can be practised by everyone. The practices that he gave were relevant to people of all hues and colours, sizes and shapes, needs and demands, for their physical wellbeing, mental wellbeing and development of awareness about spiritual life.

### **Revisiting the purpose of yoga**

You should always remember that Sri Swami Sivananda never advocated yoga for self-realization. For him the purpose of yoga was the cultivation of the faculties of head, heart and hands. Sri Swamiji continued to say that self-realization is not possible in this life. How can a non-transcendental being experience the transcendental nature? It is not possible. A scientist comes holding some liquid in a cup and says, “The chemical in this cup has the ability to dissolve anything and everything which comes in contact with it.” Yet, nothing is happening to the cup. If that chemical had the ability to dissolve everything, it should have dissolved the cup too. The same principle applies to human beings.

Thus, to help people harmonize their existing state of life, rather than give something which would be of no relevance to them, Sri Swamiji taught the practices of pawanmuktasana part 1, 2, 3, the standing postures, the forward and backward bending postures, and the balancing postures. These became the practices which people in society could be taught, and that is what you learn under Satyananda Yoga. Given all the limitations and restrictions in society, Sri Swamiji gave only specific practices that people could use to enhance their state of physical and psychological wellbeing.

Sri Swamiji always said that the purpose of yoga and of life is to cultivate spiritual awareness, not to attain spiritual enlightenment. To cultivate spiritual awareness, one needs

to understand spirituality from the perspective of the yogis, not from the perspective of culture or religion. Spirituality for yogis meant enhancing the positive qualities of life. That is true spirituality. True materialism is hardening of heart and mind, and true spirituality is softening of heart and mind. This was also the focus with which Sri Swamiji created the Yoga Chakra, incorporating six yogas into this wheel of yoga.

### **History of hatha yoga**

The first spoke of the Yoga Chakra is hatha yoga, followed by karma yoga. Historically, the first propagator of hatha yoga was Lord Shiva, who taught the science and subject of hatha yoga to his wife and disciple, Parvati. By receiving the teachings, Parvati became his first disciple, or rather his first divine disciple. However, the story takes an interesting turn. While Shiva was giving the instructions to Parvati, they were seated beside a river, and there was a fish that had listened to all the talks of Shiva. Shiva had said to Parvati that he would close his eyes and speak on the subject and she had to keep giving her affirmation, “Yes, yes, yes,” so that he would know that she was listening to him. He closed his eyes and started to speak. After about fifteen minutes of looking at Shiva’s face with closed eyes and listening to this subject, Parvati fell asleep. The fish that was listening began to say, “Yes, yes, yes,” and Shiva continued. Finally, when Shiva finished and opened the eyes, he saw Parvati fast asleep. He wondered who then was saying yes. He saw the fish and asked, “Did you hear everything?” The fish said, “Yes.” Shiva said, “In that case, you will have a human incarnation in which you will propagate the subject that you have learnt.”

That fish became Matseyndranath, the founder of hatha yoga in the human dimension. He was the first human teacher of hatha yoga. Even today, the Natha tradition which he established, follows a rigorous sadhana of hatha yoga. They are able to do incredible things, as they master the subject of hatha yoga. That is one of the original traditions which survives even today.

The hatha yoga that originated from Matseyndranath was adopted by yogis to begin with and not by civilian society. That was because yogis had to sit for hours with their eyes closed, meditating and contemplating. When they opened their eyes, they needed exercise, and they found hatha yoga relevant.

During the panchagni sadhana, I faced the same condition. I used to sit for eight hours in front of the fires, without any movement. Do you think half an hour of asana practice would balance eight hours of sitting? No. I had to follow a strict routine: so many hours of asana practice to just bring the body to a normal condition. In this way, hatha yoga was used as an aid and a discipline by yogis who practised deep states of meditation.

Later, when people from civilian society saw the yogis practise these strange postures, they were intrigued. They started imitating them, and found that the stiffness of the back went away when they did backward movements, the stiffness and pain from the joints went away when they did pawanmuktasana, the physical energies were balanced when they did some pranayama practices. Therefore, they also adopted the hatha yoga practices, but for therapeutic purposes, and another branch of hatha yoga emerged, the therapeutic one. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* by Swatmarama, you will find many *slokas*, verses, stating that for such and such condition of the body, you should do this and this asana. Yet, the original intention of hatha yoga did not become lost, as it was maintained by the yogis and sannyasins and it still remains as strong and powerful as ever.

The sannyasins followed a simple and strict discipline of hatha yoga and that tradition or system is given in *Gheranda Samhita*. Swatmarama was the person who modified and simplified hatha yoga for the civilian society and his version is given in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*. Therefore, the most common book on hatha yoga is *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* as it is for civilian society. The less common one is *Gheranda Samhita*, which is for sadhus and recluses living a yogic life. Predating these

two literatures are the original teachings of Shiva, given in the *Shiva Samhitas*.

This is the history of hatha yoga: from Shiva to the Natha school of thought, to yogis, and later on for civilians.

### **Intent of hatha yoga**

The intent of hatha yoga is evident in the name itself. *Ham* and *Tham* are bija mantras of the solar and the lunar energies. *Ham* is the bija mantra of the pingala nadi; *Ksham* or *Tham* is the bija mantra of the ida nadi. The intent and purpose of hatha yoga is to balance these two energy systems.

Sri Swamiji always explained hatha yoga in terms of ida and pingala. He did not talk about postures. He spoke about the two forces that have to be harmonized in your body, which regulate the function of the senses, the mind, and your entire life, allowing you to interact with nature, environment, society, people. If one of these powers were missing from life, there would be no life. They both have to be properly coordinated and harmonized to give the complete experience of life.

Hatha yoga begins not with asanas, but with purification and detoxification of the body. Shatkarma is its first component, also developed by yogis from long hours of sitting. Different kinds of physical and pranic blocks can be created when you are sitting immobile for hours, in the thoracic region, in the abdominal region and in other areas. Toxins also accumulate. Therefore, the yogis asked themselves how they could keep their bodies pure so that the pranas of ida and pingala would function in harmony and there would be no block or imbalance. The answer was found in shatkarma, the cleansing techniques.

After shatkarma come the asana practices. The asanas of hatha yoga are dynamic in nature, as they mobilize the body and activate the pranas. If you study the original scriptures of hatha yoga, you will find that no more than sixty postures are mentioned there. Many people number asanas at thousands, yet there is no text that describes these numbers of asanas.



Everything depends on interpretation. Is asana a posture or a condition? Asana means a condition in which you are able to establish yourself and be comfortable, yet people think of asana only as posture.

The word asana has different meanings. When you come in, I give you an asana to sit on. Here asana means a seat. Another meaning of asana is a condition that you create within yourself in which you are comfortable and at peace: *sthiram sukham asanam*. The third meaning of asana is a posture; however, it means a static posture. There is no word for dynamic postures in Sanskrit. Dynamic movements that strengthen the body are called *vyayama*. When the movements affect the subtle, micro levels of the physical body, they are called *sukshma vyayama*. From the yogi's perspective, the exercise that you do in a gym would be *vyayama* and *pawanmuktasana* would be *sukshma vyayama*. Even in *hatha*

yoga, the dynamic movements that you make are to come into a static posture. The movement is not asana, the final posture that you come into is the asana.

Asana is a specific condition of the body, which helps balance the physical systems and also affects the chemical composition of the body. When you practise asanas, the chemicals in the body change. Endorphins, dopamine, oxytocin, all the chemicals that cause happiness, comfort and joy are stimulated with the practice of yogasanas. Therefore, after a good, solid session of yogasanas, you feel buoyant, happy and talkative. This happens as a chemical change has taken place, making you happier, more extroverted, more connected with your own body and with others.

The other components of hatha yoga are pranayama, mudra and bandha, and also pratyahara and dharana techniques. Pratyahara and dharana is not limited to raja yoga; every yoga has its own practices of pratyahara and dharana, as they deal with different conditions of body and mind. Shatkarma, asana, pranayama, mudra-bandha, pratyahara-dharana and laya constitute the six branches, *angas* or components of hatha yoga, their purpose being to balance the ida and pingala energies, the prana shakti which is both gross and subtle.

Yogis realized one thing: one cannot achieve anything in life without pranic balance. It is the pranic balance that allows the body to become more efficient, healthier and active, and it is the pranic balance that allows the mind to become more creative, positive, optimistic and open. This is the basis of hatha yoga.

### **Karma yoga complements hatha yoga**

Hatha yoga is complemented and supported by karma yoga. That is the second spoke of the wheel of yoga. Karma yoga is also a way to harmonize the energies of the body. When you do your hatha yoga practices or meditate, the body builds up energy. That prana has to be exhausted. Swami Sivananda used to say that for one hour of meditation,

there should be three hours of hard work; for two hours of meditation there should be six hours of hard work. The energy that you generate in one hour of yoga practices and meditation has to be released and discharged, which can happen only through karma yoga. Many people believe karma yoga to be the yoga of action, as the name seems to suggest. In reality, it is the yoga that allows you to release the energy that you accumulate in hatha yoga or other practice-oriented yogas.

Karma yoga also has three purposes or focuses. It is stated in the *Bhagavad Gita*:

*Yoginah karma kurvanti sangam tyakwatatmashuddhaye.*

Yogis perform karmas by becoming detached, with the purpose of attaining self-purification.

The statement indicates that the first focus of karma yoga should be self-purification, *atmashuddhi*. That is also the first focus of hatha yoga: *shuddhi*. *Shuddhi* at physical level in hatha yoga and *shuddhi* at psychological level in karma yoga.

### **Attaining purification through action**

To attain *atmashuddhi*, the first condition of karma yoga is that you have to be detached from your performances and activities. How does one detach oneself from one's performances and activities?

There are two things that propel or inspire karma. One is *vasana*, desire, and the other is *dharma*, appropriateness. Usually, it is the *vasana* karma or the desire karma that is prominent in everybody's head. 'I perform my karma to please myself and to show others that I am capable of doing it.' Example: a list is made for the Symposium. Ten people are in this area, cleaning here; ten people are in that area, organizing things there; ten people are in another area, doing something else there. Now, among all these people who are working in their respective areas, if somebody

thinks, ‘Oh this is very boring, I wish I had something more stimulating to do’, that is vasana karma. You are looking at your participation with the lens of your desire for stimulation, ‘This is too boring, I wish I could do something more exciting.’ The second is dharma karma: ‘My name is on the list. The list fulfils a purpose, I am part of that purpose, let me do the best I can.’

When you are happy, accept a situation and express your creativity in that dimension, it is dharma karma. When you do something while disliking it, wanting to go away from there and do something else, it is vasana karma. It is this vasana karma that does not allow the purification to take place. As long as the vasanas are there, expectations and desires are there, there will not be atmashuddhi. When you become part of the whole scene with acceptance, and are free mentally from any thought, idea or judgement about it, then that karma will lead you to purification. In such a mental state, you are in tune with and in harmony with that particular action. This is the first level of karma, according to the *Bhagavad Gita*: attainment of inner purification by involving oneself in action. However, that involvement is combined with dharma and not desire. It is combined with the ability to become part of a bigger picture. That is one level of karma yoga.

### **Remaining the non-doer**

The second level is the attitude: *Naham karta* – “I am not the doer.” It is the recognition that ‘I am not the doer. I am only a medium through which creativity is expressing to lead this action to its final conclusion. I have done my best, and I leave the rest to the higher powers.’ The idea of non-doership is the second component of karma yoga.

Non-doership also creates a condition that has its correspondence in hatha yoga. It is a state of balance between an action and your attitude towards the action, between prana shakti and chitta shakti. Thus you achieve balance of ida and pingala in karma yoga too. If there is no ida-pingala balance,



then there is continuous strife and fight. If your pingala is too high and your co-worker's ida is too low, you will invariably clash.

### **The lightness of being**

The third aspect of karma yoga is *naishkarmya siddhi*, contentment with or without action. This means that you do not carry the weight of any action and your mind is always light and free. In hatha yoga you attain lightness at the physical and pranic levels, in karma yoga the final attainment is lightness at the mental level. Whether or not you do a karma it makes no difference to you and yet everything seems to happen perfectly around you.

In Sri Swamiji's life, I have seen all the three stages of karma yoga. When he was in Rishikesh, he was involved, like all of us, in hard, physical work, which allowed him to experience atmashuddhi. When he came to Munger and did the yoga work, he dedicated it to his guru, it was not his achievement. Non-doership came here, akarta bhava: 'I did it

because you commanded me. Now that command is over and my obligation is over, Hari Om Tat Sat.’ How many people can do that? Can people just walk out from an institution they have created and not look back? He did it – because he had the akarta bhava, the attitude of being a non-doer. ‘It was my guru’s mandate, he inspired me. It was his strength and grace that allowed me to do this. It is his vision. I am dedicating it to him.’ That is akarta bhava, the second stage of karma yoga. In Rikhia we see the third aspect of karma yoga, naishkarmya siddhi, where he became free from karmas. Thus, in Sri Swamiji’s life we see the effulgence of all the three stages of karma yoga.

### **Allow the effulgence of karma yoga in your life**

You need to understand the principle, the theory and the intent of karma yoga, and not look at it as hard work: ‘I am working in the sun’, ‘I am working in the cold’, ‘I am working in the rain’, ‘I am working in difficult conditions’, or ‘I am working in comfortable conditions’ – feeling happy and elated or feeling dejected and distracted. These are not the attitudes that allow karma yoga to become effulgent in life.

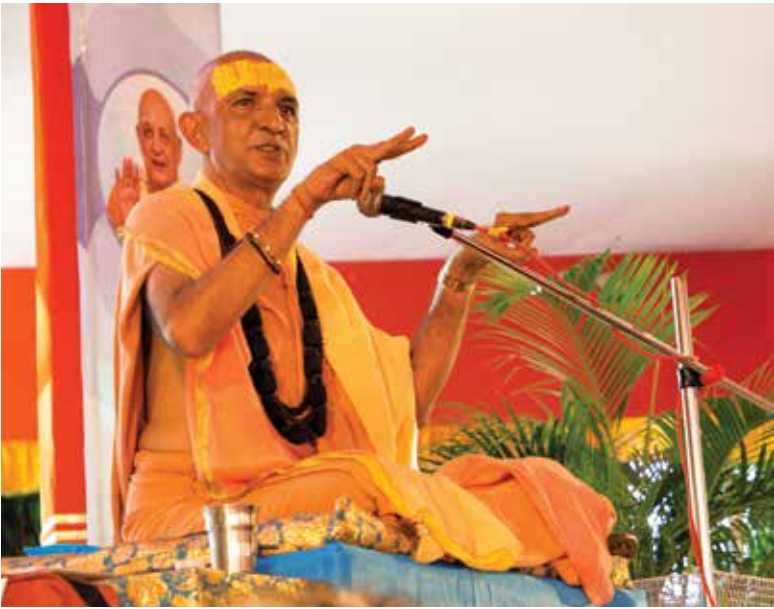
To make karma yoga real in life, think that ‘For one month, whatever I do, I shall keep in my mind the attitude that I am going to purify myself, balance myself, organize myself through my actions.’ In whatever you do, stay with that focus, and you will see that by the end of the month, you will have achieved what you set out to achieve. Try it for a month. The next month pick up the second aspect. The third month pick up the third aspect. You may not be able to complete your journey one hundred percent, but you will at least have a five percent glimpse into the intent and experience of karma yoga.

In this way, hatha yoga and karma yoga are the first two spokes of the wheel, which are physical, sensorial, pranic, elemental or *tattvic* in nature, and they complement each other.

*22 October 2018*

# Third and Fourth Spokes of the Wheel

RAJA YOGA AND BHAKTI YOGA



We have spoken about the emergence of Yoga Chakra, the original yoga teaching of Sri Swamiji, and about hatha yoga and karma yoga, the first two complementary spokes of the yoga wheel, and today the day belongs to raja yoga and its complementary practice, bhakti yoga, the third and fourth spokes of Yoga Chakra.

## **The vaidic thinking**

Before going into raja yoga and bhakti yoga, let us go back in history to see the environment that existed when the rishis were thinking about and developing the subject of yoga as a practice and lifestyle.

While following their spiritual life, the rishis in ancient times were inspired to tread the path of yoga. The first exposition of yoga was given by Shiva to his disciple, Parvati. However, the first human propagators of yoga were the sages.

The first propagator of hatha yoga was Matseyndranath, and the tradition of hatha yoga emanates from him. Today it exists in many versions, yet the originator was Matseyndranath. Similarly, raja yoga predates Patanjali by many thousands of years to the time of the vaidic rishis.

The vaidic rishis lived in their ashrams and gurukuls in seclusion, away from society. Here they practised their contemplations, meditations, invocations and austerities, and lived in harmony with nature. One of their aims was to make life more conducive, not by creating creature comforts, but by balancing the forces that guide life, both internal and external. They discovered the methods for this in deep states of meditation, and that is how the science of havans, yajnas, invocations and also yoga emerged. The truths and principles that they realized behind it all are preserved in the Upanishads, which convey the philosophic aspect of vaidic life.

The philosophy that emerged from the vaidic times, Vedanta, has never been called a religion. It is a school of thought. It has not been part of any religion, not even of the vaidic civilization. It was a school of thought to which everyone was exposed and it presented a monistic idea, that ultimately, we all go to the same point and become one. This philosophy influenced the emergence of the yogas.

One of the highlights of the vedantic philosophy is the idea of *laya*, dissolution. Every gross thing has to be dissolved in the subtle, the subtle has to be dissolved in the causal, the causal has to be dissolved in the transcendental. The entire

system of hatha yoga, raja yoga, kriya yoga, and all the other yogas that are influenced by vedantic thought, always advocated laya, dissolution of the lower tendencies into the higher tendencies, and dissolution of those higher tendencies into the transcendental tendencies.

The idea is simple. Ordinarily, salt or sugar consists of dry, hard crystals. When you put them in a glass of water, the crystals don't remain dry and hard; they dissolve and the water takes on the essence or taste of what has been dissolved, whether sugar or salt. Now, if you pour that glass of water into a bucket of water; the water will again dissolve and become one with the existing body of water in the bucket. You will not be able to taste either the salt or the sugar in the water; it has dissolved into a greater container. The vedantic philosophy presented this idea. Therefore even in hatha yoga, all the different components of shatkarma, asana, pranayama, mudra and bandha, pratyahara and dharana, ultimately lead to the laya state where the lower tendencies have dissolved and you become the pure self.

The same idea exists in the original raja yoga. I am talking of the raja yoga that has existed pre-Patanjali, and to which many seers and sages have contributed their views, including Sage Yajnavalkya. They talk of dissolution.

### **Focus of classical raja yoga**

The entire focus of the classical raja yoga is dissolution of the lower *tattwas*, elements, into the higher *tattwas*. The second area of focus is perfection of pratyahara. It defines pratyahara not just as a practice where you observe yourself and internalize yourself and go into your mind, but as a practice where you withdraw every connection that you have had with anything in life.

The theory of raja yoga says that manas and buddhi are guided by logic and represent the expressions of logic, while chitta and ahamkara are guided by feelings, sentiments and emotions, and represent their expressions. Chitta is not logic. It is sentiments, feelings, memories, impressions, samskaras

and conditions that you have been exposed to and which make you into a person. Ahamkara is not ego. The word 'ego' is generally taken to mean the hard arrogance. Ahamkara does not mean ego or arrogance. It is recognition of myself, that I exist, I know that I exist. Once you know that you exist, then everything that you do is directed towards your own gratification and satisfaction. That is ahamkara: everything that you direct to yourself for your pleasure, satisfaction and fulfilment, where 'I' becomes the prominent person. That whole understanding and awareness is ahamkara, and it takes place at the feeling level, not at the logic level.

It is chitta and ahamkara, the feeling and emotion components that have to be looked at carefully, as they make your personality. Manas does not make your personality. Buddhi does not make your personality. It is the impressions of chitta that make you who you are today. It is the existence of ahamkara that makes you who you are today.

Raja yoga states that manas has to dissolve into buddhi, buddhi has to dissolve into chitta, and chitta has to dissolve into ahamkara. When all the three limbs have disappeared and have become one in this identity of 'I am', then that identity is transcended. Then you realize the cosmic or the transcendental nature of yourself. This is how the classical raja yoga begins.

### **Development of Patanjali's raja yoga**

Many centuries later, another school of thought emerged, the Samkhya school, in which the main idea was dualism. Now enters a particular person on the scene: Sage Patanjali, who studied the Samkhya system and wrote a treatise on raja yoga called the *Yoga Sutras*.

Sage Patanjali was a student of Samkhya, not of Vedanta. He tried to fit the practices that were prevalent at that time in his understanding of Samkhya, which was an emerging school of thought at that time. That is why Patanjali does not speak of dissolution. He brought in a new component based on Samkhya: become the *drashta*, the observer.



He emphasizes observation while the classical raja yoga emphasizes dissolution.

Another focus of Patanjali was on chitta vritti. The focus of classical raja yoga is not on chitta vritti. It is on total manas dissolving into total buddhi, total buddhi dissolving into total chitta, total chitta dissolving into total ahamkara, and this total ahamkara transforming itself to become the transcendental personality. The concept of chitta vritti is not present in classical raja yoga. It has come in Patanjali's raja yoga influenced by the Samkhya system.

Thus the original raja yoga and Patanjali's raja yoga are two different entities. In the original raja yoga, the exponents have also given practices. Patanjali is a theoretician. In the entire book of the *Yoga Sutras*, he has not given a single practice to do. He has described so many stages of samadhi yet not once mentioned how to reach them. He has described pratyahara and dharana, but not a single practice. He has tried to understand the yogic concepts from the Samkhya perspective, just as somebody might try to understand

yogic concepts from the Christian perspective or Islamic perspective or Buddhist perspective. We are not denouncing Patanjali. He has contributed a lot. However, his contributions are different from the vaidic and vedantic contributions. We respect him, but there has to be a clear understanding that his path is one and the classical raja yoga path is another.

When people read the *Yoga Sutras* and come across the phrase *chitta vritti*, they are translating it as ‘modifications of the mind’. The mind is *manas*. Patanjali does not say ‘*manas vritti nirodhah*’ or ‘*buddhi vritti nirodhah*’. He says ‘*chitta vritti nirodhah*’, the third level of the whole mental faculty. Yet all translators call *chitta* the mind. They come back to the first level by saying ‘mental modification’. There is no such thing as mental modification, since *buddhi* and mind are controlled by logic and you can direct them with your wisdom in the appropriate direction. When somebody is speaking of the third stage, why are you bringing it back to the first stage? The *chitta vrittis* are *vrittis* of *chitta*, not *vrittis* of *manas* or *buddhi*.

The difference between the classical raja yoga and Patanjali’s raja yoga should be clear now. One is the vedantic approach and the other is the Samkhya approach.

### **First propagator of raja yoga**

The first propagator of raja yoga was Sage Shukracharya. He was the guru of demons. In every society, there have always been two groups: the have-nots and the have-plenty. The have-plenty are called *devas*, rich, and the have-nots are called *danavas*, poor. ‘*Danava*’ represents a tribe, though people use the word to mean demons. *Danavas* are not demons and *devas* are not gods. *Devas* are affluent people and *danavas* are poor people. Those who have plenty can do anything, discover arms, travel to space or to the depth of the ocean. Those who have nothing, have to struggle for their survival. They don’t have any technology and live a tribal life; they are a hunting and gathering society.

Being the guru of *danavas*, Shukracharya thought, ‘What can I do to wean these people away from the path of destruc-

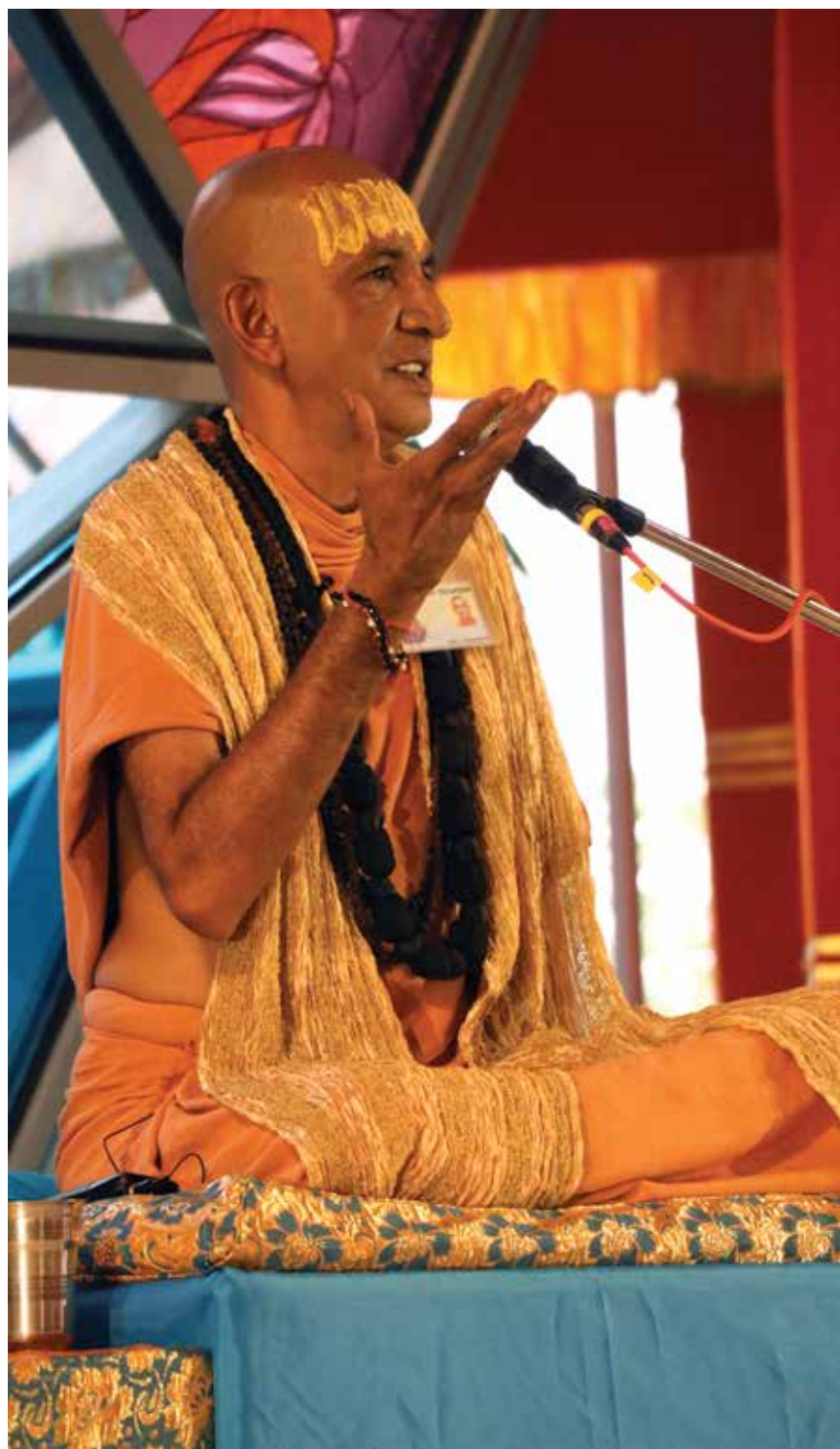
tion and death, to the path of life, cooperation and love?' What he came up with was raja yoga, which could be used to manage the mind and convert the negatives of the mind into positives.

It was a training given to people who were disturbed, who had no control over their life, actions, thoughts, ideas or performance. It was meant for them to sit down, look at themselves, realize what their ambitions, weaknesses, needs and strengths were, to prioritize things in their life and begin to live the life of dharma. Demons were those who did not follow the life of dharma and devas were those who followed the life of dharma.

