

Series 5

Progressive Yoga Vidya Training

Understanding Yoga Vidya

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

Progressive
Yoga Vidya Training
Understanding Yoga Vidya

With kind regards, ॐ and prem

Sriani Niranjan

Progressive Yoga Vidya Training Understanding Yoga Vidya

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

*Discourses given by Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati
during the Progressive Yoga Vidya Training 1 & 2,
held at Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth,
Bihar School of Yoga, Munger, from 1st to 30th October 2019.*



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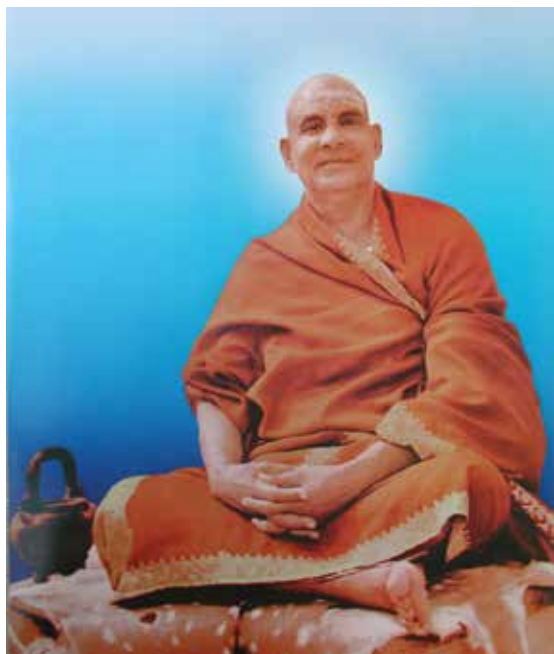
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Dedication

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



Dedication

*To our guru Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati
who continues to inspire and guide us
on our yogic and spiritual journey.*

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The 2nd Chapter of Yoga

Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati established the Bihar School of Yoga in 1963, in order to fulfil the mandate of his guru, Swami Sivananda Saraswati. The mandate Swami Satyananda received was to propagate the science of yoga and take yoga from “shore to shore and door to door”. In the days of Swami Sivananda, yoga was far from the globally recognized and accepted word it is today. Yoga was considered a spiritual practice reserved for sannyasins and renunciates who had renounced society and were seeking enlightenment. It was not seen as something that could be incorporated into society and practised by the general public.

When the Bihar School of Yoga was established, the philosophy, practices, applications and lifestyle of yoga as practical and scientific systems were unknown, even in Indian society. From the beginning, yoga training and propagation by the Bihar School of Yoga took the form of intensive residential programs, in which yoga was taught as a way to qualitatively enhance physical health, mental peace, emotional harmony. A sequence of progression in yoga was defined fifty years ago by Swami Satyananda, by giving systematic training first in hatha yoga, raja yoga, and kriya yoga, as *bahiranga yoga*, external yoga. Simultaneously, training in *antaranga*, internal, aspect of karma yoga, bhakti and jnana yoga was provided through the lifestyle and inspiration of the ashram environment. A holistic or integral yoga system developed in which the yoga aspirant

could awaken and integrate the faculties of head, heart and hands. The different *angas*, limbs, of yoga become the means of attaining this personal harmony and integrated expression.

In the early 1940s, the subject of yoga was propagated across the world by teachers and masters of different traditions, introducing the idea that through the practice of yoga one could explore the body, mind, emotions, and have a glimpse into one's spiritual nature. The first-generation teachers focused on bringing the knowledge of yoga to human society according to the need of the society at that time. In the 1960s, yoga was seen as a physical culture. In the 1970s, it was seen as a way to overcome stress, anxiety, tension and to improve the physical and mental functions. In the 1980s, research into the various possibilities and potentials of yoga to assist and promote physical and mental health took the forefront. By the 1990s, a rapid increase in the popularity of the practice of asana was evident across the globe. The asana component of yoga had been accepted worldwide and other components of yoga were relegated to the background and largely ignored by the mainstream practitioners and majority of yoga teachers. Today, 28 million people are practising yoga in the United States alone, and statistics estimate 300 million practitioners worldwide.

In 2013, the World Yoga Convention was conducted in Munger to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the Bihar School of Yoga. Over 50,000 yoga practitioners, teachers, students and aspirants participated in this historic event either in person or through the internet. The Convention was a milestone that marked the completion of fifty years of yoga propagation. The mandate of taking yoga from shore to shore and door to door was fulfilled. Over a fifty-year period, with the help of yoga aspirants and well-wishers all over the world, a yogic renaissance had taken place. The chapter of yoga propagation was complete and when one chapter closed, the next chapter opened.

Thus the World Yoga Convention also heralded the beginning of the second chapter of the Bihar School of Yoga.

The hallmark of this second chapter is a new vision of yoga not as a practice but as a *vidya*, a wisdom to be understood, imbibed and expressed in life. This understanding of the fundamental need for integral development was the vision of Swami Satyananda, which he imparted and taught through the concept of the *yoga chakra*, or the wheel of yoga.

The second chapter of the Bihar School of Yoga and the teachings which are being presented are not concerned with propagation of the practices of yoga. Isolated practices of yoga do not bring about the qualitative change and spiritual evolution intended and envisaged by the seers. The transcendence of the negative and restricting conditions and the real evolution and growth of the personality takes place only when the *vidya* of yoga is comprehended, absorbed and realized.

The profundity of yogic understanding must increase and the depths of yoga must be fathomed, if the *vidya* is to be realized and maintained for future generations. The experience and wisdom of accomplished yogis and spiritual scientists is recorded in the scriptural and classical texts detailing each *anga* of yoga. The second chapter teachings are a progressive effort to discern and elucidate the experiences and realizations of the ancient seers, within the blueprint of the *yoga chakra*.

For individual aspirants, the challenge of the second chapter is to deepen the understanding and experience of yoga. Practice is merely an introduction to yoga, which is limited by personal motivation and constraints. The *yoga vidya* dimension is accessed only when one moves from practice to *sadhana* and makes a sincere effort to experience the aims defined by the different *angas* of yoga. Until that sincerity awakens, the commitment to adhere to the system and the *vidya* of yoga is lacking. With sincerity, seriousness and commitment, each aspirant has to accept responsibility for their own development and betterment in life.

Ultimately, yoga is a lifestyle. It is not a practice. For, once the yogic principles are imbibed and become part of life, the attitudes, perceptions, interactions, the mind, actions and

behaviours will improve. To meet the challenge of the second chapter, the expressive and the behavioural components of yoga, the antaranga and the bahiranga aspects, have to come together. When head, heart and hands unite, an ordinary moment can become divine. An ordinary life can become a divine life.

Progressive Yoga Vidya: An Overview

1 October 2019

There are four stages of yoga: yoga practice, yoga sadhana, yogic lifestyle, and living the yogic culture. These stages represent the progression of yoga.

Your participation and involvement with yoga has been limited to yoga practice. You come to yoga for a reason, whether a backache, a headache or a heartache. You are seeking a solution for your problem, difficulty or illness. Once the problem is over, your association with yoga is also over. This association can last for one month, one year, three years or four years, depending on the teacher-student relationship, but not beyond many years. This is what has been happening all along: ‘Today I feel I want to do this practice’, ‘Today my body needs this’, ‘Tomorrow my needs are that.’ You only try to fulfil your needs and requirements from your yoga practice, and you are selective in what you do. Therefore there is no real gain from yoga, neither for teachers nor for students.

In the second chapter, the focus is not on practice anymore. The focus is on sadhana and lifestyle. Sadhana indicates the effort to experience the goal, the aims and aspirations that yoga has set out. In hatha yoga there are different aims, indicating progression in hatha yoga. These are known as *sapta bhumika*, or seven conditions, that have to develop in the body with the practice of hatha yoga.

If you look at these seven conditions, you will be surprised that maybe one or half a condition has been achieved by people who have been practising hatha yoga. That is because the intention was not to experience the goals of hatha yoga; it was to fulfil a personal need. Only if you focus on the goals of hatha yoga and try to cultivate that awareness, understanding and experience that you can begin to understand what yoga is aiming for in life.

Similarly, you have to ask what are the goals of raja yoga and whether you have experienced them. The same applies to other yogas too. Therefore, the focus is now on yoga sadhana, which eventually converts into lifestyle: living yoga from moment to moment. That is the slogan of the second chapter, indicating the sadhana and the lifestyle components.

The Progressive Yoga Vidya Training leads you through sadhana. In the asana class, for example, you do each practice twenty-five times. When you do even simple movements such as flexing the toes or the fingers twenty-five times, you can feel the ache and the pain in the joints and muscles, and you have to push your body to complete the practice.

Twenty-five times

One of the misconceptions in yoga is that whenever you become tired you lie down and practise shavasana. People move their fingers three times, say they are tired and lie down in shavasana for thirty minutes, relaxing. Then again they wake up, do a little bit of something, again they lie down in shavasana for thirty minutes, relaxing. That is all right for beginners. However, as you advance in yoga, hours and minutes of shavasana reduce to practically nothing and the focus is more on pushing the body to its limits, going one step further each time. That is how one has to train the body. The muscle memory has to be created in asana.

Asana is not just a practice or a movement. It is a condition in which you have to create muscle memory. That is what makes you perfect a posture in the course of time.

Muscle memory does not develop with a few rounds of practice, but with sustained, continuous practice.

When Sri Swami Satyananda used to teach us in the 1960s and 70s, his style was such that we could master the practices in one session. He gave the understanding that each practice had to be performed at least twenty-five times, moving the awareness through the five koshas: the physical body, the energetic body, the mental body, the psychic body, and the spiritual body. When you are focusing on the physical body, *annamaya kosha*, you are aware of the physical movement, the muscles and the joints. When you are focusing on the pranic body, *pranamaya kosha*, you are aware of the breathing process, the inhalation and the exhalation, and the breath moves the body. If you are practising toe movements, with inhalation the toes come backwards, with exhalation the toes go forward. It is the breath which is pushing the body, not your effort.

To access the mental body, *manomaya kosha*, visualization is used. You visualize the end result: the perfect posture, the perfect practice. In the course of time, the body falls in line with that visualization. You are not pushing your body to do anything, you are simply making it easier for the body to move into a posture by visualizing the perfect practice. With chakra awareness you access the psychic body, *vijnanamaya kosha*. With mantra awareness you access the spiritual body, *anandamaya kosha*.

A combination of these five different awarenesses constitute one practice of an asana, or any other technique. You have to develop the awareness from the physical to the subtle in your practice. You should be able to flow from one awareness to another effortlessly without having to think, ‘Now what?’ Initially you may have to think: ‘What do I do next?’ However, you have to condition yourself to the point that you flow from *annamaya* to *pranamaya* to *manomaya* to *vijnanamaya* to *anandamaya* in one sequence, one progression, without breaking the rhythm, the speed or the number of rounds of the practice.

Three-mantra sadhana

The three mantras are an important beginning to a yoga class. People are advised to practise the mantras when they wake up, first thing in the morning. At that time, you are half asleep and half awake. That is the subconscious state. In this state of mind, if you make a positive sankalpa, think a positive thought, and think that over and over again, it will be implanted in the subconscious mind and reinforced by the mantra. The mantra will act like compost for the sankalpa.

The mantras are specific. The Mahamrityunjaya mantra with the sankalpa for wellbeing and health has been found to enhance physical wellness. With the Gayatri mantra, the sankalpa is for mental clarity and creativity, and research in Gayatri mantra has shown that it enhances those abilities. The third sankalpa is to overcome distress, difficulties, distractions and disturbances in life. Everything that destroys your nature begins with D: distraction, disturbance, disease, distress. It is the power of positive D that has to be invoked to overcome the negative D. The power of positive D is the power of Durga, for she is the positive D. Therefore, we chant the 32 names of Durga.

With sustained chanting of the three mantras, the quality of body, mind and life definitely improves. This is to be attributed to the power of the subconscious mind, positive thinking and implanting a right idea at the right moment in the right place. The right idea is the sankalpa, the right moment is when you are not yet fully awake, and the right place is the subconscious. As a result, the mental behaviour changes and the mind becomes more peaceful, harmonious, confident, hopeful and joyous.

The mantras play a role in changing the behaviour, awareness, attitude and perceptions of the mind. Along with that, the effort to remain happy aids the process of making the mind positive and optimistic.

Manahprasad

Manahprasad or happiness is the first yama of yogic lifestyle. The rule for the month of October is to be happy. So please ensure that you have the best Sunday face every day while you are here. A Sunday face is a relaxed face – you are relaxed, happy and content.

Manahprasad allows you to connect with positivity and the state of joy and happiness. It also allows you to increase the time period of your happiness and joy. Most of you may have experimented with manahprasad already, out of curiosity. Now carry on with it as a sadhana. You might have started out of curiosity but continue it as a sadhana, making the continuous and constant effort to remain in the positive side of your mind, and not gravitate towards the negative side. If you remain in the positive side of the mind there will be contentment and happiness; if you gravitate to the negative side, that peace and happiness will be destroyed and your own responses will become negative and detrimental.

Manahprasad or happiness is an awareness of remaining connected with the positive side. It is awareness of the side of the field you are on today: the good and sunny side, or the bad and dark side. Try to hold yourself in the positive side for the maximum time. That is the effort you have to make: not to keep grinning the whole day long, but to remain connected with the positive side of yourself for as long as you can. Every time you experience happiness, you have to try to extend that period. Gradually, you will feel content, joyous, peaceful, balanced and harmonious for longer periods of time. That is manahprasad, and that is the condition which has to be created.

For the one month of Progressive Yoga Vidya Training, try to develop and build the condition of manahprasad. When we do it together, we will help each other. Let us create that condition in the mind and also in the environment: to remain happy, content, joyous, peaceful, balanced and harmonious.

Japa

The niyama that has to be followed along with the yama of manahprasad is japa. *Japa* means repetition. However, another definition of japa is disconnection. You think of your mantra repetition as japa, but when you repeat the mantra something else is also happening. You are disconnecting yourself from sense objects and sense perceptions. Although you are not aware of it, disconnection is taking place and the mind is shifting to another direction.

It is the disconnection that brings you into the state of concentration and focus. During the daily activities, when you find yourself getting too involved in something, disconnect mentally by asking yourself two questions three times: 'Do I really need it?' 'Do I really want it?' This is the new definition of japa.

Until now you have been focusing on repetition. Now I am asking you to focus on disconnection. When you leave the dark side of the mind and come to its positive side, you are disconnecting from the dark. If there is a pull, an attraction, a need or a desire, then ask yourself these two questions three times: 'Do I need it?' The first time you will say, 'Yes.' Then again ask, 'Do I need it?' The second time you will say, 'Let me think, maybe yes, maybe no.' The third time you ask, 'Do I need it?' you will answer, 'I am not sure, for I can do without it too.'

Each time you ask yourself, your thoughts will change. If for three times you say, 'Yes, I need it', then go for it. If two out of three times you say, 'Let me think about it', then take a step back and think about it. This is japa, to step back from involvement and participation, from being sucked into something. Instead, you are observing and coming to an understanding of whether it is really your need or want.

Manahprasad and japa are the two conditions that have to be created. Japa is not only remembrance; it is also learning where you are connected and where you are not connected. Manahprasad is not just smiling; it is remaining connected to the positive aspect of the mind at all times. These two

conditions, the first yama and the first niyama, will aid your journey in yoga.

Asana and pranayama

For your asana practice you have to find the right speed for yourself so you can do an asana twenty-five times without break of awareness or concentration and with ease. Not that after the eighteenth round you are holding your breath and hoping for twenty-five to come as soon as possible.

You have to find that level of ease and comfort in yourself. The speed and the strength you use to clench and open have to be regulated, so that every movement becomes a conscious movement. Only then it becomes a habit, a natural expression. That is what you have to try to achieve in asana.

Pranayama is a unique and important method to develop the yogic experience. Most of the time the followers of hatha yoga think of yoga as totally physical. The followers of raja yoga think of yoga as totally mental, and the followers of kundalini yoga and chakras think of yoga as totally psychic. In all these descriptions, an important aspect and link is missed: the pranic.

For a hatha yogi, the pranic aspect is limited to pranayama only. However, the pranic aspect of yoga has five different components. The last or the fifth of these is prana vidya, the fourth is prana pratyahara, the third is pranotthana, the second is prana-ayama and the first is prana-yama. These are the five stages from prana to prana vidya, the experience of prana in the body.

Raja yoga

The classical literature of raja yoga speaks more of prana than the mind. It says that prana is the factor that links your experience of body and spirit; by working with prana you can move from the body to the spirit.

It was Sage Patanjali who highlighted the subject of mind in the *Yoga Sutras*. Sage Patanjali presents two strong ideas, which are the basis of his raja yoga. The first is to become

the *drashta*, the seer or the observer. It indicates that this awareness was absent from daily life in Patanjali's times. It also indicates that people of his time and people today are the same in their mental faculties and awareness. Therefore, his focus was to become the *drashta*, as it allows one to develop *viveka*, discrimination.

Sage Patanjali's second strong idea was that through yoga one can control the *chitta vrittis*, modifications of *chitta*. Modern commentators have translated *chitta* as mind, therefore *chitta vrittis* become 'modifications of the mind'. Patanjali is not talking of *manas* or *buddhi*, but of *chitta*. *Chitta* is not the mind; it is the dimension of *smriti*, memories, and *samskara*, inherent conditions. The *chitta vrittis* are the natural behaviours of these *samskaras* and *smritis*.

An example. You met someone twenty years ago and now you meet the person again. Depending on the interaction that you had twenty years ago, the memory that was stored will now surface and define how you meet the person now. That is a *vritti* of *chitta*. It is not *manas*. Your response will be according to the memory that you have of the person. That will give birth to a *vritti*, a modified behaviour. The *samskaras* that you have, the impressions that you carry, modify your behaviour; they create a *vritti*. In this way, the *chitta* is modifying your behaviour all the time.

You like someone due to your memory of the person. You dislike someone due to your memory of the person. You think of someone as a laughing person due to your memory. You think of someone as an angry person due to your memory. It is the *smriti* along with the expressed *samskara* that defines the *chitta vritti*. That is what has to be observed, not the mental thoughts. The thoughts that come to the mind are like little rats that run around the room and gnaw at your mind. However, you have to move beyond thoughts, beyond *manas* and *buddhi*, to *chitta*.

When *chitta* is seen as a whole, then it is not consciousness. It is *prana shakti*. It is not the logic of *manas* and *buddhi*, but the nature which continuously and constantly

colours your expressions and behaviours. Through prana shakti you can access chitta and nullify the negative effects of chitta. That is raja yoga.

Prana shakti

What is prana shakti? It is defined as the vital force, the vital energy. In your body there are approximately fifty to seventy trillion cells, depending on the age and size of the body. Each cell in your body produces 0.4 volt of electrical energy. Multiply that by fifty trillion, how many kilowatts of energy is that? That is prana shakti. You have no control over this energy. You cannot generate it. It is a natural process. You cannot stop it. It will stop naturally. As long as the cells are alive, the pranas are being generated in the cells.

The negative ions in the atmosphere are the conductors of prana while the positive ions are depleted of prana. The electrically-charged particle known as negative ion is taken in the body to bring the condition of vitality, lightness, dynamism and movement. Pranayama, although it begins with the breath, sensitizes you to prana shakti. Ultimately it works at the cellular level. At first, it works at the level of respiration, then you bypass the respiratory level with *kumbhaka*, retention. The more you retain the breath, the more access you have to the dimension of prana. You have to train yourself to gradually enhance the retention to reach the pranic level.

When you start with your breathing practice, you are working at the level of the lungs, and that is known as *pranayama*, regulating the flow of prana, regulating the flow of breath. As you are able to regulate the flow of breath, you move into *prana-ayama*, expansion of the pranic experience. In the third stage, you move into *pranotthana*, awakening of the pranas. In the fourth stage, you move into *prana pratyahara*, withdrawal of prana, which is possibly the most detailed group of practices, and in the fifth stage into *prana vidya*, knowledge of prana. This is the sequence you have to go through, along with the practice of mudras and bandhas. Thereafter you explore pratyahara and dharana.

Three Dimensions of Yoga

2 October 2019

You have to develop an understanding of the whole concept of yoga. Up to now your knowledge of yoga has been limited to the few practices that you know. You understand hatha yoga and raja yoga through the practices of asana, pranayama, relaxation and concentration. You know of the theory from what you have heard from people or read in books. However, what is the overall perspective of yoga? Yoga as one subject is divided into three groups: the physical, the mental, and the spiritual.

Physical aspect of yoga

The physical aspect of yoga aspires to balance the two major forces of prana and chitta, the solar vital force and the lunar vital force. They are the vital forces controlling and governing the body and the mental expressions and behaviour.