### **Pratyahara in classical raja yoga**

Shukracharya was the first person to propagate the concepts, theories and practices of raja yoga. Later on many other sages came into the picture and developed the subject further. One of those masters was Sage Yajnavalkya. Sage Yajnavalkya describes many different levels of pratyahara, which is the main theme of raja yoga. Asana or pranayama is not the main theme of raja yoga. He describes the stages of pratyahara and how dissolution has to take place. The senses have to be disconnected from sense objects, and dissolved in manas. Manas has to be disconnected from the world and dissolved into buddhi, buddhi into chitta, chitta into ahamkara. Then pranas also have to be dissolved. The pranic withdrawal, prana pratyahara, is the ultimate attainment of raja yoga, not samadhi.

You have a memory of somebody who fought with you forty years ago. So much water has flown under the bridge, yet the memory persists. That is because there is prana in the memory. Remove the prana, let the colour that you visualize of that incident become black and white, and the memory dies. Remove the prana, and disconnection takes place. If prana is removed from your body, what will happen to you? Will you be alive? No. Similarly, if prana is taken away from an experience, that experience will not be alive. If prana is taken away from a memory, that memory will die.



This is how raja yoga developed, so that you can look at a situation, a crisis, a moment of pain and suffering, or joy and happiness, whatever the situation or the experience you are going through may be, see the relevance or futility of what you are doing, thinking, planning, and then simply remove the prana and clear the slate. This is the major difference between the classical raja yoga and Patanjali's raja yoga, the vedantic raja yoga and the Samkhya raja yoga, the two raja yoga systems that have existed.

In the earlier raja yogas, the practice of yoga nidra is also given, using marma sthanas, bija mantras, other mantras, nyasa, etc. Yoga nidra finds no mention in Samkhya raja yoga whereas in classical raja yoga it has been identified by name and the practices have been defined. The route and the sequence for the rotation of awareness through the body is given. Thus, the classical raja yoga is a rich subject, and during the Symposium, we will go through the practices of the classical raja yoga.

### **Raja yoga and bhakti yoga as complementary yogas**

Raja yoga and bhakti yoga are complementary yogas. In raja yoga, the main idea is observation and dissolution, and in bhakti yoga it is experience and dissolution. Both deal with the subtle aspect of human nature. Just as hatha yoga and karma yoga deal with the sensorial and the physical dimension, raja yoga and bhakti yoga deal with the mental dimension. The mental dimension includes both logic and feeling, together. Usually people think of the mental dimension only as logic, and emotions are thought of as something different. That is incorrect. Logic and emotion combined together make the greater mind. Manas-buddhi: logic; chitta-ahamkara: emotions.

Bhakti yoga is not the yoga of devotion as people think, it is the yoga of managing one's ahamkara, ego, and the experience of a higher love. Bhakti is an emotion, a feeling. It is a *bhava*, a sentiment. Today people associate bhakti with religion but at the time of Narada and Shandilya and others

who wrote treatises on bhakti, it was never seen as religion, for no religion existed at that time. They describe it as the journey of an individual who is fine-tuning the head and attaining internal purity, which allows for the experience of transcendental love. That is the original thought of bhakti yoga.

Sage Narada says on bhakti: *Sa tu asmin param prema roopa* – “Bhakti is nothing but the transcendental experience of love.” Shankaracharya also says about bhakti: *Sa swarup-anusandhanam iti bhaktih* – “Discovery of one’s real self is bhakti.” Therefore, do not call it the yoga of devotion; call it the yoga of love.

### **Arriving at bhakti**

How do we come to the point of bhakti? Bhakti is a process of elimination. That is how we come to the point of this transcendental awareness. What does one eliminate? The sages have given clear instructions that in order to perfect bhakti yoga, first you have to shun the company of bad people. That is the first rule. Shun the company of people who are negative and destructive, even if they are your family members. That is the first rule of the classical bhakti yoga, so that you remain in a supportive and positive environment. If you spend your time with negative people, your own thoughts, behaviours and actions will become negative. Don’t follow adharmā, follow dharma.

The second rule is satsang. Listen, think and speak the good and the spiritual. The third rule is to have faith, not in the higher self, but in yourself. If you have faith in yourself, then it will convert into faith in the higher self.

In this way, Sages Narada and Shandilya have outlined the qualities required by the individual to experience bhakti yoga. Such requirements have been mentioned in many places, including the *Bhagavad Gita*. *Adweshta sarva bhootanam*, don’t see duality and multiplicity. *Maitra karuna eva cha*, have a friendly and compassionate disposition towards all. A list of qualities is enumerated by Sri Krishna and also by other

sages. They say that if you are able to achieve these qualities, then bhakti will become real in your life. It will become experientable in your life. If you miss any of them, you will not experience the transformation of bhakti.

Today people think of bhakti as devotion and chanting of Lord's name or guru's name, kirtan, bhajan, voice modulation, gooey-eyed gentle talk: "I love my God." That is not bhakti. Bhakti is the positive transformation that you can bring about in yourself by following the guidelines that eliminate the negative and enhance the positive.

### **The crystal ball of emotions**

Bhakti is used to manage chitta and ahamkara. Those of you who have heard Sri Swamiji's satsangs will remember an example he would often give. Place a crystal ball on coloured paper and what will happen? The crystal ball is colourless, yet the colour of the paper will be reflected in the crystal ball. Whatever is the colour of the paper, whether red, white, green, blue, will be seen in the crystal ball. Once you remove the crystal ball from the coloured paper, again it will assume its normal nature, free of colour, clear and transparent. You have to see emotions in the same way. *Bhavana*, feeling or sentiment, is such a powerful factor in everyone's life that it colours everything, and it is an unconscious process, not a logical process. Therefore, bhavana is managed at the level of chitta and ahamkara, not at the level of manas and buddhi.

In any action, all four components, manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara, have a role to play. You get an idea, 'I want to buy this motorcycle.' That thought appears in manas. Immediately ahamkara kicks in and says, 'Yeah, I think it's a very good idea. I should possess that. It's very nice-looking motorcycle, it will improve my status.' Buddhi kicks in, 'Finances, resources, bank balance, payment, mortgage.' Chitta kicks in, 'When I am riding it, what a nice picture I will make, everybody will watch me.' Manas, buddhi, chitta, ahamkara – they all become part of the same play. In bhakti

too, they are part of the same play. You cannot separate manas from chitta, or buddhi from ahamkara. They are integrated components of your personality, nevertheless they are identified separately for ease of understanding and targeting your efforts to manage that aspect.

### **From tamas to sattwa**

Ultimately, bhakti is the elimination of the tamasic nature of the mind. We are not talking of just manas here, but the whole mind. It is like the crystal ball, which is always coloured by six predominant colours: *kama*, *krodha*, *lobha*, *moha*, *mada*, *matsarya* – desire, anger, greed, infatuation, superiority complex, jealousy. These six traits are inherent in the mind. Can they be removed from the mind, is the question. Yes, through bhakti.

Bhakti, the yoga of bhava, not the yoga of devotion, the yoga of feelings, not the yoga of prayers, allows you to create a positive bhava, sentiment, feeling and condition, which can overpower the six negative associates of your life. Therefore Swami Sivananda has always said that bhakti is the cheapest, the safest and the surest path.

Please remember, bhakti yoga is not dancing in kirtan, chanting the mantra in front of the deity, praying in front of Mother Mary or Hanuman or Lakshmi or Saraswati. They are devotional acts; bhakti yoga is the yoga of feelings. It is the feelings that have to be modified, which is possible by following the rules of bhakti yoga. The more you engage in positive indulgences in life, the more the negative attractions will diminish. The process of developing those positive indulgences forms the rules of bhakti yoga.

Thus, raja yoga and bhakti yoga together deal with the entire structure: manas and buddhi through raja yoga, chitta and ahamkara through bhakti yoga, so that there is elimination of the tamasic and attainment of the sattwic.

*23 October 2018*

# Fifth and Sixth Spokes of the Wheel

KRIYA YOGA AND JNANA YOGA



We have been talking about the development of the Yoga Chakra. Sri Swami Satyananda was called 'Yoga Chakra Kalanidhi' in 1963, for he had created the Yoga Chakra. He wanted to train sincere and committed people into yoga, and not those who had a flirting mind. The training that he gave was intense, a nine-month teacher training course, a six-month teacher training course, not just 200 hours, 300 hours and 400 hours. He developed the system of yoga for

fulfilling the purpose that Swami Sivananda had given: not for self-realization but to enhance the qualities of head, heart and hands and live a better life.

After the convention in 1973, when yoga went to society, the Yoga Chakra was scaled down to a few simple practices, such as pawanmuktasana part 1, 2, 3, the standing and balancing series, the forward and backward bending series, and some other practices that people could do easily. These are not asanas of hatha yoga. What all of you do is pre-hatha yoga asanas. Therefore, don't call yourself hatha yogis, you are all kindergarten yogis who do your few asanas to feel good, free and flexible and a few pranayamas to improve your breathing such as nadi shodhana, ujjayi, bhramari, kapalabhati.

In raja yoga, the one practice of pratyahara that you do, yoga nidra, you sleep in it. As for meditation, you are rowing without unhitching your boat from the pier. Practising yoga in this way, you declare, "I am a yoga teacher! I am a yoga teacher of the Satyananda Yoga tradition!"

### **The yoga teacher syndrome**

Many of you have never received a training at BSY, you are not connected to the tradition, you don't even know the complexity or simplicity of the tradition and the vidya. Just by knowing a few asanas, a few pranayamas, yoga nidra and some meditation, you have the awareness, 'I am spiritual, I am a yoga teacher.'

Where do these feelings come from? From the ego. 'I am a yoga teacher': it is the ego. 'Since I started practising yoga, I have become more spiritual' – that is the ego. Do you represent your own ego yoga under the guise of Satyananda Yoga or do you teach the real Satyananda Yoga? Nobody has taught the real Satyananda Yoga, for the real teachings and understanding of yoga of Swami Satyananda lie in the Yoga Chakra, through which he has given his vision and understanding of this vidya. You have only picked up fragments here and there, for your economic survival, not for your sadhana.

Hardly any teachers present here use yoga as their sadhana to uplift themselves. They hear everything about it, yet they never apply it. You claim to be a yoga teacher and tell others how to relax, yet you cannot relax yourself. You tell others how to meditate, yet you don't know the difference between concentration and awareness. Therefore, you have to look at yourself, not to see the flaws but to see how much you know, and try to understand the vision of yoga which Sri Swami Satyananda developed. This has to be done gradually.

In the zeal of being part of the yoga mission, everybody has become a yoga teacher; nobody has remained a yoga student any more. If a teacher is told, "You should be doing this," they look at you with wonder, 'Why is he telling me this? I am doing fine.' Where then is the sincerity or the commitment? If you are unable to explore yoga in yourself, it is hypocrisy to tell others that you are a yoga teacher.

### **Begin to live yoga**

The whole purpose of Yoga Chakra is to understand the process and the principles of yoga, not for teaching but for personal sadhana. Every citizen in a nation is not a soldier. There are different groups: industrialists, soldiers, doctors, yogis. Yogis are not yoga teachers by profession; yogis are those who live yoga. That is the vision of Swami Satyananda for the Yoga Fellowship: to live yoga.

The purpose of yoga propagation is not to make everybody into a yoga teacher, which all of you do. "I will make you into a yoga teacher, come and join my classes." Sri Swamiji's intention was to have a group of people who are committed and dedicated to living yoga vidya. That is what he has defined in the Yoga Chakra.

The Yoga Chakra has six spokes on its wheel. The first two spokes are physical, sensorial, pranic: hatha yoga and karma yoga. The next two spokes are mental and emotional: raja yoga and bhakti yoga. The last two spokes are kriya yoga and jnana yoga.

## **The tradition of kriya yoga**

Kriya yoga is an ancient, oral tradition of sadhana. Nowhere in the scriptures will you find the mention of kriya yoga like you find the mention of hatha yoga, raja yoga or other yogas. There is no separate literature on the subject. It developed as an oral tradition. Nevertheless, as with all yogas, even for kriya yoga the first propagator was Shiva. All the different kriyas are mentioned in the literatures that describe the teachings of Shiva, the *Shiva Samhitas*. However, it was left to the masters to discover those kriyas, for they are not for common use. They were always limited to those who had evolved on the path and the process of yoga, fulfilled the basic qualifications, and were ready to step into the unknown dimensions. At that time, the guru gave oral instructions in kriya yoga, and nothing was written down.

Paramahansa Yogananda brought the teaching of kriya yoga to the forefront in the modern age, both in India and the West. His organization still follows a strict oral tradition and the practitioners are bound by oaths to not divulge the practices. Sri Swamiji was the first person to compile the kriyas and make them available for sincere seekers in the form of a postal course. Nevertheless, it was sent only to those who had fulfilled the prerequisites for practising kriya yoga: some qualification in hatha yoga and raja yoga. Of course there was also Sri Swamiji's own perception of the individual, as he could see through you and decide what was best for you. To certain people he would give kriya yoga as the first lesson. If he saw that you were ready, that was the first practice he would teach you.

## **The focus of kriya yoga**

What is kriya yoga? *Kriya* means dynamic in this context, not action but dynamism. It is a dynamic system being the only one where a little is taken from every yoga and a body is created. Kriya yoga includes asanas and pranayamas from hatha yoga, awareness, concentration and observation from raja yoga, visualizations and other practices including awareness of chakras and kundalini from kundalini yoga.

Despite being a combination of many practices, the main focus in kriya yoga is the attainment of dhyana. The practices cover the aspects of pratyahara and dharana, and lead into dhyana.

In the compilation of the practices, of the total of twenty kriyas the first nine are practices of pratyahara. The interesting aspect is that while you are practising these nine, your eyes are not closed, they remain open. Yet with eyes open you move into a space where perfect pratyahara is experienced, you become totally centred and focused. You are not withdrawn or introverted; you are centred and focused as your eyes are open. You will become withdrawn, introverted and sleepy if your eyes are closed.

The next ten kriyas lead to the dharana experience. The last kriya, the twentieth, is the dhyana experience. However, from the eighteenth kriya onwards, dharana begins to change into dhyana. In this way, there is a progression of pratyahara and dharana into dhyana.

### **Awareness and relaxation in concentration**

The normal awareness is always externalized and connected to different stimulations. Therefore when you first begin to practise pratyahara, the general tendency is to focus hard. If you have to concentrate, what do you do? You focus hard, and what is the result? A headache. Your pratyahara which begins with concentration ends in a headache.

Concentration comes later in kriya yoga. Other faculties have to be cultivated before that. The first is awareness, and that is the role of pratyahara. It is only after you have cultivated awareness that you move into concentration, which is the role of dharana. However, this concentration in dharana is not without awareness; it is fifty percent awareness and fifty percent focusing. You are not straining yourself, rather with ease and with awareness of many different things, you are moving into that stage.

People think that awareness means being aware of one thing. In yoga it means being aware of seven things together:

*saptavadhana*. *Avadhana* means to hold or retain and *sapta* means seven. You retain the awareness of seven items, and that in Hindi has become *savadhan*, which means 'beware'. Yogis are supposed to hold the awareness of seven things. In the process of observation, if you are aware of the seven chakras all in one glimpse, what will be the state of the mind? If you are aware of the activities and the functions of the seven chakras at any one given moment, that is *saptavadhana*. The distinct identity of the seven is awareness and concentration. If there is lack of concentration, the distinct identity will be lost. If there is awareness then seven identities will always be perceived as different, not as one. This is an example of the state one has to develop: the ability to be aware of seven things in one thought, one glimpse, one moment.

Normally you are so caught up in your mooladhara that you are not aware of swadhisthana. You are so caught up in swadhisthana that you are not aware of manipura. You are so caught up in manipura that you are not aware of anahata. You have fractional awareness, not expansive awareness.

When you sharpen the lead of a pencil into a fine point, what happens? Although it is sharp, the thickness has reduced to a single micro-point. Its span has reduced, whereas awareness has to be like the torchlight in which the light can be enlarged. You know, one of those focus torchlights: you shine the torch and then shift the lens to enlarge the projection of light. The more you enlarge the projection, the more you see. With one laser point you can't see all the items in a pitch dark room. With a torchlight, you can see many more items in the room. That is the type of awareness that has to be cultivated.

Concentration has to be a natural part of awareness. Concentration does not mean fixation; it means knowing the identity and the presence, and keeping that in check. If your thoughts run wild, you have to concentrate, and by concentration you can stop them from running wild. However, before you do that, you have to be aware that your mind is running wild. Your mind runs wild the whole day

long, yet you are not aware of that. By the time you walk from the kitchen to the pandal, your mind has gone to many destinations and back. You are not aware of these journeys of the mind, you are only aware of the journey of your legs from the kitchen to the pandal. You are observing your legs, not your mind. You are observing the tension in your legs, the tiredness, the heat and the sweat in your legs, but never the tension of the mind, the tiredness, the heat and the sweat of the mind. That awareness is not there. You go on living your life without awareness.

Having vision does not mean awareness, having buddhi does not mean awareness. Awareness is a natural faculty of the mind which sees everything and can focus on anything. Therefore awareness and concentration go hand in hand. You cannot separate the two. Don't try to concentrate, try to become aware, and you will find that concentration becomes easier. Try it today and see. Usually when you try to concentrate intently, you go cross-eyed, your forehead creases into a frown and all the muscles of the face contract. More tension is being created in this process. Where is the relaxation that should take place? That is why awareness and concentration have to happen together.

Another point: if you keep your eyes closed in pratyahara, there can be too much self-absorption and obsession with the internal world. That is why you are told in kriya yoga to reach the state of pratyahara with eyes open, whereas in other meditations you are told to close your eyes. By following this path, you attain pratyahara at three levels: pratyahara or mastery over ida, pratyahara or mastery over pingala, and pratyahara or mastery over sushumna.

### **Masters of ida, pingala and sushumna pratyahara**

You have heard of Babaji. Babaji is a practitioner of kriya yoga, as taught by his guru. Due to his sincerity, dedication and sadhana he attained what he had to attain through kriya yoga.

People say that his siddhi is to be ever-youthful. People who recognize Babaji always see him as a sixteen-year-old



boy. They say he never ages. That is the effect of kriya yoga. Babaji taught this kriya yoga to Lahiri Mahashay, Sri Yukteshwar and Paramahansa Yogananda, and the tradition goes on. The kriya yoga of Babaji which renews his cells and does not allow him to die, is pingala pratyahara. He is able to harness the prana shakti flowing in the pingala nadi so that his cells don't die and he is able to remain ever-youthful.

Another example. You might have heard the story of Adiguru Shankaracharya, of how he was able to transmit his soul to another body. Just as people are able to transmit their thoughts if they are proficient in the art of telepathy, in the same way it is possible to transmit one's soul to another body and then come back. Adi Shankaracharya did that. He transmitted his soul from his body to another body, for whatever purpose. When the time was over, the soul re-entered his original body. Adiguru Shankaracharya was a practitioner of kriya yoga, and he perfected ida pratyahara, mental pratyahara, where he could tell the mind, 'Stop the control of the body,' tell the spirit, 'Go to that body,' guide

the spirit back into his body, tell the mind to become active again. That is ida pratyahara.

Lord Shiva is always in the state of sushumna pratyahara, where you have to hold and contain the energies of the chakras and kundalini. If those energies are let out, then he does the *tandava nritya*, the dance of destruction. Therefore he has to contain and hold them back. Shiva remains in the state of sushumna pratyahara all the time.

From this perspective, kriya yoga pratyahara techniques should lead you to relaxation and awareness. The dharana techniques should lead you to awareness and concentration. The dhyana technique should lead you from concentration to illumination. Thus, relaxation, awareness, concentration, illumination, these are the four rungs of kriya yoga. The whole system is a sequential process which allows you to easily move through all these states of consciousness.

### **Jnana yoga myths de-bunked**

The yoga that complements kriya yoga in the Yoga Chakra is jnana yoga. People think of jnana yoga as the yoga of self-enquiry and self-discovery, ‘Who enquires and who discovers?’

The other common belief is that jnana yoga is for intellectuals. In my previous lectures I have also said that jnana yoga is for intellectuals. However, today I say, jnana yoga is not for intellectuals. Intellectuals only use their manas and buddhi; they do move beyond manas and buddhi, and chitta is active only in the background. A jnana yogi, on the other hand, is able to use all the faculties of the mind in a balanced way.

An example: our own Rishi Vasishtha was part of the group of five who created the computer, and he is one of the brilliant minds in the world, not only scientifically, but also in spiritual life. In the sixties he had studied literatures that nobody knew about. When he met Sri Swamiji the first time in Vienna, he asked him a question on *Bhamini Tika*, an obscure and rare text, and Sri Swamiji was surprised. I lived

with him and Rishi Arundhati when I went to the West for the first time. At that time, he was also working for the Apollo Spaceships, calculating the trajectory from earth to moon, from moon to earth, and all that. What I observed was the incredible flexibility of his mind. He could shift from right brain to left brain and left brain to right brain in an instant. He could be the tough mathematician and scientist one moment and he would be playing his saxophone and dancing away the next minute. Two minutes later he would again be back at the table furiously scribbling out mathematical equations.

The flexibility is what allows you to explore the higher realm of wisdom. Intellectuals who are just contained in *manas* and *buddhi* will keep asking questions and never experience anything. They will answer to themselves, 'I am the holy spirit, I am God', yet never realize, experience or become that. They only remain confined to question-answer-question-answer. They don't allow anything to settle in or be imbibed. After all, if you ask your *manas* 'Who am I?' you will get a ridiculous answer. If you ask your *buddhi* 'Who am I?' you will again get a ridiculous answer. Therefore, the idea that *jnana yoga* is only about asking the question, 'Who am I?' is a mistake. The ability to ask such a question and arrive at the right answer requires you to transcend the lower levels of *manas* and *buddhi*. Therefore, *jnana yoga* does not begin with that. Rather, *jnana yoga* is a process of attaining a state of awareness and knowledge through *abhyasa*, practice.

### **The rungs of *abhyasa* and *sthiti***

There are seven sequential practices of *jnana yoga*. The first is *shubhechha*, the right intention. This right intention has to be practical. You cannot say, "My intention is to discover God therefore I am going to question, 'Who am I? Am I God's part, God's extension, or God?'"

People go through many different mental gymnastics when it comes to *jnana yoga*. However, *jnana yoga* begins with positive intention, in relation to oneself and also in

relation to others. If I see you in pain and I am able to help you, that is also fulfilment of jnana yoga, not just seva or karma yoga. When you identify and connect with the right intention, it becomes your motivating factor, your inspiration to help someone else. You have to soften your mind and heart to come to this purity of shubhechha, the right intention.

The second practice is *vicharana*, contemplation, not on abstract things but on what matters. You will get nothing by contemplating on God or religion, as God and religion are nothing but sets of beliefs. I stick to my belief and you stick to your belief. A clash happens when you try to impose your belief on me or I try to impose my belief on you. Otherwise what is called religion is just a collection of beliefs. My God has four arms, your God has two. Both statues are placed somewhere, you don't like the four arms as my God does not conform to your idea of a two-armed God. So what do you do? At night you go and cut off two arms of my God, and that is how clashes begin. It is just imposition of one's ideas on others. Jnana yoga is not about that.

Contemplation is not on something abstract. It is on something that you can do to improve yourself. There is no use discovering you are the holy spirit if your family life is in crisis and turmoil. You have to deal with that first before you can start to think about being the holy spirit. Thus, *vicharana* is prioritizing the efforts for your development.

The third is *tanumanasa*, observing the subtle mind. You have to observe what crops up from the deeper mind, you have to always be attentive to what is coming up and manage that.

These three stages of jnana yoga represent the condition that you have to cultivate in yourself through practice. Once these three conditions are created then you can say 'I practise jnana yoga'. Can you develop the condition where you have the right intention twenty-four hours of the day towards everyone, including yourself, your family, profession, the nature and the universe? Can you develop the condition where your mind is always following the right, the pious, the

positive, the constructive and the creative? If you can, then you can say 'I practise jnana yoga'.

The first three stages of jnana yoga are *abhyasa*, practices, which create the *sthiti*, the condition. The next four are *anubhava* and *prapti*, experience and attainment.

### **The rungs of experience and attainment**

The first experience of jnana yoga is *sattwapatti*, reaching the state of sattwa. This is possible when you are able to overcome the negatives of life. If you do not reach the state of sattwa, jnana yoga has no meaning.

*Asamsakti* is the second experience. It means separation and detachment from the material world. This is a natural process, but now it is done with awareness. A little boy plays with a toy and for him that toy is as real as you and me. There is so much identification with the toy that if you take it away, he begins to cry. As he grows out of that age and the state of mind where the identification took place, toys do not matter anymore. The identification changes. By following the process of jnana yoga, a natural dis-identification and separation takes place from the inanimate and animate objects of the world.

The next attainment is *padartha abhavana*, lack of feeling for objects. It means that you are not emotionally attached to anything. There are people who feel so hurt and depressed if their car receives a little scratch. They are identifying so much with that object that just a little scratch becomes the cause of cerebral, mental, psychological tension for days to come. If you disconnect, a scratch is a scratch, you will get it fixed, finished, nothing to worry about. Similarly, if you get a pimple on your body, then you apply some medication on it, finished. Or you may look at the pimple again and again, begin to worry and run to ten specialists, 'This doctor doesn't know, he did not give me the right answer. I know it is something different, I am different, this is different, it is not an ordinary pimple of the world.' You go to twenty specialists to prove to yourself that what you have is something unique,



it is not an ordinary pimple; it is carcinoma! When you hear it is carcinoma, the mind suddenly changes. If you did not know what it was, it would be a simple pimple and it would go.

When you attain the state of jnana yoga, you see an object as an object, nothing more. Even your own body has the same significance for you as your house; you just look after it, but you don't have any attachment to it. When this state has deepened, then the final state of jnana is experienced: *turyaga*, the transcendental state where the mind becomes universal.

Thus, jnana yoga is a process where the ego awareness gradually dissolves and a higher awareness manifests. The ego awareness has to dissolve and a higher awareness has to manifest. Then the question 'Who am I?' has a different meaning. Right now you are asking your own ego 'Who am I?' That awareness has to dissolve. That is why jnana yoga cannot begin with the question, 'Who am I?' or 'Who are you?' That is reinforcing the ego, whereas the ego has to be dissolved in jnana yoga. This is how you go wrong in your basics and in your beginning with jnana yoga. You have to start by developing the right intention, by developing the ability to observe and contemplate: observation of the little

heads that come up in your mind from time to time. Then you reach the state of sattwa. Then you detach yourself from sense objects and develop a feeling that they are not relevant to you, you use them yet they are not relevant to you. That allows you to transcend the gross dimension and you become established in the wisdom component, the jnana and the vijnana component. From this follows a change in lifestyle.

### **Changing the lifestyle**

Lifestyle brings us to yamas and niyamas. People think that only Sage Patanjali has spoken of yamas and niyamas and they are ten. That is a misconception. In every yoga there are yamas and niyamas. Do you know how many there are in hatha yoga? Seven, which represent the conditions that you are able to attain with the practice of hatha yoga, and are known as sapta bhumikas. All yogas, whether karma yoga, jnana yoga, kriya or kundalini yoga have yamas and niyamas. They are not necessarily named as yamas and niyamas, but mentioned in a different manner, as things that you need to achieve, become established in or perfect. They may be called bhumikas, gunas or yamas and niyamas. No practice of yoga can begin without yamas and niyamas; they are the first requirement.

From this perspective, yamas and niyamas do not represent the moral and ethical concepts of yoga, as many authors say. The words may suggest ethics and morality to a western mind, but to the Asian mind they mean acquisition of conditions that become your stepping stone to move into a higher dimension.

### **The ladder of the mind**

There is another aspect you need to understand and we will use a visualization for this. You know that there are four components of the mind: manas, buddhi, chitta, ahamkara. Now imagine a ladder. Ahamkara is one long pole of the ladder, chitta is the other long pole. Manas and buddhi are the progressive steps. The first rung is manas, the second is

buddhi, the third is again manas, the fourth is buddhi, the fifth is again manas, the sixth is buddhi, and like this it goes on.

The steps of manas and buddhi are always attached to the two poles of ahamkara and chitta. Therefore, at each level of your growth, you are connected to all four. At each step of manas, you are supported by ahamkara and chitta. At each step of buddhi, you are supported by ahamkara and chitta.

This is what happens in the everyday, conscious-level experience of the mind: the thinking and logic are always supported by memory and the awareness of 'I am'. However, when you begin to practise meditation, you begin to journey into the subconscious and unconscious levels and at first manas and buddhi seem to drop away. That is why many people feel they are stepping into the unknown and become afraid. The rungs of manas and buddhi, which they are used to using as support, are not there to guide them. The trick lies in being able to take manas and buddhi along with you as you keep going. Yogis do it; whether it is lucid dreaming, astral travel or simply remaining the witness of an unconscious manifestation, one is using the faculties of manas and buddhi. These two are responsible for keeping your awareness active at every stage. Of course there may come a time when the whole mind is dissolved into a higher experience, but that is the final attainment. At first, you have to use the ladder of the four. When you have reached your destination, then the ladder may be dropped.

Always keep this picture of the ladder in your mind, and do not think 'This practice will lead me to this level and I can be illuminated.' You have to go step by step. Even in kriya yoga, there is ida pratyahara, pingala pratyahara, sushumna pratyahara. Similarly, as you attain the state of sattwapatti in jnana yoga, as you connect with your sattwic nature, the yamas and niyamas naturally become the expressions of life. It is only after this that you reach the final state of jnana yoga, the realization of 'Who am I?' – 'I am That I am'. Then life becomes whole and complete.

*24 October 2018*

## Coming Full Circle



### **The yogic wheel**

Since 2014 people have become aware of the term ‘Yoga Chakra’. Prior to this, nobody had heard of it. When the satsangs and the teachings of Yoga Chakra were published after the World Yoga Convention of 2013, people realized that something new had started at BSY. The idea of Yoga

Chakra is novel for everyone and they think I am the creator of this concept. In reality, I am only a postman who is delivering the post sent by my master. The Yoga Chakra was discovered in 1963. That was when the sannyasins of the ashram had called Sri Swamiji 'Yoga Chakra Kalanidhi', 'one who artfully created the wheel of yoga'. That was the title given to him.

Yoga Chakra comprises of six yogas: hatha yoga, raja yoga, kriya yoga, karma yoga, bhakti yoga, jnana yoga. Out of the entire body of yoga in the tradition, Sri Swamiji chose these six, as he said that these yogas will fulfil the needs of human society in the coming times to elevate the lives of individuals, socially, mentally and spiritually. From 1963 to 1973, he trained us in Yoga Chakra. Thereafter, when we went out to society to propagate yoga, the full scale of the Yoga Chakra training was scaled down by Sri Swamiji, as he discovered that people in society would not be able to handle it. Their physical and psychological conditions, their family and social environments would not allow them to experience, understand or follow the Yoga Chakra path. Thus, a scaled-down version of Yoga Chakra was developed by Sri Swamiji consisting of a limited group of practices, which became known as the Satyananda Yoga system.

### **The range of Satyananda Yoga**

What people learn in the form of Satyananda Yoga is very basic. It is limited to practices that provide wellbeing to the body, emotions and mind, and allow the spiritual awareness to flourish. Due to people's limitations, Sri Swamiji devised a simple program of yoga, comprising of pawanmuktasana part 1, 2, 3, the standing and balancing series, the forward and backward bending series. From the entire body of pranayamas, which are powerful techniques, he selected a few simple ones: nadi shodhana, kapalbhati, ujjayi, bhramari, bhastrika. Out of the entire body of raja yoga and pratyahara, he selected the practices of yoga nidra, antar mouna, ajapa japa and chidakasha dharanas. These are the practices that

people use today and call Satyananda Yoga, and this is more than enough for those living in society.

Most people don't need any practice beyond these, as they are not aspiring to be like Sage Gheranda, Sage Patanjali, Sage Yajnavalkya, Sage Vyasa, or Sage Satyananda. They aim at living their own social life with greater ease and comfort of body and mind. For them Satyananda Yoga is more than enough, as it fulfils that purpose of wellbeing. This is what was propagated in the first fifty years of the Bihar School of Yoga, and all of you contributed to this vision and mission of our master, Sri Swamiji. In the future also, the same trend will continue. You are not going to become a teacher of the second chapter; you will remain a teacher of the first chapter only. The second chapter is to deepen your own understanding of yoga vidya.

### **From information to vidya**

Many people say to me, "Swamiji, you are talking of yoga vidya now, but what about all the lectures of Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda? Are they not part of yoga vidya?" The reply to that is: what they have spoken is yoga vidya for them. For you it is only information, as you have not experienced it. You have not gone deep enough to experience what it means, you have only been going by intellectual understanding, not experiential understanding. Vidya is what is experienced, attained and applied. Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda were able to do that.

In the modern world, it is rare to hear of a person going into a deep state of samadhi. Swami Sivananda was in the state of samadhi for the last seven days of his life. People thought he was in a coma. However, on the seventh day, Swami Sivananda opened his eyes from samadhi, said only one sentence, "God is real; always have faith," then closed his eyes and left the body. Similarly, Swami Satyananda wilfully chose the time of his departure. He sat down, chanted *Om*, did his mantra sadhana, and left the body with the mantra on his lips. These are people who have lived, experienced

and applied the vidya. That is why I say for them it is vidya, whereas for you it is only information. If you begin to live what they have said, then maybe you will begin to understand what vidya really means.

In the second chapter, this has to be the effort: not merely know yoga but experience the depth of yoga and apply it in every moment of life. For this, we are going back to the teachings of Yoga Chakra.

### **The spokes of the yogic wheel**

The first spoke of the wheel of Yoga Chakra is hatha yoga. The focus of hatha yoga is not on physical exercise, but on harmonization of the two dominant powers in human life: the physical vitality and the mental vitality, the gross prana shakti and the subtle chitta shakti. To achieve this harmony, the journey in hatha yoga begins not with asanas but with purification and detoxification of the body. Everywhere in the world people do asanas and call it hatha yoga. That is a misinterpretation of hatha yoga. Asana is not the beginning of hatha yoga; rather, it is purification and detoxification of the body and attaining a level of concentration and stability in the mind. The practices of shatkarma are focused towards these aims.

Hatha yoga is complemented by karma yoga. They go together, as both deal with senses, sense organs, sense perceptions, prana; balancing, awakening and management of prana – both the physical and the mental.

Raja yoga and bhakti yoga complement each other. Raja yoga allows the mind to dissolve into higher states of experience. The gross mind is experienced, observed and dissolved into a higher experience. Raja yoga balances the manas and buddhi expressions, and bhakti yoga balances the chitta and ahamkara expressions. Chitta and ahamkara are not guided by logic; they are guided by bhava, sentiment, feeling and emotion. People call bhakti yoga the yoga of devotion. The scriptures say it is the yoga of love. If you can understand the yoga of love, then you will understand how

far it is from the yoga of devotion. Thus, it is the balance of intellect and emotion that we see in raja yoga and bhakti yoga.

Similarly, kriya yoga and jnana yoga make a pair in the Yoga Chakra. The two go hand in hand as they deal with the higher dimensions of mind and prana. Through the kriyas you are able to overcome the instinctive and animalistic tendencies. However, before you overcome them, they become highlighted, as kriya becomes a process of purging. Kriya practitioners can sometimes become overly-reactive, but after the purging has taken place, the pranas are purified and separated from emotions and desires, then the quality of intellect changes. Now the intellect is not the worldly, materialistic intellect; it becomes the higher intellect, *para buddhi*.

*Para* means higher. It is in this higher state of existence that you can discover who you truly are. In the lower state of existence, in which everyone lives, it is futile to ask, 'Who am I?' You will never get an answer. You may say, "But that is the path of jnana yoga that Ramana Maharshi prescribed." Sure. For him it was a reality, for you it is only inquisitiveness. Are you Ramana Maharshi to be able to think like him? No. Therefore, you have to follow an approach that applies to you. You cannot become Ramana Maharshi or Swami Satyananda, for you don't have their mind, nature, understanding, wisdom or strength. You have your own abilities, strengths, qualities, weaknesses, and it is these you have to utilize to improve yourself.

Rather than trying to become somebody else, try to become the best that you are. A banana can never become an orange. A lemon can never become a mango. If you are a banana, why do you want to become an orange? If you are a lemon, why do you want to become a mango? That is an impossibility. What you can become is the best of lemon, the best of banana, the best of mango, the best of the fruit that you are. That will be your fulfilment in life, not genetic modification.

In order to convert the lower intelligence into higher intelligence, there is a path, a sequence and a process. These are seven stages of change and experience described in jnana yoga.

### **The rim and the hub**

The six spokes of Yoga Chakra are formed by the six yogas. Now another aspect. The outer circle of the wheel that connects all the spokes together is the yogic lifestyle, and the hub from which all the spokes emanate is the source of knowledge. That is the source of truth, auspiciousness and beauty: Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram.

From the hub of Satyam, Shivam, Sundaram, emerge the six spokes of the wheel, and they are connected together by the outer rim of lifestyle. This is what you have to understand in the second chapter. Until now you have been hanging on to one spoke, saying, “This is my hatha yoga, this is my raja yoga, this is my kriya yoga. I am a master in that and that.” Although you cannot do many of the practices, yet you have been calling yourself a master. Now, it is the lifestyle you have to focus on, through which the experience of yoga vidya is enhanced.

Lifestyle is beautified by cultivating the positives, not by cultivating negativity, destructiveness and irritability. Sometimes when I see people who are irritated, I wonder how they can survive that fire in the mind. They burn and also make others burn. A person who is negative and destructive will ensure that other people also suffer and burn with him or her, whereas the positive ones will smile and sow the seeds of love everywhere. The negative ones sow the seeds of discord and the positive ones sow the seeds of love.

Positivity can be attained by managing and bettering life, by fine-tuning one’s lifestyle through yamas and niyamas. Western people only know the five yamas and niyamas from the perspective of the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali. That is raja yoga from the Samkhyan perspective, and in classical yoga too the yamas and niyamas are advised.



The first yama is *manahprasad*, happiness, and the first niyama is *japa*. It is an appropriate and systematic outlook, not imposed morality or ethics. Most people in the West define yamas and niyamas as codes of morality and ethics, going by the Christian perspective. However, yamas and niyamas are conditions that naturally manifest in the mind when you are able to purify an area of the mind of conflicts, confusion and discord. Then positivity reigns in the mind.

Happiness is such a small thing, yet nobody is ever happy. People are forgetting how to be happy and universities are running courses on this. Is this not a crisis of human nature that we have to be taught in a degree course how to be happy? This unhappy individual wants to be enlightened! Then regulate the lifestyle. Manage your lifestyle. Don't practise asana-pranayama. Start with the practice of turning your mind towards a positive direction. Extend the span of happiness in your life.

Whenever I go out anywhere, whether for a walk or a program, whether in the ashram or outside, I have made a rule: the first person I happen to see in the morning, it might be a complete stranger, I look at that person and give the biggest smile I can manage. That destroys the day of that individual! He goes on wondering, 'Who was that person who looked at me and smiled? Why did he smile? Was my hair all right? Were my clothes all right?' They worry the whole day long thinking about me! Therefore, if you ever want to destroy somebody's day, just look at them, laugh out loud and walk away. The whole day they will be engrossed in the thought, 'What happened? What did I do that the person looked at me and laughed?'

To be happy is the first yama, the first effort, in yoga lifestyle. Sri Swamiji always says that we are so obsessed by our own difficulties and problems that we don't even recognize where we are and the effort we can make to become better. He says, "When a sick person comes to the ashram, I tell him that while you are in the ashram, do not think that you are sick. Think that you are healthy and do everything that a normal,

healthy person does. Take out that idea, that thought that ‘I am sick’ from your mind. If you think you are sick, you will be sick. If you think you are healthy, you will be able to overcome your sickness in a shorter period of time.” Ultimately it is the mind that matters. Therefore, if the mental state is always that of happiness, your problems will be reduced by a large percentage.

Happiness is your armour against all the arrows of pain and suffering that are shot at you every day. It stops them from hurting. It fights the arrows of dejection and disease and stops them from hurting; it fights the arrows of distress and difficulties and stops them from hurting. You may get a scratch, but you will not bleed to death.

The first niyama of yogic lifestyle is japa, as it gives you the ability to disconnect from the sensorial world and connect with your inner nature for a short while. The first disconnection from the material and the sensorial in life takes place in japa. Otherwise, you are connected to the senses and sense pleasures twenty-four hours of the day. You are all the time seeking the pleasures of the senses, nothing else. Even at night when you are sleeping you are connected to them. Your mind and nature always remain gross. However, when you do japa, wilfully and consciously you are able to disconnect yourself from the senses, sense objects and their experiences, and centre the whole awareness within. Thus japa becomes a process of learning how to disconnect from the overload and connect yourself with another socket of peace and happiness.

Manahprasad and japa are the beginning of the yogic lifestyle. Along with these yamas and niyamas, if you practise the six limbs of the Yoga Chakra, you will begin to realize and experience what yoga truly is.

*Hari Om Tat Sat*

# Sessions of Inspiration

*20–24 October 2018, Afternoons*





# Connecting, Imbibing, Expressing



## **Introduction**

*Swami Sivadhyanam:* These thematic sessions are an introduction to the Munger Yoga Symposium. They are geared towards giving insights into the second chapter of yoga and yoga teaching in general. Senior acharyas from our tradition will be sharing their experiences, wisdom and insights. Also, the younger generation of teachers will talk about their experiences.

This is to get you thinking, put you in the right frame of mind, give you inspiration, pointers and ideas on how to apply these teachings, the yoga vidya that Swamiji has been

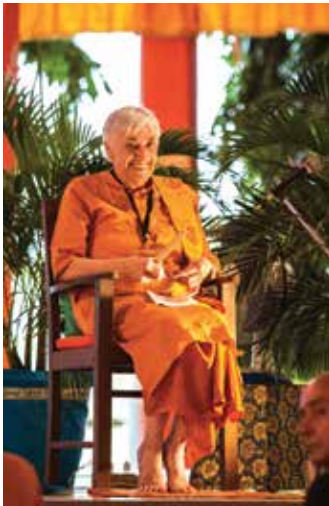
talking about. To make these sessions meaningful, have no expectations, come with an open mind, an open heart, be like a sponge and absorb as much as you can.

Each day will have a theme and the presentations will be woven around that theme. The theme for today, the first day, is connecting, imbibing and expressing the tradition.

Imagine that you are a seed planted in the ground. By itself the seed cannot do anything, it needs to send out roots and connect to the earth, which is the source of its nutrition and sustenance. Just as it is for the seed, so it is for us sadhakas. We need to connect to a source, and that source is the tradition, the *parampara*, the vidya. We need to imbibe from it as much as we can, just as a seed absorbs nutrition from the earth. Then we express it in our life, in our behaviour and interactions, just as a seed expresses itself by giving out leaves, flowers and fruits. That is the journey for a yoga sadhaka as well: connecting, imbibing and expressing.

## THE CONNECTION

*Rishi Arundhati, Canada*



*Hari Om Tat Sat, Hari Om Tat Sat, Hari Om Tat Sat.* First I would like to do pranam to my first guru Rishi Vasishtha who introduced me to yoga. My second guru Sri Swamiji Satyananda who guided both of us into a greater depth of yoga. And my present guru Swami Niranjan who gave me poorna sannyasa and is continuing to guide me in my evolution, in yoga.

I'm going to talk about Sri Swamiji. I met him in Vienna, Austria, in 1968 when he made

his first World Tour. We were informed by the Austria - India society that Sri Swamiji would be coming. The artist whose studio, where Sri Swamiji was to be staying, we had met two years earlier and became friends. So they said to me, "You don't work, so will you come and be here daily while Sri Swamiji is here, so that if he needs anything he can tell you, and you can tell us." Because they didn't speak English, they spoke German. So I said, "Of course." So every morning Vasishtha would get up and go to work at the IBM Research Lab which was about eight blocks away from this studio. So I would go with him and I would go to the studio to sit many hours with Sri Swamiji. I was usually with him from nine in the morning till at least nine in the evening. And many times during that day, it would be just me and Sri Swamiji there. I had never really met a swami before, so for me it was a very interesting experience, and I can imagine that for Sri Swamiji it was an experience to have someone so inexperienced to have to deal with for so many hours a day.

Typically, Swami Satyananda, had arrived early. So I planned to leave home around six or seven pm on the day of his arrival, but about five o'clock Vasishtha rang me and said, "Swamiji is here. So come on now." I said, "But I've got supper ready." He said, "Put it into the refrigerator and come on." So I said, "Okay," and all the way downtown I kept saying to myself, "Okay, if he wants to teach me about raja yoga, if he wants to teach me about meditation, I'm interested. But I don't want to know about bhakti yoga, it's too Christian for me." I grew up in Christianity, but I was very disappointed with the Christians that I met. So I went downtown Vienna and up to the studio. The moment I walked into the studio and saw Sri Swamiji, I just loved him. I wanted to serve him, I wanted to cook for him, I wanted to do his laundry, I had to laugh at myself because he made me understand without saying anything, just sitting there, that bhakti was my nature and that karma was my path.

Today when I think about when Sri Swamiji was in Rikhia to have ten minutes with him was a premium. So I started to

realize how fortunate I was to be able to spend so much time with him when we had first met. Very soon I learned that when Sri Swamiji closed his eyes, I needed to close my mouth, this I learnt very quickly. I decided one day that I was going to ask Swamiji for a mantra. I said to him, “Swamiji, would you give me a mantra?”, and he asked me, “What’s your sun sign?” and a few questions about myself. He then took a piece of paper and he wrote my mantra in Devanagari, then he wrote it in Roman letters and then he drew a picture, and handed me the paper. I’m looking at this picture he drew, so he says to me, “That’s your psychic symbol.” Well, I wasn’t sure what a psychic symbol was, however, I knew what the picture was.

Of course he had met Vasishtha, because Vasishtha was called to translate that first day since he arrived early, and Sri Swamiji was very impressed because Vasishtha asked him questions about a book that Sri Swamiji later said most Indians didn’t know about. And he’s thinking, “Here’s this western person who’s obviously read it, because he wants my opinion of it.” He went on to say that he thought then, “Now I have met someone I can talk to.” So he knew Vasishtha well. So I said to him, “Swamiji will you give,” he was called Peter at that time, “will you give Peter a mantra?” Today I think Swamiji must have thought, “This one is a really naive,” because you don’t ask for a mantra for someone else. So when he met him, and as I said he later would talk in Rikhia about how impressed he was with Vasishtha, so evidently it was okay. So he took the paper back and he writes Vasishtha’s mantra down in both languages and draws his picture.

So I was there, as I said, to translate for the family that were putting him up and also for other people who would come for private interviews. At that time the second language in Austria had become English rather than French, so many people already spoke English, so they could ask Swamiji their questions directly. But there were families, for example a couple in particular that came, they didn’t speak English and so they would tell me and I would translate it for Sri

Swamiji. He would then answer and I would I would give the translation in German. Well, I could speak a bit of German, but I wasn't that fluent even then in understanding. So this couple came and they had a question for Sri Swamiji and I'm thinking, "Now, how do I say this correctly, so that Swamiji gives the correct answer?", and so I'm saying, "Ummm, ummm..." Swamiji said, "That's okay," and he gives me the answer which I translated to the people. But I was thinking, "Oh, did he get that from me or from them?" However, he never showed his greatness unless you became a disciple.

He came back to Vienna the next year and Vasishtha said to him, "Swamiji, I'm going to Belfast for a year to head a research project in computer science." Sri Swamiji said to him, "You start yoga there and I will come." Because Vasishtha at the time was the president of the Theosophical Society in Vienna, the theosophist in Belfast had heard that we had started to give yoga classes. Before Swamiji left Vienna the first time he had given us the names Vasishtha and Arundhati by that time, so he said, "Vasishtha is the philosopher and you are the gymnast, so give yoga classes." We had a hall at the theosophical society, so those theosophists in Belfast had heard about this. Four of the men came and said, "We know that you have been teaching yoga, so will you give us classes?"

This was 1969 and it was when the troubles started again in Northern Ireland, so in the house we rented we cleared all the furniture out of the front bedroom and there I gave classes to these four gentlemen. But after about a month, they said, "Look, these classes should be made available to anyone from Belfast that would like to learn yoga." I was teaching all I knew which was what Sri Swamiji called shakti bandha which is not the same as those in APMB, but what Sri Swamiji had taught us the year before, which is six variations of vajrasana. And once I learned kriya yoga, I realized that it was sort of like a watered down kriya yoga. I also had been taught surya namaskara, so that is what I was teaching them, and of course yoga nidra. Then they said to us, "Look here, Belfast, Northern Ireland needs this," and asked Vasishtha if

he would give a public lecture. So he gave a talk. There were fifty people; one of them was the reporter for the Belfast Telegraph. The ad that was in that newspaper was a small ad in the want ad section of the newspaper, but enough people read it and came. Vasishtha gave the talk about yoga and about Sri Swamiji and the techniques that we had learned from the Bihar School of Yoga. Therefore, the people were interested and they said, "Okay, we want to join a course." We had no place, so he said, "Give us a way to reach you, and as soon as we can get a place then we will start classes." That was on a Tuesday night and on the following Monday the reporter's article, his account of Vasishtha's lecture, came out in the newspaper. He rang Vasishtha and said, "Look here, my phone hasn't stopped ringing. These people want to know where this is happening." So Vasishtha said, "Give me your phone number and I will call you back." So he called the men that had arranged the first meeting, they said, "Okay, I'll call you back." They arranged for it to happen at the same place, same time on the following day, on the Tuesday, so again we had another fifty people. So suddenly we have a hundred people wanting to do yoga.

After that, because Vasishtha was associated with Queens University, he was approached by the students from the student's union to give a talk for them. He gave a talk, titled 'The art and science of yoga', and again we had another fifty or more students. But the nice thing about that was that we didn't have to worry about the place for classes anymore, because we had access to the student union building where we could give classes.

In the meantime, Sri Swamiji had come to France. He called us, so we went. When we arrived, he was in the middle of a session. We just took seats at the back and then when everybody left, we went to him and did pranam. Vasishtha said to him, "Swamiji we have decided that if you will accept us as disciples, we would love to be your disciple." Swamiji gave him a slap on the head and said, "It's about time." So later he called us to his room. Swamiji was lying back on the

bed with his head resting in his hands. When we came in he sat up and said, "Okay, you're going back to Belfast and what you need to do is get yourself a committee," because he knew that we had raised money selling bonds that would be paid back in five to seven years, and had been able to put a down payment on a house for yoga. So he was giving us his okay. Anyway, we started yoga there. Swamiji came as promised and then it just continued from there. Since then we have always been and still are disciples of Sri Swamiji.

I want to quote Sri Swamiji before I finish. He was the most selfless individual and most spiritual individual I have met, and he was also the most astute businessman. He had both ends of the stick well in hand. So I want to read a quote from him. He says, "All forms of sadhana have just one purpose, to evolve a new spiritual awareness and yogic personality. What does the yogic personality mean? It means the state of egolessness."

In 1972 we moved to Newcastle upon Tyne when Vasishtha took a job at the university and had just purchased a house there when we were informed that Sri Swamiji had said we were to go to Belfast and bring Swamiji Niranjanananda to live with us. It was interesting meeting Swamiji for the first time. When he walked into the room where we were with Swami Atmananda, the look he gave us was like having Sri Swamiji looking at you. You felt he was not looking at your outer appearance but was sizing you up in relation to your spiritual self. The following day we took Swamiji to the ferry to go over to England.

It was the beginning of September and school had started and he was 12 years old so we took him to the local school and the principle gave him a reading test and placed him in a class with his peers, it was called 2L3, Second form with 3 languages. Every two or three weeks they would give him an exam and move him up to a higher class so finally one day he comes home and said that he had been made head boy. I asked him what that meant since I was schooled in the USA and we didn't have head boys or girls. He said it meant that

when the teacher had to leave the room he was to keep order in the class. He also said that he had a badge that he wore during school time and when I asked if I could see it he said he was not allowed to bring it home, it was to be turned in each afternoon before leaving school. However, the following day when he came home he was wearing his badge. When I reminded him that he said he was not to bring it home, his reply was, "You had never seen one and I wanted you to see it." The following day when he arrived at school his teacher told him that she could not find his badge the day before and he said, "I took it home with me." She said but you know you were not supposed to do that and again he replied. "My mother had never seen one and I wanted her to see it." She told him, "Well don't do it again."

The second week he was in school he came home and told Vasishtha, "I have to do second form math but I have never been taught first form math." Vasishtha told him tomorrow you get the name of the math book and where we can get it and the following day he brought the book home. In two weeks the two of them had worked through the math book that the other students had taken a year to work through.

When I was asked to give talks on yoga to women's groups, such as the Women's Institute etc., I always took him with me. I would sit on a table in asana and he would sit beside me in asana. If I talked thirty minutes or one hour he sat and never moved. When I finished my talk the ladies would rush up to me and ask me, "How did you do that?" I knew they were referring to him so I always answered, "I didn't, I got him that way."

Until I came to India in 1999, I had never seen Swamiji and Sri Swamiji together. When I did I realized the true meaning of a devoted disciple and to this day I still see the same devotion Swamiji has for Sri Swamiji, which is understandable since it is impossible not to be devoted to such an exceptional soul. Vasishtha and I both often remark that we did not realize that our karma was so good that we had such an opportunity to learn from and serve such individuals.

## THE EXPRESSION

*Swami Vedantananda, Portugal*

We are all teachers and disciples of Sri Swamiji and Swamiji, and our expression is teaching yoga. This morning Swamiji said that the Satyananda Yoga teaching will continue even in the second chapter because society needs it. As disciples and teachers we belong to this tradition and we represent this school; we are a part of this tradition through our teaching. However, we need to know, we need to remember that there are certain standards that we should be upholding when we teach. This is the expression and I will talk about that now.



First of all, we need to be true to the tradition. Out there in the world and often on our own it is very easy to be swayed by other influences. In addition, these days there is a lot of competition. When many of us started teaching yoga, there were very few yoga teachers and yoga classes, but nowadays you find hundreds of yoga teachers and asana instructors all over the world. We don't want to become a brand or compromise what we do. Even if there are a lot of people vying for the students, we have to make sure that we don't try to please the students to get more of them. Therefore, my advice would be: don't give up your day job.

Know and value what you do and what you teach, and stay true to that. The Satyananda Yoga tradition involves a certain style of teaching. The style is precise and simple, the manner of the teacher is calm and composed. The speaking technique is direct and to the point, and not around it. These are very

important aspects of what we teach and how we teach, and should not be underrated or forgotten.

So what is expected of a Satyananda Yoga teacher? I have a list. First on the list: a teacher would have a commitment to the Satyananda Yoga system and teaching it in its purest form. They would have a genuine wish to pass on the knowledge of yoga. They would be a good example of yoga, inspiring students by their state of being and displaying confidence that yoga works. They will be committed to their own personal sadhana and maintaining the connection to the guru. They would have a continuing sense of enquiry and a desire to learn. They would be patient, positive, encouraging, spontaneous, approachable and sensitive to others. They would have a sense of inner calm, relaxation and discipline. They would have a respect for the student-teacher relationship and maintain appropriate boundaries. And last, but by no means the least, they would have a sense of humour.

With all of that in mind, we will go back to some of the basic points. It is to remind you and review what you do, for after years of teaching we can often forget, slip into bad habits or be influenced by what we see as fashionable trends around us. We have something amazing in Satyananda Yoga and we have to stick to that. So the first thing is to be a good example, and under that comes appearance. Your dress must be neat and discreet. I am sure those of you in the world are aware that there are many yoga clothes in the market; they are incredibly expensive and there is very little of them! We do not wear skimpy, figure-hugging clothes, for it gives off the wrong message. If you dress like that, you look like you should be teaching fitness in a gym. Then the posture: it should be steady and relaxed, without betraying any nervousness, upright and straight spine, sitting still, being calm and steady. The whole presentation should be relaxed and confident, reflecting an inner discipline and one that inspires students to maintain discipline also. Be in the classroom before the students, so that you set a good example

there. Greet your students warmly and look pleased to be there, no matter what is going on in your life.