In the process of developing the balance between prana shakti and chitta shakti, many physical transformations take place. The most visible is eradication of physical problems and ailments, and attainment of health. However, wellbeing and health is not the purpose of the physical dimension of yoga, rather it is attaining the balance between pingala and ida, prana and chitta. As you perform various practices to attain this balance, the body experiences certain conditions, which are known as *bhumikas*, literally meaning 'platforms'. You arrive at these platforms when you perfect a practice.

Seven bhumikas

There are seven bhumikas defined by hatha yoga. The first is *shodhanam*, which means purification or detoxification. Whatever practice you do, even if it is pawanmuktasana, the first outcome is detoxification and purification. Whether it is asana practice or shatkarma, it will first lead to purification of the body systems and balance of the three humours: *pitta*, *kapha* and *vata*, bile, mucus and gas.

After purification and balance comes the second condition: *sthairyam*, stillness. The *Yoga Sutras* present sthairyam as *sthiram sukham asanam*. Stillness of the body indicates that you are able to manage the movement and activity of the senses. Mastery over sensory activities leads to stillness. As long as the sensory activities are hyper, stillness will not be experienced. Even if you close your eyes, your eyeballs can be moving rapidly, making you agitated, disturbed and definitely not focused. Any activity of the sense organs will break the state of stillness and balance which is both physical and psychological.

The third condition is *drirhata*, fixity. We did the practice in which you visualized yourself sitting on a triangle and then encasing the body in a pyramid (*See Appendix 1*). At that time, you became fixed. There was stillness and fixity of the body. Not a single part of the body was moving, and there was comfort in that state. Fixity means an unchanging condition of comfort: absolute and total comfort, no distraction or disturbance of any kind.

The fourth condition is *dhairyam*, patience. From fixity comes patience. Here you move from body to mind, for patience is a quality of the mind whereas fixity is a quality of the senses. When the mind is still, there is patience. When the mind is agitated, there is impatience. Patience is a state or condition of mind where nothing is disturbing it and you are able to remain in that state quite comfortably.

It is hard for people to tolerate peace and quiet of mind. Although everyone seeks peace, no one can manage it. Patience is a condition that sets into the mind when there is

no distraction from sensory activities, from the karmendriyas and jnanendriyas. That condition affects the mind and it becomes still and peaceful. Once the senses and the mind become still and quiet, the fifth stage of *laghavam*, or lightness of body is experienced.

In ancient times, monks would walk on rice paper to test their level of concentration and control over the senses. If they could walk without leaving any imprint, they were considered to have mastered the senses and attained lightness of body. This is one of the tests in Shaolin martial arts, as control of prana lightens the body. The more you focus, the lighter your body becomes.

Laghavam or lightness of body is considered to be a natural outcome of harmony between the senses and mental behaviour. The activity of the senses represents pranic activity and patience represents mental activity; therefore when mental activity and pranic activity are balanced, lightness is experienced.

From lightness emerges *pratyaksham*; it is a state where you are able to identify with what you are experiencing. In the morning class you were asked to identify how aware you were in each of the five components of the asana practice. If you apply your awareness one hundred percent in each component, that will be pratyaksham: complete absorption and identification with what you are doing and experiencing. You become one with the movement, you become one with the experience of prana, you become one with the breath, you become one with visualization, you become one with the chakra, you become one with the mantra. That sound resonates in you; it is not just a mental repetition; it becomes a living experience. Visualization, breath, prana, they all become living experiences. It can happen and will happen, given time. Thus, pratyaksham is to live an experience.

Pratyaksham leads to the seventh condition, *nirlipta*, a state of mental non-involvement. You are not involved, you are simply the witness, *drashta*. You are not the *bhokta*, the enjoyer or the experienter. Once you are able to witness

your own experiences, you become nirlipta. You cultivate the ability to see, to become the observer.

These seven conditions have to develop with the practice of physical yoga. Once these have been mastered, then you move into the mental yoga. Whether it is shatkarma, asana, pranayama, mudra, bandha or any other physical practice, it will lead you through these seven conditions, indicating the progress in your sadhana. They represent the outcome of the physical practices. If you do the shatkarma, shodhanam will be attained; if you practise asana and pranayama, sthairyam and dhairyam will be attained; if you perfect pranayama, laghavam will be attained. In this manner, whatever practice you do will take you to a condition, a platform, as that is the objective or aim of the practice.

Yama and niyama

While you do the physical practice, there is another aspect that you have to take into account: the mental awareness, attitude or condition that you create to facilitate the progress of your sadhana. The practice is physical and the attitude is mental. This attitude has been identified as yama and niyama.

Yama and niyama have been translated into English as ethics, morality and disciplines of yoga. This does not convey their right meaning. *Yama* means to hold, to hold something that you have become. When you become something and you are holding that state, you are experiencing a yama. It is an indication that you have passed through something, which is the negative, and have become something, which is the positive. Therefore, yama is to hold the positive in sight, to become the experience of the positive in life.

There are two fields in which you run. One is the field of positivity, hope and happiness. The other is the field of negativity, despair and suffering. It is your choice in which field you wish to run. The inherent tendency in life is to go towards the negative, while you hope and aspire for the positive. While you hope and aspire for the positive, all the responses and reactions of your daily life are coloured by the negative. Your

aggression, anger, frustration, greed, ego is coloured by the negative. That is what you are living, and it indicates that the natural gravitation in life is towards the darker field.

Your direction has to change. You have to connect with the lighter, luminous and positive field. That is where attitude comes in. With the help of awareness, you can transform the negatives of your attitude into positives and create another attitude. That is the pratipaksha bhavana which Swami Sivananda propagated. Pratipaksha bhavana is nothing but cultivation of different yamas, or positive qualities, in life. Yamas are not only the ones mentioned in the *Yoga Sutras*; yamas are all those qualities which bring out the creative and positive you. Swami Sivananda indicated this when he said, “Always change the negative into the positive, a bad thought into a positive thought.” However, that is difficult. The mind always gravitates towards the negative and the detrimental; it does not look for the positive and the optimistic. That is the biggest challenge in yoga: dealing with the mind.

Raja yoga sounds very nice, but has it worked for you? You have been meditating for so long, has any improvement been seen in your life? You have to see what has happened to you, what you have gained from your practice.

In the physical dimension of yoga, there are twenty yamas and twenty niyamas. They are thought patterns that change the response of the mind from worse to better. If you follow one idea to the end, it will change the nature of the mind. When you put a dirty cloth and soap in the washing machine, after some time the cloth comes out clean. In the same manner, when the positive soap scrubs the mind all the negative grime is gradually washed away, and the luminous mind emerges. That is the outcome of yama and niyama. Yamas are an awareness of how you respond, and whether you respond positively, constructively and creatively or not. It is fine-tuning of the mind by cultivating thoughts, samskaras and ideas which are positive and uplifting.

Niyamas are conditions that regulate the lifestyle and bring in some order, system, sequence and progression in

your routine. Thus, fine-tuning of the daily routine through practice will lead to attainment of the seven conditions and fine-tuning of the attitude will improve the human nature.

Mental side

Then comes the mental side of yoga, which is composed of prana and consciousness, energy and mind. Both have to be dealt with in the mental aspect of yoga. Sage Patanjali deals with mind and the classical raja yoga deals with prana. Combining both becomes a good tool to work with.

Two ideas are important in Patanjali's raja yoga: *drashta* and *chitta vritti*. *Drashta* means to become the observer. You can only become the observer of mind. You cannot become the observer of shakti, rather you become the expresser or the experiencer of shakti. Yet you can become the observer and witness of mind.

What are you to observe in the mind? Thoughts in reality are not worth your time, for they are totally irrational, idiotic and sometimes misleading. So thoughts are out. What you observe as *chitta vritti* are the memories. Everything is decided by past memory. How you are going to interact with people is decided by past memories filed in your brain. It is those memories that bring out a reaction, a response. These responses are the *vrittis*. If you see your adversary after many years, you will be seething inside. As long as you are aware of your enemy, you will be seething inside. That will be your reaction, your *vritti*.

It is the memory component, the *chitta* component, that you have to look into, not the *manas* component. If you understand *drashta* and *chitta*, then the subject of mind becomes clear. It is said that the mind is composed of *manas*, *buddhi*, *chitta* and *ahamkara*; *manas* being the reflective mind, *buddhi* the intellectual mind, *chitta* the *smriti* or memory mind, and *ahamkara* the ego mind, the I-mind.

The thinking, reflective mind, *manas*, is superficial. Thoughts can change. Just as you change your clothes, your thoughts can change. *Buddhi* is generally relegated to the

background as memories are stronger. When buddhi, logic or intelligence becomes active, then *viveka*, discrimination, comes in. Otherwise buddhi takes a backseat.

Chitta is the active principle. Behind chitta is ahamkara, the ego principle. Chitta and ahamkara together constitute chitta vritti. It is the ego that responds to memory. It is the ego that takes a stand when memory says that this and this happened. The focus of pratyahara, dharana and dhyana therefore has to shift from manas and buddhi to chitta and ahamkara.

In the classical raja yoga you see everything as a pranic expression. There is a question, “Why can’t you erase your memory?” The answer is, “Because it is still coloured by prana.” Visualize this. You take a polaroid picture and keep it in your album. As long as the picture is not exposed to sunlight, it will retain its colours. If you expose the picture to sunlight, the colours will begin to fade. After some time, the whole image will fade and eventually only the white paper will remain. Memory is like that. The memory of your early days is still as vibrant and alive as the experience at that time. If you remove the prana from the memory, the colours fade. It turns sepia, then black and white, and eventually it fades away completely. This is another way of *chitta vritti nirodhah*: remove prana from a memory and not give it any fuel. Once prana is removed, the memory will dissolve.

Spiritual dimension

The systems of the mental dimension of yoga lead you to the state of meditation. Meditation is complete absorption in an experience. When that state of absorption takes place, then you are ready for the spiritual dimension of yoga. Until now you were only playing with your mind. When *dhyana*, absorption, has happened, then you come to the spiritual dimension of yoga.

By the time you come to dhyana, your mental attitude and awareness have become much more positive, you have managed your stressors with greater efficiency, and there is

more peace and harmony. You are in better control of your sensorial and mental behaviours. You are on a good path. Now spiritual realization becomes a living experience, not fantasy or imagination.

According to Sri Swamiji, the goal of human life is to cultivate spiritual awareness, not God-realization. That spiritual awareness is the awareness of the positives. In the second chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* (2:54), Arjuna asks Krishna, “How does an enlightened being live in this world? What does he eat? What does he think? What does he drink? How does he live?” Krishna replies, “Just like you and me and everyone else. They may be enlightened, but as long as they are in this world they have to live according to the rules and laws of the world, the senses, the body, nature and everything. They will feel hungry. They will feel sleepy. They will feel everything that a normal human being experiences. The difference is that they will see the luminosity, while others see darkness everywhere.”

It is a simple statement. The enlightened being will see luminosity everywhere, while all others see darkness everywhere. Luminosity here can mean hope, positivity, optimism, inner strength.

The Progressive Yoga Vidya Training takes you from one experience of yoga to another to another to another. That is known as swadhyaya. The Upanishads state that one of the pillars of *dharma*, righteous living, is swadhyaya. Swadhyaya generally means self-study. However, the Upanishads say that yoga is swadhyaya. People think of swadhyaya as reading books and scriptures, and increasing their knowledge bank. Swadhyaya is knowing oneself and yoga is swadhyaya. Every practice of yoga, every step of yoga is swadhyaya. It allows you to discover a new side of yourself each time. From the upanishadic perspective, yoga is one of the components of *dharma*, as it allows you to realize yourself, discover another aspect of yourself. Progressive yoga is exploring the sequence by which you can go through the sadhana defined by yoga.

The Many Forms of Shakti

7 October 2019

There are three dimensions of yoga: physical, mental and spiritual. All yogas have a mental, a spiritual and a physical benefit. You cannot say that hatha yoga is physical, raja yoga is mental, or kriya yoga is spiritual. You cannot say that this yoga is beneficial for the body, this yoga for the mind, and this yoga for spiritual development.

When practising asana, physical awareness, breath awareness, visualization, chakra awareness and mantra awareness are experiences that have to be lived. This form of awareness is one of the foundations or baselines of hatha yoga: *pratyaksham*, the seventh *bhumika* or plane. *Pratyaksham* means something which you are able to realize, cognize, perceive, and no question or doubt remains about it. *Prati* means towards and *aksham* means the vision where you can see everything. *Pratyaksham* is the seventh condition of hatha yoga, when you are extending your awareness into the experience of the body, the movement, the breath, the visualization, the chakra location, the mantra vibration.

At each stage you are trying to revive and revitalize that awareness. That is *pratyaksham*. It is not *pratyahara*. Whenever you close the eyes or observe something within, it cannot be defined as withdrawal of the senses from objects or *pratyahara*. Rather, it is the realization of a particular experience that you go through. All the foundations of hatha yoga and raja yoga, although they vary in nature with one

being more physical and the other being more mental, are interrelated and complementary. After all, what is the body? Compressed energy. Matter is a form of compressed energy. What is the mind? It is also energy. Your thoughts are energy. What you call mind, or logic and intelligence, is also energy.

Pranotthana with yama and niyama

Prana is also energy which links the gross, the physical with the subtle, the mental, and beyond the mind. When you practise hatha yoga, the focus is on wellness of the body and on activation and awakening of pranas. Wellness of the body comes with shatkarma and asana. Activation of pranas happens with the practices of pranayama, eventually leading to *pranotthana*, awakening of pranas.

With the awakening of pranas, the body pranas change and so do the mental pranas. In hatha yoga, the effect of activation of pranas is seventy-five percent physical and twenty-five percent mental. In raja yoga, it is twenty-five percent physical and seventy-five percent mental. Body and mind are the two opposite extremes of prana with pranamaya kosha being the centre.

The purpose of hatha yoga is activation of pranas, so why are yamas and niyamas, which are understood by people as the ethical and moral codes of yoga, included in hatha yoga? Yamas and niyamas reinforce the awakening of pranas. Yamas are related with the mind. Niyamas are related with the body. Yamas activate *chitta shakti*, the mental energy, and niyamas activate and regulate *prana shakti*, the physical energy.

You are creating a condition in your body, in your environment and in your mind by following the yamas and niyamas. You are altering the pranas of the mind and the pranas of the body. There is a tangible and real relationship between the yamas and niyamas and ida and pingala.

Yamas and niyamas are not only a conscious thought process or mental experience; they are a condition of mind which reinforces the awakening of pranas. Yamas are mental practices that cultivate mental awareness and manage chitta

shakti, the subtle prana governing the mind, the intellect, the emotions. They are also an attitude, an awareness of positivity that you hold and focus on.

Niyamas regulate your lifestyle. They regulate your performance, activities, senses, your whole routine. They regulate the external and environmental conditions and factors so that everything becomes conducive to what you wish to achieve in life. Including yamas and niyamas in the practice of hatha yoga becomes a powerful tool to create the pranic change.

Mitahara and shaucha

The yamas and niyamas of hatha yoga begin in a simple manner. There are seven bhumikas, foundations, and ten yamas and niyamas each. The yamas and niyamas are grouped according to the bhumikas.

The first bhumika is *shodhanam*, which means to clean, to clear away, to detoxify, to purify. Shatkarma and asana begin the process of shodhanam. The impurities of the body are gradually removed and it is detoxified. Two yamas and two niyamas help this process of shodhanam. The first yama is mitahara and the second is shaucha.

Mitahara means light eating and *shaucha* means maintaining hygiene or cleanliness. Light eating and cleanliness is a good combination. *Ahara* or craving is a basic instinct. Some people have the habit of eating a lot when under stress and thereby putting on weight. With some people the reverse happens: they lose their appetite with stress. In this way, food becomes an expression of the condition of body and mind. Your food habits indicate the condition of your body and mind.

If you regulate your diet and food habits and practise balanced eating, then the body will receive all the nutrients it requires naturally from food. Overeating for the sake of taste, indulgence, sensorial or sensual gratification is damaging and harmful. If that understanding comes in, one habit in life will change. There will be lightness in the body, lethargy

and sloth will disappear, the nutrients will be absorbed by the system and waste-matter will be eliminated efficiently, thus ensuring wellbeing for the body. Mitahara is good for the body; it lightens the body and changes a habit and conditioning of the mind.

The second yama is *shaucha*, cleanliness. If you want to know the condition of someone's mind, visit their bedroom, open the closet and there you have the mind of the individual in its full glory. That is what you are. Purity has to be there at all levels. The concept, the idea of *shaucha* has to be there at all levels, beginning with the physical and progressing to the subtle. Ultimately it is the *mal*, dross, of the mind that has to be cleaned. The thought of *shaucha*, cleanliness and purity at the outer and inner levels helps maintain a positive awareness and attitude.

There has to be moderation in diet so the body remains in perfect health. There has to be awareness of purity and cleanliness all around so the mind remains optimistic and positive.

Homa and siddhanta shravana

The two niyamas that aid shodhanam are homa and siddhanta shravana. *Homa* is generally considered to be a ritual, a fire ceremony to connect with nature and the elements. However, homa has many connotations. It can mean a performance, a ritual, a *vrata* or fasting, a physical action, a posture, a pranayama, or a mudra. It can also be combined to become a powerful method of purification and connection. Homa is the niyama, discipline, which allows you some moments to connect with nature and the divine.

When you practise meditation, you are disconnected from nature. When you practise homa, you are connected to nature, and through nature to the *tattwas*, the elements, and through the *tattwas* to the cosmos. Homa here does not mean an elaborate ritual, but something which you do in five minutes, agnihotra for example. Agnihotra is a homa tradition which developed as a five-minute practice to be

done at the times of sunrise and sunset. Doing it at these specific times, you connect with the energies and prana shakti of the sun. You feed that energy and it feeds you as well. These small practices, which developed as traditions, are not religious but a way to mould the mind so it can realize the effect of nature and the cosmos on the individual.

The second niyama is *siddhanta shravana*, which means satsang, swadhyaya, understanding, listening or reading, with the intention to know and purify the mind and the senses. These two yamas and two niyamas, along with the practice of hatha yoga, lead you to the first level: the bhumika of shodhanam.

Energy fields

Thoughts are energy and mind is energy, therefore a positive mental condition creates an energy field, and a negative mental condition also creates an energy field. What you think is being projected into the environment. It is not only the internet which has the cloud, humans also have the akashic record. Just as the cloud cannot be seen but can be accessed with the right instrument, in the same manner, the akashic record cannot be seen. The zillions of thoughts, words and sentences floating in the air cannot be seen. When the right connection of mind takes place then they are heard, just as when the tuning of the radio or the TV is right you catch the channel. That is known as *shruti*, something that was heard. Some sadhu was sitting down one day and tuning his inner radio. Suddenly he got the station which was broadcasting the Vedas, and he heard the mantras of the *Rig Veda*. That was shruti, the connection took place. It was a connection of energy. There was compatibility of the person's frequencies with the cosmic frequency.

Therefore, don't disqualify yamas and niyamas as irrelevant. They are efforts and attempts to keep you on the positive side of life. If you wish to go to the negative side through your own desires, hatred, expectations and greed, that is your choice. Every effort of the global spiritual

traditions has been to keep people on the positive, the best and the beautiful side of life.

Your sadhana is to remain focused on the positive side. When you remain focused on the positive side, the vibrations and energies change. It is this change of vibrations and energies that modifies and changes the mind. Otherwise the mind keeps playing havoc all the time.

The yamas relate to ida shakti or chitta shakti, and the niyamas relate to prana shakti or pingala shakti. Everything is seen from the perspective of prana. Therefore, when you come to raja yoga, the experience of prana, which was generated in hatha yoga, continues. The experience of prana in hatha yoga is more physical while in raja yoga it becomes subtler. It becomes more emotional and expressive, oriented towards feeling and sentiment.

Just as there are five pranas in the body, there are five mental pranas. The physical pranas are governed by pingala, the solar energy. The mental pranas are governed by ida, the lunar energy. The physical pranas are responsible for motion of the body and functioning of internal organs. They have different properties: some are outgoing forces, some are incoming forces. Similarly, on the mental side there are five pranas, one controls manas, another controls buddhi, the third controls chitta, the fourth controls ahankara, and the fifth is all-pervasive in the mental dimension. Just as there is prana, apana, samana, udana and the all-pervasive vyana in the physical dimension, the mental dimension of prana shakti or chitta shakti is constituted of manas prana, buddhi prana, chitta prana, ahankara prana and the all-pervasive subtle prana, with each having a different motion.

Prana is generally imagined or visualized in the form of an energy swirl going round and round. Apana is the downward-moving force, so it swirls down. Prana is the upward-moving force, so it swirls up. Udana, samana and vyana have circular, lateral and all-pervasive movements, respectively. Similarly, manas is visualized as a prana moving from left to right, right to left, left to right, right to left. That

is the experience you have when you observe your thoughts. When you read your thoughts, they go like tickertape. The natural movement of manas is lateral, and that is how this shakti is visualized.