The next point is about beginning a class. Encourage the students to come in quietly and practise mouna. This sets a good yogic atmosphere and also reflects the teacher's frame of mind. Take time to centre yourself; you may have had a busy day, therefore it is important to centre yourself. You can do this by practising your mantra, watching your breath, connecting with the guru, with the source. Make sure that you are seated in a way that you can see all your students and that they can see you. Be aware of where you sit in a room in relation to windows, doors, mirrors, and such like. Keep your teaching place tidy and clear. This is basic stuff, yet sometimes we forget these things.

Then the speaking technique. Your voice should be clear, well-modulated, without being too sing-songy. It should be a voice that holds the attention of your students, interesting and loud enough to be heard at the back of the class. Your instructions are given in a clear and precise manner without complicated sentences and long-winded explanations. The language needs to be economic and effective. You might also like to consider how you use language and the necessity of using positive language when you speak. Bathe your students in positive suggestions such as, "With every repetition of this practice, feel the body is becoming more flexible", or "more strong", or "With every breath feel that you are becoming calm."

These days there are many courses available to everybody which work with developing self-esteem, and so on. Even businesses run these types of courses so that their managers can manage the workers better. A great big focus there is on the use of language and its implications on subtle levels and not so subtle levels. Of course this has gone completely over the top in political correctness, yet there are certain points that we should consider, especially in the West. Therefore, avoid the use of negative expressions where you can. Instead of saying "Don't move," say "Keep still." Another

word is 'can't'. When we say to our students, "If you can't do this . . .," it keeps them unable to do it. Try to give the impression that 'can't' maybe applies to today and tomorrow; the next week or the next month they may well be able to do certain things.

We all have a word that we overuse when we teach. You have to be aware of that. For example, 'relax' in yoga nidra, "Relax. Lie down, relax. Relax your legs, relax your arms, relax this, relax that." If you can't relax, that's actually very stressful, so find other words that say the same thing, 'release', 'let go', etc. 'But', 'and', 'now', 'then' are other words that are used excessively. My word is 'so.' I overuse it and every time I catch myself saying it in class, I mentally say 'Ham'. So, find your word, the word that you use excessively and be aware of it. Count how many times you say it in a class.

You should also know about the effect of using the words 'the' and 'your'. When you are internalizing people, then a way to disown the body slightly more quickly is to use 'the body', 'the breath', and so on. When you are coming out of a practice, especially at the end of class, you need to re-own the body, at that time it becomes 'your body', 'your breath'. Little things, but they keep you on track. Language is the main tool that we have when we are teaching yoga, therefore play with it and find different ways of expressing yourself so that you don't end up sounding like a robot, always saying the same old thing.

Satyananda Yoga teachers do keep their eyes open at all times when they are teaching, especially during pranayama, yoga nidra and meditation. This is not your time for practice or internalizing. Frankly speaking, as a student I don't want to know what's going on in your head, I'd like to have my own experience. Satyananda Yoga teachers clarify and simplify. They emphasize breathing, awareness and relaxation. When a practice cannot be conveyed adequately through words, demonstrations are used. They are sensitive to the needs of others and understand how different classes need to relax at

different times. They encourage students to practise at home on a daily basis.

Satyananda Yoga teachers do not do practices with students. If you are teaching children or the elderly, that is a different matter, but normal classes – no. They do not spend too long on explanations or rush the students. They do not go beyond the limitations of the students and they definitely do not bring other disciplines into the classroom by name or otherwise. For instance tai-chi, pilates or any other ism or schism that is becoming fashionable, we do not bring it into our class.

Then time keeping. It is a very important aspect of discipline. You need to start the class on time and finish it on time. Even if there is nobody when you start, you start it. Of course, your being there to greet the students is a good example. Many times teachers overrun on the asana class and then cut short pranayama or leave it out altogether, because if you don't give your students yoga nidra they are not going to be very happy. You need to be very disciplined throughout the class with the time you allocate to each part. Respect the fact that people have busy lives, therefore finishing on time is sometimes really important. People have to get back for some reason or the other, catch a bus or a train. Nevertheless, the pace of the class should be relaxed without any feeling of hurriedness. If you realize that you are running on, there is no need to convey that to the students. I have heard teachers say, "Oh we must do this now because we are running out of time." The students don't need to know that. You keep that to yourself and manage it in a calm, relaxed way. On that subject I will finish: timekeeping!

## LIVING THE CONNECTION

*Swami Gorakhnath, India*



When I came to Munger, I brought my body in a half-pant and a half-shirt, but I did not bring anything in my mind. I came with an empty mind. Whatever I have received and learnt in life, it is due to the grace of guru. No previous learning has ever been useful in life, not a single one.

When we came to Sri Swamiji, we had no idea about how to behave with a guru or offer him respect, as he would never project his gurudom. He would never act like a great guru, he would be like a normal person; our relationship with him was like that between father and son. We would play together, laugh together, eat together, never realizing what a great guru he was.

Yet, when it came to discipline, there was never any compromise. If you did not arrive on time for a meal, you would not get any food. Sri Swamiji himself followed this: if his food arrived even one minute late, he would not have the meal. If some mistake was committed, you could not get away with it. In fact, the ashram discipline and the lifestyle was so strict that on many nights I would think, 'Maybe I should go away from the ashram.' But in the morning, I would say to myself, 'So why did you come? What for? Follow the purpose for which you have come.' Immediately I would become peaceful and get back to my duties. It was hard, yet it was the most rewarding experience of life.

Through all this, I came to realize that without guru kripa, without his shakti, nothing is possible. This is something I

have experienced throughout my life. When we would work with Sri Swamiji, we would never get tired. On the contrary, it was as if the energy would increase manifold. There was balance between difficulty and ease. Guruji would keep us on a tight leash and also make us feel that 'he loves me the most'. In this way, he would make us experience the different facets of life: joy and sorrow, day and night. It is when you live these things in a practical way that the mind becomes empty, not otherwise.

Everyone talks about envy, hate, arrogance. Everyone says, "I don't have arrogance, I am not envious of anyone, I don't have any ego." We were talking about egolessness; ego can become less but not dissolve at its root without guru. No yoga can remove ego, it is only the training of guru that can do it. Our Gurudev excelled in that. I will give my own example.

I used to be the kitchen in-charge. One day Sri Swamiji sent one person who was the office in-charge to the kitchen saying, "Go to the kitchen and get a bucket." The sannyasin came to the kitchen, grabbed a bucket and was about to leave when I saw him. I stopped him, held his arm and said, "Where are you taking this bucket?" He said, "Swamiji has called for it, I am taking it to him." I said, "I am the kitchen in-charge. You cannot take it without my permission." He said, "It is Guruji's instruction, who are you to tell me anything?" I said, "Nothing doing. Where is the chit?" He said, "What chit, it's Swamiji's instruction and I am following it." I said, "Nothing doing, no chit, no bucket!" The argument turned into a fight, I won't go into the details, but I didn't let the bucket leave the kitchen. The sannyasin went back, reported the matter to Sri Swamiji, "Gorakhnath is not giving me the bucket that you have specifically asked me to get." Sri Swamiji just said, "Don't worry, leave it."

A week later he called me and said, "Go to the office and bring the green file that is sitting on the desk." I was always eager to serve Guruji and in my eagerness I forgot what had been my experience the week before. I went

running to the office, grabbed that file, and as I was about to leave the office, the office in-charge who happened to be the same person who was trying to get the bucket out of the kitchen a week ago, stopped me, "Where are you taking this file?" "Oh, Sri Swamiji has called for it." "No! Where is the chit?" Again a verbal and then a physical tussle took place. I managed to get the file from him and went running to Guruji. He also came running behind me. Both of us entered Guruji's office, huffing and puffing. Seeing our state, Guruji said, "Sit down. What happened?" The other sannyasin told him how I had taken the file. Guruji said to him, "See, he was made the kitchen in-charge to look after everything properly. Therefore, you should have asked him before taking the bucket the previous week. It should not be that you take anything using my name." I was feeling very pleased thinking that Swamiji is supporting me. Then he turned to me and said, "You went to the office and just took away the file. There are so many important papers there, if something goes missing, who would assume responsibility for that?" I also became quiet. And then he said, "Now both of you go to the kitchen and eat from the same plate." We came out, started laughing together and ate together, and we completely forgot the ill-will between us. Then he sent us to work with the labourers, again to hammer home the message of humility that he was trying to inculcate in us.

It is easy to give a lecture on egolessness, but one has to first see it within oneself. That is why there should always be emphasis on learning in life, not on speaking or teaching. We should first learn ourselves, and that is not possible without guru's grace. This is the truth. I feel it even today, every day.

When Sri Swamiji took mahasamadhi, one day I started thinking, 'Now what will happen? Guruji is gone. How will I go on in life?' But then suddenly, another thought came, 'Swami Niranjanji is there.' It was as if Guruji was saying, "Don't worry. He is there. He is with you and I am in him." This feeling came from within and all worry dissolved. The point is that there has to be oneness and love between guru

and disciple, between teacher and student, only then yoga is experienced and only then you can say that you are living yoga, not otherwise.

## THE CONTINUING CONNECTION

*Swami Anandananda, Italy*

Connection to the tradition and yoga vidya starts with connection with guru. Without guru there is no tradition and no vidya. The connection with guru comes first. Through that connection there is automatically a connection with tradition and yoga vidya. Then follows the subject of understanding, maintaining and cultivating that connection.

Since I was to talk, I have been thinking and reflecting on connection. What is connection in this context? And I came to a simple, basic conclusion, which Swami Niranjan has also said in the past. Connection is a sense of belonging. 'He belongs to me, I belong to him.' When there is that recognition of a sense of belonging, there is connection. Everything else follows naturally: respect, endurance, consideration, understanding, all that. When you have the sense of belonging, you automatically tend to protect it. Then you apply it in a yoga class, in your daily life, you apply it whether you are a yoga teacher, a karma sannyasin or a sannyasin.

Sri Swamiji was a living example, an embodiment of tradition and vidya. Not just the practical and philosophical aspects, he was the expression of the result of vidya, of sadhana. He was a constant expression of the qualities and the potential of vidya. It is from this that different aspects



of our tradition developed in the course of time, such as preparation. In our tradition, preparation is a very important aspect. Before you do anything, prepare properly.

Once I went to Kutir for some duty and inside there were three suitcases on the floor, neatly lined. Sri Swamiji was sitting on the chair talking to somebody. I did whatever I had to and came out. The next day, I go back. Again the three suitcases are there, Sri Swamiji is sitting on the chair, talking to somebody, very relaxed. I do my things and go. The third day I go back, again the three suitcases are there, Sri Swamiji is sitting there, talking in a very relaxed manner. I kept noticing these three suitcases, very neatly packed. On the fourth day, there is no suitcase, no Sri Swamiji. I said, "Where is Swamiji?" "Oh, he left." Then I realized, 'He had his luggage ready three days before!' Three days before travelling he had the luggage ready, and he was totally and absolutely at ease and relaxed.

Whether it is a class or any other situation, if you are prepared and go well in time, you are relaxed, centred and aware. If you just rush in there, you are not any of those. I have found that whenever I follow this principle I am relaxed. These are the things I have learned from Sri Swamiji.

Being systematic is another aspect. Swami Satyananda was very systematic. If you see the teachings in APMB and other books, everything is systematic. He had a system for everything. Once we were preparing what is now the Akhara. It was completely different then. We were bringing earth from where Shakti Vihar is, and I was given a shovel to work with. I was working in construction and I thought I knew how to shovel. When Sri Swamiji saw me, he said, "No, no, it's not like that. Do it like this, and you can do it for eight hours non-stop, you will not get tired."

Sri Swamiji was a living example and embodiment of tradition and vidya. During the times that I spent with Swami Satyananda since 1979, I never had any practical class from him. I never attended any asana, pranayama, yoga nidra or anything else, only lectures and satsangs. I've been

translating all his satsangs from English into Italian when he came to Italy or when the Italian groups were there. But a class I never had.

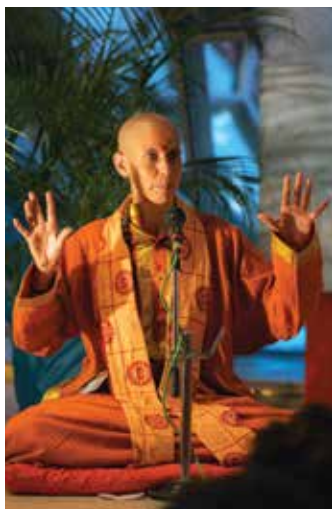
In 1983, one day I was walking down around the kitchen building and I saw one swami. Instantly I knew, ‘This is Swami Niranjan.’ We had this immediate recognition and connection. It was the same connection as it was with Swami Satyananda. And from then on we kept growing and developing this connection. I was not like what I am today, in 1983. Swami Niranjan helped me very much. If you ask me what is the real thing that he taught me, it would be: to be myself. That is what I have received from the grace of the gurus.

From 1983, slowly Swami Niranjan has been developing things here. We are now in this historical moment of the second chapter, but for me the second chapter started in 1983 when Swami Niranjan came to Munger. Now the formal, official event is being executed of what started then.

I did not get classes from Swami Satyananda, but I did get classes from Swami Niranjan, and I also received my first certificate from him! After the World Yoga Convention, I have been part of some of the training programs: Yoga Chakra, Progressive Yoga Vidya Training, and others. I tell you, to receive a class for one month every day from Swami Niranjan is something unbelievable. He was speaking about experience, well, he is leading us to have the experience. There have been moments, there have been days when I could say, “Yes, I experienced that aspect which is the aim of yoga.” To receive the teaching from a living guru, not a yoga teacher, but a living guru, is the best thing that can happen in our life, and we should be absolutely grateful to God and life for that. So please make the most of this opportunity, this occasion that we are living here, because he is extraordinary! We will realize it in the future, at the threshold of the third chapter.

## IMBIBING

*Sannyasi Vijayashakti, Australia*



I came here in 2012 for the three-year sannyasa training conducted by Swamiji, which was a blissful experience. We worked hard and were faced with challenges, but we were with the master, so everything worked out all right. This period culminated in the unparalleled World Yoga Convention in 2013, when Swamiji announced that the first chapter of yoga propagation was over and the second chapter begins. At that time I was not sure what this meant.

Since that time, however, I remained in Ganga Darshan and have been able to witness and participate in what has been happening here.

Swamiji stated that the second chapter is to deepen our experience of yoga. This struck a chord in me, for although I had completed Yogic Studies and teacher training and had many wonderful experiences with that, it still felt as if there was a vast ocean of vidya to swim in, dive deep and explore, but I needed an experienced guide to help with that. Swamiji, in his generosity, wisdom and love, has delved into the scriptures and brought out so many amazing new perspectives, most of which I had never heard before in my learning of yoga. All these ideas and inspiration flowed especially during Swamiji's higher sadhanas, during his panchagni.

I was a little apprehensive that during panchagni Swamiji would be unavailable, remaining in total isolation, yet that was the time when he conveyed so many ideas, inspirations

and instructions on yoga. It was a beautiful and extraordinary phase. One could feel the energy coming from the Akhara, the place of Swamiji's sadhana, into the whole of Ganga Darshan spreading power, peace and auspiciousness. Anyone here at that time could feel it.

In 2014, Swamiji first outlined the Yoga Chakra of Bihar Yoga to the residents of Ganga Darshan, and we were simply astounded. For so many years, decades, we have been doing all these things – hatha yoga, raja yoga, karma yoga, bhakti yoga – yet we did not actually know what we were doing, of yoga's true intent and purpose. And then suddenly our understanding of yoga assumed this amazing sequence, form, and system. Until this point, to me yoga was all about being one. Now it was differentiated and each part was explained so systematically. I could follow and understand the aims and the distinction between all the different yogas. This was a revelation.

Looking back, Swami Sivananda first brought yoga out of the darkness and inspired so many people to take to sadhana. Then Sri Swamiji categorized every practice and gave yoga an understandable, scientific sequence that one could follow: from the pawanmuktasana series into the advanced asanas, from basic breathing to advanced pranayama, and so on. And I feel that now Swami Niranjan has taken us to a new level, refining every detail of each yoga: aim, purpose, intention and sadhana. This has been a life-changing experience on a personal level and in terms of teaching yoga. My entire understanding of the meaning of yoga has changed, seeing it now as a complete system for harmony, happiness and health.

After Yoga Chakra, when Swamiji gave us the vision and a framework of where we are going, many new trainings started appearing. We experienced the Progressive Yoga Vidya Training in 2015 for one magical month, in which Swamiji conducted most of the classes. As Swami Anandananda said so beautifully, just to be in Swamiji's classes is indescribable. When learning under the guidance of the guru, it is as if the whole body, mind, spirit just surrender, and the experience of

yoga is totally different. We were immersed in experiencing, living and imbibing yoga during that time.

In 2016 there was an explosion of yoga trainings, and the focus was on experiencing yoga as a sadhana, lifestyle, culture. Yoga Capsules for health came out; no more health management, no more teacher training. The Capsules focused on health through lifestyle. The first trainings which were called *yatras*, journeys, into hatha yoga, raja yoga and kriya yoga were launched. Since then, each year a new module has been added to the *yatras*, for experiencing yoga vidya more deeply.

Taking hatha yoga as one example, everyone believes that hatha yoga is asana and pranayama, but no. Staying true to the vidya of hatha yoga, a whole schedule was developed covering all of the limbs over the three years. In the first year of the hatha yoga *yatra*, the full focus was on shatkarma, with minimal asana and pranayama. This was wonderful: all of us participating were so bright, shiny, clean and happy at the end of the cleansing week. In the second year asana and pranayama were used to stabilize the energy. One could feel this difference. First there was cleansing, then working at the pranic level. Next was Hatha Yoga *Yatra* 3, the focus of which was mudras and bandhas, to work deeper at the psychic level. Completing the journey from that first year to the third year was a hatha yoga darshan – seeing and experiencing this path of yoga in its full glory. Swamiji went back into the scriptures and gave us what is really there. Not going in any other direction, but staying true to the original path, to the aims of yoga.

Another example: raja yoga. Many of us understand that raja yoga, or yoga in general is the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali. That is also part of it, but we now know that raja yoga existed way before Patanjali and had a different sequence. Swamiji has explained that currently we are collectively at the level of developing pratyahara. This has been very helpful. Normally, the tendency is to think of the limbs – yama and niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara,

dharana, dhyana, samadhi – and presume that the goal is samadhi. Swamiji has clarified, “No, you are at the level of pratyahara. This is what you have to perfect.” That guidance from the guru, “This is what you need to do,” changes the whole perspective. All of the different components of pratyahara were explained and we realized that it is not just a general definition. There is pratyahara of the senses, pratyahara of the pranas, pratyahara of the mind, pratyahara of the different aspects of the mind – manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara.

When Swami Vedantananda spoke about what one needs to keep in mind as a teacher, I reflected on the classes that Swamiji has been conducting, and how he represents all of those aspects naturally. Of course Swamiji is not only a teacher; he is a guru. Yet, I was reminded of how much happiness he conveys when he teaches, and how everybody experiences that, and it is so beautiful. There is so much joy in him when sharing the vidya. This has inspired me a lot personally, as a student and as an aspiring teacher.

If I can sum up the last five years in five words, I will say: exquisite, amazing, yoga vidya magic. Massive gratitude to Swamiji, on every level, for his generosity, love, wisdom, guidance, for sharing the ancient wisdom with us, making it relevant, practical, understandable in a way that we can apply it to transform our lives in a positive direction. Thank you Swamiji.



## THE FELLOWSHIP OF YOGIS

*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

The theme of today's talks was connection. In this context I would like to make it clear that there are two dimensions of connection, as there are two groups of people.

In a school, hundreds go. They all study the same subject, yet the intention of most students is to just learn enough to pass the class so they can finish school quickly. The intention of only a few students is to study the subject to master it and become an expert in it. Those who want to study to move on do not remember or imbibe; they have short-term memories. Those who try to have mastery over the subject convert their short-term memory into long-term memory and develop an affinity and connection with the subject. There are stories of many scientists around the globe of how they become so engrossed in their own research that they forget what exists around them. They belong to the second category.

In yoga too, there are two types of people. One, who belong to ordinary society and come to yoga for their general wellbeing. They are concerned with their stress, pain and sleep management. They don't need to develop a connection with guru; they need a relief for their condition. Those who try to become gurus to such people will always fail. That connection will never develop; it will always be a connection of selfish needs. However, there is another group of people who want to understand, master and apply in life what they have learnt, and they pursue the subject to its depth. It is this group that develops a connection with the vidya and with the master.

When Sri Swami Satyananda started the yoga work, he conceived of a fellowship. If you look at our ajna chakra logo, underneath it says, 'International Yoga Fellowship'. It is a fellowship of yogis, signifying people who want to master, learn, imbibe, apply and live yoga. It is these people who will ultimately make a qualitative change in their own

life and also in their family, society and nation. Not the random practitioners of yoga who come to your class for a few months, then go to someone else's class for a few months, then join some other club, some other ashram, take some other mantra from some other guru, comparing this system with that system, this person with that person, and so on.

The fellowship is created by people who are connected to the vidya, for they want to explore, understand and master the subject. This group of people are the ones who nurture and nourish the vidya. They don't practise the vidya. Practice is for the first group who come and learn the practices: pawanmuktasana, pranayama, yoga nidra, meditation. For three months they associate with you, then Hari Om Tat Sat. Their purpose with yoga is over, so they don't feel the need to associate with you anymore. They received what they were looking for. They are not interested in deepening their experience or in following your aspirations, so why would you even want to impose your aspirations on somebody who desires something different?

The connection develops between people who have similar aspirations, not between people who have different aspirations. When aspirations are the same, then there is a deepening of connection. That is what Sri Swamiji envisioned: a group of people who have the same aspiration to experience and explore yoga vidya. The connection has to be with the experience. It is this relationship you need to cultivate. As long as the person is there, you develop a relationship with the person, fair enough. However, when the person is not there, then the relationship, the connection has to continue with the spirit that has motivated you to find that path of richness and goodness.

This is my humble submission after listening to all the people, to tell you that it is not important for everyone to develop the connection or wonder, 'Do I need to develop it?' If you are interested in deepening your own experience and understanding, you are connected. Just be sincere, committed and truthful to that connection.

21 October 2018

# Yoga Bhava not Bhoga Bhava



## Introduction

*Swami Sivadhyanam:* Today the theme is ‘yoga bhava, not bhoga bhava’. Yoga and bhoga are two opposite ends of the spectrum. In bhoga it is the person, it is the ‘I’ who is important. ‘My desire, my aspiration, my ambition, my need’ that needs to be fulfilled first, and one usually expresses the tamasic and rajasic qualities in pursuit of bhoga. For a serious practitioner, that mindset should change to yoga bhava.

As Swamiji has told us often, the yogic journey is the journey from tamas to sattwa. That sattwic attitude is the yogic attitude, the yogic bhava, where the role of the self gets relegated to the background and it is more about following

the dharma: following the right path, expressing the right behaviour, doing the right thing.

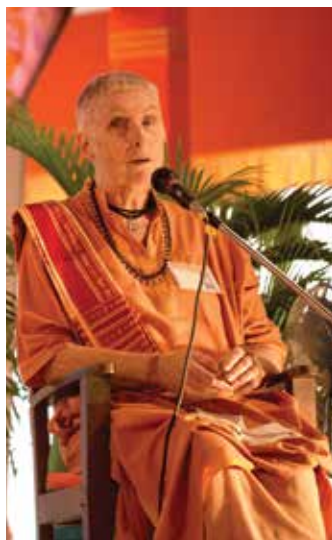
The positive bhava needs to be continuously nurtured and protected, only then it becomes a part of our nature. It is not merely a nice thought, 'Oh, I should act in this manner.' There has to be constant effort. For example, in terms of karma yoga, for a month can you have the bhava that atmashuddhi is the goal behind every action that you are doing? Can you maintain the bhava where you do not perceive what you are doing as hard work or weigh it in terms of what you are getting out of it? Can you sustain that attitude for a month even in the face of reversals or when things don't go as you planned?

This is just some food for thought about what yogic bhava can mean to us. Each one of us has to find his or her own way in which to deepen that bhava and express it in our daily lives.

## OVERCOMING CHALLENGES OF YOGA PROPAGATION

*Swami Sivamurti, Greece*

My talk today is on how yoga started in Greece in relation to Sri Swamiji. Yesterday Swami Niranjan was talking about aspirations: if a teacher is fortunate enough to have the same aspirations in relation to their role of teaching as the guru, then their teaching has another motivation, it follows a different path. It moves away from us, our status, our centre or our teaching environment and is more towards connecting with the source, the source of knowledge, the wisdom, the guru. Our teaching becomes more of seva.



If we think about how Sri Swamiji started teaching, it reflects this path. Teaching yoga was not something that he actually wanted to do. He did not even learn yoga in his guru's ashram. Yet, following a mandate of his guru, Swami Sivananda, to bring yoga from door to door and from shore to shore, he researched yoga and brought it to the system that today is known as Satyananda Yoga. Yoga was not his profession. In our tradition, yoga has never meant to be a profession. It is a form of seva, it is following the mandate of the guru, connecting with the guru.

I first met Sri Swamiji in the late 70s in the old ashram in BSY. I had been teaching yoga before that, but I realized that I did not know enough to teach. So I started to look around different ashrams in India and wrote to about ten different ashrams asking if I could come there and study yoga. They all wrote back in the affirmative welcoming me. There was something about one of those letters, the one from the Bihar School of Yoga. I did not know anything about the Bihar School of Yoga at that stage. It was just one on the list of ashrams I had seen in a book. The little letter I received was one of those airmail letters, typed in a very simple way. There was something that touched me in the wording and in the letter itself. So I chose that ashram to visit. I packed my bags, put on a pair of jeans and T-shirt, and took off on a plane to India.

Sri Swamiji wasn't in the ashram when I arrived and he didn't return until three weeks later. During that time, having had no experience of ashram life and no knowledge about what an ashram was all about or who a swami was, I really began to wonder whether I was in the right place. I remember writing in my diary on the first or second night, "I think I've come to the wrong place." Nevertheless I stayed, because when I talked to the different swamis and residents, they all spoke about Swamiji with such glowing expressions, such shining eyes, that I thought I have to stay a bit longer and meet this person 'Swamiji'. After about three weeks there was a hooting and tooting in front of the main gate of the

old BSY, and a big van came in. Everyone, without exception, rushed in that direction, pranamed and welcomed Swamiji back.

Swamiji had arrived and my moment to meet him had come. Soon after, Swami Atmananda, who was the manager of the ashram at that time, called me and said, "Swamiji is calling you." I went. He was in a little tent and there were two other swamis there. One was in profile, the other one was staring into space, no expressions on their faces. Sri Swamiji was just reclining there, his eyes closed. I went in, he opened his eyes and in that moment I realized I have met person I've been searching for all my life. My search was over. Something about the connection, something about the amazing feeling that emanated from him at that point just took me completely. I fell hopelessly in love, or as Swami Niranjan would say, I rose hopelessly in love. He said to me, "Stay in the ashram and learn as much yoga as you can." And so I stayed there.

After some time he called me and said, "I'd like you to go and see if the Greek people are interested in yoga. Be prepared for everything: television, lectures, talks, summer camps, etc. etc." I was a little taken aback by that and I went away. At that time I was reading a book about how different components of a car have to be matched to enable it to do its task, and it was relating this to different components of an individual, and how everything had to be in place before you actually started off on whatever you have to do. I took that paragraph as a message to me. I went back to Swamiji the next day and said, "Swamiji, I've been reading this book about the car and I've realized that I am not quite ready to . . ." I didn't even finish the sentence, he said, "In no uncertain terms, I have told you what to do. Do it." That was it. I said, "Swamiji, will you come to Greece?" He said, "No, I will never come to Greece." Nevertheless, he gave me a beautiful samskara. He said, "Everything that happens to you will happen for your good. There will be nothing negative in your life." And in all the challenges I have faced since then, those

words ring in my ear, “Nothing will be negative, everything will be positive.”