Buddhi is the 3D effect of prana, like a black and white swirl moving in the old black and white movies; you can be dragged into it. That is the buddhi visual. Chitta is rapid up and down, like a piston. Whatever comes in, you are pushing it down into the memory and samskara holder, into the container of chitta. Ahamkara, the ego prana, is visualized as an upward-facing triangle, the Shiva triangle. That triangle is full of fluff or sparks. The subtle all-pervasive mental prana has the same movement as the physical vyana.

Ahimsa and asteya

The second bhumika in hatha yoga is *sthairyam*, meaning stillness, steadiness, stability, not only the gross physical stillness, but stillness at the micro and cellular levels. This is the outcome of balance attained in the first bhumika.

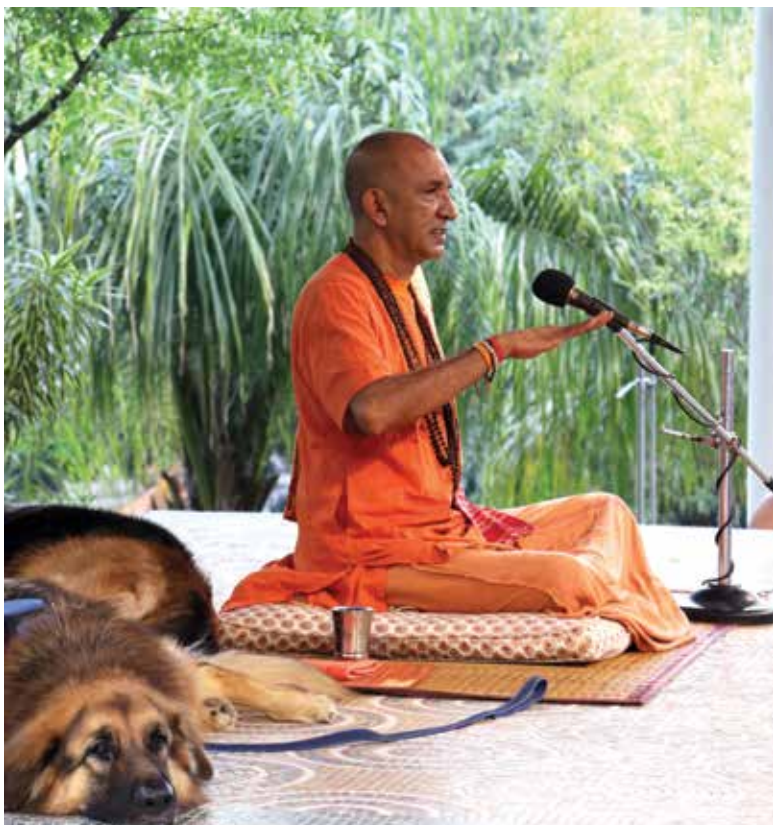
The yamas that deal with *sthairyam* are ahimsa and asteya. The niyamas that deal with *sthairyam* are japa and santosha. The two yamas bring about stillness of mind. When the mind is not agitated, there is no reaction, no aggression. When the mind is agitated, there is reaction and aggression.

Himsa means the nature of aggression and disturbance that leads to an uncontrolled response of the mind or the senses. This response is identified as violent, destructive, harmful, unsettling behaviour. Ahimsa is managing the irresponsible spikes of the mind.

Asteya is also one of the conditions in raja yoga. It means desire-less. If you desire less, then you follow asteya. If you desire more, then you are greedy. The spikes that are generated with desire have to be managed. Therefore, two questions are always asked: 'Do I need it? Do I need it? Do I need it?' 'Do I want it? Do I want it? Do I want it?' These two questions will keep your awareness balanced and hitched on to asteya. If something is really needed and desired by you,

you will acquire it, be it a husband, a wife, a car or another pair of shoes. If it is not desired by you, then you will know by asking three times. You will know that you are mentally free from your own obsession. These two questions can play a vital role in controlling the senseless activities of mind and prana. The senseless activity of mind and prana leads to the non-asteya condition, where one simply wants to grab, accumulate, possess, acquire and own.

Yamas and niyamas are as important in hatha yoga as shatkarma or asana, provided you understand their intention and make the effort to create the right condition within yourself to experience the goal set by yoga for everyone.



Sthairyam, Drirhata, Dhairyam and Laghavam

8 October 2019

Until now, everybody has seen yoga as groups of independent practices: “My interest is in asana, so I am going to practise asana only, I am not interested in meditation.” “My interest is in meditation, so I am going to practise meditation only. I am not interested in pranayama or the physical body.” You have chosen one practice of yoga for whatever your compulsions and needs be. You have failed to see the complete picture of yoga and appreciate its value in your life. You have failed to see how the different components of each branch of yoga support the experience of that yoga.

We had started with the physical aspect of yoga using the principles of hatha yoga to understand that there are seven outcomes of the physical practice. These seven foundations or conditions that we create with the practice of asana, pranayama and shatkarma have only two purposes: harmony and wellbeing in the body and awakening of the pranas. Everything in hatha yoga, whether it be a yama or a niyama, is to activate the pranas.

There are yamas and niyamas in every branch of yoga, including kriya yoga and kundalini yoga. They are like the hands are for the body. What do you use your hands for? Everything. From grabbing to holding to eating, you use your hands for everything, although they are just six inches long. Similarly, yamas and niyamas are small points, yet they create a change in consciousness, energy and personality.

Asana and pranayama regulate the flow of prana, however, change comes when you are consciously working to bring about a positive condition in your mind. That positive condition alters the pranas too. Once the pranas are altered, the effect and influence is on the physical body as well as the mental body.

Sthairyam or stillness

In hatha yoga, the second condition that has to develop is sthairyam. *Sthairyam* means stillness. The two yamas which bring stillness are ahimsa and asteya. *Steya* is desiring, wanting, grabbing, possessing, stealing, thieving, owning, whatever one does to acquire something, and *asteya* is the opposite of that. Ahimsa is the condition where the aggression of mind and senses are stilled. When asteya and ahimsa are experienced, then sthirata comes in.

Sthirata is not only the physical condition of stillness, it is also the mind becoming still: not allowing the pebbles of influences to disturb the calm waters of the mind. That never happens. If you are calm and peaceful and some disturbing element comes, you immediately become agitated. Allowing the disturbing element to come in to make you agitated is himsa. If you do not allow the disturbing element to come in, that will be ahimsa. Himsa should not be taken only as a violent or aggressive act or behaviour; it is also something that changes the harmony of the mind. Therefore, ahimsa is maintaining the harmony of the mind.

When you are able to perfect ahimsa you master your *krodha*, anger, for anger is the result of spikes in the mind. If the spikes don't appear there is no anger; instead, there is mastery over anger. Similarly, if you are able to live asteya, you overcome *lobha*, greed. Lobha is another vritti, another quality or nature of the mind, and it can be managed with asteya.

The two niyamas for sthairyam are japa and santosha. Japa is repetition of mantra, and it creates a condition where you are able to disconnect from the external distractions and

connect with your inner spiritual experience. That is the role of japa. You reduce the outer distractions and connect with your inner, spiritual experience.

Mantra also gives you the ability to turn off the switch of the mind. Otherwise, twenty-four hours your mind is in the 'on' position and connected to the world of senses and sense objects. Even during sleep it is on. There is continuous anxiety and stress being built up inside. There is no rest, no disconnection from the main stream of thought. When you do japa, the mind is diverted from its thought-field and focused on the mantra. For whatever time you are focused, even if there is ten seconds of total absorption in the mantra, it creates a gap, a rest period for the mind. In those ten seconds you feel *shanti*, peace. When the mind again connects with sense objects, the peace is gone and your connection activities begin. Japa gives you the ability to disconnect from your area of involvement and connect with your inner spiritual experience. Perfection of japa aids in attainment of stillness and steadiness.

The impact of japa is on the mental pranas. Until now the impact was on the physical pranas; with japa, the mental pranas are being affected. The mental pranas are manas prana, buddhi prana, chitta prana and ahamkara prana. The function of manas prana is to activate thoughts and to bring stuff from the subconscious and unconscious to the conscious field. It pulls out information and places it in front of your eyes to enable you to take a decision. Manas prana brings information which you see in the form of thoughts: what you are aware of presently.

When you are doing japa, it is manas prana that is affected first. Mantra has been defined as *mananat trayate iti mantrah* – “Mantra is that power which stops the chattering of the mind.” The chattering of the mind is the activity of manas prana as it is pulling things up and bringing them to the field of your perception, awareness and knowledge. The stopping of this chattering is the first experience of japa. Then, its connection with buddhi becomes still as manas is

also pulling from buddhi. Although you are not accessing buddhi directly during japa, there is a feeling that the mind is calm, composed and balanced; there are no spikes. That is japa.

The second niyama for sthairyam is santosha. *Santosha* means not being influenced by the pulls of desire. When you are acting in a manner that is restrained and guided by the principles of balance and sanyam, that is santosha, contentment. It is a condition where nothing is attracting you or calling you. The principles of sanyam and balance are highlighted in your actions, not your involvement with people, events or situations. Understanding how to maintain sanyam in your actions and thoughts, in everything that you live for, brings contentment.

Sri Swamiji says that the mind is like a battery. The more you use a torchlight, the faster its battery becomes flat. The less you use it, the longer the battery lasts. The mind is like that. When there are desires, imaginations or expectations, the battery is being used continuously in the background.

So much is happening in the background though superficially you see everything turned off. Your sight, perceptions, needs, expectations and desires are all active every second. To have sanyam in this condition is difficult. How do you find a gap to enter when there is confusion every second in the mind? If you are able to hold the mind, then you are conserving energy. When you conserve energy there is contentment, when you spend energy there is discontentment. Conserving mental energy is one of the ways to attain santosha.

To achieve santosha, the awareness has to be there that the battery has to be conserved. One of the methods to conserve energy is *mouna*, silence. Why is mouna practised in the ashram tradition? Many people don't like it, they think of it as an imposition; many people flout it. Despite everything, the rule stays. Even if you don't follow it, the rule stays. Why? To conserve the battery. If you are talking while eating, your energy is being used in both talking and in digesting and

assimilating. You are using half here and half there. If you are able to practise mouna at mealtimes, all the energy will be used for absorption of prana in the body. A simple discipline like mouna is important for life, for body, prana, mind and spirit.

Drirhata or firmness

The third level, foundation, or condition of the physical body is drirhata. *Drirhata* means firmness. All the hatha yogic practices along with mudras and bandhas will bring you to the state of firmness of body.

Firmness of the body propels you into the pranamaya kosha, for you are free from the pains and discomforts of the body; the body does not hold your awareness down to its level. There is a state of comfort and stillness, which is the definition of yogasana: *sthiram sukham*. Sthiram and sukham together bring drirhata, for there is no discomfort to distract you in any manner. You are still without any distraction, you are experiencing total comfort. Thus, physical stillness and mental comfort both lead to drirhata.

Drirhata is required to reach the state of meditation. The first use of the stability which you gain through your practice is perfected in kaya sthairyam. That is the first practice. Antar mouna, yoga nidra and ajapa japa are not the first practices of meditation. It is kaya sthairyam. The conditions of drirhata are being created for you to come to this first level of meditation, to be totally free of distraction.

Along with physical firmness there is also pranic firmness. The yama for drirhata is *dhriti*, which means firmness of mind. This firmness of mind comes when the pranas are stilled and guided with the practice of mudras and bandhas. Many practitioners have had the experience that when they perform jalandhara bandha, moola bandha or uddiyana bandha, there is a feeling of lightness and the mind becomes totally fixed, focused, firm and concentrated. That is a condition of drirhata. The firmness is experienced in manas when *vikalpas*, oscillations, are not there in the mind. The

body is absolutely still like a statue, the mind is perfectly still and silent. No thoughts, no oscillations, perfect stillness.

The niyama is tapas. For many people tapas is austerity. They are right, for it is an austere life that you live in tapas. However, you are able to live that life as you have created a condition in which there is no indulgence; you are the master of your senses and mind. Sri Swamiji did the panchagni. I did the panchagni. People used to say it is tapasya, hard austerity. It could have been: surviving eighty degrees of temperature. But if I look at the hardship of the practice and keep thinking, 'This is difficult, this is difficult, I have to face it, I have to do it', and half-heartedly I make the effort to do my sadhana, I would be creating a negative condition in my mind. I would not be in sync with what I am doing. If the mind thinks that the austerity is a problem, then how can it perform the austerity? Therefore, the real meaning of tapas is living a life without indulgence, whether material, mental, psychological, psychic or spiritual.

When there is no indulgence, there is no wastage of prana shakti. The blocks of prana are removed and the pranas can be elevated. The whole idea of tapas is to be able to lift the pranas and to master the pranas. It is a constant, ongoing process of channelling and directing prana. When you are practising asana, if you are able to direct your pranas, your body will support you. That is tapas. If you are not able to direct your pranas, you will feel discomfort during asana. For how long can one sit in front of fires at eighty degrees, thinking it is too hot? Not more than a few minutes. However, if one is enjoying it and the pranas are in sync with the agni pranas, the question or thought of 'It is hot, it is intolerable', does not arise. Rather, there is synchronicity between my prana and the agni prana, the agni tattwa.

Tapas does not always mean hardship. Tapas also means to synchronize oneself with the environment and the cosmic will. This is another definition of tapas. Yet another meaning is to live in sanyam and not overindulge. Yet another meaning of tapas is to live a basic, spartan lifestyle. You do

your own thing and don't depend on luxuries, comforts, equipment and instruments. Anything that pushes you to live in a disciplined manner, with restraint, in harmony and sync with nature and the cosmic will, is tapas. It is a niyama, for if you are able to regulate your life then the changes will be felt in the activities of the mind and senses. This is the result of tapas: it changes the performance, the understanding, the perception of the senses and mind.

Dhairyam or patience

Level four of attainment in hatha yoga is dhairyam. *Dhairyam* means patience. At this level, pratyahara begins. Patience with the mind has to be there as you have to link prana with mind. Once you identify with the nature of the mind, you follow it. Don't identify with the mind, don't follow the mind. Experience pratyahara. Slowly isolate the mind from its outer interactions. Balance of prana and consciousness is dhairyam, patience.

When a rocket goes to the international space station, the process of docking has to happen in an absolutely perfect manner so that the locks lock against each other. If it is half a centimetre off the angle, docking will not take place. It is the same in pratyahara. Everything has to be sealed properly, there should be no escape. In raja yoga pratyahara, you can observe the mind, control the mind, create a thought, empty the mind, and play with yourself. In hatha yoga pratyahara, you cannot play with yourself. Rather you have to hold on to one understanding, idea or experience and live it completely. That is the indication that your mental and pranic frequencies are in sync. When they are in sync there is no craving for anything. Desire is not seen as ambition but as a need, and then it becomes possible to take the right action. Dhairyam, patience, happens when the frequencies of mind and prana are synchronized. This balance leads to heightened sensitivity in the field of buddhi, chitta and ahamkara.

The niyama is mati. *Mati* means an awakened understanding, mind-set or mentality. When the interaction

between the senses and the mind is governed by sanyam, restrained and appropriate mental conduct is experienced. Wisdom-ful action, thoughtful action, analyzed action is experienced, dharmic behaviour is experienced. This is the result of mati. It is awakened intelligence which governs your responses at all levels.

Laghavam or lightness

The fifth level is *laghavam* or lightness. Laghavam is the outcome of perfection in pranayama. Without perfection in pranayama, lightness cannot be experienced.

To experience lightness of pranas in the mind, the two yamas are *daya* and *kshama*, compassion and forgiveness. With compassion, the rigidity of the heart and the mind disappear. Heart and mind become soft. That is daya, compassion. When you hold on to things, believing that this is ‘anti-me’, then you are always reacting. If you stop thinking that this is ‘anti-me’, then reactions will not be there; instead there will be forgiveness: ‘Ah, it happened, doesn’t matter.’ When things are perceived as a threat to yourself, there is always a negative response. When you do not see things as a threat, that is *kshama*, forgiveness.

A child comes and starts pulling at your hair and you feel a surge of anger. This reaction is not kshama. If you don’t react, that is kshama, forgiveness. Kshama is an understanding of when to act, when not to act, and when to let go of things. When there is no kshama, you don’t allow things to go. You hold on. You cling to everything. When you remember the bad experiences and forget the good ones, the capacity to forgive diminishes greatly and you become a reactive animal.

Clearing the mind on a daily basis of all impressions and incidents which have affected you, whether positively or negatively, will bring forth a condition, a quality, a nature which is non-reactive and peaceful. That non-reactive and peaceful mind-set will be the forgiving mind-set. Compassion and forgiveness become the yamas for lightness of prana, body, mind and emotions.

Daan is the first niyama. This is an interesting combination. Compassion, *daya*, is the yama and *daan*, giving, is the niyama. You can give only if there is compassion. If there is no feeling of compassion, you will not want to give. They are complementary: you feel compassion therefore you give, reach out to help, support, encourage or inspire somebody. Daan is the outcome of *daya*.

The second niyama is *astikeya*, which means belief in the good, in generosity, kindness and benevolence. If you are giving daan, if you are giving something to somebody out of *daya*, then *astikeya* comes in as complementary to *kshama*. When you are able to forgive somebody, what do you give them? You give them your love. If you forgive somebody, then how will it be identified or known that you have forgiven them? By the expression of love. The feeling towards them will again become pure and they will recognize that feeling: ‘This person has forgiven me.’ Contentment will set in. This is love for the other person. You see the *sundaram* aspect in that person, the beautiful aspect of the person; not the *satyam* aspect, not the *shivam* aspect, but the *sundaram* aspect. Due to the connection with the *sundaram* aspect, the pure feeling that you are expressing is *astikeya*.

This is all pranic transformation, and that is the basic difference between the yogic understanding and the academic understanding. In the academic understanding, mind, consciousness, energy, prana, each is seen as separate. “This is different, it has a purpose, it has a role.” “This is different, it has a name, a purpose, a role.” In the yogic understanding, everything is interconnected and supportive of each other. One practice of meditation helps the performance of asanas. One asana practice helps the awakening of chakras. One pranayama practice leads you to deep meditation. Experiences of deep meditation ensure that you master the previous techniques. It is all interlinked and interrelated.

Therefore, when Sri Swamiji started his yoga training programs, he made it clear that little aspects have to be taken

from every source and put together to make a complete yoga program. It is no use practising only asana for eight hours. It is no use practising only pranayama for six hours. It is no use practising only meditation for four hours. Instead, have a collection of practices, techniques and systems that are applicable for you to improve your life. For this reason, after a certain period of training, Sri Swamiji would make yoga an independent, individual practice and not a classroom training. His classroom training was only confined to beginners and intermediate classes.

Even today, Bihar School of yoga follows the same system. General, common classes are confined to basics, beginners and intermediate. Beyond that, whatever yoga training is given, is tailored training. Yoga is not a common practice for all. Up to a certain point, yes, but after that, it has to be tailored individually, and what is tailored individually cannot be taught to the public in a class as it is not meant for them.

That is how you have to now think of yoga. Teaching yoga is separate and living yoga is separate. If you can create this distinction, this awareness, this condition, you will gain.



Seven Bhumikas

9 October 2019

The journey in yoga vidya begins with the physical body, advances to the mental experience and then reaches spiritual consciousness. The practices of yoga which cover the physical dimension are generally known as hatha yoga, however, there are many varieties of hatha yoga. Besides Yogi Swatmarama's *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, there are many other literatures on the subject. The common point between these different literatures is the purpose of hatha yoga, which is wellbeing and pranic awakening.

There are many practices of hatha yoga other than asana, such as shatkarma, pranayama, mudra and bandha. There are practices of concentration and even other advanced practices that activate the chakras directly, that influence the chakras at the muscular and cellular levels. There is a wide range of practices in hatha yoga, yet people only think of asana as hatha yoga. This creates a limited understanding of the yogic intent and purpose.

The outcome and overall result of hatha yoga in anna-maya kosha is clearly predetermined in the form of *sapta bhumika* or seven conditions. These are states that are created when you practise the physical yoga and go through the process of purification and wellbeing. The seven conditions are aided by yamas and niyamas pertaining to hatha yoga. The bhumikas are the outcome of the total hatha yoga practice, not just asana, not just shatkarma, not just

concentration, not just nauli, not just kapalbhati, but the whole practice.

Shodhanam

The first conditioning, *shodhanam* or purification of the body, is aided by imposition of sanyam on diet. This yama is called *mitahara*, light eating, or eating food which is quickly digestible and increases vitality rather than diminishing it. Shodhanam is also supported by *shaucha*, cleanliness. If the environment is clean, the body is clean. If the body is clean, the mind is clean. This is the concept of shaucha. Thus, appropriate diet and cleanliness are the first yamas of hatha yoga.

The niyamas are homa and siddhanta shravana. Homa is a means by which you can align the physical energies with the cosmic energies. This fine-tuning can happen only at certain times, when the energies of the body, the energies of the sun and the cosmic energies are in tune with each other. This happens at the time of sunrise and sunset, therefore this is the time chosen for homa by the rishis. You can reorganize your prana shakti, energy, easily and with minimum effort at this time.

Siddhanta shravana is similar to satsang: discuss, listen, study, increase your level of understanding, increase your level of knowledge, and allow the spiritual teachings to become the medium to purify your mind, senses and emotions. This was the first level, shodhanam or purification.

Sthairyam

The second level is *sthairyam*, stillness of the body, which is aided by the yamas of ahimsa and asteya. The spikes in the mind are created by the opposite of these two conditions. *Himsa* is the violent nature, the rage, the anger, the aggression, and *steya* is the desire to grab, possess, acquire, accumulate: the entire self-orientated nature. When there is some spike in these two, you become agitated, violent, aggressive and disturbed. If you are able to maintain

balance in the spikes of himsa and not react, if you are able to maintain balance in the spikes of craving, then that is sthairyam, stillness.

The niyamas are japa and santosha. Japa gives you the ability to disconnect from the connections with thoughts, with sense objects, with the world, with an ambition, a problem or a situation. For ten or fifteen minutes, you change the mental awareness and attitude from obsessive thinking to stillness of mind through japa. Discontentment is the reason for disturbance, therefore the niyama is *santosha*, contentment. With contentment there is happiness, mental and emotional relaxation and satisfaction, and you are more at ease with yourself.

Drirhata

The third level, *drirhata*, the state of firmness and stability of the physical body, propels you into pranamaya kosha. When there are no distractions of the senses and the body is perfectly stable, then the condition of firmness is attained. When you practise kaya sthairyam and you are focusing on the stillness of the body, it is not only the physical body which is still. At that time, all the pranic activities also become quiet, silent and still. You can identify with that feeling of stillness, firmness, stability. It is the pranic, muscular and mental stability which is identified as drirhata.

The yama for drirhata is dhriti. Firmness of mind comes when the pranas are stilled, which is guided by the practices of mudra and bandha. When the mind is not being pulled by thoughts here and there, that is dhriti. There is perfect focus, one-pointedness. The niyama is tapas. All the actions which are guided by *sanyam*, restraint, and *jnana*, wisdom, and which lead you towards a specific purpose of sadhana and evolution are known as *tapas*, austerity. The discipline which leads you to sadhana and evolution is known as tapas. Sadhana regulates your life, and with regulation of life, there is evolution of mental faculties and spiritual awareness. This is the outcome of tapas.

Dhairyam

The fourth level is *dhairyam*, or patience, and this is the beginning of pratyahara. Dhairyam allows the mind to be still. Impatience has become the nature of people, and to reverse it is the effort of dhairyam. The yama for dhairyam is also dhriti, for the stilling of pranas has to be developed to experience patience. This stilling of pranas is felt in the realms of manas, buddhi and chitta.

The niyama is mati. *Mati* means appropriateness: appropriate action, appropriate behaviour, appropriate thinking. Whatever you do is appropriate to, conducive to and in harmony with the time, place and situation. It is the right act. In dhairyam, the state of patience, you have enough time to reflect on the righteous course of action; you are not a reactive person at that time, and this is expressed in life in the form of mati.

Laghavam

The fifth level, *laghavam*, lightness, relates to the outcome of pranayama: lightness of body, lightness of prana and lightness of mind. Lightness of body is attainable when you are able to bring prana shakti and oxygen into your cells. Lightness of prana shakti is possible when you are able to awaken the pranas. Lightness of mind is possible when you are able to follow the yamas of compassion and forgiveness, *daya* and *kshama*.

Compassion and kindness represent the soft, light nature of the mind. Forgiveness also indicates a light nature of the mind which does not retain anything against any person or itself. These are the two yamas to attain lightness of spirit. The niyamas are astikeya and daan. *Astikeya* means belief in the good, in the just. *Daan* means to share, to give, to help people overcome whatever they lack in life.

Pratyaksham

The sixth level is pratyaksham. Meditation creates the condition of pratyaksham. When you are practising con-

centration in the five koshas, you follow a progression that is not intellectual or mental, but experiential. That is pratyaksham. It is not pratyahara. There is a difference between pratyaksham and pratyahara. Pratyaksham is experiential whereas pratyahara is mental.

In the drashta attitude, you are seeing things in two-dimension like pictures. That is the drashta awareness. Then you come to pratyahara and there you have a three-dimensional experience. The two-dimensional image has now become three-dimensional, as you are now able to live that experience for a short time. You cannot maintain it, it is just a fleeting experience. Pratyaksham is 5D, for everything comes together here, everything becomes visible, known and realized.

Pratyaksham is a much higher state than pratyahara. Drashta is the two-dimensional experience and pratyahara is the three-dimensional experience, but not the complete experience. You can see, observe, sense or be aware of your thoughts, feelings and emotions, yet you are not inside them. When you go inside them, then it becomes a five-dimensional experience and that is pratyaksham.

When you move from kosha to kosha in your asana practice, you build up the pratyaksham component and not the pratyahara component. In pratyaksham, one stage has to dissolve into the next. They are not to be left separate. Therefore in the first five movements the focus is on the physical movement. You get to know the aches, the stiffness and tightness of the muscles and joints, your limitations and abilities. You use five movements to develop this physical, muscular, skeletal, nervous, organic awareness of the body. After that, you disconnect from the body and focus on the breath. The movement dissolves into the breath, breath and movement become one. You are not moving separately and breathing separately, as it happens in many conditions and times. The movement is not independent of breathing, rather they have become one; the breath and movement flow as one. The physical awareness merges into the breath. It is the breath that guides the body.

After five movements, you let the body movement and breath merge with visualization. You are moving the body, you are moving with the breath, and you are also visualizing. As you visualize the perfect posture, your body will make the necessary effort to get into that posture. It will take time, but it will happen. Now body movement, breath awareness and visualization happen together, simultaneously.

Then chakra awareness comes in. Although you are focusing on a chakra at one specific point of the body, you are also observing the movement, the breath, the posture. It is all synchronized together. Then this merges into the mantra awareness, where you simply breathe in the mantra vibrations and breathe out the mantra sounds. When all the five experiences take place together, that is pratyaksham. There is no withdrawing of consciousness or awareness, there is no isolating the mind from what is happening outside, for you are focusing on the feeling, not on the mental process.

If somebody gives you a hug, is that a mental imagination or do you feel a pranic connection also? It is a pranic connection which you feel, not just a mental idea that 'I am liked, loved and connected.' There is a physical awareness, as well as a pranic and mental awareness of connection. Consciousness and energy are both there. If you can become aware of this, that is pratyaksham. You know that fire burns, yet it is when you put your hand in the fire that you have the experience. That is pratyaksham. Until then you did not have the experience; it was only a thought: 'Fire burns.' It was not living the experience; it was speculating about the experience that fire burns. The speculation became a reality when you had the experience.

Pratyaksham can happen instantly. You do not need to go through a process. In 1976, when I was travelling in Tasmania through a forest, we passed by a lake. There was a willow tree in the lake. I was sitting on the passenger side in the car, looking out of the window at the scenery. Suddenly, for one moment I lost my body consciousness and became the willow tree. That was the pratyaksham experience. I became

that. I had the experience of water lapping against my roots. I had the experience of my roots inside the squishy mud. I had the experience of creepy-crawlies along the roots, the fish swimming around. I had the experience of twigs, branches and leaves, the wind moving through the branches and leaves. It was overpowering. I had no control. It happened all of a sudden, without any thought or even readiness.

Today when I look upon that experience, I would say that was pratyaksham. The whole range of experience, from the roots to the squishy mud to little creepy-crawlies to the wind on top in the branches was gone through. The whole thing was realized. That is the outcome of yoga. You are able to bring together the experiences of the five koshas and have the complete awareness.

The yama that helps pratyaksham is brahmacharya, and the niyama that helps is Ishwara pranidhana. Brahmacharya here is to know the correctness of the sequence and procedures which lead to expansion and evolution. It is not celibacy. *Brahma* means divine and *acharan* means conduct. So *brahmacharya* actually means the divine conduct. That divine conduct of brahmacharya is to have the luminous mind; not the gross, negative, tamasic mind, but the sattwic mind and nature. A brahmachari is one who tries to overcome the tamasic and become established in sattwa. Whatever is tamasic has to be left behind. Whatever is sattwic has to be attained. The awareness of purity and sattwa is brahmacharya. Ishwara pranidhana is faith, belief or trust in the divine.

Nirlipta

The last bhumika is *nirlipta*, the state of mental non-involvement, beyond the gravitational pull of maya. Nirlipta is to be without attachment, without being pulled and influenced by the six friends of *kama*, *krodha*, *lobha*, *moha*, *mada*, *matsarya*: desire, anger, greed, infatuation, arrogance, jealousy. You are not affected by these companions. You are independent of them. You now become the seventh person. Until now you identified with the six, now you

have to dis-identify from the six and become the seventh, a separate individual. Let those six go wherever they want to. Discovering the identity away from the six friends is the condition of nirlipta, and that is who you are.

The yamas for nirlipta are satya and arjavam. *Satya* is truth and *arjavam* represents the purified mind. The mental pranas are balanced and harmonious. Truthfulness and simplicity open the channels of thoughts that were blocked. That is the experience of satya and arjavam. The niyama is *hree*, to be like a blade of grass. There is no ego, no involvement with the world; the games and manipulations are all irrelevant. You become like a blade of grass that bends as the wind blows and again becomes straight when the wind stops. That flexibility of adjustment and accommodation is hree. In the condition of nirlipta, you have come to the state of sattwa and purity, you are not affected by the six friends, and you experience hree where nothing affects or alters your pure state.

This is the outcome of the physical dimension of yoga. The next stage is the pranic dimension, the pranamaya kosha. Pranamaya kosha and manomaya kosha are the main subjects of the mental dimension of yoga.

Bhumika	Yama	Niyama
<i>Shodhanam</i>	Mitahara and Shaucha	Homa and siddhanta shravana
<i>Sthairyam</i>	Ahimsa and asteya	Japa and santosha
<i>Drirhata</i>	Dhriti	Tapas
<i>Dhairyam</i>	Dhriti	Mati
<i>Laghavam</i>	Daya and kshama	Astikeya and daan
<i>Pratyaksham</i>	Brahmacharya	Ishwara pranidhana
<i>Nirlipta</i>	Satya and arjavam	Hree

Body and Prana

10 October 2019

The practices with which we start our asana classes are known as the pawanmuktasana series which is unique to the Satyananda Yoga system. These are what one would call ‘the warm-up exercises of yoga’. Yoga postures are classical in nature. To come to one perfect posture, the body has to be prepared, and this preparation takes place with the warm-up exercises.

First level of yoga: the body

Sri Swami Satyananda researched all the sources to compile the warm-up exercises and gave them the shape of pawanmuktasana. He divided them into three groups. What worked on all the different joints and muscles was grouped as pawanmuktasana part 1. These movements help to loosen up the joints and muscles, remove acids from the joints, promote circulation of blood and prana shakti, and in this way gradually prepare the physical body for the practice of classical yogasanas.

Pawanmuktasana part 1 is possibly the only group of exercises where you start working with the toes and work your way up to the fingers, the neck and different parts of the body. Sri Swamiji made it the primary class of yoga. Just as you learn ABCD in primary class at school, in the same manner you learn about your body in class one of yoga. Sri Swamiji would sustain the practice of pawanmuktasana part 1

for many months, not just two or three sessions but for many months. The emphasis was: prepare the body.

The next group was pawanmuktasana part 2. Sri Swamiji said that for the wellbeing and health of the body the most important system is the digestive system. Breath is only connected to the lungs, circulation to the heart, but digestion is connected to life. Digestion is responsible for taking the nutrients from the food you eat to nourish and strengthen the body and develop immunity. Imbalances in the digestive system weaken the body and reduce its stamina, prana shakti and vitality. As a result, the body is unable to function optimally and the three humours of mucus, bile and gas become disturbed. To balance the three humours, to promote digestion and assimilation of nutrients and to have better physical stamina and health, Sri Swamiji brought in pawanmuktasana part 2.

Even in his initial training, you see a progression and understanding of what people and their bodies require. He did not teach yoga at random. Sri Swamiji first analyzed and discovered the progressive, systematic way to develop body, prana and mind with yoga. Starting with pawanmuktasana and the progression of asanas and yogas represent this thinking. The broad nature of body, joints and muscles are worked at level one with pawanmuktasana part 1, while the digestive and abdominal organs are worked at level two with pawanmuktasana part 2.

Pawanmuktasana part 3, apart from its physical benefits, is to develop awareness of prana shakti. That is the focus: develop awareness of prana shakti and balance the physical and pranic activity. The pranic activity is generally controlled by manipura chakra. The first four movements of pawanmuktasana part 3 relate to manipura chakra where prana shakti is generated. Prana shakti is stored in mooladhara, so the remaining four squatting postures deal with mooladhara. Pawanmuktasana part 3 develops the awareness of the relationship and interaction of prana shakti with the human body and its influence on it.

With the three levels of pawanmuktasana, the basics are covered, the body is prepared, some level of flexibility and lightness is attained, and an understanding and awareness of prana shakti is generated. Sri Swamiji thought next, 'What are the major movements of the body? In how many ways can you move the body?' Stretching, bending whether lateral, forward or backward, twisting, inversion – the body can be moved in six ways. Therefore, he brought in the training of the six movements which we today call the TTK capsule consisting of tadasana, tiryak tadasana, kati chakrasana, surya namaskara, vipareeta karani asana and shavasana. This becomes the first introduction to dynamic yoga, where you start with tadasana and end with inversion followed by shavasana. The six practices constitute the general capsule of yoga, as their purpose is to centre and balance the hyper and hypo activities of the senses and pranas.

Up to surya namaskara, the fourth level, it is all preparation. Once you have mastered tadasana, tiryak tadasana, kati chakrasana, surya namaskara, vipareeta karani asana and shavasana, you become free to choose a practice from the standing, forward bending, backward bending and vajrasana series, and you can also practise other asanas. The first four levels take the body and prana through progressive preparation for eventual asana practice. This was Sri Swamiji's thinking and logic in developing pawanmuktasana and coming to TTK and surya namaskara. They constitute the primary class, the first level, the beginner's class in the Satyananda Yoga system. After surya namaskara, you move into the intermediate group of practices.

Next level of yoga: prana

The pranic dimension needs to be understood properly. 'Prana' is a generic term meaning energy. Under this one word there are different forms and types of energies, such as prana, apana, samana, udana and vyana in the physical body. Prana indicates the presence of energy, the presence of shakti. What is that shakti?

You think of energy as something external, like electrical energy. Your idea of energy is AC and DC, alternate current and direct current, and the frequencies generated by them. Energy is always seen as some form of electrical manifestation in nature or in the body. This may be true, for electrically-charged particles of air or negative ions are much more vibrant than the positive ions. When you breathe in negative ions, your body becomes full of vitality, energy and dynamism.

There is a link between electronically-charged particles and the prana shakti in the body. Each cell in the human body produces 0.04 volt of energy. This amounts to the production of three kilowatts of energy in an hour. All this energy is used to digest the food that you eat. The stomach is not just an empty pot where things fall in and are processed and expelled. An intricate process is taking place there which requires so much energy. It is like a furnace. That is the physical aspect.

What is the location of prana shakti? The chest. Where is the heart? In this region of prana shakti. Where is the seat of the soul? The heart is the seat of the soul. Not the brain, not the mind, it is the heart that is the seat of the soul. When the heart stops, the soul goes. When the brain stops, the soul can remain. When the brain stops functioning you can still be alive, but when the heart stops functioning that is final. The heart is the most precious organ of life and also the strongest. It goes on ticking from the day you are born until the last moment of your life. It is an incredible machinery. If it cracks, you have a heart attack. If you have problems in any other organ or part of the body you can survive, but if you have a problem in the heart, whether physical or emotional, it is difficult to survive. The heart is considered to be the seat of the soul and this is the dimension of prana shakti. Therefore, the heart and the soul are encased in prana shakti.

Prana shakti becomes the second level of experience in yoga. Awareness of prana shakti begins with the body: the gross, material, physical. Then this awareness changes. It

becomes subtler. Yogis have said that prana shakti is the gear that allows you to go from body to mind, from mind to consciousness, from consciousness to spirit. Prana is used as the neutral gear to move from one experience to another.

In a car, you have the first, second, third and fourth gears, with the neutral gear as the fifth one. Similarly, you have four koshas with pranamaya kosha as the fifth one. Pranamaya kosha, the dimension of prana, covers all the other four koshas: the physical, the mental, the psychic and the spiritual. Therefore, it is the most comprehensive level of human experience. It is due to prana that you are able to experience the gross, the subtle and the transcendental. It is not due to the mind. The mind will only analyze and see, prana will experience. Prana is energy, and energy becomes a participant. Mind is consciousness and consciousness remains an observer; it does not become a participant.

It is like the story of two men, one blind and the other lame. Both want to go to a fair. How will they go? The blind man cannot see, but has full use of the legs. The lame man cannot walk, but has full use of the eyes. The simple solution is that the lame man will sit on the shoulders of the blind one and guide the way. 'Lame' here is consciousness. It can see but it cannot act. 'Lame' here is the mind which can see and feel, yet cannot act on its own. Energy is the 'blind' one; it cannot see, yet it can act, move and be guided.

Guiding prana shakti

Guiding prana shakti and using it to access different dimensions of the personality is the subject of pranamaya kosha. The entry into pranamaya kosha begins with pranayama which has five stages.

Pranayama is defined by many people as breathing exercises, however it includes many components. In relation to body, pranayama is breath. In relation to prana, it is the awareness of current. In relation to mind, it is vitality. Breath, current and vitality are the first three components of pranayama.

The first aspect of pranayama is the breath and learning how to breathe properly. For most people the breathing is not appropriate; it is shallow. You do not take complete breaths, you do not inhale to the full capacity of the lungs. Your breath is up and down, up and out. The lungs can take in four to six litres of air in one breath, yet that will only happen when you breathe consciously. Otherwise, only a little area of the lungs is used. Therefore, first comes the training to regulate the breath. At this stage you are not concerned about prana shakti. You are only learning to breathe properly: where to direct the breath, how to control the breath, how to change the breath, how to use the swara or the flow in the nostrils to achieve a desired result.

There is prana shakti in air. When you are training your lungs to breathe better and control the breath – to inhale longer, to exhale longer, to retain the breath in, to hold the breath out – you are also taking in prana from the air in the form of negative ions. While you are working with your breath, there is a feeling of heightened awareness and energy as you are taking in negative ions from the air and the environment. This breath training must be continued for some time, working through all the permutations and combinations of the breath, and also combining it with mudras and bandhas. The training continues until you are able to breathe freely and easily and arrive at the point of thirty seconds inhalation and thirty seconds exhalation.

On an average, human beings breathe eleven breaths per minute. I know certain people who breathe one breath per minute, thirty seconds inhaling and thirty seconds exhaling. There is a person I have known for the last fifty years. He used to come to the ashram as a boy and was very interested in pranayama. He started practising pranayama diligently every day. He lives a normal life in society, has a family and a profession, is one of the most successful lawyers in the state of Bihar. However, his breathing rate is always one breath per minute. He is fully active, his blood pressure is normal, his body functions are normal, his mind is normal. There is

neither a drop in any faculty nor increase in any faculty, only he can regulate his breath effortlessly. It has become a habit.