After some time, I left the ashram and went to Greece. He had said to start in a small way. I started in a small, provincial, conservative town of Kalamata where the few people who had heard about yoga believed it was the work of the devil. They were supported by the bishop and priests there who spoke more about me than they did about Christ and the church, telling people not to go to ‘that woman’ because they would fall from grace. That naturally stopped a lot of people, and the few who did come had a lot of reservations. The classes had to be segregated for women and men, as men did not want their wives doing yoga with another man beside them. There were also a lot of private lessons as many well-to-do people in Kalamata did not want anyone else to know that they were practising yoga. I had to stagger the classes and put half an hour in between each class so they wouldn’t meet on the stairs. Sometimes they would overlap as someone came earlier and at that time, I had to put one person into a cupboard, settle the other person in shavasana, then give an ‘all clear’ sign to the first person.

I didn’t speak a word of Greek. I prepared the lessons in English and had them translated by a very kindly lady there, who translated everything I hope into correct Greek. That was for many years. In this way, Kalamata was a real training ground and a learning experience in many ways. Sri Swamiji had said to me, “Don’t necessarily stay in one place. You have to go where the need is.” After some time I realized that a greater need may be elsewhere. I started travelling around, giving lectures in different towns and cities and eventually moved to Athens. I started there in a small flat. It was about fifteen by fifteen square metres, with furniture that was immovable. I had to sit and stand on the sofa and give the practices. The students had to manage under the immovable tables and chairs. I only had eight students, but they enjoyed it. When I meet some of them today, they say those were the best days.

After about eighteen months of moving back and forth between Kalamata and Athens and also Thessaloniki, I heard that Sri Swamiji was going to Spain. I wrote to him and asked if I could join him and he said yes. I went to Spain and soon after I saw him, I thought to ask Swamiji again to come to Greece. I said, “Swamiji, will you come to Greece?” And he said, “Yes, of course I will come to Greece.” He said, “Invite Swami Niranjan to prepare the way.”

I didn't know who Swami Niranjan was, but I invited Swami Niranjan and Swami Niranjan arrived. I think it was in 1979. He almost didn't get into Greece, as in those days to get someone of Indian nationality into Greece you had to have your papers stamped by fifty different offices. But we managed. I remember the first moment of seeing Swamiji there. He was absolutely shining! He was so bright. Dressed in full geru with that magnificent turban on his head! Again I had that beautiful feeling, a type of recognition that I've met this person before.

Swami Niranjan stayed in Greece for some time and lectured in Athens and Kalamata, and gave satsangs to different devotees and students who had come around at that time. He gave yoga classes as well, and he paved the way for Sri Swamiji to come to Greece.

Eventually Sri Swamiji came to Greece. He came many times, in fact, after that initial 'no' that I had received. On one of those occasions he said to me, “It's time to start looking for a residential country ashram where people can reside and live a yogic lifestyle.” He gave a few indications: that it should be at a 17 to 23 kilometre radius around Athens, it must have one building on it. At that time, there were a few swamis with me. We all went out in different directions looking for the place. After some months Swami Aparokshananda came back and said, “I think I found the place. You've got to come and see it.” I went to Paiania, that is where the ashram is today. As soon as I walked in, again there was that recognition that 'this is the place.'

I then spoke with Sri Swamiji and he asked in detail about every tree, every plant, every building. I gave him that

information on tenterhooks, thinking that he might say that this is not the place. Eventually, after forty-five minutes he said, "This is the place. Start the construction there." We started the construction and that was challenging since we had no means, we had very little finance. We didn't have toilets, we had to dig a hole in the ground. Anyone who went to the toilet put out a red flag and when they left put out the green flag. Slowly, little by little the ashram started to take shape. In 1985 Sri Swamiji came and inaugurated it and called it Satyanandashram, 'true bliss ashram', he told us.

The ashram has grown enormously over the years, and it is all due to the grace of Sri Swamiji and Swami Niranjan. And it is also due to the bhava, the devotion of the Greek people who from the very beginning were more focused on the guru and the tradition and his mission rather than on aspects of yoga. The connection started with guru and yoga came in the picture later. This built a very deep spiritual connection of the Greek teachers and students with the parampara, with the gurus here. Since that time, almost every year Greek groups have been coming over to the ashram here and to Rikhia.

This spiritual connection, I feel, is what teachers sometimes miss in their classes today. So many teachers are setting up their schools or yoga centres on a more professional basis and forgetting that actually the most important relationship they need is the spiritual relationship. We have so many experiences with physical relationships, mental relationships, emotional relationships. What we really need is the spiritual relationship, which comes through our connection with the guru. If the teacher has that connection with the guru, it adds that extra sparkle to their class. Not only do the students benefit but they themselves benefit, for through the connection to the guru they learn more, they are more open and receptive to the guru's teachings. They realize that in actual fact we know so little.

When we look at the vastness of Satyananda Yoga, there is no way we can possibly learn all about it in one lifetime.

We have to come back many times to catch up on everything that's being taught here, everything that we hear Swamiji speaking about. So we need to come to that realization that we don't know enough. We may have passed numerous TTCs or in-services or God knows what, but actually we need that spiritual connection. We need to be connected and associated with someone who knows more than we do. That person is the guru.

If Sri Swamiji and Swami Niranjan had taken a different course, if their course was not yoga, then I also would have taken a different course. I wouldn't have followed yoga, I would have followed whatever they were teaching. For the connection with the guru has always been the most important factor for me, not the connection with teaching yoga.

## BEING A RESPONSIBLE YOGA TEACHER

*Swami Vedantananda, Portugal*

First of all, maybe you would like to take a moment to consider what your personal inspiration or motivation for teaching yoga is. The inspiration has to come from the feeling of yoga bhava or seva, as an action of seva: enjoying it, learning from it, learning about yourself and about other people. As soon as you become bored with yoga teaching or stop enjoying it, you should take a break and reflect on the reasons you are doing it and your motivation. Find another way of expressing your yoga bhava or seva. We don't all have to be yoga teachers. Love what you do. Your connection with the guru and the vidya will carry you and the teaching.



Now we come to responsible teaching. It is your responsibility as a Satyananda Yoga teacher to teach the whole range of practices that we have. As mentioned, we don't really know very much, but what we do know is what we are passing on. Society today faces many illnesses: physical illnesses, emotional distress, mental problems, fears, and so on. They have fears that didn't exist before, such as terrorism, crime, fear of losing jobs. Therefore people are turning to yoga to find answers to their problems, and they know that they need more than asana and pranayama. I have a quote from Sri Swamiji:

“Through asanas and pranayama, you develop and maintain a sound and healthy body. Through selfless service you exhaust your vasanas and karma. Through devotion and self-surrender, you stabilize your emotions. Through mental control, you increase your mental capacity. Through self-analysis and self-enquiry, you sharpen your discriminative faculty. Through meditation, you expand your consciousness. Thus, all the layers of your personality are properly developed and you become an integrated personality. This is the task of yoga.”

Through regular practice of Satyananda Yoga techniques, people are finding ways to live more harmoniously and healthily, and to be more tranquil. It is with the aim of helping people to live like this that we teach yoga. By staying true to the purity and the integrity of the tradition, we can help people and also help realize our gurus' vision to take yoga out into society.

Now we come to the responsibility of taking care of our students' mental, emotional and physical health. A responsible yoga teacher knows his or her own limitations and capacity, and never teaches beyond his or her experience or competency. At the same time you should know the limitations and capacity of your students, and not go beyond that. Our system is designed to progress in a slow

and systematic way so that the development takes place in a balanced way.

The responsibility applies also at the mental and emotional levels, and this is particularly relevant when you are teaching pranayama, yoga nidra and meditation. Some people come to yoga just for the physical side of the things, they just want to be a little bit more flexible, relaxed and calm. They won't realize that by letting go of tensions on the physical level, one is also going to be letting go of emotional and mental tensions. They may not be ready to handle that, but you as the teacher must be ready and able to handle that. It is your responsibility to pick up the pieces, for the practices will take people to places that they may not have been to before. Therefore, it is a duty to look after them.

If students have problems and want to speak to you, you need to be available for a relaxed and friendly question and answer session. If you find that your students have problems that are beyond your experience, then you need to know more experienced yoga teachers or therapists whom you can pass them on to. You may need to develop some listening and counselling skills. But remember, you are a yoga teacher, not a therapist, so know your limitations when you are trying to help people in that way.

This brings us to the physical body and the teaching of asana. We should only teach what is appropriate, on all levels, to the student whom we have in front of us. This should be common sense, but as you know, common sense is not always common. Swamiji was talking this morning about how asana is a condition. Over the years I have observed many teachers and practitioners practising asana with absolutely no awareness of what they are doing. It is as if they have a bus or a train to catch, they do it as fast as possible so they can get on to the more important stuff. Well, if you don't have any awareness of your body, how will you ever have any awareness of the things that are more subtle than that, like prana, the mind, and so on.

We all come in different shapes and sizes, and some of the things that I am going to say now are possibly more

appropriate to the western body. Broadly speaking, the main difference is that an Indian body is usually quite short in the trunk and has longer limbs, while a western body is longer in the trunk and has shorter limbs. Therefore, for some westerners some things are never going to happen. So before you go off madly running through your APMB and planning your classes, you need to take a good look at the students and at the practice. Then make the decision, “Okay, I’d like to teach this asana, but really that is not going to work for them.” Find an alternative practice with the same benefits that would be accessible to your students. Also, westerners tend not to squat, they are often overweight, but today things are changing also in India. A lot more Indians now sit on chairs and are becoming overweight. So, some of the points are relevant to both.

The advantage that we have with our style of teaching is that we focus on awareness and developing slowly. We start with PM 1, which is accessible to everybody. There may be some issues with necks in terms of rotations for elderly people, but on the whole, all of the PM practices are accessible to everybody.

There are mainly three groups of people we need to be aware of who could have problems with the practices. The first are those who have medical issues, for instance a bad back. The second are people who are hyper-flexible or hyper-mobile. The third are people who are unfit and overweight.

The three areas of the body that you need to take care of in particular are the knees, the lower back and the neck. Let’s look at the knees first. The main problems with the knees are hyper-flexion, hyperextension and misalignment. Hyperextension of knees would be when you are standing up and contract your kneecaps and practise your standing asanas in that way. If you want to end up with legs that look like bananas, bending backwards, then by all means do that, but I would recommend you didn’t. The other issue is hyper-flexion. That means when you bend the knee and the knee is more than a right angle or further forward than the foot.

Then there is misalignment: when a knee is not in line with the foot, and this often happens in squatting poses.

With necks, the problems could be mainly hyperextension. When you are instructing somebody to take the head back, your language is useful. “Lift your chest. Lift your chin. There should be two-finger space between the base of the skull and the vertebra so that you don’t get hyperextension of the neck.”

Problems with the lower back include over-ambitious bending backwards and problems bending forwards, hyper-flexion and damaging the back. You can help this by softening the knees, bending the knees, or even shortening the arms – bending the arms as well so there is not so much weight coming forward.

Then we need to know why it’s a problem, especially with the knees. The main issue with knees is ligaments. Ligaments don’t have a very high supply of nerves, so you don’t feel pain. It’s only when you get old that you know that you’ve got knee issues, and there are quite a few older yoga teachers with knee problems, and students of course.

We will now focus on one practice to indicate how you need to take care. It is something that we all practise a lot and are quite eager for our students to practise. That is surya namaskara, which covers most of the points.

- *Position 1*, pranamasana. Soften the knees, make sure that you haven’t pulled the kneecaps back, you haven’t hyper-extended the knees.
- *Position 2*, hasta utthanasana. Take care with the neck and the lower back.
- *Position 3*, pada hastasana. Bending forward. Only go as far as you can, and with regular practice you will eventually touch your toes.
- *Position 4*, ashwa sanchalanasana. Hyper-flexion and misalignment of the knee. Watch out for it. Look at your own practice. Look at your own body.
- *Position 5*, parvatasana.
- *Position 6*, ashtanga namaskara. That’s a tricky posture for many people and the manoeuvre into bhujangasana is

completely out of a lot of people's range of movement. Maybe they just stay in marjari asana.

- *Position 7*, bhujangasana. Problems of hyperextension in the lower back and potentially also in the neck.

*Positions 8 & 9*, parvatasana and ashwa sanchalanasana, stepping forward with the leg from the mountain. Sometimes I just want to die when I see people do this, their foot doesn't come out through between their hands, so they are balancing on the toes, their knees totally hyper-flexed and misaligned, and they are overweight. You have a big recipe for disaster there.

Surya namaskara is a fantastic practice, just make sure that your students are ready for it. Use asanas in a way that one asana prepares for the next. I am not going to say warm-up, because we are not working in a gym. Just use other postures to prepare for things that might be more challenging.

Doing these practices without any awareness of the body may not make as much of a difference if you only practise once a week. But we are encouraging our students to practise daily, and then the long-term effects have to be considered. This becomes obvious when you are older, so pay attention from the beginning.

It is important to be aware of these things as responsible yoga teachers, nevertheless we are not going to turn into anatomy freaks and go completely over-the-top with this. If you want to study anatomy, do so, but remember that it is not yoga. If you study anatomy and physiology, it is for your benefit; you don't introduce it into the classroom. We teach yoga. So please make the distinction. Any study you do, any knowledge you acquire, is for your own benefit and it doesn't necessarily come into the yoga class. Also keep in mind that if you are teaching in a responsible way, students will learn about their own bodies from within, from the awareness that you are encouraging them to use.

There is an important factor you need to consider, however, particularly in the western world. The West is becoming a very litigious society. I am usually shocked when

I go to England and watch the television. In the commercial breaks there is always an advertisement with lawyers suggesting that you sue if you had an accident. You could be walking down the street, trip over a paving-stone and decide to sue the Council. The fact that you probably were sending an SMS on your mobile phone at the time and had absolutely no awareness of where you were going is another matter. There have been incidents where yoga teachers have been taken to court because the students injured themselves. It is no good if the yoga teacher stands in the courtroom saying, "Well, your honour, this asana is very good for anahata chakra." It's not a very good defence, and I honestly don't think that the judge would be on the side of the yoga teacher. So, just check your own insurance!

This leads to the point that when you are teaching asana, it is very important that you demonstrate and instruct how to come out of a posture. Coming out of a posture is just as important as going into it. This is especially relevant when you are teaching practices like ushtrasana, matsyasana or sarvangasana, where if your instructions are not clear and the student doesn't know how to come out of it, they are going to move their head to watch somebody else. Say in matsyasana, head back, crown on the floor, it's not a very comfortable position to turn and look at your neighbour. That's not going to do any good to the neck either. Therefore make sure that you guide clearly or demonstrate how to come out of a posture.

Moving on to teaching something like pranayama. You need to be very aware and watch the students very carefully because any mistakes that they are making are not so obvious in pranayama. When somebody does something wrong in asana, it sticks out like a sore thumb. In pranayama it is more subtle, it is not so obvious. So watch carefully instead of sitting with your eyes closed having a nice time.

Another very important aspect: externalizing. Be really mindful of externalizing the students well when they come out of yoga nidra and meditation. It does not matter so much in the ashram because nobody is going anywhere, unless

they've got a gate pass. When you teach at home, people are potentially going to get in their car and drive home, so you need to be sure they are well-grounded.

Make sure that you give all contra-indications and precautions before doing any practice. It is no good saying to the class after they finish a hundred and eight rounds of bhastrika, "Oh, this shouldn't be done if you've got high blood pressure." It's too late. And of course by giving contra-indications and precautions, you've got a room full of witnesses if somebody does hurt themselves and decides to sue you.

These are a few points on being a responsible yoga teacher, and you might like to consider them. It will be a good exercise to write down your own list of about fifty points, of things that you do and things that you don't in your classes as a teacher, and things that you ask your teachers and students to follow and don't.

## BEING WITH SRI SWAMIJI

*Rishi Nityabodhananda, Australia*



I began yoga with the idea that there is another place up there to which I could transcend, because life was awful. I was a suppressed, persecuted Jew from a broken family, with a broken heart, and I didn't like life.

I found out from a book that gurus in India can lead you to this place, they can take away the ignorance and everything is revealed. I said, "I've got to go to India." So I got a list of gurus from books, and I came. I went to the Himalayas and Varanasi and

here and there. Finally, I had the name of Swami Satyananda, which somebody gave to me. The person said, "I don't like this man, but he is a powerful yogi. You should see him."

I was in Kathmandu and I wrote a postcard, "I would like to come and visit your ashram" and I went. I reached Munger on 31st October 1969. They gave me a bed, I put my bag on it, walked out and looked. Down at the end of the path, there was a group of people talking. I thought, 'I wonder what's going on there?' I walked down to that group and there was a man speaking to maybe ten other people. As I grew close he said something like, "Jews are very wonderful people," so I sat up a little. Then he said, "They make great scientists." I sat a little higher. "The best doctors are Jewish." I went even higher. He must have thought I've gone a bit too high, so he said, "They are very tight with money." I went down a bit. This was my introduction to Swami Satyananda, the psychic.

Next day, we began kriya yoga. I just happened to land there on the day before the start of the kriya yoga course that he was conducting. I was the last person at the back. He started: hands on the knees, siddhasana, khechari mudra, ujjayi pranayama, jalandhara bandha, mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara, arohan and draw the breath up. The classes started, by the way, at 4 am, and for the next two hours, from 4 to 6, we traced the path again and again and again. Mooladhara, up to the pubic bone, swadhisthana. Jalandhara, come up, swadhisthana. Return back to mooladhara. Mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara, arohan, up to swadhisthana. For two hours I did not know anything else. All I heard were these instructions and all I knew was about drawing the breath up like that, nothing else. It was intense.

Then came breakfast, which in those days was dalia, broken wheat with ginger and a bit of sugar. Then, we continued with these instructions, very clear, and by lunch time we were at anahata. Afternoon, vishuddhi. Finally we got to bindu. The class went on till 8 pm. Sri Swamiji did everything himself. Just before the finish time at 8 o'clock at

night, we were back at mooladhara. I said, 'Ah! We have done a full circle.' So concentrated and intense was his teaching that there was no time to think of anything else.

So, first I met him as a psychic. At that time, he didn't know my name, I didn't know his name. I didn't know who he was, just a man talking to others. Then he was an instructor. After three days of the kriya yoga, somebody tapped me on the shoulder and said, "You have to go. Swamiji said you have to go." One person had left and there was a space down the front, "You have to go down to the front." I said, "Oh no. Somebody else. I'm just a newcomer." Then they said, "When Swamiji says you go, you go." And so I was introduced to Swamiji the authority.

The discipline. Swamiji used to lock the door of the classroom from inside at five to 4, classes started at 4. If you were not early, you missed it. There was no sleeping in. If you missed the class just once even, you'd always remember that. This was how I learned about firm, reliable, responsible, clear, intense instruction and discipline. At the end of kriya yoga I thought, 'Gee, I've got this practice now, all I have to do is to find a cave and practise myself.' Someone said there was a three-year sannyasa course coming up on 8th September 1970, and I ought to join it. I said, "What sannyasa? What is this sannyasa business?" They said, "Oh it's very good. You become totally involved in yoga and all that. It will set you up in meditation." I said, "Hmm, three-year sannyasa course."

I went and asked Swamiji, "I would like to attend your three-year sannyasa course." He said something very interesting, "I don't appreciate un-firm decisions. I respect firm decisions." He added, "If you take sannyasa here, don't expect me to give you medicine if you are sick, don't expect me to give you blankets if you are cold, don't expect anything like that from me." Then he said, "I am going to send you out to make certain you have a firm decision." He gave me some addresses to go to. Do you know where he sent me? To his critics. He sent me to people who criticized him. I thought, 'What a man!' Those critics had messy things to say, I didn't

even like their vibration. I went to Bombay, Varanasi, different places for which I had been given addresses on that piece of paper. One of them said, “I will give you a nice hut. You will be very comfortable there. We will give you good meals. Stay with us.” I thought, ‘I don’t want to be bought! No, not for me.’

Finally, I came back to Swamiji. The day I returned from that trip he said, “There is the barber. Tonight you will take initiation.” He called Swami Niranjanji and a few others. We shaved our heads leaving this little tuft of hair, and we were initiated before a small havan kund down there in the old ashram. We started to prepare for the three-year sannyasa course as a few people were beginning to gather. We had one particular sadhana. Every morning before breakfast, sit in padmasana or siddhasana. The cook was in charge. He was there with a piece of paper. We had to sit for one hour and then go for breakfast. We used to get served food as we weren’t so many people. The cook would cook and serve. On the second day, he gave the food there and he gave the food there, then he went past me and he gave the food there. I said, “Hey, what about my food?” “No, shhh. Missed.” I said, “What missed?” “You moved.” If you moved just this much during the one hour, no food. It was good training. Wonderful training!

Finally, the sannyasa course started and we would begin our sadhana with mantra chanting. We were doing *Aparokshanubhuti* mantras and other shanti mantras. Swamiji would read out the mantras and we would repeat. He would say something like, “*Om, shamno mitrah sham varunah.*” We would all repeat. Then he would say, “No, not like that.” I thought I’d done it perfectly. Everyone thought they’d done it perfectly. He’d say, “This is the right way: *Om shamno mitrah sham varunah.*” Then he’d say, “This is the wrong way: *Om shamno mitrah sham varunah.*” I’d listen very carefully. To this day, I swear, there is no difference! But I’m sure he would swear there is a difference. I couldn’t discern it. We used to do this every day.

The next thing was pranayama. We started with pranayama in the cooler months. We started on the roof, 4 am, bhastrika. Two hundred left, two hundred right, two hundred both. Internal kumbhaka, jalandhara bandha, moola bandha, then relax, then meditate for half a minute. Then again two hundred left, two hundred right, two hundred both, and again kumbhaka. Release. One minute meditation. And again. And again, and again, and again. We were flying. You know, two hundred is a lot of breath, but as soon as you'd think, 'Oh, I'll have a little rest', Swamiji from the front, I can hear his voice even now, "Continue. Continue." It was dark on the roof. He couldn't see anything, but he knew. He knew. He had an intimate connection with each and every one of us, each of our troubles and each of our difficulties.

Then we went to nadi shodhana. It took us one whole month to do the four stages of nadi shodhana. You cannot believe for how long we inhaled through the left. Slow, slow, slow, slow up, then down, down, down, down. Hours and hours and hours. Finally we got to the final stage with pooraka, kumbhaka, bandhas, rechaka, kumbhaka, bandhas. Then he said to me, "You will do 12:48:48:48." And I did. (*applause*) Don't clap for me, clap for Swamiji. (*bigger applause*) I tried later on, I couldn't. I never had it. I couldn't, it was his power. He was right with us in the pranayama.

When I took sannyasa, in a fit of renunciation I had thrown everything away. Mala, clothes, photographs, notebooks, everything. I had just gone to the fire and thrown it all in. I had a rudraksha mala, I was very happy with it, but I thought, 'No personal possession. I'll throw it all into the fire.' Then came the time when we started mantra japa. There were one hundred and eight of us in one hall. Twenty-five down one wall, twenty-five down another wall, then back to back in the middle, and twenty-five on the other side. We also had our beds, the chatais, in the hall. We'd roll them up in the morning, go take a bath, come back and do our sadhana in there. So, the time came for mantra japa. I thought, 'Hmm, I haven't got a mala.' Swamiji came around carrying

an armful of malas, he came to me and picked out the mala that I'd thrown into the fire some months before and said, "Here." The same mala. He was so closely associated with us. He never left us and he still doesn't.

## THE SPARK OF YOGA BHAVA

*Swami Yogatirtha, Switzerland*

The speakers of today and yesterday have given us a live-expression of yoga bhava, for they spoke of their long-standing, wholehearted connection with yoga. None of us would be here if we did not have that spark of yoga bhava.

Yoga bhava is the love for yoga. It is a deep feeling for and inner connection with yoga. Over the last few years, we have been receiving more and more glimpses of what yoga vidya really is all about. However, the feeling we have for yoga creates in us a connectedness to ourselves, to others, to yoga and to life in general.

Yoga bhava is the aim of the second chapter that Swamiji is starting. The aim is to develop yoga bhava in all aspirants. At the World Yoga Convention in 2013, Swamiji gave us the foundation of the second chapter and of yoga bhava. Although he did not use the expression 'yoga bhava', he gave us the foundation through the three words: seriousness, sincerity and commitment. Without these three, without that base, without that foundation there cannot be a second chapter. Since then, Swamiji has explained more in detail what these three words mean in relation to yoga. He said that every yoga aspirant has to follow, emanate and live these three words.



‘Serious’ means that we connect to yoga as a vidya. Yoga vidya is not just an interesting practice or a lovely kirtan. It is a whole science. To be a serious yoga aspirant, we have to connect to that body of knowledge and discover its treasures.

‘Sincere’ means that we want to experience the aim of each yoga branch and not follow our own likes and dislikes. Each yoga branch has a defined aim, a system, has steps and stages, and to be a sincere yoga aspirant we have to follow the path as described.

‘Committed’ means that we are ready to be positive, to enhance and express the positive qualities in life. This connection to positivity in all its forms has to become our sadhana in the same manner that we make asana, pranayama, or yoga nidra our sadhana.

As the expression and support system of these three words, Swamiji gave us the six lifestyle yamas and niyamas, which were introduced during the Adhyatma Samskara Sadhana Satras held twice a year at Ganga Darshan. These yamas and niyamas are not moral codes, they are not Indian or Asian, they are not do’s and don’ts. They are positive qualities that have been identified by the rishis, sages and saints to make our life more beautiful, harmonious and peaceful.

As to the yoga teaching at Ganga Darshan it was imparted through the channel of trainings called ‘ystras’. We had Hatha Yoga Ystras, Raja Yoga Ystras and Kriya Yoga Ystras. This year, in 2018, we had the three levels, 1, 2 and 3, for each yatra. This means that people who did the Hatha Yoga Yatra 3 started in 2016 with a one-week training of Hatha Yoga Yatra 1 and the focus on shatkarma. Then they had a whole year of sadhana at home. In 2017, they came for the training of Hatha Yoga Yatra 2, with the focus on asana-pranayama. They again followed it with a one-year sadhana at home, and this year it was Hatha Yoga Yatra 3, which was dedicated to the learning and experience of mudras and bandhas. They went home with this new sadhana.

In the same manner, raja yoga and kriya yoga developed year by year. Swamiji insisted on that strict progression.

Nobody was allowed to jump. Nobody was allowed to come and join Hatha Yoga Yatra 2 or Raja Yoga Yatra 2 without having done the previous training. Everybody had to start with Yatra 1 and then move on. This discipline ensured that truly only the serious, sincere and committed aspirants took up the yatra training.

In April this year we had Hatha Yoga Yatra 3, the first level 3 training. The participants finished their training and they were just glowing. There was a happiness in them which was unique, which was different from normal happiness in people, and I wondered what it was. They said, “Oh it’s so amazing, so wonderful!” but they could not say what it was. It was like this aura of happiness and bliss around this group. Something about this group was different from any other group.

This morning Swamiji spoke about hatha yoga. He explained the aims and what happens when we practise with sincerity, seriousness and commitment, in a systematic and progressive way. What happens is that things change. He said it is the chemicals that change and it is the new chemicals that make you happy. I thought, ‘Oh, that’s what it is. That group had those happy-making chemicals flowing in them by doing the given sadhana over the past three years.’ What Swamiji wants us to do works and following the system of hatha yoga brings about the change of chemicals which we could see in that group of people. That is transformation, for real transformation occurs when the chemical structure in our body changes; and with that change, the quality of happiness is different.

Apart from the yoga yatra training, an awareness evolved here at Ganga Darshan that this connection to positivity, to sincerity, seriousness and commitment is not a choice any more. It is something that everybody has to do. It is a need. There is a need to live these words, there is a need for change. Understanding that need and acting accordingly may just be the essence of the second chapter. It is no longer, ‘Oh, I want to’ or ‘I don’t want to,’ ‘Maybe yes, maybe no’. If

the second chapter has to happen, then we have to do it.

Along with this understanding and acceptance develops the awareness that when the effort is made to connect to positivity, then the effect is there. We experience without fail and doubt the effect of that effort. That calmness, that peace, that harmony manifests in our lives and in our environment.

We see the attainment of yoga bhava in our three masters, who have lived and who have given their life to share their yoga bhava, to share their love for yoga vidya. Swami Sivananda spent forty years talking about yoga and developing his integral yoga. Sri Swamiji took yoga around the world and presented a wider system and application; and Swamiji, who, after so many years of teaching the first chapter, is now fully engaged in the second chapter to give us the opportunity to make the necessary changes in ourselves, our lives and experience true transformation.

The Munger Yoga Symposium and the time we have here together is to connect with our own little spark of yoga bhava. The more we immerse ourselves in this wonderland of yoga that Swamiji has created for this occasion, the more we experience the yoga bhava. Looking at all the panels and even the T-shirts everyone is wearing with quotes from our masters, we are constantly reminded of what yoga is, why we are here and what we have to do.

This Munger Yoga Symposium is the most beautiful beginning of the second chapter: just to be in this environment to imbibe what is here and to be ready for what is to come – for by turning the pages of the second chapter, Swamiji will bring that light of yoga bhava into every home and every heart, and not only here.

## TWO WEEKS OF LIVING DHARMA

*Sannyasi Gyanmudra, USA*

2018 saw the return of the yoga yatra. From January through July teams of teachers were sent out all over India and to Europe to give people out in the world a glimpse of the second chapter of yoga.

The practices and talks at these yatras centred around the theme of balance, equanimity, harmony and nurturing positivity. Negativity is running rampant, the quality of life is on the decline, the very fabric of society is disintegrating. Yet, if one is able to make a conscious and sincere effort to uplift and transform the state of one's own mind, then the environment around will transform as well. So, out we all went, equipped with the inspiration and the tools to provide people out in the world to do just that, as well as to encourage them to see yoga as more than a mere physical practice and adopt yoga as a harmonious lifestyle.

In April, Sannyasi Madhuri and I were sent to Kolkata. It was two full weeks with about thirty sessions all over the city. We had classes, shivirs, and programs with people from all walks of life – young, old, rich, poor, yoga practitioners, non-yoga practitioners. The responses to the teachings were tremendously warm and appreciative. The love and respect we were shown was a bit overwhelming at times, but, of course, that was to the representation of Swamiji and the Bihar School of Yoga. There were magical moments in every session and with every single group that we met, because what we had to tell them made such a strong impact. I had no idea



that I was in for such a rich experience. I'd like to share with you one particular shivir.

The shivir was held in northern Kolkata in a large gated community called Space Town. The great fun of being on a shivir is the spontaneity, because you don't know the students or the venue. You walk in and you just have to be ready to adapt to anything. This one was a three-day shivir with a late morning and an evening session, two classes per day for three days. When I walked into this venue on the first day, I was rather taken aback. It was more like a social or party scene. Gathered there were about fifty to sixty women – mothers and housewives of working class families – who, except for one, had never practised yoga before. That first class, it was challenging. They were very out of touch with their bodies, had difficulty identifying left from right, answered their cell phones, wouldn't turn them off; we had to be a little firm to keep the class together. But what worked best was a lot of eye contact and smiling.

In the evening I walked in for the second class, and I thought I was dreaming. The room was silent and they were all sitting still in a meditative posture, their hands in chin mudra, ready to go. A transformation had taken place in such a short time. I wouldn't have wanted to be someone who inadvertently left their cell phone switched on.

What really grabbed them was the lifestyle yamas and niyamas. When we spoke on those yamas and niyamas, there was pin-drop silence, their faces showed rapt attention, the body language was like they were on the edge of their seats. That was true across the board for every class we gave during those two weeks. When we spoke on those yamas and niyamas, no matter who the participants were, whether we were in corporative offices, a university or a park, everyone would go quiet. Whether they had practised yoga or not, it was the yamas and niyamas and correlating practices that grabbed them.

I couldn't wait to get back to Ganga Darshan to give that feedback. I spoke to someone in the ashram during the two

weeks and I said, “The yamas and niyamas are lighting them up.” And she said, “Yes, that’s the feedback we are getting from all over the country.”

On the last day at Space Town I taught the class and became a little choked up over the beauty I saw coming out of this group, and what had transpired from class one to the last day. The attendance kept going up, first it was just the mothers, then the grandmothers were all lined up in the back doing their practices in chairs. On the last day, one elderly woman came up, and she said to me, “I’ve never seen yoga practised, I’ve never done yoga, but I’m feeling the divine.” It was beautiful and it was touching.

This group was really keen to take care of us. They wanted to make us lunch and dinner, and were intent on feeding us. So on the last day we said, “Yes, let’s have lunch.” In talking to them then, I really began to see what the yoga classes meant to them. Their absence from their household was causing fear in their children and husbands. They didn’t seem to spend time away from their houses and their whole life was spent in service to the family. They didn’t take time out for themselves. We may take going to a yoga class for granted, but it really meant something to them. They said they had never ever stopped to consider their own happiness before. Of course, they feel happy and unhappy, but they had never ever considered it.

It was amazing to see new avenues of consciousness opening up to them. I began to feel more and more connected to them in that I was coming to the second chapter teachings with a beginner’s mind also. As I taught over these two weeks, I felt myself becoming closer and closer to the teachings, imbibing them more and more. Just like them, I was finding myself on this new path of self-discovery and expression, and breaking through old patterns and limitations.

I felt connected to the Satyananda family in Kolkata who put so much time, effort and care into making the shivirs happen and run so smoothly and successfully. I felt connected

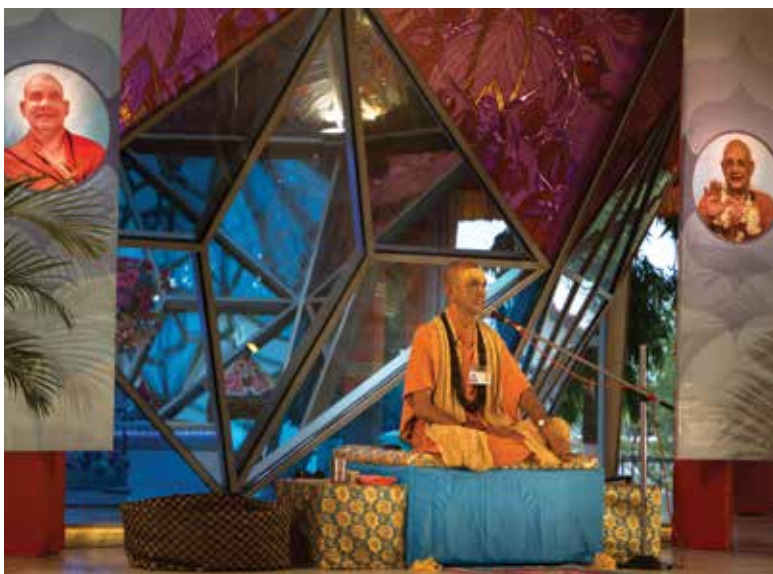
to everybody back here at Ganga Darshan and so grateful for the training we had received to go out there. And, of course, there is the connection to the tradition. The defining moment of each and every class for me was when we lit that deepak in front of Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda. Everything fell away. It was like connecting to something bigger than myself, and whether I was feeling nervous or insecure, anxious, distracted or tired, it was all gone. The only feeling was, 'The class is on, I'm going to deliver these teachings as I was instructed and to the best of my ability, and give these people the best experience possible.'

In this way, there was a lot of personal transformation, the second chapter teachings coming alive inside me and around me. At the very centre of all these depths and levels was that Swamiji entrusted me to take these teachings out there. The form of my awareness at all times was that Swamiji trusted me. That was the ultimate, and from there everything fell into place. It was two weeks of living within the confines of dharma, which I have never ever experienced. That was the ultimate.



## BECOMING THE YOGIC SANTA CLAUS

*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*



The subject matter of the day is yoga bhava and bhoga bhava. In the middle there is another bhava: kriya bhava. *Bhoga* means indulgence and *bhava* means the attitude, the desire, the sentiment, the feeling. When there is indulgence and the desire to indulge in life, then mind and life become material and gross. That is the tamasic condition. The desire for indulgence, bhoga, is the tamasic nature. Then there is yoga bhava, the attitude, awareness, sentiment and feeling of harmony, joy, peace and contentment. That is the sattvic nature. In the middle is kriya bhava, the rajo guna that allows you to move between bhoga bhava and yoga bhava.

Our paramguru Swami Sivananda has spoken about what needs to be done to make the movement from the tamasic condition and nature of life to a sattvic condition and nature of life. People think that in order to practise yoga, the practice of asana, pranayama, concentration and

meditation is a must. This is what people believe to be yoga. Swami Sivananda said no, this is what you practise only for your body, prana and mind. If you practise yogasanas, you will experience some limbering up, flexibility, looseness, movement of prana shakti. If you practise pranayama, you can experience a certain tingling in your nostrils, coolness and heat as the breath goes through the nostrils, an emptying of lungs, and so on. If you practise meditation, nobody really knows what you are doing. Even the instructor is only hoping that you are following the instructions, whether you go off on some imaginative journey is your own call. The question is, are you able to improve the quality and condition of your mind and life by doing all these practices?

I have been involved with yoga for a long time now. I have seen people practise asana-pranayama for more than fifty years. Sure, when they are old they continue to be mobile, dynamic and active like young people, yet does that mean that they have lived a yogic life? No. Swami Sivananda used to say that a yogic life is not based on the practice of asana and pranayama; it is based on the expression of your positivity and creativity. That is yogic life. You don't receive this training in an asana, pranayama, or even a meditation class.

Swami Sivananda gave a simple sadhana to convert the bhoga bhava into yoga bhava. He said, distance yourself from the negatives in life and connect yourself with the positives in life. If you are able to do just this much, the path of your journey to sattwa is clear. The more you distance yourself from the negatives of life and the more you connect with the positives in life, you live a yogic life in a complete form. In this yogic life, whether you practise your asana, pranayama, mudra and bandha makes no difference. These are components that deal with specific small parts, expressions and experiences of your total life.

In order to move from the negative to the positive, Swami Sivananda gave a simple idea: *pratipaksha bhavana*, creating the opposite feeling. This is not a sadhana that

you do in a classroom; it is an ongoing, twenty-four-hour effort of observing, correcting, again observing and again correcting. It is continuous self-observation and self-correction. Whenever you think ill of somebody, become aware of it and change that into a positive thought, instead of going on enforcing the thought, 'I dislike this person, I hate this person, I reject this person.' No. Always observe the mental state and keep it positive. This was the condition set by Swami Sivananda. He said that if you can do this, you will live the divine life. That is the ultimate yoga.

You can do asanas only for as long as the body is able to. You can do pranayama and other practices only for a limited time. However, you can definitely manage and alter the attitude, the behaviour and the vrittis of the mind from being attracted towards the negative and guide them towards the positive all the time. That is a simple way to convert your bhoga bhavana, the desire to indulge, into yoga bhavana, the harmonious life.

As for one's relationship with one's guru, it is personal. My relationship with my guru and how I have cultivated it has to do with my effort, awareness and connection. You cannot copy it. Your relationship is your unique one, I cannot copy it. The relationship indicates a level of trust, love and connectedness which is much deeper than intellectual ideas. It is something much more internal, beyond even emotions. It is a spiritual connection.

The spiritual connection is for a few only. As mentioned before, everybody who goes to school is not keen on mastering the subject. Everybody who comes to yoga is not keen to become a disciple or have a connection, please remember that. When a connection develops naturally, then it is not based on desire; it is based on love. Everybody who walks in Ganga Darshan is not connected to Swami Satyananda or to Swami Niranjana. They come here for yoga. Yet there are some who are connected, not to yoga, but to Swami Satyananda and to Swami Niranjana. For them yoga has no meaning. For them the connection has the meaning. It is that connection

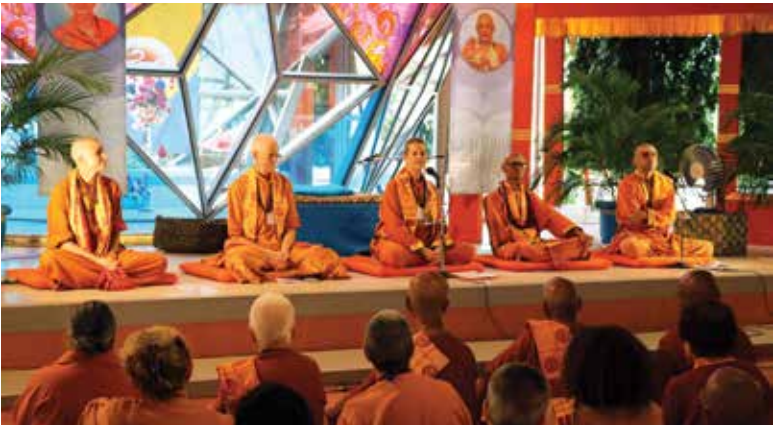
which they cherish, not yoga. Yoga for them is a side practice. Therefore, everybody does not fit in the same category.

Connection represents a behaviour of the individual in relation to another person. It represents an understanding, trust and love between two people. That happens naturally and spontaneously. If you believe then it happens. If you don't believe then it won't even happen with God, although He is all-powerful, all-pervasive and all-knowing. Connection will not happen even with God if there is no belief, faith or conviction.

The people who are present here, I believe are connected. You come here again and again due to that connection. Yoga may be the carrot, but our load is not that of carrots. We follow the carrot of yoga, yet the load we carry is not of carrots. The load we carry is of clothes, something that people can wear to be free from the effects of heat, cold, rain and dryness. The more we move for the carrot of yoga, the more distance we can go with our load, and that load is not a burden.

When Santa Claus comes to town, does he come with a burden of gifts or does he come with a load of gifts? If Santa came to town with a burden, then it would no longer mean anything. Santa comes to town with a load of gifts, and that means something different. Similarly, what we carry is not a burden. It is the gift of peace, harmony and bliss that we share with others around us. Through yoga we are able to share these gifts. Nevertheless, we have to work with ourselves so we can distance ourselves from the negatives and come closer to the positives. That is our yogic journey and that is our connection.

# Deepening the Experience of Yoga



## Introduction

*Swami Sivadhanam:* Today we have the theme of deepening the experience of yoga. In a sense, that is the key theme of the second chapter of yoga that Swamiji is initiating, because through deepening the experience we are able to really connect to the yoga vidya. This deepening of experience happens in two main areas: one is sadhana and the other is lifestyle.

In the sadhanatmak aspect of yoga, Swamiji keeps reminding us that we can become a sadhaka only when we aspire towards the actual aims of yoga and not our personal

whims, fancies or ambitions. If you say that you are a sadhaka of hatha yoga, merely practising a few asanas or pranayamas does not make you a sadhaka. Only if you seriously and sincerely attempt to perfect and reach the goal that hatha yoga has specified, which is the balancing and harmonizing of the two fundamental energies of the body, the ida and the pingala forces, you are a sadhaka. Otherwise your experience will remain superficial. It is the same with other yogas. Therefore, the sadhana aspect of yoga is the bahiranga aspect of Yoga Chakra, the yogas that we are able to practise, be it hatha yoga, raja yoga, kriya yoga.

Then comes the lifestyle aspect of yoga, which is the expressive aspect: how we express yoga in our daily life, in our behaviour, how it affects and transforms our personality, habits, attitudes, mindsets. That is where the antaranga aspect of yoga comes in: karma yoga, bhakti yoga, jnana yoga. That is where the lifestyle yamas and niyamas that Swamiji has been telling us about also come in. He has told us about happiness as the first yama. Unless we are in a happy state, a positive state, how can we even think about going deep into meditation, if that is our goal as a sadhaka of raja yoga? If we are distracted and dissipated by the daily turmoil that we experience, if we cannot maintain a certain plateau of balance for hours, then any hopes that we may cherish of becoming a raja yoga sadhaka is empty daydreaming.

Sadhana and lifestyle are like the two wings of a bird and both are equally important, and the deepening has to happen in both areas. We can also equate the two with melody and rhythm, in the language of music. Melody is like lifestyle, it brings sweetness. You also need rhythm, the regularity, the constant force that sadhana brings into life.

Let us all think about what deepening the experience of yoga means to us individually as sadhakas and how we can get closer to the source, the vidya, to deepen our experience. Let us think about how we can become what Sri Swamiji wanted us to become, when he envisaged the Yoga Chakra and started the whole yoga movement.

## LET EVERY MOMENT BE A HAPPY MOMENT

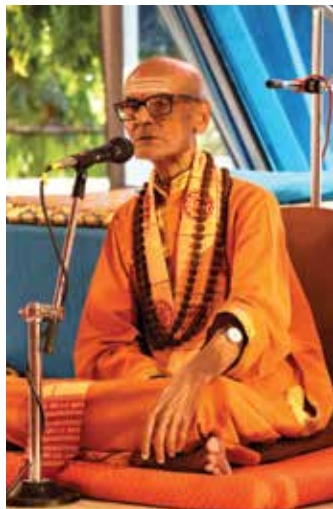
*Swami Gyanbhikshu, India*

I am very happy today to find so many aspirants, so many yoga lovers, and all of them disciples of the tradition, of Sri Swamiji and Pujya Swamiji, Swami Niranjan-anandaji.

Happiness is the first sadhana of the second chapter: *manah-prasad*. This happiness is not just artificial happiness; it has to be something internal, it has to be the product of positive inclinations, positive ideas, positive aspirations. I have a habit. I say to everybody, “Happy morning! Happy evening! Happy day! Happy lunch!” So much so that if I don’t say it, another person will say to me, “Did you forget happiness?” I will tell you about how this habit developed.

One day, I went to the Akhara for darshan of Swamiji. I had nothing to demand, nothing to present, no instruction to seek. Pujya Swamiji was not there. I bowed down in front of his asana, and turned back to go. The moment I came out of the gate of Akhara, the mantra started humming in my mind, “Happy morning! Happy morning!” I felt like I could jump up and down. I reached the courtyard. There was a sannyasi there. I said to him, “Happy morning!” He looked at me and replied, “Happy morning, Swamiji!” I said, “Mind it, ‘happy-morning’ is a wonderful word. It is a *dwadasha akshara mantra*, a twelve-letter mantra.” This is how my learning of happiness started.

Happiness or manahprasad is a sadhana. It is *manasic tapa*, mental austerity. We start from here, and journeying



through the series of six lifestyle yamas and niyamas, reach *shantata*, serenity. So manahprasad is the beginning and the first sadhana of the second chapter.

I was introduced to yoga purely by chance. I was not a believer; I was a leftist out and out and did not believe in these things. Physical needs brought me to the ashram. For five days, I learnt some asana, pranayama and neti to help with a chronic cough and cold. I would come as a day scholar, learn for a few hours and go. But then I did practise continuously, without any break, for months, and I was fully cured of that twenty-year-old condition.

After three years, I came to the ashram for the second time, and learnt surya namaskara and other practices. Five years passed. During this time I did not know anything about Sri Swamiji. I knew that one sadhu or sanniyasi is here but I used to come for one hour and go, and therefore no interest and no connection. Pujya Swamiji was not here at that time. One day in 1983, suddenly another word comes to my mind, 'Diksha! Diksha!' I had never read about diksha, nobody had told me anything about diksha. I thought, 'What is this diksha?' Then the idea came that I should come to the ashram. I came one fine morning, here in Ganga Darshan, enquired about diksha, and was told, "Today is not a diksha day, come next Friday." I still remember that pious day of my life, 23rd of July 1983. I received mantra diksha from Sri Swamiji. And just as I had been doing asana, pranayama, neti assiduously, I started doing mantra morning and evening.

In 1984 I heard that a kriya yoga course was going to be conducted. I enquired at the ashram. The person on duty told me, "You have not done any other course. You cannot do kriya yoga. Kriya yoga presupposes that you are master in many practices of yoga." Fortunately, Sri Swamiji heard the exchange. He asked, "Who is he?" The swami said, "He is such and such person." Sri Swamiji called me, and as is the norm in our tradition, I bowed down respectfully. Sri Swamiji asked me, "What have you learnt?" I told him of the few things I had learnt. He said, "Yes, you may join."

Here came the turning point of my life. I came to the course, 5th of July, for seven days. I went back and started practising kriya yoga. I would get up at 2.30 every morning and do all the twenty practices, for six years continuously. That inspired me to visit the ashram again and again.

The most wonderful thing at that time was that Pujya Swamiji had taken over, and Sri Swamiji had really hundred percent handed over. Sri Swamiji would give satsangs in the Kutir lawn for four hours, two hours in the morning and two hours in the afternoon. He would speak on everything under the sun: physics, chemistry, philosophy, history, politics, medicine, science, and of course yoga and tantra. There was one satsang that became very important for me in the next part of life. One day he started talking about the Soviet Union, the old USSR. Sri Swamiji said, "Communism, nice philosophy, but this system cannot stand, it will break." My leftist mind rejected, 'A sadhu should not take interests in such things. Why should he make comments? What does he know about communism and socialism and capitalism?' You know what happened. Gorbachev came and the USSR was finished, scattered, demolished.

Sri Swamiji would never criticize anybody. One day, satsang was going on about different sadhus of India, and Sri Swamiji spoke about many of them but only words of praise. One sannyasin asked about Pujya Swamiji. Sri Swamiji said, "What about Swami Niranjan? He is taller than me." The person said, "Of course he is physically taller than you." Sri Swamiji said, "No, in every respect he is taller than me and time will tell that."

Another day there was a discussion about awareness. I knew the literal meaning of awareness, but Sri Swamiji said, "Awareness means 'I know that I know'." I started thinking, 'What does it mean? I know, but I know that I know.' Now I know the meaning, but it is not easy to practise it. Pujya Swamiji told us, "When I move my finger, I know that I am moving my finger." I am also moving my finger and my head as I am speaking, but I don't know it. It is happening habitually or instinctively. This is about awareness.

Another discussion was about acceptance, happiness and sorrow. Everybody asks about problems of life. Sri Swamiji's answers to problems of life used to be so direct that a man in pain and suffering might think, 'Babaji is misguiding me. He is not giving me a solution.' Sri Swamiji said, "We have to accept life." I remember the words and I practise them because it helps me. Sri Swamiji said, "You see, life has been like that. The world has been like that. Nobody can change it. Pleasure will be there and pain will be there. Suffering will be there and joy will be there. Victory will be there and defeat will be there. You have to just accept." At the height of it he said, "You love your moments of happiness and pleasure. You enjoy success. Why don't you enjoy failures? Embrace the state of sorrow and suffering and failures." This also I try to practise and it helps very much.

Then came sannyasa course 1991, conducted by Pujya Swamiji. I was one of the participants in the course and that was a memorable period of life for many of us. Pujya Swamiji taught us everything. Two things I remember vividly. The SWAN concept, it is the product of that sannyasa course. See your strengths, weaknesses, ambitions and needs, examine them and try to improve. In this SWAN I see the seed of the second chapter; the idea: change for the better. Now it is presented in a systematic way and that is very important for understanding. At that time it was just SWAN. Making a continuous, persistent, consistent effort to improve, to overcome the negativities of life, the minuses of life; to become positive, sattwic; to transcend the negativity and the tamasic nature of the personality. As one great saint of the sixteenth century has said, *Karat karat abhyas te jadamati hot sujan* – "Even a person with an inert mind can become a jnani with continuous practice." With all our participation and the inspiration of Pujya Swamiji, I think the mission of the second chapter will make steady progress and drive the force of yoga.

## YOU ARE NOT A YOGA TEACHER

*Swami Vedantananda, Portugal*

Over the last couple of days, we have been hearing some wonderful stories from Sri Swamiji's first generation disciples of how they met him and came to the ashram. They came to the ashram to learn yoga and to live the lifestyle of sannyasa, not to teach yoga. However, nowadays many people come to yoga just because they want to teach it. In the West it is very much seen as a career path and in some organizations it is even promoted as a career.



Yesterday we spoke about the motivation and inspiration for teaching yoga, which has to be yoga bhava or seva. If your motivation is earning a living, it doesn't work. Over the years I have seen many well-meaning yoga teachers being very ambitious and getting themselves into financial problems as they overextend themselves. When money is the motivating force, you are teaching yoga to pay the rent. That definitely changes the way you teach, it becomes the tail that wags the dog. It becomes a financial burden and a weight around your neck. So remember the tradition that you belong to and be true to what you believe in. Follow your heart and not the dollar. There are thousands of yoga teachers out there teaching yoga and earning thousands of dollars. It is big business. They get paid a lot of money yet they don't have half of what we do. They may have thousands of dollars in the bank, yet we are richer than them because what we have is gold. We have guru and we have tradition.

I started teaching yoga when I was nineteen and I met Sri Swamiji in 1983 in London. In October 1985, I came

to Ganga Darshan for the first time. I was a newly initiated poorna sannyasin, naive and confused. In those days Sri Swamiji would see you in Kutir. I asked if I could see him, not really knowing what I wanted to say. I was told, "Come tomorrow at 8.15." Being a person who is pathologically early, I was there at quarter to eight, and 8.15 did eventually come and went. And 8.30 came and went. And 9 o'clock came and went. Eventually somebody said, "Oh Sri Swamiji can't see you today. Please come back tomorrow." I went back the next day. This time I decided to go at eight, and 8.15 came and went. It was the same thing. Eventually they said, "Oh no, sorry. Swamiji can't see you." On the third day, I was there, I went in and I had a clear idea of what I wanted to ask him and of course I realized that's what all the waiting was about: to clear my own head. I said, "Swamiji, I don't know what to do." He said, "Your spiritual path is to teach yoga and apart from that," with a flick of the hand, "I don't care what you do." Which gave me a lot of freedom and a great gift.

I had already been teaching yoga for more than a decade at that point, but still I valued the gift that he had given me. Through my life, I have taught yoga to the best of my ability and I have always felt supported, guided and inspired as if he was standing behind me. Yet for all those years, I identified myself as a yoga teacher. A few years ago, Swami Niranjan was giving a satsang where he told all of us, "You are not yoga teachers. Yoga teaching is what you do. It's not who you are." I realized at that point that we all identify ourselves by our profession or by what we do. So now I say, "I am Vedanta and she teaches yoga."

Now is the time for us to drop the identity of 'I am a yoga teacher'. Now is the time to become a student, to remember how to be a student. In doing this, we also are going to have to drop the ego. We teach people amazing practices that make them feel good and they give us the credit for this, they fall in love with us, it goes to our head. Therefore, the first step for us in dropping the identity of a yoga teacher is to

begin to practise egolessness, as Rishi Arundhati was saying the other day, the example of Sri Swamiji.

There is always something new to learn and as teachers we often forget how to be a student. The yoga vidya is fathomless, never-ending, and when we connect to this vidya, our students will feel it in the way we teach, there will be a qualitative difference in the way we teach. Therefore we need to move out of the maintenance level of practice and begin to practise real sadhana. We need to take our practice to sadhana, for ourselves and for our students. We need to live yoga in all its forms, continue to learn, and allow real positive changes to come from within.

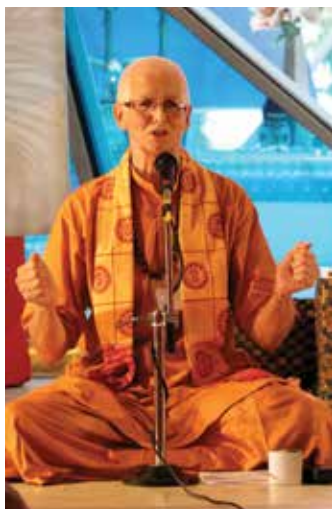
For those of you that have been away from here for some years, I urge you to stay connected and to come to the courses that are being held here in Ganga Darshan. I am sure that you have been inspired by the two young ones that gave us talks yesterday and the day before, inspired by their eloquence, their maturity, their confidence; they were inspirational in what they said about what is going on here at the moment and will continue with the second chapter.