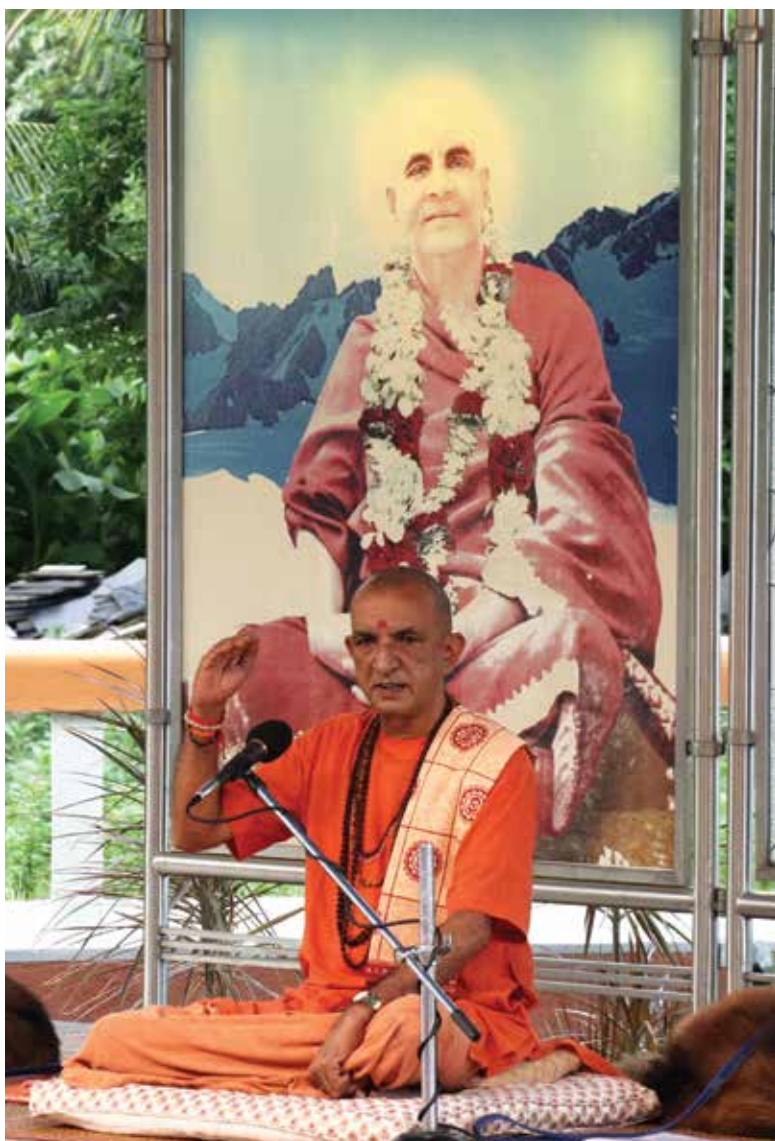
If you are able to train yourself in the correct manner, longer inhalations and exhalations become a habit and not an effort. This indicates mastery over the first stage of pranayama. Therefore, the emphasis at this stage is always on increasing the count. Gradually increase whatever count you are on to twenty-four matras, which is approximately thirty seconds. That indicates mastery over the breath.

Once there is a reasonable mastery over the breath, you move into pranayama. The first purpose of pranayama is to activate prana and apana, as these are the two important pranas. The merger of prana and apana takes place in manipura, and therefore there is a sensation of heat, of warmth. The first experience of prana is in the form of heat, and that heat has to be regulated. When we used to practise pranayama in BSY during the early days, our entire diet changed. We did not have any solids, only liquid. We used to practise pranayama on a liquid diet, as the liquids would rehydrate the system. The pranayama would create heat and evaporate the liquid, then the liquid would again rehydrate the system. We learnt pranayama in this manner.

You are learning one pranayama a day, three–five rounds. We used to practise eight hours of pranayama a day. Therefore, the entire routine had to change and we were able to experience the in-depth effect of pranayama. I can still feel the sensations in the body: the tingling, the heat, the movement as if thousands of ants were crawling inside. It was a nice feeling, not uncomfortable. These are the memories of the experience.

People generally go up to two levels: breath control and a little bit of prana-ayama awareness. Breath control is known as *prana-yama*, to hold the pranas. You are not activating the pranas, you are holding the pranas and manipulating the breath. The second level is known as *prana-ayama*, expanding the dimension of prana. This is where *pranotthana*, the awakening of pranas, takes place. Due to pranotthana,

there is excess of prana, and you need to practise prana pratyahara. After that comes prana vidya. These are the five stages to explore the realm of prana.



Pranayama

11 October 2019

For most of you, the yoga routine consists of only asana, focusing on the physical experience and benefits. Beyond that your understanding of yoga has been minimal, except for what you read in the books. Now, the sequential and progressive yoga system is being presented. Yogis did not invent yoga at random. There was a plan, a thinking. This plan and thinking was to develop the whole personality. That was the purpose behind developing the different yogas. If yoga was only meant for emancipation and spiritual realization, then meditation would have been enough.

Why did the yogis include the component of asana and pranayama? They realized that the body was important. Why did they think so much about the mind? Why did they say, “Observe the thoughts, develop this attitude, become the *drashta*, the observer, observe different types of *chitta vrittis*, different types of cognitions?” A lot of study went into the mind. Yoga was not a whimsical idea of some yogi who woke up one morning and said, “Tomorrow we start teaching yoga to people in the world.” No, there was progression of thought, which took place over many centuries and generations. Each generation contributed to the development of the subject.

There are many practical and scientific approaches in yoga, not only with regard to spiritual development, emancipation and meditation, but also for managing the

physical, mental and emotional conditions that arise in day-to-day life. Asanas represent only one small portion of the yogic system, yet every yoga teacher today is only a physical asana teacher with meditation being just an attraction, a spice thrown in.

The meaning of yoga keeps evolving. It keeps developing every day as the thoughts of the seers become known. Until now, people would read one passage from a book and then impose their own ideas on how a practice had to be done. These people were called yoga teachers, who were reading one sentence from a book and the rest was their own creation and projection. They were not yoga experiencers.

The yogis and rishis looked at developing the pure human being, the sattwic human being, the illuminated human being. In that state of illumination, the body and mind continue to function, yet the nature and condition of the person alters. Their level of perception, feeling and knowing alters, and they are able to live a better life. The whole idea of how to live a better life by becoming this pure human being is defined in the yogic lifestyle processes. The practices of yoga aim to explore and discover those energies and states of awareness within that can improve the quality of head, heart and hands.

We are not looking at one component of yoga during this Progressive Training but at the whole subject of yoga. What we discussed so far is not only related to one book, but includes the complete range of the physical yogas and mental practices as defined in all the literatures and scriptures. This makes the map of yoga clear before our eyes.

Pratyaksham

We can define the difference between the physical and mental components of yoga with two concepts from hatha yoga and raja yoga: pratyaksham and dhyana.

According to Sage Patanjali, the culmination of raja yoga is dhyana and samadhi. According to the classical raja yoga, the culmination is merger of the individual with the cosmic;

mind merges with consciousness. The highest state of hatha yoga is pratyaksham. After pratyaksham comes nirlipta, the last state, which is being free from everything. If we connect pratyaksham to dhyana and nirlipta to samadhi, then maybe we can get a rough comparison between the two.

Pratyaksham is the last condition of the physical yoga which indicates that you are able to take your prana to all levels of experience, and nothing remains a mental ideation, concept or theory. Pratyaksham is living that experience. It is the living experience where prana is bringing to life all the mental experiences of consciousness. The 2D image in your mind at first becomes 3D and begins to move and act, and eventually it becomes 5D where the scope of understanding is full. There is a complete experience.

In dhyana, meditation, there is complete absorption, so much so that in the final stages you may not even know that you are meditating. Even that awareness is lost. It has to be lost, for meditation is comprised of three factors: the meditator or 'me', the object of meditation, and the process of meditation. I, the meditator, is meditating using a specific technique, the process, to come to a certain experience, the object. I start with these three awarenesses. Then, as I focus more and more on the object of experience, the process becomes natural and spontaneous and its awareness drops away. I become the process. Then, from the process, I become the object. I identify with that, and the 'I' awareness drops away. Only the object of awareness remains. I am that. This is containment. Meditation is actually containment: containing the mind to one specific experience without allowing it to go from there.

The two concepts of physical yoga and mental yoga represent the energy and consciousness aspects of life. Pratyaksham is an experience of energy, and meditation is the experience of consciousness. This energy has to be explored.

First stage of pranayama

With the physical practices you are able to fine-tune your body, remove the blocks, the stiffness, the tensions, free your body, promote circulation of blood and vitality. Once the body has come to its optimum state of wellness, then you move into the practice of pranayama.

The subject of prana has to be understood first by controlling and regulating the breathing process. The total capacity of your lungs is about six litres of air. However, in a normal inhalation, you take in only about 500 millilitres of air. The vitality, health and stamina of your body depends on these 500 millilitres. Therefore, the first practice in pranayama is learning to take deep breaths, to breathe in more than 500 millilitres, maybe 1,000, maybe 1,500. You increase your ability to utilize the existing capacity of the lungs. This is the first result of pranayama.

When you begin to utilize your lung capacity, much more air enters your system. At present you are surviving with what you receive from 500 millilitres of air. If you begin to use even half your lung potential, two or three litres, it is a big improvement. Everybody knows that respiration should not be shallow, and emphasis is always given on long and deep breathing. Psychoanalysts advise people to take long and deep breaths for anger management. Common sense says that when you are under stress and tension, the breathing is rapid and shallow. When you are rested and relaxed, the breathing is long and deep. Nobody will accept this commonsensical fact until a doctor says so, for then it is medically and scientifically confirmed. This is the state of our understanding of life.

There is no commonsensical understanding of life. There is no natural living. There is always a projected lifestyle. For people who live a projected lifestyle it is difficult to imbibe the yogic lifestyle, as in the yogic lifestyle you have to work with yourself. You have to re-tune and refine yourself, and the training begins with the breath.

A longer and deeper breath reduces nervous, cerebral and muscular tensions. If you are nervous before taking an

injection, the doctor says, “Look the other way. Take a deep breath in,” and then he sticks the needle in. Breathing is used by everybody to create a condition in the body. While it is an important aspect of life, people do not fully utilize this ability. Therefore, the shakti which would normally be in you if you utilized the full capacity, is reduced to less than one-fourth.

Your stamina, strength, vitality, health and buoyancy can be much more if you breathe in more. Your body can be buzzing with energy as it is receiving more. So the first stage of pranayama is always important, for it is here that you learn to regulate your breathing, increase the capacity of the lungs and master the process of inhalation, exhalation and retention.

Kumbhaka

In yogic scriptures, you will come across the term *kevala kumbhaka*. It means external retention of breath for as long as possible. In that state you experience prana. When you practise internal kumbhaka, inner retention, the filling of the lungs creates pressure on your heart. With internal kumbhaka the heartbeat increases as the heart has to pump harder and faster to compensate for the pressure of air from the lungs. When you practise external kumbhaka there is a bigger gap. There is no pressure and your heartbeat will not increase until you begin to gasp for breath. Then your heart will begin to beat faster. This is a physiological activity: while inhaling and holding the breath you will be able to feel your heartbeat increase. Holding the breath out you will feel much more comfortable and the heartbeat will increase much later. According to yogis, it is when you are in external kumbhaka that you experience prana shakti vibrating in your body.

Sri Swamiji says that the actual experience of pranayama takes place in the gap between inhalation and exhalation. There is a break between inhalation and exhalation, and it is during that break that you can experience prana shakti.

There is no inhalation and no exhalation at that time. That is the state of kevala kumbhaka.

However, there is a difference between regular external kumbhaka and kevala kumbhaka after exhalation. The first is a practice of breath control where you are deliberately and consciously holding the breath after exhalation. Kevala kumbhaka is a spontaneous, effortless suspension of breath when the pranas have awakened and reached a certain level. In the regular external kumbhaka, the exhalation and the next inhalation are the supports of the kumbhaka, but kevala is supportless – it is *only* kumbhaka, ‘kevala’. There is an experience of total relaxation and ease after emptying out completely with the exhalation and the breath is held out naturally. Of course, to come to this experience requires not only years of practice in pranayama but also a higher state of mind which is able to connect with that experience of emptiness or space. That is why kevala kumbhaka is equated with samadhi.

Most practitioners find internal retention easier than external retention as they are working only with the breath, and the desire to inhale again during external retention overrides the ease of emptying out. The body systems and the heart are also at ease only in that gap where the desire to inhale does not arise. The moment you feel you need to breathe, the sympathetic nervous system kicks in and if you try holding any longer you will turn black and blue. Nevertheless, you can get a glimpse of kevala kumbhaka in external retention by forgetting about the ratio, count etc. and instead practising to exhale, hold, and connecting with the experience of emptiness or space while holding. If you do this, you might discover that the kumbhaka extends naturally.

Kevala kumbhaka can also take place after inhalation. You inhale, hold the pranas in a higher centre, and the breath just stops. For as long as the pranas are held, the desire to exhale is not there. However, in internal kevala kumbhaka the pranas come to a standstill, there is no

shoulders, arms. He used to say that it is nada, the flow of prana shakti. When the prana shakti flows, it can actually make a sound which is defined as nada.

Prana-yama and prana-ayama

Our objective is not to go into ideas and philosophies of what yogis can do or what is physically possible or not possible, but how you can manage your own lungs. Breathing exercises are known as prana-yama. *Prana* meaning energy and *yama* meaning to hold. You are holding the pranic energy, and trying to develop its awareness and understanding. You are also preparing your lung capacity, the physical capacity to breathe, and through breath access the prana shakti.

The breath becomes like the rope that you catch hold of in order to climb up a branch on a tree. Through the practices of nadi shodhana, surya bheda, chandra bheda, kapalbhati and bhasrika pranayamas, you are increasing your capacity. That is the first part.

The second part is *prana-ayama*, expansion of prana. What is the meaning of expansion of prana? According to the yogic scriptures there are five manifestations of prana in the body and each performs a different function. The first manifestation is prana shakti itself. The area of prana is the chest area governing the lungs and the heart. It is an indrawn breath. When you breathe in, that is prana. The lungs and the heart are controlled by this pranic energy. The next energy is apana, active in the area between the navel and the perineum. That is a downward-moving energy, the exhaled breath. It is responsible for expulsion of waste matter, both solid and liquid. If any form of waste has to be ejected from the body, including sweat, the apana force becomes active.

The third energy between the navel and the ribcage is samana, governing the digestive system. *Samana* means the equalizing force, and it is responsible for digestion, for extracting the nutrients and putting the waste matter on the conveyor belts. Udana is in the extremities, responsible for

locomotion of the body. It is present in the legs, arms, head and neck, and it also governs the sense organs in the head: the eyes, nose, mouth and ears. Vyana, the fifth energy, is the second breath. It is like the emergency supply. When one supply runs out, instantly the emergency supply goes there.

These five pranas have been defined. Out of the five, two are considered the most important: prana and apana. As prana and apana merge they become larger. It is the merger of prana and apana in samana which is known as pranayama. It is not the breath; it is the merger. Different techniques are used in pranayama to aid this process of merger, such as mudras and bandhas. The breath becomes secondary here. In prana-yama the breath was primary. In prana-ayama the breath becomes secondary, and the experience of the movement of the pranas becomes primary.

The purpose of prana-ayama is to merge prana and apana. Only these two pranas. The scriptures and yogis don't deal much with udana, vyana or any other form of prana; they speak of prana and apana merging in the samana region. This means the three pranas become one. That is the expansion of prana which we seek in prana-ayama.

Pranotthana

With expansion of prana comes the next stage. The psychic centres, the chakras, become activated, and the energy contained in them is released. That stage is known as *pranotthana*, awakening of the pranas.

After awakening of the pranas, you work with the chakras. In the second level, prana-ayama, you deal with the merger of prana and apana. In the third level, you are managing the release of energy from the chakras. You are not trying to release them; you are trying to manage them. Please remember that. This is a major point. People think, 'I can awaken my chakra.' No. If it awakens, you have to manage it. It is the management which is more important than the awakening. You can wake up the sleeping giant and then what? Therefore, don't think of awakening, think of managing.

Pranotthana takes place naturally when the pranas merge and become one. The identity is gone and the chakras discharge the prana contained in them. That is chakrotthana and pranotthana, and it is their result that you have to manage. This management is done through prana pratyahara. Prana pratyahara has been vastly defined in the classical raja yoga, and one of the practices of prana pratyahara is prana nidra.

After prana pratyahara, when you are able to master the pranic energy, the fifth component is prana vidya. Now you can do anything with prana shakti. You can heal yourself. You can transmit prana shakti to heal other people. It is not like a Reiki experience. Prana vidya is the classical, traditional and original way of exploring and utilizing this cosmic energy for the betterment of society. The outcome of pranayama is *laghavam*, lightness, of body, mind, emotions and prana shakti.

This is the progression: prana-yama, prana-ayama, pranotthana, prana pratyahara and prana vidya. Prana is the next level of the physical yoga and it is aided with other components such as mudras and bandhas. That completes the pranic dimension.



Dimensions of Prana

16 October 2019

We have been discussing about yoga vidya and the physical component of yoga: the seven conditions that have to be attained with the practice of the physical component of yoga, and the supporting conditions of mind that aid the physical aspect of yoga. We have also looked into the component of prana and pranayama as part of the physical aspect of yoga, including the progression in understanding prana and pranayama and the practices related to prana.

The progression constitutes of prana-yama or breath control, prana-ayama or expansion of prana, pranotthana or the awakening or release of prana, prana pratyahara, and prana vidya. These five stages deal with the subject matter of prana or energy. In this Progressive Yoga Vidya Training we shall be going up to number two only: prana-yama and prana-ayama. The subject of pranayama has to be understood properly, as much of your yogic understanding depends on what you understand of prana and pranayama.

Prana-yama

Prana-yama is the regulation or control of the physical breath, the inhalation and the exhalation, and regulation of the flow of ida and pingala. By learning how to breathe properly or by lengthening the duration of the breath, you are able to create a balance between inhalation and

exhalation. You notice in your own breathing that inhalation is comparatively laborious and exhalation spontaneous.

People often ask an agitated, hyper or angry person to take a few deep breaths in. They know that the process of deep breathing somehow regulates and balances the nervous system and the agitations felt due to anxiety, anger or some other reason. The average capacity of the lungs is four to six litres of air, yet in a normal inhalation you breathe in only 500 millilitres. You have the capacity of four litres yet you breathe in only 500 millilitres. The space for 3.5 litres remains empty. There is that much empty space in your lungs all the time. The yogic breathing takes you through the process of understanding and enlarging inhalation and exhalation.

The yogic inhalation is known as *pooraka*, inhaling long and deep, full breath in. Full breath out is known as *rechaka*, exhaling long and deep. This is the first breath training. The first effort in pranayama is to learn to breathe properly and to focus on lengthening the inhalation and exhalation. For this purpose, you use a count: so many seconds inhaling and so many seconds exhaling. A continuous effort will create a condition in your lungs where deep breathing will become natural. At first, deep breathing involves effort and attention, however, when the condition is created it becomes spontaneous and natural.

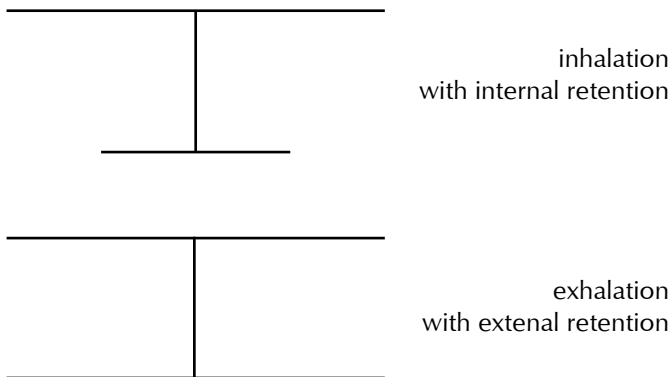
Practices like nadi shodhana pranayama regulate the breath and the ida and pingala flow. The breath and ida and pingala are both being worked on. All the pranayamas which involve breath control form part of the first group. The scriptures state that the ideal length of the breath is the length of one Gayatri mantra, which has twenty-four *matras* or beats, translating to about thirty seconds. Thirty seconds inhalation and thirty seconds exhalation is the perfection of pranayama: regulation, balance and harmony.

Prana-ayama

In the second stage, prana-ayama, another awareness is added: the gap between inhalation and exhalation, or retention of breath, *kumbhaka*. Your incoming breath and

outgoing breath are taking place continuously, yet for a split second there is a break in the flow before the breath begins its descent or ascent. That split second break has to be enlarged. That is the *ayama* or expansion component. The part which you are expanding is kumbhaka. You are inhaling and exhaling, straight up and straight down, but the space from pole A to pole B, which was a little distance at first, becomes longer as you increase the gap (*see diagram below*). The circle becomes bigger. While the inhalation and exhalation remain the same, you are increasing the gap between them.

Internal kumbhaka and external kumbhaka



The picture of inhalation with internal retention has a T shape. The same is reversed in external retention. After exhaling and before inhaling again there is a gap when there is no breath, all the activities have stopped. When you enlarge this gap and it becomes a reverse T, it is exhalation with external kumbhaka.

When you breathe in and hold the breath in, internal retention, the lungs are full, pressing against the heart. The ribcage is expanded, you experience a tightness in the chest, and the heart has to pump harder. Due to this, you feel the heart beat faster in internal retention. When you exhale and

hold the breath out, there is no pressure on the ribcage and the heart beats normally. There is no hyperactivity of the heart until you begin to run out of breath. During the period when the heart is beating normally and there is no pressure of any type anywhere, sushumna awakens. It is when you are practising external kumbhaka that sushumna awakens. This is why external kumbhaka has been given importance in hatha yoga. It is known as *kevala kumbhaka*, ‘the only-one breath-retention’. Kumbhaka means retention. *Kevala* means ‘the only one’, and also transcendence. It is a state in which you are experiencing singularity. In internal kumbhaka you experience multiplicity, whereas in external kumbhaka you experience singularity, therefore the activities of ida and pingala drop and sushumna is activated.