Thus, focus now on your own progressive development and move from being a half-baked human-doing to a well-rounded human being. Make the shift from practitioner to sadhaka and practise your sadhana seriously, sincerely and with commitment to become a shining light of peace, balance and harmony in the world. Your journey begins right here, right now.



## WORK IN PROGRESS

*Swami Yogajyoti, Ireland*



My journey as a sadhaka started, as I am sure many of your journeys started, with a Satyananda Yoga teacher. I was fortunate in that. That first class was pawanmuktasana and yoga nidra, and it was just amazing! I said to myself, ‘Bring this on, this is just something else.’ It made me feel so good and I haven’t stopped talking about yoga since.

The next morning I was up and doing my pawanmuktasana, and I did that for a week until the next class. It was like a door opening up. That’s what Satyananda Yoga was for me. It opened up a pathway. There was a path, there were steps on the path and it brought all the fragmented parts of me together. There was no separation any more, it gradually brought all the bits: bits in the mind, bits in the body, into one. Swamiji was saying that Satyananda Yoga brings health and wellbeing at all levels, I did not know that at the time but that’s what it did bring. It was probably getting those endorphins flowing, which I didn’t give much of a chance before that.

It was no problem doing it every day, it was so good. Every morning I felt, ‘Give me an hour of this and I am ready for the day.’ It went on like that for some time, I was loving it, I was feeling stronger, I was feeling well. I could take on the world at that point. My teacher would speak about Sri Swamiji and gave us BSY books to read. She had spent one year here in the ashram, so she brought the teaching back in the same format. She was always encouraging, “If you want

to know more, then go to the source, go to Ganga Darshan.” I decided I was ready for that journey, thinking I had myself fairly sorted, and arrived at the ashram.

Swamiji came after a few days. What followed has been my experience since then whenever I am in the ashram and with Swami Niranjana. It was as if there was a very strong steel lid on all the parts of me that had nothing to do with me, nicely packed away, and that just dissolved. All the little worms and things that were inside, were out there for me to deal with. Having been here in the routine for some time helped, as it gave me a little bit of discipline. Also, as I had been practising at home, there was that strength, that feeling, ‘Okay, taking it one day at a time, you will find the way.’ I thought, ‘These are parts of myself that I can look at, that I can maybe even adjust and change.’ The practices were like a little treasure for me, something that I could rely on, and I used the practices to help me progress.

I was travelling back and forth between Ireland and Munger, but it was coming here that would every time bring me back to the base level again. Another layer could be opened up to look at, another part of me to discover, to understand, to learn, to change. At the time I thought I was living the yogic lifestyle, and when Swamiji spoke about sincere, committed, serious at the Convention, I thought, ‘Definitely that’s me. I have been doing this now for quite a few years.’ In the meantime I had become a teacher, and was trying to inspire people with yoga and seeing the results of doing that. I thought, ‘I am ready for this new chapter’ and when the yoga vidya courses began, I decided to come.

The time spent here felt like we were all given this big, bright torch to look at ourselves again. Another layer to peel, yet there was a greater depth now, a new brightness, and given in such a way that it was not, ‘Oh my God, is this me again? How much more do I have to change?’ It was given in the way that if you fall down and can’t keep going with everything, it doesn’t matter, you just keep trying. The highlight was the joy in the effort, in trying. I think that’s

what Swamiji gives, and above all, a great patience. When I think of all the years that I have been trying and failing and trying again and trying it this way and that way, and still always welcome, always given the encouragement to just get out there, try it, keep the practice going.

If we are a teacher, it is sometimes easy to lose it because we get concerned about the students and they are looking for more. So gradually it can happen that the time for your own understanding and practice of yoga becomes a little less. You are busy with students and the courses. It is a very positive thing to do, yet the not so good thing is we squash our own learning, our own discovery and become this teacher figure. With the yoga vidya courses, it began to become clearer how easily we can slip into that. The sadhana too becomes superficial. Instead of being deep as it should, it comes up to the surface: I am doing my practice daily, but not staying at the depth.

In this way, the yoga vidya teachings have opened up layers and made me see the value of the treasure that I've been carrying, that we all carry. Swami Vedanta called it gold. I will call it diamond, but not realizing that you have a diamond in your pocket. The yoga vidya put the light inside that diamond so that it became a bright shining burning light that filled everything.

Now, it is the fourth year of this sadhana. Previously I would have thought that focusing on something for one year was a long enough sadhana, that you really get a lot of change happening. This is four years, we are still at the beginning and I am still looking at the first things. As it was mentioned, there is an ocean of knowledge there, and all for our benefit.

It is only in the last Raja Yoga course that I began to understand the yoga lifestyle aspect. As I said, I thought that I was living a yoga lifestyle, now I realized all that I did was about using the practices for what I wanted, for how I thought I should change, for where I was trying to get. It isn't that. I have only begun to realize what yoga lifestyle is and that I have to remember that every waking moment. This is what I

am living and anything else follows from that. Thus, for me, it's still work in progress.

## TAKING THE SECOND CHAPTER TO THE WORLD

*Swami Prembhava, Australia*



My experiences with the second chapter actually started in 2017. Even though I had been living here for many years and teaching yoga, experiencing yoga, in 2017 Swamiji called me and said, “This year you will have to write a book and go travelling and teach the book. Write the book on yoga ecology and lifestyle, the title will be *Janani* and when you’ve written it, you can go and teach.” The immediate reaction was panic and fear, ‘I don’t know how to write a book. I haven’t studied

anything in years, I haven’t really been writing, I haven’t been reading. I have just been doing seva, karma yoga and ashram life.’

I had to start studying again. I had originally studied environmental science at university and had always been very passionate about the environment. When I was studying, I started going to yoga classes and heard that this really cool guy was coming from India. They said to me, “You should go and see him, he is a real yogi.” So I went with some friends and met Swami Niranjan, he had come to Australia. From that time on, I started to think that the only way that we can actually live ecologically is to live and practise yoga. The two concepts came together and I decided I wanted to come to India, I wanted to be where Swamiji was and learn yoga. I came and for a few years I was very neurotic about

plastic, trees being removed, compost bins, mosquito spray. Slowly, slowly Swamiji chipped away at my obsessive nature and after a while the neurotic environmentalist went into the background and karma yoga and ashram life became the path that I was following. Then in 2017 he said, “It’s time for you to write a book and go travelling.” In one month we wrote the book. It was quickly put together, sent for printing, back it came, and off I went with the book in hand, trailing my suitcase, terrified.

I first went to Delhi and had to go and buy some shoes for travelling. Someone took me to a big fancy department store. I had never seen this side of India before: a three-four layered, air-conditioned, busy place, lifts in glass going up and down, and people shopping like I had never seen. In India, people shopping with this consumerism and materialistic nature I had never noticed before. I started thinking, ‘The world has really changed. India has changed so much.’

In the airports, I noticed how everybody was walking at high speed with their wheely bags, always on their phones, ten people sitting in a line all on their phones, no one talking, no one communicating. There I was, just sitting, watching this madness. When you’ve lived in the ashram for a long time and go out into the cities, it is a shock. I started thinking, ‘What am I doing? How am I going to teach this?’ Swamiji had given me one instruction when I left. He had said, “Take one message with you. Tell people to try every day to see the rising sun.” That was the message, not complicated.

So travelling and spending a lot of time waiting in airports, in buses and trains, I started reflecting on this, ‘Wake early to see the sun rise.’ That is actually the basis of yogic life and of yoga ecology. We have to make little changes in our life that harmonizes us with nature, with the environment around us. When I was studying, we were warned about climate change, global warming, air pollution, ocean pollution. We knew about it and coming out again so many years later, I noticed that it had become worse. Nothing

had improved, the plastic in the ocean was more, the plastic on the roads was more, global warming was a reality, and all of you know about it.

Just this year, Europe was burning, Sweden was burning. There were floods all over India. Water was out of control, fire was out of control. We are at the mercy of Mother Nature's wrath. She has become very angry and we can see it. Every week there is another cyclone, another hurricane. It's undeniable that what we have done to the planet is possibly irreversible. So what are we going to do about it? The yogic path is perhaps the only path that we can tread to help the planet just a little bit.

As I travelled to different places, people asked me, "How is yoga and ecology linked, what is the relationship? How can putting a stretch in your body help the environment?" Yoga and ecology are the same. Yoga ecology is nothing new. It is as ancient as yoga and the yogis, and it has always been a part of our tradition. Swami Sivananda always said that if you want to live a happy and full life, you have to spend time with birds and animals, communicate with rivers. He would worship Mother Ganga every morning. He would use natural therapies to heal people. So yoga ecology was part of our tradition from the very beginning. Swami Satyananda would worship tulsi and the plants in his Akhara every morning. He had a special connection with water; many people can tell you stories about how it always rained whenever Sri Swamiji had a program. He had connection with nature and with the elements. Yoga ecology is nothing new, but it is definitely the requirement of the time now. That is why Swamiji has started to encourage the practices, the path and the training of yoga ecology and yogic lifestyle.

To see how people responded to the practices was quite beautiful. I travelled out to South America and to Europe. Wherever I went, everyone was very open. It didn't matter if it was children, an atheist, a businessman. When we spoke about nature and the environment, about protection and worship of the divine within nature, everybody let go of

whatever preconceived ideas of yoga or anything they had in their mind. For protection of the Earth and of the elements is something that we all need for existence to be alive. There is no use doing your asana and pranayama if the air is completely polluted, you can't breathe. There is no kriya that is going to help you if the water is full of plastic and polluted. If we connect with nature and start to live yogic lives, that will help us survive, as a species and hopefully as a planet, then the beauty and the ecosystems that exist on this planet might be preserved.

During the various sessions, we focused on asana in terms of the animal postures and make people become like those animals. One would see very posh people doing titali asana with smiles as if they were the prettiest little butterfly jumping around a garden. In that way it was very relaxed, and we tried to create the ashram environment wherever we went. We didn't do short one-hour or two-hour seminars, it was whole weekends. We would try to find the most beautiful natural environments where we could do the practices. We had most of the classes outside and people felt that is was an ashram, just for the weekend. We tried to live the full Yoga Chakra within a day. There was hatha yoga, raja yoga, karma yoga, bhakti yoga, not in classroom style but in ashram lifestyle.

You can learn asana and pranayama in a class, but to really live yoga and to learn yoga, you have to do that in the ashram. Therefore, you have to come and spend time here if you want to deepen your experience of yoga and live and imbibe the yogic lifestyle, whether one week, one month, one year. Yoga is something that becomes who you are, it is a whole lifestyle. It is the diet, the routine, it is waking every morning to see the sun rise.

When you spend time in the ashram and wake early every morning, it becomes a part of who you are. Your biorhythms tune into that and it becomes you. When I was travelling, I found it didn't matter whether I was jetlagged or exhausted, I'd still wake every morning at 4 am because my body is tuned

into that. To see the rising sun every morning is in itself a sadhana, but when you do it for a long time it becomes a part of who you are. It becomes natural, it becomes the way in which you can live yoga. If you wake early, it's quiet, everyone else is sleeping. It's the *brahmamuhurta*, the time of the gods, the time for sadhana. You can quietly do your sadhana, clean your room, have your breakfast, everything before everyone else is out of bed. It gives you energy, prana, and it connects you to the biorhythms of the Earth and the sun. That in itself keeps you healthy and strong.

Most people now go to bed very late. They eat huge dinners at 11 o'clock at night and sleep after that. The eating habits, the sleeping habits, everything is completely out of sync. Your grandparents probably had their meals quite early, because that was the natural way. You don't eat your dinner at 11 o'clock at night and go to bed on a full stomach.

Yogic life is a simple, natural, ecological life. There is nothing complicated, it's following the natural biorhythms of nature, eating simple, healthy, vegetarian food which is also very good for the planet. It's about living with awareness. It's about sharing what you have with others. It's about seva, where we perform everything for others, for the Earth. Therefore, yogic lifestyle and yoga ecology go hand in hand.

The practices of yoga ecology are largely aradhana based, where we tune into the divine within nature. When we can do that, when we can see the divine in everything, then that becomes our journey, our path. That becomes our spirituality. When we can see the divine in the trees, in the rivers, in the ocean, in the people around us, in the animals, that is yogic life.

When I came back to the ashram, my overwhelming feeling was what an amazing connection we all have around the world. Wherever I went, everybody welcomed me with open hearts. They opened their houses, they took me in just like family and I never once felt like a stranger. I never once felt alone or scared, there was so much support and kindness, and that was everyone's love of guru.

It is the love of guru that sustains us. It is that love of guru that enables people who are working in their ashrams and centres to keep going year after year. It is the yoga that maybe keeps us healthy, keeps our joints limber, but it is the love of guru that keeps us going. That was my strongest impression: we have this amazing Satyananda Yoga family the world over, who may not be in the millions but the quality is the best. As Swami Anandananda said to me, “It’s not the quantity, it’s the quality that makes Satyananda Yoga the best.”



## THE EXPERIENCE OF ANT NIRANJAN

*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

Everyone is having experiences all the time, even now. Your skin is feeling the heat, it is an experience you are having. The hardness of the floor, it is an experience you are having. The sweat on the face, it is an experience you are having. The peacefulness of being here, it is an experience. The agitation you feel when you go to the kitchen is an experience. Anything that changes the condition, quality and behaviour of mind is called an experience. The problem is, you are not aware of the experiences.

Are you aware of the hardness of the floor? Not until it begins to hurt you. Are you aware of the sweat on your face? Not until it begins to drip. Are you aware of the heat in the environment? Not until you begin to sweat. Therefore, only when an experience reaches its peak do you become aware of it. The peak triggers three responses: *raga*, *dwesha* and neutral. *Raga* means attraction, *dwesha* means repulsion, and neutral is neutral. Example: after Swami Prembhava's visit to Europe, people have been writing of their experience of the sessions. One letter from Europe said:

"I've been living in this city since my birth for the last forty years. I go from my house to my workplace walking every day. I walk down the same footpath every day. However, it was only after doing the yoga ecology course that for the first time I noticed the trees lining the avenue. I noticed the greenness of the leaves, the sturdiness of the trunks. For forty years they were there, but for the first time I actually saw them."

This account indicates that something opened up a different perception. Whether it was asana, pranayama, aradhana, meditation or the environment, it opened up another door of perception, and the person suddenly saw the trees lining the footpath he had been walking for forty years. Until now they had not registered. Suddenly they registered,

‘Wow! These trees are here. Look, the leaves are green. Look, the trunk is solid and sturdy. What a surprise that for forty years of my life I never noticed them!’

This is an experience of yoga lifestyle, where you become aware of the experience. The example is a neutral experience: recognition of something that exists. Then there is the raga experience. Now I don’t travel much, but when I used to be a peripatetic sannyasin, with my address on the road or in the air, many people would come and talk about their practices of yoga. Many meditators would also come and say, “Swamiji, I’ve been learning how to meditate for some time. For many months I did not see anything in my meditation, and then one day I saw an angel and light. I was totally intoxicated by that vision and experience. It has happened only once, it hasn’t happened again. How can I have that experience again?” I would ask, “When you are not seeing the angel, what are you seeing?” The response would be, “I am making the effort to go back to that state of consciousness where I saw the angel. I want to go back there.” This means the person was not meditating; they were only striving and making the effort to go back to a state. Would that qualify to be an experience?

Another example: imagine that you see the angel and hear the divine trumpets blaring away in your meditation. You open your eyes, then again close them and think, ‘I shall deepen that experience.’ You try to recreate what you saw and experienced. Now you are recreating it, you are not seeing it again. It is not darshan any more, it is now a creation of your own mind, and that is not an experience.

Experience is that which happens spontaneously and automatically, without information to you, “I am coming.” If you expect the experience to come on the 10 o’clock train when you sit down to meditate, then definitely that is not going to happen. It is not going to come at that prescribed time. Yet the mind has changed. The mind is now attracted to repeating the same experience where you felt that first bliss and happiness, where you felt, ‘Now I have become



truly spiritual. I can see angels. I can hear the divine music. I have become a prophet and I can profit from it!’ The entire attitude of meditation changes into that of imaginative fantasy. That is not deepening the experience, that is going on your own imaginative journey, following the shadow of an experience that you had when you did the right meditation. Without any expectation or anticipation, you came to a stage where suddenly the vista opened up before you. Now, when you are making the effort, the vista is not opening up any more; it is only a reflection of your raga.

Then there is the opposite, the dwesha experience. There are people who come to me and say, “Swamiji, I have stopped meditating.” Why? “Because every time I meditate, something negative comes out of me.” The negative that was being released has stopped the individual from going through the experience. When you see bad things, you think, ‘I am doing something wrong.’ Seeing the devil doesn’t fit in your understanding or in the jacket that you have made of the experience, therefore you do not want to continue. That is dwesha.

People also feel that in order to deepen an experience, they have to go in and in and in, become more focused, more concentrated, more acutely pinpointed in a dot, sharpen

the pencil so that it comes to a sharp tip. People think the more they sharpen their pencil and the more pointy the tip becomes the more the concentration will improve, the awareness will improve, everything will improve. What they do not understand is that when you reduce the lead to a point, your awareness has actually reduced; it has not expanded. You have reduced your awareness by going into it and focusing more.

Let us say, I am an ant, a sannyasi ant. The owner of the house, God, brings a picture printed on a dot matrix printer, not on a laser printer but on a dot matrix printer. The picture is all pixelated, showing small squares of white, grey and black. God puts that picture on the floor, and tells me, "You ant Niranjan, walk up to that paper and see the picture." This ant Niranjan begins to walk on the paper, trying to look at the picture, trying to deepen the experience of looking at the picture. However, he can only see white fields, grey fields and black fields stretching on endlessly; sometimes the white becomes black, sometimes the black becomes grey, yet he never sees the whole picture. God says, "Okay, my dear Niranjan ant, come on to my finger." I somehow manage to climb on to His finger. He lifts me up high and says, "Now look down." When I look, what was previously white, black and grey fields, in different shapes and hues, have suddenly taken the image of a person. I can see a face in the picture. This is what has to happen in order to deepen an experience.

I am giving you the opposite understanding. You have to rise above what you are experiencing to see the bigger picture. That is deepening the experience, where you are able to see not the pixelated form but the actual picture the pixels have made. To do that, you have to leave the paper and go higher. The experience is left down there and your observation, your drashta awareness, is up here. That is when you can see the full picture. If you try to deepen your experience while being on the field of black, grey and white, you will only try to dig deeper. If you dig in the white field, you will only go deeper into the white space. If you dig in

the black field, you will only go deeper in the black space. If you dig in the grey field, you will only go deeper in the grey space. Your whole awareness will be restricted and contained, not expansive.

Thus, the first point is that you are having experiences continuously, irrespective of whether or not you are aware of them. It is a continuous process at physical, sensorial, mental, emotional, psychic and spiritual levels. There are times when you cross a person on the road and say, “I got bad vibes from that person. I didn’t feel right when the person crossed me. I felt something negative from him.” Was that a physical experience? Was that a mental or logical experience? Was that an emotional experience? No, it was a psychic experience. This is an example of how experiences are taking place all the time though you are not aware of them. When you become aware of an experience, you either desire or dislike it so much that you limit your perception and ignore all the peripheral and small experiences that continue to take place. You only try to recreate the one that you liked, as you have become attached to it, and that is your raga. In order to see the bigger picture, there has to be awareness of and detachment from the experience.

If you are doing *bhujangasana*, the cobra pose, and somebody says, “Experience your body,” where will your attention naturally go to? To the lower back, since that is where the maximum tension is. You are not experiencing the posture; you are experiencing the tension in the lower back. Is that the experience of *bhujangasana*? Yet that is what each one of you, from the senior teachers to the junior practitioners, do. If you hear, “Experience your body in *bhujangasana*,” the attention will instantly go to the lower back, ‘It is aching. How much longer do I have to hold?’ That cannot be called an experience. This indicates that people do not realize the meaning of the word ‘experience’. They do not realize its complexity or vastness.

If I had to experience my body in *bhujangasana*, I would do it differently. I would visualize the whole posture, the

whole body. I would experience the whole body from the top of my head to the tips of my toes in one thought, one glimpse, one idea, and not just focus on the part which is aching. I would see the whole picture. That is the experience of bhujangasana. If you are told, "Experience the pain in your back," then you are free to take your awareness there, but that is not the instruction. You were told to experience your body in bhujangasana, and you are unable to do that as you are translating that into something else: becoming aware of what is hurting you and is unpleasant to you.

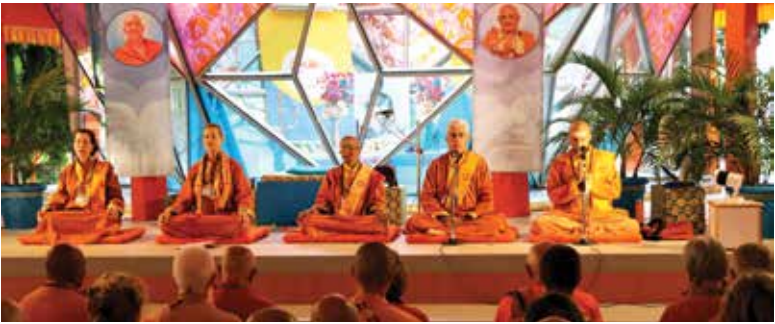
The same thing happens in meditation. What you don't understand you reject, and then stop the practice. What you decide to accept, you chase that. Deepening the experience, on the other hand, is an expression of everything. It is an understanding of all the expressions of the body and mind.

Experience is one thing, awareness of the experience is another thing, and understanding the awareness of the experience is a third thing. As it is said, "I know that I know." Not just "I know." You all know, yet you all forget what you know. Therefore it is no good saying, "I know." If you can say, "I know that I know," you are reaffirming and accepting that.

Thus, to deepen an experience, don't go into it; rise above it. If you try to go into it, you limit yourself. The awareness which extended for miles has now been focused to a few inches. Instead, if the awareness which is a few kilometres wide can be increased to ten kilometres, that is deepening the experience. Now you are able to see a bigger picture, have a better perspective and understanding.

This is one reason people flounder in meditation. They go in so deep that they are unable to extract themselves. If you say, "Come out of it," they reply, "But I have been doing this for the last thirty years. How can I just stop and change everything?" You have to accept a different approach if you wish to realize that deepening of awareness is understanding, observing and knowing that you are undergoing that change, that transformation, that feeling, that experience.

# The Fundamentals of Satyananda Yoga

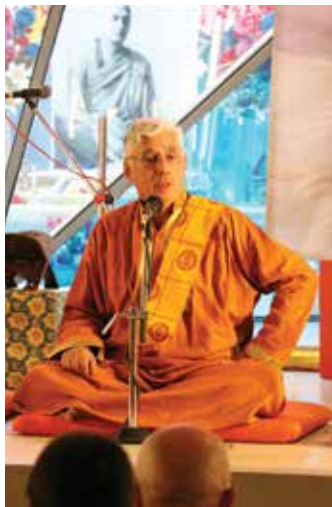


## Introduction

*Swami Sivadhyanam:* During the last three days we have looked at different themes. On the first day it was the importance of connecting to the vidya, to the masters, imbibing and expressing that vidya. The second day it was developing yoga bhava instead of bhoga bhava. Yesterday it was about deepening the experience. Different people have shared their insights on how one can do all this. Today on the last day, the theme is about the fundamentals of Satyananda Yoga, and the speakers will be presenting their viewpoints on the different aspects that make up what we know as Satyananda Yoga. This includes awareness, which most of us know about, yet need to be repeatedly reminded of as the underlying foundation of the entire edifice of Satyananda Yoga.

## LESSONS IN AWARENESS

*Sannyasi Agnideva (Ignacio Copete), Colombia*



My subject is awareness, the foundation stone of Satyananda Yoga. However, before I speak about awareness, I want to give you a picture of what was the mood that we Colombians had when Sri Swamiji came to Colombia for the first time in 1971.

Two of us had seen Sri Swamiji for the first time in 1968 through a movie reel from France. His name did not stick in the mind, but then when we saw the picture of this yogi that a friend had sent from France, I told him, “That is the yogi I saw in the movie. He was teaching *trataka*.” That was the beginning. At the same time, there was this guy who came and said to us, “You are a group, you have a mission, and there is this being of light waiting for you to open up. If you don’t, he cannot come. You have to open yourselves and let him come.” We decided, “Fine, let’s open ourselves up.” We found that the yogi was coming to London and we decided, without even knowing him, that we would invite him. We wrote a letter to him and said, “We want you to come.” He replied, “Yes. Send two tickets, one for me and one for my assistant, and I will be there.” That’s how the whole thing started. So our mood was that of expectation of something important but we didn’t have a clue what it was!

When Sri Swamiji came to Colombia and into our lives, we did not look at him merely as a yogi or a visiting professor. We tried to observe him to understand him, to see what he was, what his mission was and what our purpose with him was. So we would be literally just looking at him, at everything that

he did, the way he put the foot out, his chappals, everything. We were trying to learn and understand what was going on with him and what he had to teach. This was the first time we were in front of a yogi, face to face, and we did not know what to do. We took him to the museums! Yet, the main thing was that we were in the process of trying to understand who he was and how he did things. From then on, that was our main attitude. The whole group did the same, though each one had their own experiences. So what I am going to tell you is a few experiences in my life that I had with Sri Swamiji, which helped to understand his teachings.

The first time that I met him, it was a shock. I was just out of law school, young, powerful, I could do everything that I wanted. I was a young man and by definition young men do not cry. Sri Swamiji landed, and fate had it that he was going to stay in my house, in my parents' house, I moved out of my room to give it to him. He got in the car and I was in the front. As I sat there, I started to cry, for twenty-five minutes, for no reason at all.

He was supposed to be in Bogota for five days. The first day nothing happened, the second day nothing happened. I ended up being appointed as his translator by him. He started to talk, talked for ten minutes and said, "Now you translate." Yet nothing happened. On the third day, I decided, "I have to go and talk to him and see if he is my guru." I went to him and said, "Swamiji, are you my guru?" "Of course! I have been giving you all kinds of clues, but you do not understand, you are not aware." So my first contact with Sri Swamiji was not very successful as far as awareness goes. I failed the test.

The second time I met Sri Swamiji was here in India at the old ashram for the convention in 1973. There was the Diwali celebration and I was walking right behind him. As I had been his translator, I sort of felt that I was allowed to be near him. I was really close, Indian style. I was walking behind him and suddenly he turned around and said, "You know!" From then on 'you know' for me was like 'Hey Siri!'

You know what ‘Hey Siri’ is? It is a command that you give to an iPhone so that Siri starts listening to you. It is a command of alertness to a device. So the moment Sri Swamiji would say, “You know,” I knew that something important was coming. It happened throughout my life with him.

He turned around and said, “You know, if a person achieves the capacity of being a witness of everything that he does, thinks or feels, he has achieved the most important thing that a human being can achieve.” He said this, turned around, and continued walking. From then on, those were the rules of the game.

I had the opportunity to go with him around the world, and that was the unspoken rule. You had to be aware. If you were not aware, he would leave you behind. You had to see the whole picture, understand the environment, understand what he was trying to do, and gauge whether you had to intervene or do something else. It was all a play of awareness. The other thing that was important for understanding him was that he had allowed us to be near him because we were not obnoxious, a hindrance or a menace. However, this meant that you had to continuously understand what was going on, see how much you project yourself to him, how much you go back and stay back. It was all a play of awareness.

Another instance. In 1975, there was a convention in Colombia. I was the translator; we were all very happy sitting at a classical wooden table with chairs. He was giving a lecture and I was translating. Now, the translation with Sri Swamiji was quite a story, because he would go for five, seven, eight minutes and I would have to remember everything that he said and translate it back. They would time it: if he spoke for seven minutes, I would have to go for seven minutes. Nevertheless, it was going reasonably well. Then he decided that he didn’t want to sit on a chair. He said, “Let’s go up on the table. Sit cross-legged,” and the lecture was for two hours. He probably saw my face, and said, “Ah, it’s good for you. Good for you and for your awareness.” So I also got up and sat there. The first twenty minutes were fine but then the legs started complaining.