External kumbhaka seems harder, as it is easier to hold something in than to be empty from inside. This is the normal way of thinking. When you hold in you are creating more pressures and tensions, and pranas and nadis are not activated. In prana-yama you are working with ida and pingala and sushumna is just a background awareness, whereas in prana-ayama you are working with three forces: ida, pingala and ultimately sushumna. Here you are trying to expand the external kumbhaka, which leads to kaivalya, oneness, through the awakening of sushumna and the eventual ascent of kundalini. You have to understand this properly, for all the practices and knowledge of yoga depend on how much you are able to perfect this area.

Sandhikaala

Kumbhaka is the point of transition and that is known as sandhikaala. *Sandhikaala* is where two events meet. It is the actual pratyahara, for it is the state of yoga nidra when you are neither asleep nor awake. You are neither conscious nor unconscious; you are in-between, half and half. That is sandhikaala.

In vedic lifestyle and routine, a specific ritual called *sandhya* is performed at sandhikaala. The main practice here

is agnihotra, involving the use of mantra, fire and the power of the sun. It is a five-minute practice done at the period of sandhi, morning and evening, strictly following the time of sunrise and sunset. It is not done at 5.30 in the morning every day. No. If the sun is rising at 5.19, it has to be 5.19; tomorrow 5.20, the day after tomorrow 5.21, then 5.22, then 5.23. You have to go with the sun. At the exact point of sandhi where sun and darkness meet, is sandhikaala.

It is also said that no religious worship should be done after the sun is out. From the religious point of view, worship should be done before sunrise when you are still able to see the stars and the light of dawn. Thereafter you see the sun emerge. This is again sandhikaala, the period of merger and transition. Sankranti, the day of the month on which solar worship is conducted at Sannyasa Peeth, is the sandhikaala of two *rashis*, the transition of one zodiac sign into the next.

Thus, sandhikaala signifies pratyahara, for it is in the transition period that you can clear the pratyayas, not when you are inhaling and not when you are exhaling but in the gap between inhalation and exhalation. Inhalation and exhalation also represent *raga* and *dwesha*, attraction and repulsion. If a pratyaya is seen at the time of inhalation or exhalation, it will be affected by the powers of raga and dwesha. That is why the clearing of pratyaya has to happen in the period of sandhi. Otherwise, your meditation remains mental imagination without any clearing of pratyayas. Sandhi or the transition point is what you are looking for in yoga, and that point has to be expanded and developed.

In pranayama, emphasis is given on developing the time, space and ratio of kumbhaka, nevertheless, there has to be comfort. You should not be forcing yourself, getting out of breath, feeling your heartbeat become faster, and thinking, 'I have to practise my rounds.' No, the conditioning of the body has to be precise. Pranayama should be comfortable. The moment any type of agitation sets in, you are forcing yourself and creating more tension. This is not the intention.

Kundalini

When the passage of sushumna is clear, the energy contained in the chakras is released. Chakras do not awaken one by one. Chakras are like buds which release pollen in the air when they open. They release shakti. That abundance of shakti is known as pranotthana. The abundance has to be managed for kundalini to ascend, for this shakti is like helium.

In kundalini yoga it is stated that kundalini has descended from higher centres and lies dormant in mooladhara chakra. In the natural course of evolution kundalini does not ascend. By fluke or as an exception it may happen, but this is not the normal evolutionary course. The normal evolutionary course is the descent.

What holds us down to the ground is gravity, therefore our descent is into gravity. The element earth, the senses and sense objects have an intense pull. We cannot free ourselves of them. We are so used to it that we do not realize the effect of gravity on the body. If someone comes to this planet for the first time, conditioned to a different form of gravity, they will naturally feel the effect of gravity here, either more or less.

Gravity is the force that holds you grounded. In the same manner, senses and sense objects have their gravity which holds you grounded to all your desires, expectations, needs and ambitions. It is in this gravity that you are living your life. Kundalini is anti-gravity. It is not affected by the laws of gravity. It simply ascends. That is the role of kundalini: to ascend again to merge with the higher self.

When the pranas are released in the state of chakrotthana, they inspire kundalini to ascend in a light manner beyond manipura chakra. Once it goes beyond manipura, it loses the gravitational pull of matter. It is now in the lighter realm of elements from where it ascends easily. In *Kundalini Tantra*, Sri Swamiji says that kundalini can rise from mooladhara, come to swadhisthana, then to manipura, and then go back down. From mooladhara to manipura

there is influence of gravity. Mooladhara is earth and manipura is the upper layer of our atmosphere where air meets space. Once kundalini goes beyond manipura, there is no resistance. It simply elevates itself to sahasrara.

The effort is to go beyond manipura. Up to manipura chakra it is sadhana, the rest is experience. Anahata is an experience, it is not a sadhana. Love, compassion and kindness become an experience, a way of life, an experience of life. Higher perceptions, intuitions, purity, transcendence become experiences of life as kundalini ascends. The sadhana to ensure that kundalini ascends beyond manipura is the process of kundalini yoga: from mooladhara you push to swadhisthana and to manipura, from the deep insecurities and fears to the unconscious and to the pranic dimension. The whole sadhana revolves around this push from mooladhara, the deepest aspect of yourself, to swadhisthana, the insecurities and fears that you contain within yourself, to manipura, the vitality aspect. This sadhana becomes easy when you practise prana pratyahara.

Power of prana

Sri Swamiji has said that when you hold the breath in, air is converted into prana. When you practise internal kumbhaka, the air that you have taken in converts into prana shakti.

The internal retention enhances prana. It extracts prana shakti from the air that you have taken in. Therefore, while the external retention is clearing the passage for sushumna's awakening, internal retention allows you to receive prana from your own respiration. This prana shakti goes to the brain. What you receive in internal kumbhaka is used by the brain.

Prana is specific to different parts and organs of the body. When the cosmic prana came into your body, some parts went into the chest region to sustain life: your breathing and heartbeat, and this prana is identified as the vital force, *prana*. The prana that settled in your digestive system became *samana*, the equalizing force. The prana that settled down

in the perineal region, responsible for excretion of toxic matter from the body, is known as *apana*, the downward-moving force. *Udana* came into the limbs. *Vyana* became the reserve force. When the cosmic prana shakti entered your body and adopted various tasks and duties, it was understood by different names based on its functionality. It was by the functionality that people understood the role of the pranas.

In one of his satsangs, Sri Swamiji speaks of an experience he had in Rishikesh. He had a dream one night that he was in a huge city with beautiful roads, trees, gardens, houses and parks, yet nobody lived there. There was no light in the city either. He asked Swami Sivananda about this dream. Swami Sivananda said, "Well, that is your brain, and it has to be illuminated. When this city is lit up, enlightenment takes place. As long as this city is dark, we are just travellers on the path." The lighting up of the dark city occurs with internal retention, as the air converted into prana goes directly to the brain.

Expansion of prana is the second aspect, prana-ayama. It is in the kumbhaka state that you expand *apana*, *samana* and *prana*. The more the extension of kumbhaka, the more the expansion of prana. During the expansion, the three pranas also merge with each other. They don't oppose each other; they simply merge with each other as they expand. Expansion and merger happen simultaneously. When you are meditating and you apply this principle of pranayama to be free from your likes and dislikes, and to objectively witness your experiences during this gap, then meditation will be more appropriate.

Psychological and scientific discoveries have also found that breathing suppresses physical and psychological resistance. There was an organization called SALT, System of Accelerated Learning and Training. I was part of that group in 1982. Its basic work was on how to improve the retention power of school children, how they could retain information better and improve memory. It was discovered that when instructions were given by the teacher while the students

were exhaling, they retained more. When instructions were given while they were inhaling, they would remember only fifty percent.

The researchers would put grandfather clocks in the classrooms and swing the pendulum, telling the students, “Breathe in when the pendulum goes to the right. Breathe out when the pendulum goes to the left.” The teacher would watch the pendulum and give instructions when the pendulum was swinging to the left, the time when the students were breathing out. The teacher remained quiet when the pendulum was swinging to the right, for that was the time when students were breathing in. It sounded ridiculous to some to hear that in some classrooms children were studying in this manner. However, the results were outstanding. We did notice a marked improvement in the learning capacity and grasping power of the children.

This also enforces the fact that when you breathe in, you create physical, psychological and emotional blocks. It happens automatically. When you breathe out, all the structures come down with the breath, so the information goes in. This is what pranayama has always been about. If you are able to regulate and manage your breath, you can achieve many potentials of your life: not siddhis but creative abilities. They are not psychic powers, but creative abilities that every individual can use.

When the expansion of prana takes place, you move from practice to sadhana. You move into the level of experience, which then expands into lifestyle as you begin to fine-tune your actions and your reactions and responses to situations.

A Glimpse of Experience

17 October 2019

The whole process and the science of pranayama is based on retention of prana, known as kumbhaka. Inhalation and exhalation are incidental. Kumbhaka means pranayama and pranayama means kumbhaka. Those aspirants who are keen and working on this new project of awakening the silent areas of the brain, should prepare themselves slowly by perfecting kumbhaka. It has been found that during kumbhaka, an increased supply of blood is poured into the brain and at the same time, extra heat is generated within the system. Pranayama also influences the cerebral fluid of the brain. When energy is generated, it changes the chemical structure of the cerebral fluid surrounding the brain within the skull. When this fluid is chemically influenced, it acts on the behaviour of the brain. For example, when you take a narcotic drug, it produces an immediate chemical reaction within this fluid. As a result, you experience certain psychic phenomena. During the state of kumbhaka, extra energy in an electrical form is generated and in the course of time, it changes the chemical structure of the fluid in the brain. That is why one experiences sometimes the feeling of dizziness in the practice of pranayama. This dizziness occurs in the brain. When you have to superimpose this state on the mind, all the great explosions of experience take place in the

firmament of this dizziness, and very few people know how to manage it.

—*Swami Satyananda*

This statement of Sri Swamiji mentions an important point: pranayama creates chemical changes in the brain and due to that you experience lightness and dizziness. Kumbhaka creates that condition.

Sri Swamiji has also mentioned that in normal inhalation and exhalation, you breathe in 500 millilitres of the whole capacity of the lungs. The exchange of ions does not happen as it should in the body, and the proper absorption of negative ions and oxygen does not take place. When you take a full breath in and hold the breath in internal kumbhaka, air is separated from negative ions which are absorbed, and after the kumbhaka air with positive ions is expelled.

For separation of air and prana, kumbhaka is emphasized. Sri Swamiji says that inhalation and exhalation are incidental; they don't really matter. They are the primary movements of breath, therefore we use them to develop our capacity to hold the breath. Regulation of breath is the control aspect, the *yama* aspect.

Prana-ayama

In the prana-ayama aspect, rather than focusing on breath, you have to focus on the space inside your body. You have to focus on the movement of the vayus, the prana shaktis, inside the body.

When you practise nadi shodhana pranayama, the final ratio of the breath has to be 1:4:2:2. If you breathe in to a count of two, you hold for a count of eight, four times the length of the inhalation. You breathe out for a count of four and hold for a count of four. The internal retention is double of external retention, and the exhalation is double of inhalation. If you are breathing in to the count of ten, you hold the breath for forty, then you breathe out twenty, then you hold the breath for twenty, then you breathe in

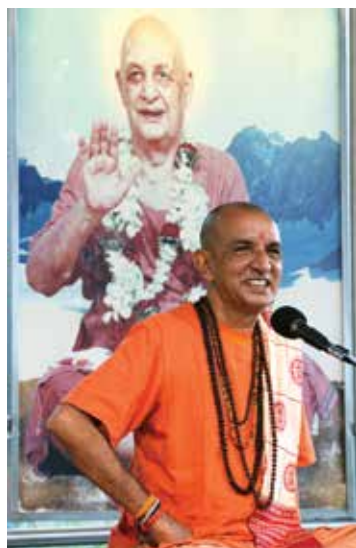
again to the count of ten, hold forty, and so on. The focus or emphasis is on developing the retention capacity. The more you develop this capacity, the more pressure is created, and when you release your breath, the opposite happens: vacuum is created.

You have seen a dropper. You put the dropper in water, squeeze it and when you release the pressure, water will come up. Another example is a game little children play. They press their arm against the wall standing sideways. They put the weight and pressure of the body for a few minutes. Then they stand straight. The arm lifts up automatically. Why does the arm lift up on its own? Pressure was created and the response was elevation, lifting up.

That is the concept of pranayama, of internal and external retention. When you enlarge your internal retention to forty seconds, then for twenty seconds there is the kevala kumbhaka experience, the external retention experience, or maybe ten seconds as the initial experience of the vacuum and the raising of shakti. Then again you are creating pressure for forty seconds, and in ten seconds or twenty seconds of external retention, you are feeling the lightness. In those twenty or ten seconds, you are experiencing kevala kumbhaka and the ascent of heat and energy. When this is happening, you are not to focus on the breath but on the experience.

Prana-yama or breath control is control of the breathing process and prana-ayama is not control, it is the experience of the content, space and flow of shakti, of energy, of apana and prana. From control you move to experience. To practise prana-ayama, at first without count, take normal, long and deep breaths, then hold your breath in for as long as you can comfortably. Just before your heart begins to pump harder, stop the practice, exhale and do not allow the heartbeat to quicken but maintain the condition or state of the body which is the experience of space and not of any solid object.

Somebody asked Sri Swamiji, "What is a correct and systematic method for preparing for meditation?" He replied:



Concentration and meditation come under raja yoga and before you practise raja yoga, you must purify the physical body with the techniques of hatha yoga. In yoga, the causes of thought processes should be cleared up first through the physical medium. For example, sometimes a thought can be the outcome of a bad stomach or the effect of thyroid malfunction or sleeplessness, or even fear can create cancer. Therefore, we recommend the purifying techniques of hatha

yoga. There are six hatha yoga cleansing techniques: neti, dhauti, basti, nauli, trataka and kapalbhati. They are called the shatkarmas.

After you have practised the shatkarmas and hatha yoga for one to two years, harmony is attained within the nervous system, the parasympathetic and the sympathetic, in ida and pingala. They are responsible for *manas shakti*, mental energy, and *prana shakti*, vital energy respectively. If either of these nadis are disturbed, then you will have diseases borne of manas or prana shakti. By hatha yoga you are purifying all the flows so that they are homogeneous and uninterrupted. When this has been accomplished you should then start concentration for which a strong nervous system is imperative. When the flow in ida and pingala are correctly energized and balanced with respect to each other, the third flow, sushumna is automatically activated. When this happens, meditation becomes spontaneous. You must continue with whatever you are doing but if you are serious to enter into meditation practise, then you must do it systematically.

The Mental Dimension

21 October 2019

Today we move to the manas area, the mental dimension of yoga. To understand this dimension, we will go back to the elements.

We know that there are five elements. The densest is earth, lighter than earth is water, lighter than water is fire, lighter than fire is air, lighter than air is space or ether. Out of these five elements, two are earthly and three are airy. Earth and water are earthly, for you can hold them in your hands. You can hold water in your hands and you can hold earth in your hands. These two denser elements have earth as the main property. The remaining three belong to the air dimension. You cannot grasp fire or a flame, you cannot grasp air, and you cannot grasp space.

Evolution of consciousness

From the yogic perspective, creation begins with *sphota* or the Big Bang. According to science, from the Big Bang emerged many different things: clouds, dust, light, rays, waves, and so on. They spread and gradually formed stars, planets, galaxies and eventually life-forms.

When life-forms were created, a different kind of energy manifested. It was in the form of awareness, or consciousness. The elements of earth, water, fire, air and ether were already there as energy, but now there was positive energy and negative energy. Just as there are positive ions

and negative ions, there is positive energy and negative energy, plus and minus. The plus or positive energy is experienced as vitality, and it expresses through the senses, the body and the elements. What is experienced as thought, mind, awareness and consciousness is the minus energy; it is not expressing itself outwardly yet it is there. The two energies coexist, just as negative and positive ions can coexist in the same space. Similarly, these two energies, defined as prana and chitta, stay together. Prana represents the vital, dynamic, active energy, and chitta represents the passive, dormant, inactive energy. They are the positive and negative poles.

Scientifically, consciousness and mind have not yet been defined. In a *Time* magazine issue of the 1980s there was an article stating that there is no mind, only electrical inputs in the brain. Science is looking at the physical or material component. However, not everything is physical and material, there is also the subtle dimension. It is the sentient energy that gives us the experience and understanding of life, while vital energy carries the movements and motions of the elements forward.

Through permutation and combination of different elements and chemicals over a period of millions of years, nature and life-form came about. This life-form was guided by a component, which was later identified as the mind. It was the awareness of 'Who am I?' 'Where am I?' 'What is this?' 'What is this fruit?' The word fruit did not exist, it was simply 'What is this?' Everything was enquiry, to know one's place in creation. The life-form had never been exposed to cold, heat, water or air. It had not even been exposed to the body, to walking, to thirst or hunger. Yet, instinctively it had the understanding of self-preservation, the knowledge of how to survive.

To instinctively know self-preservation is chitta shakti. The sentient energy begins to operate. If toddlers are thrown into water, they try to move their arms and legs to remain afloat, and that is how they learn to swim. They develop

a skill which they did not have before, by being placed in a special condition. The same thing happens here: when placed in a situation, a skill, an awareness, an understanding develops, which people did not have before. It is not logical, it is instinctive.

Instinct became the first kick of the sentient energy. It manifested as instinct. You see that instinct in everything, in every life-form. Even a single-cell amoeba has the survival instinct. In all life-forms, from animal, insect, bird, reptile to quadrupeds and bipeds, that shakti, that awareness, understanding and instinct is expressed. There was a time when this instinct was the main function in life. Today it is relegated to the background since the faculty of *buddhi*, logic and intelligence, has come forward.

When we were living in the Stone Age, we were expressing our instincts. When we were living in the Industrial Age and the age of discoveries, we were living our *buddhi*, logic and intelligence. This progression from instinct to logic is the development of awareness, of consciousness and of knowing.

Koshas and prana

The aspect of knowing and development is integrated in the yogic experience as the five dimensions, bodies or sheaths: the physical, the pranic, the mental, the psychic and the spiritual. We are aspiring to realize these dimensions: *annamaya*, *pranamaya*, *manomaya*, *vijnanamaya* and *anandamaya*.

For the sake of understanding, the first dimension, *annamaya* kosha, can be seen as the first layer of skin. Attached to it is the second layer of skin, *pranamaya* kosha. To *pranamaya* is attached the third layer of skin, *manomaya* kosha. The fourth layer is *vijnanamaya* and attached to it is the fifth layer, *anandamaya*. *Annamaya* represents the material body, which is composed of the senses and the physical organs, *karmendriyas* and *jnanendriyas*, the organs of action and the organs of cognition, and the different systems

of the body. All these physical components are dependent on energy or the input of pranamaya kosha. Without pranamaya kosha the body can be there, but it will be dead. The spirit can leave the body and it will still be warm, but when the pranas leave the body it will go into rigor mortis. The spirit can go first, but the pranas are the last to leave the body.

This is an indication of how important this vital energy is for the functioning of the senses, the sense organs and the physical organs of the body, whether the heart, the intestines, the kidneys, the liver, the pancreas, and so on. Everything depends on the pranic input. Supporting the physical body and its activities is the next layer, pranamaya. Most of the prana shakti produced goes to manage the functions of the body. When this energy is depleted, the body feels tired, the body parts feel tired, the legs, the hands, the head feels tired.

In 1977, some research with Kirlian photography was conducted in Australia. We were about seven people from various professions and occupations: myself, a psychiatrist, a general medical practitioner, a stone mason, an engineer, a writer, a taxi driver. During this research, every morning upon waking up, we would take Kirlian photographs of our hands and the extremities of the body to see the emission of energy. Then we would all go to our respective workplaces. In the evening, after eight hours of work on a normal day, we would come back and again take prints. We could see what had happened to the energy. Then we would practise yoga techniques and again take a picture to see if the energy could be increased with yoga. We discovered that it could be. For people who did hard physical work, like the stone mason, or people who did a lot of mental work, like the psychiatrist, the energy reduced drastically during the day as it was spent on their work. They were able to increase the level of vitality in the body through pranayama, relaxation, asana, trying different practices and techniques. This was an indication that physical stresses can be managed by infusing prana into the region that is depleted.

Mind and consciousness

After prana comes the mental dimension, then the consciousness dimension and thereafter the spiritual dimension. Yogis have differentiated between mind and consciousness. In western psychology, mind and consciousness are not separate, they are a different level of experience of the same item. From the yogic perspective, mind is *manas-chatushtaya*, the four-compartment mind. That is manomaya kosha, the dimension of the mind. This mind is not only the thinking mind, it is the total mind, which interacts with the world. It is the sense-mind. The aspect of consciousness which interacts with the world, the senses, sense objects, likes and dislikes, desires and aspirations, is the mind, the interactive consciousness. The non-interactive consciousness which is not engaged in the daily affairs of the senses, sense objects and the world, which is the silent witness of everything that is taking place, is the consciousness behind the mind, *chetana*.

The mind is like a child playing with toys, interacting with whatever is in the immediate environment. Consciousness is like the parent, sitting on a chair watching the child play. One is dynamic, the other is passive. One is interactive, the other is the observer.

The four different components and compartments of the interactive sense-mind are: manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara. Traditionally, these four aspects have been called manaschatushtaya, the four compartments of mind or the four aspects of manomaya kosha. Manas is the outermost layer of the interactive sense-mind, the interactive consciousness, interacting with people, objects, the senses, with yourself, with your own perceptions and needs, with the world and the environment. The other three remain in the background yet they contribute to each interaction with the senses, sense objects and the world. The four are controlled and guided by different forms of chitta shakti.

Pranas of the interactive mind

Just as there are five forms of prana shakti in the body, there are five forms of chitta shakti in the mind. Samana in the physical body is the *vayu*, energy, which moves sideways in the abdominal region, and is responsible for digestion. Manas *vayu* is like samana. When you see thoughts in your chidakasha, they move from left to right, coming and going, coming and going. They may be digested, rejected, accepted or assimilated by you. Just as digestion is controlled by the lateral moving force of samana, the manas component is controlled by a similar force, which is known as manas prana or manas *vayu*.

The next level is buddhi. Buddhi is intelligence and awareness. Its nature is like that of prana *vayu*: an incoming force. It is constantly taking in, and this process takes place both unconsciously and consciously. Unconsciously, billions of pieces of information go into your brain every second. What becomes important is recognized by buddhi as the situation now. Therefore, buddhi is the filtering agent. It filters all the information and projects what is relevant to your present moment through manas. The effect of buddhi prana or buddhi *vayu* is the same as that of prana *vayu*.

Chitta is like apana, and somehow it is constipated. If the body is constipated, what happens? Everything is stored inside. If the mind is constipated, the same happens. Everything is stored inside the mind due to mental constipation. The *smritis* or memories, the *samskaras* or impressions, the archetypes, the conditionings, the nature which you have become are all stored in chitta. The building-block of your life and nature is chitta. The mind-set that you express today is chitta. The behaviour that you express today is chitta. The appreciation or rejection, your likes and dislikes is chitta. Everything is connected to your past impressions and memories. Whatever you do externally has some connection with your memories and past. What is without connection, a new experience, becomes a memory and is stored again.

Chitta is like the attic in old homes. If you go to the attic you will find many suitcases. There will be one belonging to your great-great-grandfather containing his clothes, equipment and sextant. You will find another bag belonging to your great-grandfather with all his important things. You will find another bag of your grandfather and another one of your father. Things have been stored in the attic, in suitcases, for future use. You store many things for future use. You never use them, yet you store them. That is chitta.

Ahamkara, the ego, is the I-awareness, the I-identity: 'I am', 'I exist', 'I see', 'I hear', 'I need'. The idea of 'I' is ahamkara. Ahamkara is udana, the extremities: head, arms, legs. When does ahamkara come up? When there is some form of threat or problem. Then ahamkara raises the head and says, "What is happening? Do I fight, do I run, do I defend, do I confront? Will I win, will I lose? What about my prestige and image?" This ongoing identification with the self is ahamkara and its behaviour is like udana prana. The four aspects of the mind are connected to chitta shakti, which is the negative shakti.

Merging and observing in raja yoga

Classical raja yoga states that you should merge the experience of the physical body with prana, merge the experience of prana with mind, merge the experience of mind with consciousness, and merge the experience of consciousness with spirit. The entire system of raja yoga is based on the idea of merging–dissolving–merging.

When you put sugar in water, it dissolves. First there were two separate items: liquid and solid. When the sugar crystal dissolves in water, it cannot be found. It becomes totally one with water. There will not be a needle-drop of water which will not taste sweet. That is dissolution, to become one with something. In the same manner, the functions of the physical body are channelled into the pranic body. It is not the physical body that moves you anymore, it is the prana that moves you. Then you merge your prana in the mind.

Then the mind becomes free and clear of all the impressions of chitta. You merge this mind with consciousness. Then all the limitations of the self can be transcended. You merge that consciousness into the experience of spirit. There you experience moksha, emancipation, freedom.

Over a period of many centuries, as raja yoga became more accessible to people in society, they said, “Merger? I am not a sadhu, I am not a recluse, I am not a seeker. I don’t want to merge myself. I want to improve the quality of my life. How can meditation help me achieve that?”

At that point, Sage Patanjali gave a new interpretation of raja yoga for society in his *Yoga Sutras*. Sage Patanjali does not describe any practice, he presumes that people already know them, as the trend of raja yoga had been continuing from the past. The ideas, the practices, the system, the procedures, everything was known. Therefore he does not have to define or describe anything. He simply introduces a concept. He says, “Instead of merging, become the observer.” The *drashta* concept comes in. When you are merging, you are a drashta only initially. As the merger takes place, you lose that consciousness.

When you sleep at night, you are one with the sleep consciousness; your waking consciousness is dormant. When you wake up, the dormancy is gone; you are in a state which is totally opposite to the other one, even though it is the same consciousness. It is the same with merger. It develops another level of consciousness and leaves the previous one behind. Then it develops another level of consciousness and leaves the previous one behind. It is possible to achieve this only by those who have no ties to the world. People with ties to the world cannot leave anything behind. Your family and home will be disturbed, and you have to follow your dharma. Therefore, Patanjali developed the component of drashta, the observer.

Re-understanding chitta vritti

Chitta vritti is a term that specifically relates to the third level of mental experience, the chitta. People translate it as ‘modifications of mind’, not ‘modifications of smriti or chitta’. The mind brings the awareness to the frontal region, the manas level. *Pramana*, *viparyaya* and *vikalpa*, right knowledge, wrong knowledge, dream or fancy, the first three vrittis given in the *Yoga Sutras*, belong to the realms of manas and buddhi. *Smriti* and *nidra*, memory and sleep, the last two, belong to the realms of chitta and ahamkara.

Nidra is a vritti of ahamkara. It is in the nidra state that you are free from the effects of ahamkara. In the waking state you are under the sway of ahamkara. Smriti is a vritti of chitta. Pramana is a vritti of buddhi. Viparyaya and vikalpa are vrittis of manas.

In the classical raja yoga, the focus is on connection of the pranic or vital energies with the impressions and memories which are still alive today and also with those you have been carrying from your previous incarnations. Chitta vritti, from the perspective of classical raja yoga, means disconnecting prana from those latent impressions that form your thoughts, ideas, desires, needs, aspirations, ambitions, and which propel you into the material dimension without any control, awareness or understanding of what you have to do.

Removing prana from the mental experiences, or separating the negative energy and the positive energy, is a precept of classical raja yoga. When you remove prana from a memory, it dies. Take the example of a colour picture. If you expose it to the sun, what will happen? In the course of time, the colours will fade. Eventually the picture will disappear and the paper will again become white. If you don’t expose the picture to the sun and keep it safe in your album, after one hundred years your grandchildren will open the album and see the same picture with the same freshness of colour. The same vibrancy, the same sharpness will be there.

This happens in your life too. Everything is put away in chitta, nothing sees the light of the day, so everything is fresh. An event which took place fifty years ago is still as real and vibrant today. It affects you mentally, emotionally and psychically as it did then. Memories are those retentions of impressions, images and experiences with all the prana in them.

Raja yoga seeks to separate prana from mind. When you separate prana from mind, the chitta vrittis or the smritis die. When prana is sucked out from a memory, the memory dies and that is prana pratyahara. Then merger of prana with mind takes place. The sequence goes on, until you are able to clear the impressions in your chitta. Once the chitta impressions, the memories, are cleared, the spiritual dimension of yoga begins.



The Sense-Mind

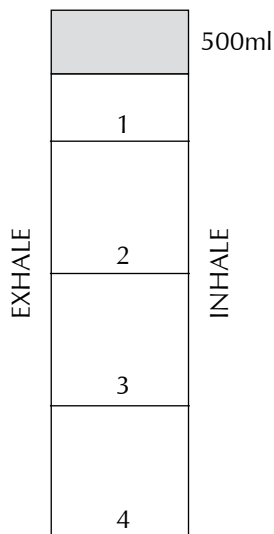
22 October 2019

Our lung capacity is of about four litres. The diagram here depicts this. The right side indicates inhalation, the left side indicates exhalation, and the four compartments are the space for the four litres.

In the practice of pranayama, you make the effort to breathe fully. In the practice of relaxation, you make the effort to breathe long and deep. During the day, that happens for maybe twenty minutes to maximum half an hour, while you are practising yoga.

Now here is a question. During the day, are you even aware of your breath? Do you try to elongate your breathing consciously? Do you live that essence of pranayama in your normal day-to-day activity? Or do you think that only twenty minutes of pranayama practice will awaken your potential?

You have to make the effort, even in your normal routine, to breathe long and deep. When you are walking, travelling, sitting at the table, cultivate the habit of taking long and deep breaths. That way you will live pranayama



during the day also and not do it merely as a twenty-minute practice. The conscious effort has to be made, not only in the classroom environment, but during the day and at night, whenever you are aware. You have to cultivate the aspect of awareness through which you can lengthen your breath.

Your practice should not remain confined to the classroom. Your practice must happen every second, every moment. It may not be necessary to hold your nose, yet it is necessary to learn to take long and deep breaths. During pranayama, you are breathing in three, four or five litres of air for twenty minutes and you get high on that due to the intake of negative ions and prana shakti. Then for twenty-three hours and forty minutes, you are only breathing 500 millilitres. That is one-eighth of the capacity of your lungs. So where is the effect of pranayama? What have you achieved through pranayama? Nothing. There is no pranic component, no awareness, no elongation of the breath. Pranayama has become a physical breathing exercise. It should not remain that.

Your first effort, whenever you are aware, wherever possible, must be to elongate the inhalation and exhalation. Over a period of months and years, you will see the change in your own mind and brain behaviour. The ability to manage anxiety, insecurities and fears will be much greater; you will not succumb to their pressures. The mind and brain will be more relaxed. The nervous system will be more relaxed. Hence, elongation of breath should be the sadhana, the effort, the practice on a daily basis. Sit down and breathe in and out long and deep. That is one aspect.

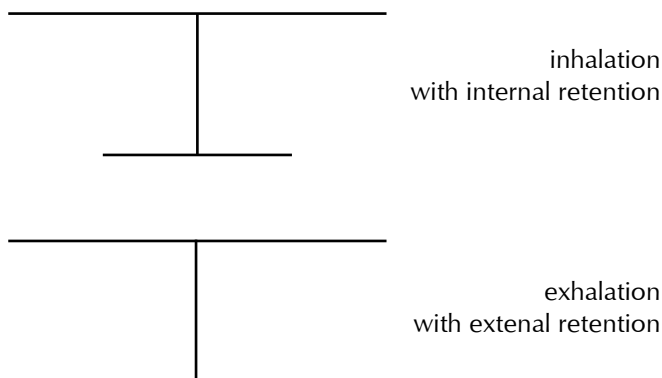
Kumbhaka

The second aspect is the importance of kumbhaka. Sri Swamiji says, "Pranayama is kumbhaka and kumbhaka is pranayama." All the scriptures state that it is in retention that miracles happen. When you hold the breath in, for whatever length of time, oxygen and negative ions are separated from the air and absorbed into the body. Normally, what is absorbed is only from the 500 millilitres that you breathe

in. Imagine the quantity of absorption when you are able to breathe the maximum capacity of the lungs, four, five or six litres, in a natural, normal way.

When you hold the breath in, the rule of the thumb is that retention always has to be twice the length of inhalation. If inhalation is one, retention has to be two, double. If inhalation is two, retention has to be four. If inhalation is three, retention has to be six. Always double. This is shown in the following diagram. Longer internal retention, which is twice the length of inhalation and exhalation; and shorter external retention, which is the same length as inhalation and exhalation.

Internal kumbhaka and external kumbhaka



You have to first practise elongation of breath for six months or one year, inhaling and exhaling long and deep. When you have mastered it and are able to breathe in and out with long, slow and deep breaths, then you start working with kumbhaka for the next six months to one year. First come to the point where you can retain inhalation and exhalation for longer periods and equal in length, equal in width. Then in the next stage, practise making the exhalation longer than the inhalation. Do this until the exhalation is double of inhalation. You can do this by

engaging the diaphragm. After you feel you have breathed out the air from the lungs, engage the diaphragmatic muscles to push the remaining air out slowly and gently. When you have reached this stage then begin to work on your kumbhaka.

Hold the breath for three seconds, let it go. Hold the breath for four seconds, let it go. Hold the breath for five seconds, let it go. Build up internal and external retention with the same length. Just as you have built up inhalation and exhalation, build your internal and external retention, so they become even, they become equal. If you are able to hold the breath for the count of ten internally, then you should also be able to hold the breath for ten externally without any discomfort. Build up the kumbhaka state, one second every day, or one second every second day, or one second every week. Build it up until you come to thirty seconds, to a minute, to a minute-and-a-half. The maximum time a person can hold the breath with practice is about three minutes.

When you hold the breath in, gradually try to make the retention four times the length of inhalation. If inhalation is one, retention has to be four. If inhalation is two, retention has to be eight. If inhalation is three, retention has to be twelve. This is shown in the second diagram. When you hold the breath out, it should be the same as exhalation. The external retention is shorter than the internal retention.

The lengthening of inhalation and exhalation is working with ida and pingala. Working with kumbhaka stimulates sushumna. When kumbhaka is perfected and you are able to breathe and hold kumbhaka in every chakra, then in the state of kumbhaka, the energy of that chakra is released, like pollen from a flower. This is known as *pranotthana*. That will happen only when internal and external retention have been mastered.

By pumping your abdomen, pranotthana will not happen. By practising uddiyana bandha or agnisara kriya, pranotthana will not happen. It will only happen when

the condition is correct and that condition is kumbhaka. In kumbhaka, there is no pull of gravity. It is just a state of balance and harmony. When pranotthana happens, and all the chakras release their prana, something else happens, which is the ascent of kundalini.

Up to this point, everything is happening at the physical and pranic levels. You have come to pranotthana by inhaling and exhaling long and deep, by practising kumbhaka and by the chakras releasing their energy in the state of kumbhaka.

The mental level

What will happen at the mental level when the pranas are awakened? This is an important aspect of yoga, the missing link which you do not know yet. You think of prana and mind as two separate entities. To understand the link you need to understand the idea of chakras.

There are different traditions of chakras. The Yoga Upanishads, the Puranas, the vedic tradition, the tantric tradition all describe different numbers of chakras. Whatever the total number may be, the important chakras are seven: mooladhara, swadhisthana, manipura, anahata, vishuddhi, ajna and sahasrara.

Apart from these seven, there are other minor chakras which are located in sushumna. The first of the minor chakras is *hrit chakra*, just below anahata to the left in the heart. It is not anahata chakra which is in the heart, it is the hrit chakra. It is a minor chakra connected to anahata. Anahata is in the centre behind the sternum in the spine. This minor centre becomes important in pranotthana.

The second centre is under the tongue, known as *talv chakra*. It is the location which yogis perforate to practise khechari mudra.

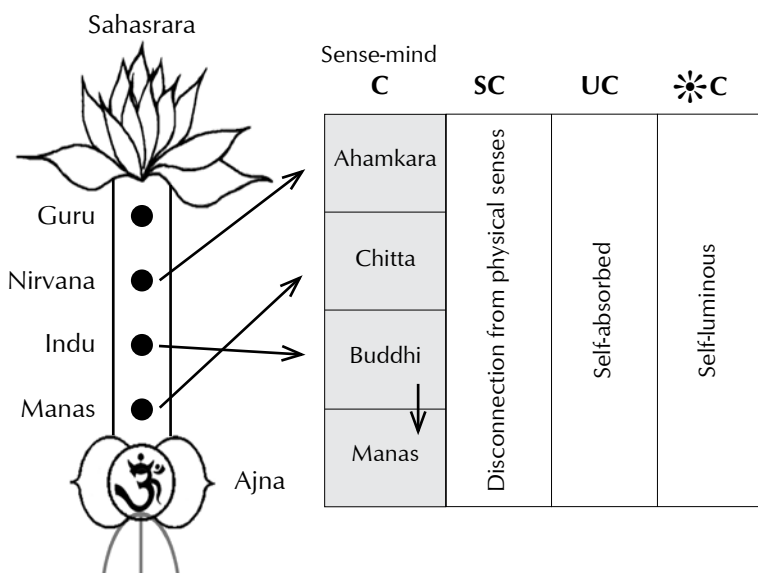
The third minor chakra is beyond ajna. From ajna to sahasrara the only nadi that flows is sushumna. Within sushumna, above ajna, is the next chakra. It is an important one, known as *manas chakra* or *chitrini chakra*. This chakra controls chitta.

All the collected sense impressions, sense memories and sense experiences are transferred to the sensory cortex. From the sensory cortex, they are transferred to the sense-mind. There, in the mind, the experience becomes a *vayu*. As a *vayu* it follows the path of *ida*, goes into *chitta* and becomes a memory. A physical experience converts itself into a *vayu*, a form of *prana*, which follows either the *ida* or the *pingala* path.

From the *chitrini chakra* which controls the *chitta*, the *vayu*, the experience goes into *chitta*. *Chitra* means image and *chitrini* means impression, and *chitta* is the storehouse of impressions. The *chitrini chakra* has six petals. Each petal is coloured differently, as it corresponds to a sense organ and a *tanmatra*. The quality of smell and the organ of nose, sight and the organ of eyes, sound and the organ of ears, speech and the organ of tongue and the mouth, touch and the organ of skin, all the five *jnanendriyas* and the five *karmendriyas* are controlled by *chitrini* or *manas chakra*. It controls another condition: sleep. So the senses and sleep have a direct connection to *chitta*.

In the image opposite, you see a square which is divided up with three vertical lines in the middle. In the first section is C meaning consciousness, second is SC, subconscious, third is UC, unconscious, and fourth the superconscious, the sun.

The superconscious is out of bounds, the unconscious is out of bounds, the subconscious is partially out of bounds, but you have full access to the conscious. This conscious nature interacts with the material world of the senses and sense objects. Therefore, the conscious is divided as *ahamkara* on top, *chitta* second, *buddhi* third, and *manas* fourth. *Manas*, *buddhi*, *chitta* and *ahamkara* are all expressions of the conscious. In the subconscious the connection, the link is broken. In the unconscious the link does not exist, and in the superconscious you are self-contained.



Sense-mind and chakras

This conscious realm, classified as manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara, is the sense-mind. It is the interactive mind, known as antahkarana or *manaschatushstaya*, the four-compartment mind. The interactive mind is an offshoot or expression of the total consciousness.

Above ajna chakra is manas chakra controlling and feeding chitta. Above manas chakra is indu chakra. *Indu* means moonlight, and indu chakra controls buddhi. It has sixteen petals which represent positive vrittis of buddhi; not pramana, viparyaya, vikalpa, nidra or smriti, which are the material vrittis. Buddhi is also material and non-material, and the sixteen petals represent sixteen sattwic vrittis, conditions or states of mind and expression.

Buddhi has five functions and the indu chakra controls these five aspects. The first is *manisha*, meaning higher intellection, higher search, higher enquiry. You don't just see the effect but also try to see the cause. That is enquiry. Normally you see the effect and you react, but a jnani does

not react to the effect. He sees the cause of the effect and tries to manage the cause rather than react to the effect. Manisha is to look beyond what you are experiencing; it is higher intellection and not being influenced by what you perceive to be real. It is knowing the difference between appearance and reality.

The second aspect is *mati*, mentality, mind-set, thinking, how your mind thinks all the time, what is the mentality: good, bad, negative, positive, plus, minus. That is *mati*.

The third aspect of buddhi is *manana*, reflection, which becomes *manas*. One component of buddhi becomes *manas*, therefore the three chakras deal with *chitta*, buddhi and *ahamkara*, and not with *manas*.

The fourth component of buddhi is *drishti*, insight or vision. Some people have good insight, good vision. That is an expression of buddhi.

The fifth component is *medha*, the reflective power, retentive power: what we retain, understand, imbibe, live and become.

These are the five aspects of buddhi. When buddhi is not tamasic, attached to the material, sensorial and sensual, it becomes sattwic, luminous. In that luminous state the sixteen vrittis emerge, which become the condition you express and live in life. This is the *indu chakra*.

The third is *nirvana chakra*, connected to the I-ness, the I-identity, the 'me' and the awareness that 'I am'; it is connected to ego. There are three kinds of egos: tamasic, rajasic and sattwic. Tamasic is undesirable, sattwic is desirable. Therefore, spirituality does not seek the elimination of ego. People say, "Destroy your ego." This cannot happen, for the ego is you. If you destroy your ego, you destroy your body, you destroy your life. Ego is the I-ness which you experience, 'I am'. That 'I am', that I-ness when it is connected to the material, sensorial and sensual is tamasic, for it gives birth to many cravings for self-satisfaction and self-fulfilment. This takes you more and more into the material world which is definitely a world of vices.