Sri Swamiji sat like the perfect yogi he was and I had to play the same part. I couldn't move. The legs and the back were hurting, yet I had to pay attention to what he was saying and translate. The only way I could do it was by practising what Swamiji Niranjan was saying, "Look at the whole thing." The awareness had to be complete, I couldn't ignore the pain, I had to acknowledge that. At the same time, I had to be aware of what I was hearing, what I was understanding, remember it and say it in Spanish. I had to be aware of everything.

Another time, we were in a garden, the two of us alone. He started to walk around the garden, looking at the flowers and trees and birds, and he said, "You know"! He said "You know" exactly as he had said it the last time, "You know, people try to find gurus of the calibre of Ramana Maharshi, Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Sivananda. Those gurus are very difficult to find. They do not understand that the flowers, the trees, the wind, the whole nature is always in the process of being a guru and giving many teachings. But they are not aware." That was his message: if you are not aware, you cannot understand the teachings that are being given. In this way, the theme of awareness was always present.

I want to tell you a final story with Sri Swamiji, which I think is very important for us, for the people who are connected to the tradition, the 'teaching disciples'. It was in Rome, 1981. He said, "You know, yogis are very difficult people, extremely difficult, cynical people. They have a mission to complete, and they will complete the mission no matter what. If you fit in the mission, if you are of help in the mission, they will carry you. The moment you are not of use for the mission, they will drop you." This is very important for us. We have to be aware of what is the mission. If we want to get in the train of the mission, we have to understand what the mission is and we have to understand that we have to be an asset to the mission.

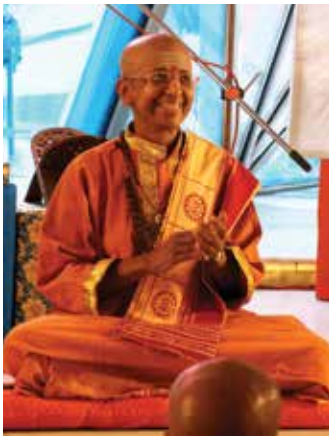
This is something we learn from Swami Niranjan also. He was just a little boy when I met him, twelve years old. We knew then that he was the successor of Sri Swamiji, not that he might be, no. He was the successor of Sri Swamiji and we

knew it. Still we managed to develop a personal relationship, outside of his being the successor. We have friendship. He is my friend, my guide, my philosopher. Yet in him I see reflected all the teachings I've told you about. He could always anticipate what the guru needs. Once he told us that there is a saying in India that you have to walk one step behind your guru but you have to think one thought ahead of your guru. You walk behind, but you think ahead. This I learnt from Swami Niranjan.

I appreciate very much the surrender of Swami Niranjan. We are lucky to have him and to receive what he is giving out. What I see in him is the essence of Swami Satyananda. It is there. What I see is not Swami Satyananda, I see my Swami Satyananda. I have a certain perception of Sri Swamiji and the essence of that perception I see in him and I love it! Swami Niranjan is like my backdoor to get to Sri Swamiji. I can play with him, I can joke with him and I can get the connection with Sri Swamiji through the backdoor!

## WORKING WITH AWARENESS IN A SATYANANDA YOGA CLASS

*Dr Swami Nirmalananda, India*



For all doctors all over the world, Continuing Medical Education, CME, is mandatory. This Symposium is like CYE, Continuing Yogic Education. It is essential, and I offer my deepest gratitude to Swamiji for arranging this for our benefit. It is like the thousand-petalled lotus of sahasrara chakra is opening and he is allowing us to have the glimpse of one of his petals through this CYE. The

knowledge is limitless, yet through this Symposium we will have the glimpse of one petal of Swamiji's sahasrara chakra. So I am very thankful that he is letting us do that. I am also thankful to his support team, all the residents of Ganga Darshan, for they are his thousand hands and thousand legs who make it all happen, who make his vision happen in reality.

Coming to the subject of the day, awareness is a fundamental aspect of Satyananda Yoga practices. Therefore, we are going to look at the components of a normal Satyananda Yoga class: what it consists of and the role of awareness in each of the components. As yoga teachers we take our students through different levels of awareness depending on their capacity. You don't expect the finest level of awareness from them on the first day. It is slowly and gradually developed. For that, the teacher has to have the awareness first. If you are teaching others to be aware, you have to be aware first.

What I am going to speak about, you all know it, it is nothing new. Yet, just as in CME we have refresher studies so we can refresh our own knowledge, it is the same in yoga. As Swamiji mentioned, over generations the knowledge becomes diluted. In medical terms, there is disuse atrophy; if you don't use something, it dies. If you don't use a muscle, it becomes flabby and small. Many of us do not use the component of awareness as much as we should, and that is why it goes out of our memory. That is why this refresher and reminder.

The first component of a Satyananda Yoga class is Shanti Path and the three mantras. It is one of the most important practices, as it brings in positive thoughts, it brings in the attitude of prayer and it helps our students to forget about their material world and start going inwards, start knowing themselves and also expand the awareness to others. It is not only self-centred awareness, we are also praying for others and thinking of the wellbeing of others. Therefore, this component is very important. All of you know the sequence: we go from body awareness, to breath, to the state of mind,

then we make them aware of chidakasha and ajna chakra. This is how we proceed.

The second component is asana. Usually, the class starts with asana. What we select in asana is up to the individual teacher, depending on which area they want to work upon, which prana, which chakra, and so on. What we have to remember is that there are many different layers of awareness that we induce in our students. The basic principle in this is that we go from the superficial to the deeper structures of the body. We don't straightaway say, "Become aware of your stomach." We make them aware of the skin, then joints and muscles, and then different organs.

The other point is that in body awareness, we go from gross to subtle. For example, if we make them aware of the abdomen, that is gross. But if we make them aware of the sound that the digestive system is making, the gurgling, etc., that is a subtler awareness of the same area. Still subtler is becoming aware of the pulsations in that area, the warmth, and so on. This leads to the awareness of prana of that region. Not all students will be able to follow these levels of awareness, but you may be able to take some students deep during the class. You can also use these levels of awareness to make sure that if they are doing just PM 1, they are not getting bored and losing interest. They should also realize that the awareness changes as they advance in their practice. The same PM 1 can become very exciting if they are able to experience, and if the teacher is able to lead them into the experience of pranic awareness.

We also always synchronize our practices with the breath. We start from body movement awareness, then we synchronize it with the breath, then the subtle sensations of the breath. Breath as a gross sensation is watching the rate, the depth, the movement, etc. But when you start feeling the coolness, the warmth, the tingling, you are beginning to lead them into prana. Sometimes they are able to feel the local area breathing, and that happens often in yoga nidra. If the students are ready, even in asana practice they are able

to feel the breath in a local area, in the part that they are moving. This eventually leads them into psychic breathing. In makarasana, for example, it is a common practice to use breath in the spinal passage. This also helps students to go into pranic awareness of the practice and ultimately even deeper than that.

The third component is relaxation, it may come in between asana practices, but it is always there. In relaxation we make them aware of relaxation at all levels, which I will not discuss because all of you know it very well. Sometimes we also make them visualize the previous practice. Suppose they are lying down in shavasana after surya namaskara and we make them visualize the practice of surya namaskara. Through this awareness, not only they remember the steps and the technique of that practice, but they also re-live the experiences generated at the time of the practice. Due to this, the practice becomes imprinted on the memory very firmly. There are times when experiences of the practice come when they are visualizing it, rather than when they were actually doing it. Therefore, this component is very important.

The fourth component is pranayama. The purpose of pranayama is to work on the pranas and make the mind ready for the subsequent practices of pratyahara and dharana. The awareness here moves from body to breath, and then to the subtle aspects of breath, which we have already talked about. We also bring in swara awareness many times during pranayama practice. That is very helpful as the state of swara is linked with the state of mind. Through pranayama, we are trying to balance the swaras and therefore the mind. That is why the awareness of swara, specifically during nadi shodhana pranayama, is helpful. Then, if we want to balance the swara, we have to choose the right pranayama to change from ida to pingala, or from pingala to ida, depending on the body or what we want to do further. We have to also create awareness of the relationship between all three: the breath, the swara and the mind, how they are interlinked. If they can become aware of this during their pranayama practice,

they will be able to change the state of their mind at will and prepare themselves for the pratyahara and dharana practices. Thus, the sequence of awareness with regard to the breath is: breath, swara, subtle breath, psychic breath and leading to awareness and experience of prana. This results in a calm, positive, energetic and focused state of mind which is necessary for a reasonably successful practice of pratyahara and dharana.

The next component is pratyahara and dharana, which will be discussed by Swami Vedantananda. I am going to end my talk with the last component of a Satyananda Yoga class: the Shanti Path. How does this Shanti Path differ from the opening Shanti Path? Think about it. Here the aim is not only bringing positive thoughts and the prayer attitude, but also spreading the goodwill. *Asato ma sadgamaya, sarvesham swasti bhavatu, sarvesham shantirbhavatu, etc.* The intention is: whatever you have achieved, the peace, the joy, the harmony, the 'feeling nice', you send that to others. That is when it converts to contentment, a deep sense of contentment and bliss. Just doing asana, pranayama, pratyahara and dharana may not lead you to a feeling of bliss, but when you send the nice feeling to others, you make them your partners in feeling this, and then you are in a different state. That is where the class usually ends, with this feeling of contentment and bliss.

## HONING THE AWARENESS IN YOGA NIDRA

*Swami Vedantananda, Portugal*

Following on from asana and pranayama, I am going to talk about awareness in pratyahara practices, specifically in yoga nidra.

Yoga nidra has gone viral in the world. Everybody thinks they are teaching yoga nidra and that they know yoga nidra. Even amongst ourselves, we have lost the plot in certain cases. Yoga nidra is a system developed by Sri Swamiji which



allows the individual to move from body and sense awareness to discover deeper aspects of ourselves, and I'd like to go through the stages of the practice.

The first stage of yoga nidra, whether you call it preparation, relaxation or settling, is comprised of three parts: the first part is the initial settling of the body, the position, comfort, warmth, and so on; the second part is the initial relaxation of the body, letting go of the body, being aware of the contact between the body and the floor, and so on; the third part is the initial mental relaxation, here you need to keep the mind busy by being away from where it's come from, so maybe you go to sounds, use the sense of touch or the breath. This is all under the heading of stage one, settling, going from gross to more subtle, from the body to the breath.

The second part of yoga nidra is sankalpa. The sankalpa is the seed that we sow, which will bring about positive changes from within. My opinion is that the sankalpa should be made in the present continuous tense. If you say it in the future, it will always be in the future. If you say it in the present, then your intellectual mind will disagree. If you say, 'I am peaceful and calm', your intellectual mind will say, 'No, you're not.' Therefore, if you say, 'I am becoming peaceful' or 'calm' or whatever the sankalpa might be, there is no argument. Also, when you ask the students to repeat the sankalpa three times, clearly, with awareness, you need to become silent and give them the time to do it. The best way to do that is to mentally repeat your own sankalpa three times, maybe four in case they have long ones.

The next stage of the practice is rotation of awareness. We start with right hand thumb. How many fingers do we have? We have four fingers and a thumb in English. Many times we end up with a thumb and five fingers: first finger, second finger, third finger, fourth finger.

The next point is that it is a long way from your right little toe to your left hand thumb. In yoga nidra, it can be very jolting sometimes if things are moved quickly. Therefore it is good to find linking language, such as, “Now bring your awareness to the left side, left hand, the left hand thumb.” That gives them time to be able to make that move. Those transitions need to be there between the stages of yoga nidra also and when you are moving through the body. It is important that you find a rotation and stick to it, for you and your students. The part of the body is named, the students mentally repeat it, take their awareness there, and in more advanced classes you would ask them to also visualize the part. Also remember that we want to induce a state of pratyahara, we are trying to disown the body, and therefore the use of the language is important. We need to say ‘the body’, ‘the right hand thumb, index finger’ or however you go, but ‘the’, not ‘your’.

The next part of the practice is breath awareness. The breath is more subtle than the body, so we begin to let go on a more subtle level. Just as with rotation, here also it has to be ‘the breath’. If you use ‘your breath’, it starts to externalize people, because becoming aware of your breath is very often the way you do externalize from a practice, even in meditation. The important thing to remember here is that you are watching the natural breath, it is not deepening the breath or lengthening the breath, it is the natural breath. Remember also that long pauses in yoga nidra equal sleep. So you have gently-timed reminders and comments to keep them on track. It is also important to let go of the breath before you move to the next stage.

The next stage of the practice is pairs of opposites. This part of the practice helps to let go of emotional tension and

brings emotional relaxation. It is also good for developing the willpower and controlling swings of emotions. You are going to create feelings here. Generally, we undergo feelings, but in yoga nidra we are creating feelings. You create a feeling, develop it and let go of it before you move to the opposite. It is a bit like in antar mouna where you create a thought, develop the thought and drop it. Therefore, if you are creating heaviness, you develop heaviness, then leave heaviness and you go to lightness. This works on parts of the brain that allow us to have inner balance and harmony with outer balance. Our inner and outer environments are more in harmony with each other.

The next part of the practice is visualization. This brings mental relaxation and preparation for meditation. First of all, define the place where people are going to be visualizing: chidakasha, and then begin. It requires sensitivity on the part of the teacher how you choose your images and it is important also that you use images that relate to all of the senses. Some people don't visualize, but they hear or feel or smell. Therefore use images that relate to the different senses. Keep it simple, start with rapid images. Rapid images are rapid, not quick in terms of saying them really fast, rapid means they are not too detailed. You leave a little space there, that is why you repeat it two or three times for students to be able to create the details for themselves. Eventually you would move on to telling stories. These stories are not just having a nice time. If you read some of the examples in the book, it is usually going through some kind of a challenge and then coming out to a beautiful scene. It is a journey, not just a nice little story. The last image should invoke a sense of calmness, peacefulness or expansiveness, because then the mind will be more receptive to positive suggestions.

After visualization comes the second sankalpa. At the end of the visualization, you let go of the images, let them fade into chidakasha, maybe have a little time to watch any other impressions, and then you move to the sankalpa. The second sankalpa is like watering the seed that you earlier planted.

The last stage is externalizing. It needs to go from the subtle back to the gross. Therefore you come back to 'your breath', 'your body', 'your body on the floor', the environment of the room and then going out to sounds. When you go out to the sounds, you go to the near ones first, not the far ones. For the sensitive people in your class, it can be very jarring if you begin the externalizing of yoga nidra by going straight to outside sounds. They've got no body, no breath, therefore bring them out of yoga nidra in the reverse way that they went in, more or less.

In that externalization, also guide the students on how to move the body, starting with the small parts of the body and moving to the bigger parts. Otherwise you have people who are just gently moving their toes and then other people who are having a great big stretch and sighing, and so on. Try to keep that sense of control through the last part of bringing them out, and finish with 'Yoga nidra is now complete. Hari Om Tat Sat.'

Yoga nidra is structured in this specific way. It works, please do not change it.

## THE MEMORABLE INITIAL YEARS

*Sannyasi Agnityoti (Maria Teresa Copete), Colombia*

You heard about how Sri Swamiji first came to Colombia in 1971. Then in 1972, Swami Niranjan arrived. After he had been in Colombia for a few months, the news came from India that Swami Satyananda is conducting a World Yoga Convention in 1973 in Munger, Bihar, India. And we were in Colombia, South America. They were a world apart.

Nevertheless, we were committed to work for the mission of Swami Satyananda to take yoga from shore to shore and door to door. We started thinking about how to do that. Apart from Swami Niranjan, Swami Amritananda and Swami Agnimitrananda were there, and Ignacio the translator. But there was a space in the car.

I was in high school at that time and Ignacio said to me, "Swami Amritananda said you are coming on the tour. We are going to do a Colombian tour by car." Colombia is in the Andes, a very mountainous area, and they were going to do the tour by car. I said, "How can I go on a tour? I have to go to school. My parents will never allow it." But things had to happen and Swami Amritananda said, "You go ask your parents." I went and asked, and my mum thought, 'Maybe this is something good for her', and she made all the arrangements in the school. So there I was, going on a tour with three Indian swamis, Ignacio and myself, by car, to spread the word of yoga from shore to shore and door to door.



Remember this is 1973 and we are inviting people in the whole of Colombia, while travelling by road, to come to a yoga convention in India. When you think of it now, it was kind of crazy, but then it was the guru's mission, and we did it. We took a jeep, which somebody lent to us, printed some papers about the convention in India and started the tour. My mother had some connections with priests and nuns and convents, as she had two sisters who were nuns and one brother who was a priest. She called all the nunneries and said, "My daughter is coming on a tour with these Indian people and they are spreading the word of yoga." Yoga had never been heard of, nobody knew what it was. Anyhow, we were on a mission and we took off.

We had also asked the students at the Satyananda ashram at that time to help us with their contacts. Some people said, "Yes, I have an aunt who lives in the southern part of Colombia." We said, "Please call her and ask if she will

organize a lecture with her friends.” In this way, someone organized a lecture at a school, at a friend’s house, and other places. We would be on the road from four in the morning. In places we had no contacts, if we saw a sign ‘school’, we would knock and say, “Hello, good morning. We are on a tour spreading yoga with three Indian people from India, and we would like to give the students a talk on yoga.” Surprisingly, they said, “Oh welcome. Can you give us ten minutes? We will fix everything for you.” That was the way we did it.

Once, while Swami Amritananda was giving the lecture and Ignacio was translating, Swami Niranjan, who was twelve or thirteen at that time, started drawing hearts on a piece of paper: “Ignacio loves Maria Teresa; Maria Teresa loves Ignacio.” This went on for a month. Then one day, we were in a hotel, and he said, “You know” – beware of the ‘you know’ – “You know, if you and Ignacio would get married, you would do great work for yoga.” I did not pay much attention then, but to make the story short, we’ve been married for forty-seven years and we have been working for yoga.

This is what it was like forty-five years ago when nobody knew what yoga was. This was the way we started spreading the word, sowing the seed. We were told, “Just go and sow the seeds wherever you can.” In the remotest places we would give the leaflet and say, “There is going to be a convention in India in October 1973, from this date to that date, and we have come to invite you to it.” Twenty-seven people from Colombia came for the convention.

Those were the most beautiful days of doing Sri Swamiji’s work. After that convention, Sri Swamiji came to Colombia in 1975 and conducted a convention. In 1980, he conducted a second convention. The work continued and has continued non-stop for forty-seven years.

## MOMENT TO MOMENT YOGA

*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

Over the last four days we learnt that we are not yoga teachers. As Swami Vedantananda put very eloquently, “I am not a yoga teacher. My life is that of Swami Vedantananda. That was the initiation I was given by my guru. She, Swami Vedantananda, teaches yoga, not me.” Everybody says, “I teach yoga,” whereas it should be said, “I am not a yoga teacher. I am this, and I teach yoga.” The garb of ‘yoga teacher’ has to be shed, as it only reflects a hypocritical and egotistical nature and not the nature of a sadhaka of yoga. This is the main difference between the first chapter and the second chapter.

The first chapter was the age of yoga propagation, the Stone Age, and the second chapter is the age of yoga experience, the Bronze Age. The Stone Age had its own distinct identity, which has evolved into the Bronze Age. Similarly, the Bronze Age has its distinct identity, and in the course of time, when the materials and tools have been accumulated, it will progress into the next age. In every age things move forward, nothing goes back.

In the same manner, you as yoga learners – I am using the expression ‘yoga learners’ – must think and recognize that you have to develop the yogic experience rather than teaching others to develop the yogic experience. It is totally unjustified to the tradition, to the gurus and to the wisdom of the vidya that you are telling other people to relax, while your own mind is under stress. That is not honouring the vidya or the parampara. If there is a feeling to honour the vidya and the parampara, the tradition, the knowledge and the wisdom, then a definite effort has to be made to make your lifestyle a bit better than what it was yesterday.

As learners of yoga who live in their own centres, teach in different locations in the city, or live in an ashram, a question must be posed: you are teaching others, but what are you

doing to yourself? Are you living what you are teaching? To answer this, you have to see and observe your lifestyle.

It is not possible or practical for everybody to live a perfect yogic lifestyle. If you live at home with your family and have to look after the children's education, the shopping, the job, the house, and are only a part-time yoga teacher, then definitely it becomes more challenging to live the yogic lifestyle of your choice. There are many other factors that divert your energy, time and attention.

The other group, people who live in ashrams for some time, also cannot be considered living a yogic life. An ashram has its own set of disciplines, and yogic life, which is unique to you, has its own set of disciplines. Ashram life may require you to get up at four in the morning, but merely getting up at four is not yogic life. If you begin your day with the chanting of the three mantras, irrespective of when you get up, then it is a yogic life. You have to decide at what time you are going to wake up depending on your environment. Whatever environment you are in, you have to live according to that. In the ashram, if the class is going to start at five, then you have to be up early, but that compulsion is not there at home.

To live a yogic life no matter where you are, you have to spread the yogic awareness throughout the day. One of the biggest shortcomings in people, whether yoga practitioners or advocates of yoga, is that they are not able to sustain a routine and discipline. They think, 'My yoga is done in the classroom. When I am not in the classroom, I don't have to think about yoga.' This kind of thinking means that you don't even understand the meaning of the word yoga, yet you talk about it as if you were a master. Just by reading a few books and making eloquent speeches, you do not become a master. There is a sutra in the *Yoga Sutras* about regularity, continuity and believing in what you do: *Sa tu deerghakaala nairantarya satkaara sevito dridhabhoomih* – "It (sadhana) becomes firmly grounded by being continued for a long time with reverence and without interruption." If you remember this sutra, it will help you understand the path of sadhana.



Yoga is not classroom teaching. You have heard from all the speakers during these four days that the yoga they learnt was more from interaction, observation and self-correction and not from classes of asana, pranayama, yoga nidra and pratyahara. Nevertheless, the biggest misunderstanding continues to exist that 'I practise my yoga every day from this time to this time, and then I am free to do other things.' No, you are not free to do other things. You may not do your asana and pranayama and yoga nidra and meditation, yet you are not free. You have to maintain the yogic awareness and attitude throughout. It is this aspect which will help you in life, not practice of asana and pranayama. Therefore, take yoga away from classroom learning, teaching and practice into your personal life as a moment to moment practice.

To make yoga into a moment to moment practice, you have to look at all the components of the Satyananda Yoga system that Sri Swamiji has devised. Then make capsules of the practices to do at different times of the day. Spread the practices over a twelve-hour period. In the morning, practise the three mantras. The practice of mantras pacifies the mind, as is indicated in the meaning of the word mantra. Many of you think, 'Why do I have to chant mantras in the morning when my mind is already pacified? I should do it when my

mind is disturbed.' You think in such a manner as you listen only to the words without understanding their intention.

The mind does not need to be pacified only when you feel the stress, for the mind is always under stress. Even when you are not aware of it, the subconscious and unconscious activities continue to take place. Even right now subconscious and unconscious activities are taking place, yet you are not aware of them. To develop awareness of those activities, moment to moment awareness has to take place. If you are moving your hand, you should know that you are moving your hand. If you are moving your head, you should know that you are moving your head. Not a single act should go unnoticed. If I am flexing a finger right now, I am aware that my finger is being flexed. That degree of awareness has to come. Continuous, constant awareness has to be built up. This can happen if in the morning you make three sankalpas; one for the body, one for the mind, and one for the entire life. Body requires health, therefore the first sankalpa for health with Mahamrityunjaya mantra. Mind requires wisdom, therefore the second sankalpa for wisdom with Gayatri mantra. Life requires distress-free living; therefore the third sankalpa for overcoming distress with the 32 names of Durga. By making these three sankalpas in the morning when you are fresh from sleep, you plant positive seeds in the mind. Then you can go about your daily business.

There are many books that have been published over the last four years as part of the second chapter initiative. There is a particular series, 'Yoga for Everyone'. These contain practices in capsule forms: with minimum practice you can get maximum benefits. This approach has to be adopted in life. There can be five asanas, four asanas, seven asanas; one pranayama, two pranayamas, three pranayamas, no pranayama; this practice, yes; this practice, no; this practice, half; this practice, one quarter, according to the different capsules that have been made. Each capsule has a specific purpose, just as Disprin, antibiotic or bronchodilator each has a different purpose.

The capsules include asanas, which can be practised for no more than fifteen to twenty minutes before breakfast. The logic is simple: if you have a headache, you take one Disprin and the headache goes away in ten minutes. By taking ten Disprins, will the headache go away in one minute? No, but you will definitely damage your system. It is the same with yoga. If you do five asanas for your need, they will fulfil the purpose. You don't need to practise fifty. You are free to do them; that is your choice, especially if you want to show off to yourself. If you want to derive the benefit, then be specific.

Pranayama can be practised during the day, whenever you feel low in energy. Even in your workplace, go to the toilet, light incense and practise your pranayama. It is possible, people have done it.

When you come back home from your work or other external occupations in the evening, lie down on your bed for ten minutes, practise yoga nidra and get rid of everything. At night, before going to sleep, practise meditation.

What you do in a two-hour session in a class can be spread across the whole day. Each time you do something, you are renewing your connection and awareness, with yoga and with yourself and your condition. The more you observe yourself, the more the desire to fine-tune will develop. You will begin to notice the little bits here and there which need rectification.

Along with all this, there has to be some swadhyaya, something that you study every day. You read the newspaper every day, try reading one page of satsang also every day. Make that part of your daily news. Every time you open your computer or I-pad, after completing the job, read a satsang and change the mind, change the mind completely. Try to develop the positive qualities while living your usual life, away from all the disciplines of the ashram, which is hard.

In the ashram, October is declared the month of happiness. If you observe for how long you are happy during the day, you will be surprised to find that it is not more than fifteen to twenty minutes in the entire twenty-four-hour

span. Can you increase the span of happiness? From twenty minutes per day, can you make it half an hour, then one hour, then two hours, and keep on increasing the duration of being happy? That will help you.

People are forgetting how to be happy. Earlier this year, there was a news item that at Oxford University a course on happiness was being given by a professor, and it was the most participated in course. While in other classes there were thirty, forty or fifty students, in this class there were about five hundred students who wanted to learn how to be happy. What a pathetic state of human life that now courses have to be conducted in universities to teach you how to be happy. You have to learn how to be happy as you have forgotten how to be happy. Therefore, applying the component of lifestyle yamas and niyamas becomes that much more important. If you can develop these yogic attitudes along with swadhyaya, satsang, kirtan, mantras, they will create a substantial change in the environment of the group, the family or the ashram. Wherever there is a group effort, if you do this, the environment will change.

Even the Saturday Mahamrityunjaya mantra havan is not an individual effort. In India at least, the entire family gets together and even neighbours come to do the Mahamrityunjaya mantra, the purpose being to create a change in the mental environment. Definitely, it brings about more unity, cohesiveness, understanding, communication, affection, sympathy, love and connection. All these lead to strengthening of the human nature.

You have to think in terms of lifestyle. Don't just focus on the practices that you wish to learn or do; focus on how you can live a harmonious yogic lifestyle, no matter where you are, by creating a routine for yourself. Then we will be able to move into the second chapter of yoga with optimism and hope and bring about a qualitative change in our life and in our environment.

*Hari Om Tat Sat*





SATYANANDA YOGA  
BIHAR YOGA

*Yoga Chakrodaya*, the Dawn of Yoga Chakra, is a tribute to the Munger Yoga Symposium conducted at Ganga Darshan in October 2018 to unveil the second chapter of yoga. In a nine-day celebration Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati launched the Yoga Chakra, the wheel of yoga, in the presence of yoga teachers and aspirants from all over India and from around the globe.

In *Book I*, Swamiji develops the six spokes or yoga branches of the wheel, and long-time associates of the Satyananda tradition speak on their learning and experiences with Sri Swamiji and yoga.