When you have money, vices come into your life. When you don't have money, you are a restrained person. When there is no money, there is greater sanyam. When there is money, the doors are open to vices. Material prosperity always brings the negatives into life. The tamasic ego identifies with the negative. A reckless person will always identify with recklessness. A disobedient person will always identify with disobedience. That is the nature. To become something different is a struggle. That is the I-identity. The nirvana chakra controls this ahamkara aspect and converts the negative ahamkara into a sattwic ahamkara: 'I am happy', 'I am blissful', 'I am content', 'I am fulfilled'. There is appreciation and acceptance of life. There is appreciation of the beauty of life. It is not just a rat race to fulfil all your cravings and desires.

After the nirvana chakra, when the ego has become sattwic, comes sahasrara. The journey beyond ajna is the most important journey, connecting prana with mind.

When you look at the koshas, the annamaya kosha is the first layer, the outer skin or the first layer of the onion. The second layer is pranamaya kosha. It is pranamaya kosha which feeds the senses through manas chakra, receiving all their experiences. It connects the senses to the sense objects and the world. That is the function of pranamaya kosha. If the connection of prana was not there, the body would not experience anything of the world. In the subtle dimension, pranamaya kosha controls manas. Up to ajna chakra, you are under the influence of ida, pingala and sushumna. Just as prana is controlled by ida and pingala, the mental dimension is governed by raga and dwesha. If ida and pingala, the lunar and solar powers or forces are important for pranayama, it is the management of raga and dwesha which is important for the mind, as they represent the nature of the mind. When you work with pranas, you are able to influence the mental dimension.

After manomaya kosha, you enter into vijnanamaya kosha, the area of consciousness, where the sense-mind and

the sense experiences have stopped, and inner awareness has developed. The external connection has stopped and internal connection and awareness have evolved. You become aware of your internal dimension, potentials, possibilities, limitations, weaknesses, creativity, inhibitions, and you learn to make the best of them. Vijnanamaya kosha deals with the subconscious, unconscious and superconscious. The journey from the subconscious to the superconscious takes place in vijnanamaya kosha, the fourth layer. When you enter anandamaya kosha, you identify with that superconscious nature, with universal wholeness, completeness, bliss, with *poornata*.

Summary

Today's discussion was to clarify two points. First, your practice is not to remain confined to the classroom if you want to have some benefit of yoga. Continuous effort has to be made to improve the quality of breathing, the inhalation and exhalation, so that you can work little changes, little miracles within yourself: activate ida and pingala, practise kumbhaka, gain comfort and mastery, activate the chakras. This will only happen if you are aware of yourself during the day.

If you want to experience yoga, you have to be sincere, serious and committed to the yogic path and not follow the whims of your mind. It is for your experience and understanding.

Progressive Yoga Vidya Training is not for teaching other people. If you can respect and honour that much instruction and guideline, you are welcome. If you truly honour and respect the learning and are serious, then continue to develop yourself and your abilities. Don't dilute the perfection by your ambition of teaching others. For fifty-five years you only knew that the body is composed of two arms, two legs, one trunk, one back, one head; now you are learning not only what is perceived, but what is inside, the movement of muscles, bones and everything that makes the

body move. This learning you have to acquire in order to understand yoga.

The second point was about chitta, buddhi and ahamkara, which have two different compartments. One compartment is the material one, the sense-mind, the sense consciousness, anything connected with the senses and sense objects. The sense-mind is the conscious mind, beyond is the non-sense mind. The sense-mind is the conscious mind, and beyond that everything is an experience: not the material, sensorial, sensual or physical, but a psychological and spiritual experience.

The journey begins in the subconscious mind. Scientists speak about the power of the subconscious mind and the extent to which we can change if we utilize this power. We can change our habits, our needs, our environment. We can change many things, provided we have the right sankalpa. That is the power of the subconscious mind. It is not only an opinion of the yogis, scientists also speak of the need to awaken the subconscious. As the doors open, we discover the unconscious and superconscious realms, which are extensions of a deeper and better perception, understanding, expression of all the sattwic, tender, soft and positive qualities of life.



Towards Fellowship

23 October 2019

Today, yoga is one of the means to unite society and to unite oneself. Situations, behaviours and mind-sets are changing fast with technological advancements. As we become more and more extroverted, there will be a need to find our own centre and balance. Yoga, in a basic form, will come in handy. This basic yoga will be used by the coming generations as people will not have the spiritual awareness, understanding, culture or samskara, for they will have been exposed only to the internet. In society, the focus of yoga will also be more physical in the coming years.

At the Bihar School of Yoga, we connect with the vision of Sri Swami Satyananda, which is an evolving vision. Underneath the logo of BSY, the image of ajna chakra, a simple statement says: 'International Yoga Fellowship'. Fellowship was the purpose and the intent of Sri Swamiji. A fellowship is a group of people who are exploring, experiencing and living yoga. This fellowship is different from the student and teacher interaction. It is a connection that defines the relationship with the tradition and with yoga.

The purpose of Satyananda Yoga is not enlightenment. Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda have never said that yoga is for enlightenment. Swami Sivananda said the purpose of yoga is to awaken the faculties of head, heart and hands. That was the yoga mission of Swami Sivananda, and

Swami Satyananda carried that mission forward. You may believe in your emancipation, however Swami Satyananda and Swami Sivananda do not believe in emancipation. They believe in improving the quality of life. For this reason, the system which was propagated was basic: to overcome the stressors in life, to find relaxation, wellness, mental peace, balance and harmony.

The second chapter of yoga is the secondary school level of education in yoga. We are not looking at the external body with two arms and two legs and the rest. We are looking at the mechanics of the body. How does this body function? What is the role of the nervous system, the brain, the heart? What is the role of the lungs and the digestive system? That level of awareness is the second chapter of yoga, and a glimpse of it is being given during the Progressive Yoga Vidya Training.

In the second chapter, we are learning how to live yoga and make the effort to become part of the fellowship, in a small number. Millions are not needed for a fellowship, even twenty or one hundred who can live yoga and be examples of this achievement will do. It can even be only one person in every country. This is the goal of Swami Satyananda. Until now we were working for yoga propagation; in the second chapter we are working for a yoga fellowship.

For society, the basic training of Satyananda Yoga is more than enough. For fifty years, this simple group of practices have helped people overcome many difficulties. Physically and psychologically people have benefited from it. The basic training of Satyananda Yoga is not going to stop and it should continue the way it has been done until now. The only addition in this basic Satyananda Yoga training are the capsules that we are developing. There will be capsules for every purpose, reason, condition and situation. The publication of these capsules will become the manual for teaching people in society. There will be specific practices for specific purposes and for specific gain. Satyananda Yoga training and capsules will be taught side by side.

Your interaction with Satyananda Yoga and the capsules is one aspect; however, if you want to become part of the fellowship, your understanding and experience has to develop. Therefore, you have to be serious, sincere and committed to follow this path. For your own recognition as a yoga teacher in society, continue with the basics of Satyananda Yoga which is valid today and will be for the next fifty years as it is enough for human society. The exploration of yoga vidya is your effort to live the life which Sri Swamiji envisioned as a fellowship of people living yoga.



Role of Pratyahara

24 October 2019

The second chapter initiative of Bihar School of Yoga is understanding yoga vidya with its physical, pranic, mental, psychic and spiritual components. Sri Swami Satyananda has spoken about the mind in the past and this is one of the many satsangs he delivered on the topic.

The Mind

The mind is a faculty of the soul. The power of the soul is manifested through the mind. The mind has its own attributes, functions and nature, but it is not able to function without an association with the soul force. If all the components of a machine are in order, the machine can carry out a particular task, yet it cannot function by itself without being motivated by some form of power like electricity. The mind is in the same position. Its direction and tendencies are separate, but when associated with the soul force, it becomes active and works according to its faculties. That is why, motivated by past tendencies, a person does good or bad acts, higher or mediocre acts.

Just as the mind acts with the help of the soul, similarly, the senses function with the help of the mind. We have five organs of action and five organs of perception. The ears, eyes, skin, tongue and nose are the organs of perception. Speech, hands, feet, reproductive and excretory organs are the organs of action. Like the mind, which is not able

to function by itself, the senses are not able to function without the association with the mind. For reasons of simplification, we have named that power of thought and knowledge, through which the senses function, as the mind. It is because of the mind that we are absorbed in the world.

The mind has been said to be the cause of the bondage of the soul and also of the experiences of happiness and misery. It should also be remembered that the mind is an instrument of self-elevation, the inspirer of emancipation. Under the normal waking conditions of life, one is subjected to a continuous stream of sensory data from the outside world. Added to this are the multitudes of thoughts that arise from the subconscious mind, many in response to negative emotions and reactions to inner and external events. Due to this, the enormous power and potential of the mind is not used. Instead, the mind operates at a lower level compared to its fullest potential. Its energy is dissipated in all directions.

The first step on the path of spirituality is to control the mind and make it useful. The first sadhana of a sadhaka consists of understanding the mind, in knowing its direction and turning it upwards. Hidden deep within the recesses of the mind are the samskaras or archetypes which influence the emotions, personality and life of each and every individual. Your problems arise from this inner storehouse of experiences. Happiness and unhappiness lie deep in you and these experiences are stored in the form of samskaras. Within you, they are accumulated in the form of particles. From particles, they become waves of energy and these waves develop into a force which later emerges as an experience. Your experience of happiness or unhappiness arises in the form of a wave that is born of one particle. That particle is known as a samskara or archetype.

The archetypes in the brain come out in the way of your expression. They are the substances which lie buried in

the depth of the human mind. Not the external mind, connected with the senses, eyes, ears and other mediums of perception. This mind obtains knowledge. You don't need to have much to do with this mind, which depends on the external sources of the senses, the indriyas. Not even with that mind which depends on the storehouse or fund of knowledge, that you have collected. The area of the mind which you do not know, that you have never experienced, which tries to come out, that mind can only come out if you can fix the archetypes.

The accumulation of archetypes collectively form the karma of an individual. It is on account of them that one's mind, emotions and personality are formed. If one suffers in life, it is on account of deep-rooted karma. If one enjoys life, it is also on account of karma. How does one deal with one's karma? Karma cannot be dealt with by a rational process such as psychoanalysis or psychiatric treatment. It has to be understood as a subtle force underlying each and every action or event that is encountered. It has been found that the practice of concentration on a symbol is effective in purging these archetypes from the unconscious mind.

In the teachings of Progressive Yoga Vidya Training, yoga has been seen as divided in three parts: the physical dimension, the mental dimension and the spiritual dimension. In all these three dimensions, the practices can come from hatha yoga, raja yoga or kriya yoga. They are all interconnected, therefore the practices are also interconnected, just as the many parts of the body are interconnected.

In the physical dimension, we have spoken of seven conditions that have to develop in the body in order to achieve complete wellness. We have spoken of prana and the need to use the power of prana to access the dimensions of the mind and body. In the discussions on prana it was mentioned that in one specific area situated in the pathway of sushumna between ajna and sahasrara, in the frontal

region, lie three centres. These three centres are responsible for managing mental activity. Sri Swamiji was explaining how the material is transformed into an experience and retained in memory.

An example. If you hold an incense stick in your hands, the fragrance is confined to the stick only. In order to smell the fragrance, you have to bring it closer to the nose. Now, if you light the incense stick, its fragrance spreads in the whole room. When the incense stick burns, the material becomes a *vayu*, air, its quality becomes gaseous. When it becomes a *vayu*, it spreads in the environment. Then even a person sitting at a distance will be able to smell the incense as it is not matter anymore. The event is gone, yet the experience in the form of *vayu* is all-pervasive. No matter who comes into that environment, they will experience the fragrance. They might not see the incense stick yet they will have the experience. This is the idea of the senses and mind.

The senses are the material subject; what you see, touch, taste, smell, hear is an expression of the material content. For it to become a mental experience, that material content turns into a *vayu* and becomes part of *chitta*. In the mental dimension of *chitta*, meditation is not important, rather managing and clearing the mind is important, and therefore the practice of *pratyahara*. If managing and clearing the mind of these impressions in *chitta*, *manas* and the sense-mind was not necessary, then the instruction would be to go straight to meditation.

In yoga, meditation is not given importance. People give importance to meditation, yoga does not. Nowhere in the literature of yoga has any meditation been defined. There is no guideline or instruction given on meditation in yoga, just as there is no guideline or instruction given on *samadhi* in yoga, as it is a state. The focus, the effort and the practices are with regard to *pratyahara* and *dharana*.

Meditation is a state of mind; it is not a practice. In that state of mind, a new *vritti* develops, known as *brahmi vritti*. *Brahmi vritti* is the expansive *vritti*, controlled by indu

chakra. Among the sixteen vrittis, conditions or moods which emerge in indu, joyfulness is one, spiritual awareness is another. These are sattwic, pure vrittis, untainted by matter and maya. They represent the pure human nature, which we find reflected in the lives of saints of all cultures, traditions and religions. That pure human nature or brahmi vritti inspires us to become like it, to come closer to it.

The purpose of pratyahara is to clear the mind of the dross and develop sattwic awareness, without which meditation is not possible. For those who do not understand the process of pratyahara and dharana, meditation is an escape from reality into an imaginary world. Everything which is sensorial and external is creating an archetype, an impression in the mind. Everything that you come across in your own mind creates an impression within itself, even thoughts that you generate form a mood, an opinion or an understanding.

The external and internal activities, events, interactions, everything is causing an impression. This impression is known as *pratyaya*, the seed, which becomes part of the mind. When it becomes part of the mind it is known as *smriti*. *Smriti* is a memory which is always there. Sometimes it is an active memory, sometimes it is a remote, passive or internal memory. Memory is not just of one type. There are different kinds of memories. The immediate, passive and active memories, or *pratyayas*, create different responses in life. The expressions, experience or exposure to these *pratyayas* gives the understanding of what the mind is.

In the previous diagram (see page 91), the conscious part of the mind is identified as *manas*, *buddhi*, *chitta* and *ahamkara* representing the sense-mind. 'Sense-mind' is a new term that has been introduced, and it represents the physical and pranic interactions becoming mental experiences. Whether it is through *manas*, *buddhi* or *chitta*, everything comes to the level where it is retained and becomes an archetype, an impression, a memory which is hard to get rid of.



First effort: clearing

Sage Patanjali says that there are many kinds of samadhi. There is *savichara samadhi*, samadhi with thoughts, meaning that even in that state of samadhi, you are not free of thoughts. There is *sabija samadhi*, samadhi with impressions, meaning you are not free of inherent impressions. Even in samadhi, the highest state considered to be realization of the transcendental nature of the mind, the mental functions are active. They are not dormant and have not been transcended. So there is samadhi with thought and then without thought, with seed and then without seed, with and then without, with and then without. You are going through both stages, with and without, and this represents duality. So how can it be samadhi? If you are 'with', then it is not samadhi, as the mind is still active. If you are 'without', then the next 'with' is on its way. The next 'with' comes from inside; you have to again encounter that. So where is the samadhi?

To have the experience of samadhi you have to clear the pratyayas, which is the mental dimension of yoga, not relaxation, concentration or meditation, but clearing the mental house. This clearing begins in hatha yoga, not in raja yoga, with the practice of *trataka*.

Trataka on a candle flame, if practised properly, is a powerful technique of introversion. It stops the chatter of the mind. It also gives the best sleep at night. Trataka on a point stills the mind. The practice of stilling the mind and clearing pratyayas begins with trataka in hatha yoga.

Trataka is not just fixing the gaze on one point; it is cultivating an awareness of the mandala in which you live. You are aware of the house in which you live, your home. If you are in the sitting room, you know what is in the bedroom, the kitchen, the bathroom; everything is under your gaze. You can tell anybody to find a certain object in a certain place. Similarly, the mandala of life is the mind.

A mandala is not only a cosmic form, but even life is a mandala, as it is a combination of myriads of kaleidoscopic experiences. It is like the kaleidoscope which has pieces of glass inside, and takes different forms, patterns and shapes every time you move it. Millions of shapes emerge, yet inside there are only five, six or ten pieces of cut glass. From those five or ten pieces of cut glass, millions of images emerge and keep on changing continuously, depending on how they fall.

The same principle applies to the mind. The moment your mental kaleidoscope changes, the vision and perceptions change. You have to keep moving this kaleidoscope until everything converges in the middle and the mind becomes still. Even in a kaleidoscope, suddenly a point comes when everything simply merges in the middle. All the pratyayas which were playing around have suddenly merged and the background is white. This is pratyahara. After that begins meditation.

In the mental dimension of yoga, the focus is always on pratyayas, the clearing of impressions. Therefore, the first guideline given in the mental dimension of yoga is to cultivate awareness and become the observer. Hatha yoga or physical yoga begins with asana but mental yoga begins with the cultivation of awareness. The more you are able to connect with your awareness, the more you will observe the influences of the outer world on your life, mind, senses and

emotions. The more you see their effect and influence on your reactions and natural responses, the better you will be able to modify the impressions. You will be able to channel, control and regulate them until a point of stillness descends where there is no mental activity. When the mental activity stops, you have perfected pratyahara, you have cleared the impressions, you have cleaned the mental room. This is the effort of raja yoga.

Second effort: concentration

The second effort after cleaning is cultivating concentration, learning to fix the mind so that it remains without fluctuation. It is not easy to fix the mind. When you do your mala of mantra, when does your mind disappear from the mantra and mala awareness? After ten beads the mind dissipates. So what is the span of your mental awareness? Can you maintain the mantra awareness for the entire mala? Unbroken awareness? If you can, that is the beginning of dharana. If you cannot, you are still flirting in pratyahara: mind going, mind coming, mind going, mind coming. When you are able to hold your awareness for the entire practice of a mala, that will be the beginning of dharana.

This was a challenge given to me by my guru, Sri Swamiji. When I took mantra initiation, he told me to do two malas and I used to finish in less than two minutes. One day I thought that I should ask him if I could increase the number of malas. So I went to him and said, “Swamiji, I finish the two malas in two minutes and I want to sit for longer. Can I increase the number of malas?” I was ten at that time. He asked me, “For how many beads are you aware of the mantra?” I said, “Let me see.”

That night I started my normal practice and I realized that I was gone from the word go. Only my hands were moving the bead, my mind was somewhere else and the mantra was not even registering. I did the second mala with a little bit more carefulness and awareness. It was a struggle. It was quite interesting to see how many times the mind

wandered. With all the fluctuations it took me half an hour to complete one mala.

Once I decided to let it fluctuate and to only move the bead when I was aware of the mantra. That was too much. Sitting there for forty minutes not doing anything at all and then moving two beads. So I said to Sri Swamiji, “Swamiji, I lost count of how many times I miss the mantra when I am doing one mala of japa.” He said, “Niranjan, increase the malas when you are able to complete one mala with one hundred per cent awareness of the mantra.” The effort to maintain constant awareness for a period of time is dharana. If you can practise one mala with mantra awareness in every bead, then that is dharana of one mala: maintaining the awareness without fluctuation, distraction, or dissipation.

Pratyahara and dharana become two tools to clear the mind and to train the mind. Clearing happens in pratyahara, training happens in dharana. Then dhyana, meditation, is a natural experience. When that state of meditation happens, you rise fast as there is nothing conditioning your desires, thoughts or expectations. Right now, everything is coloured by your desires, thoughts and expectations, and as long as they are there, meditation will never happen.

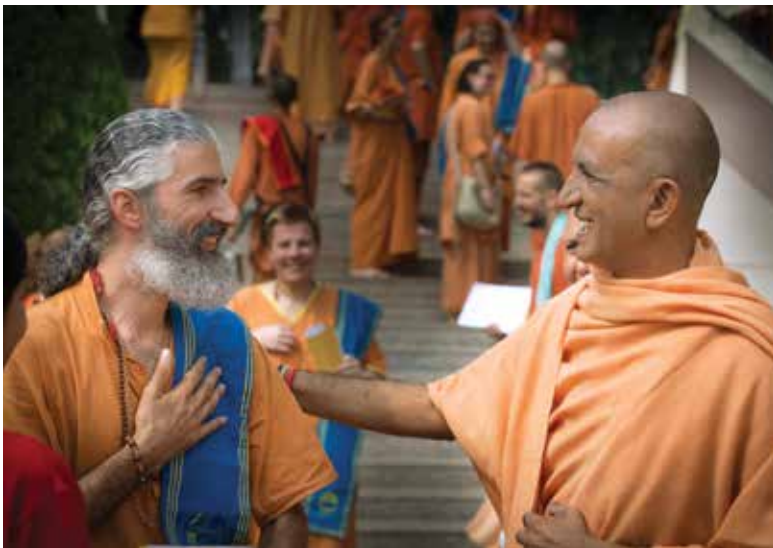
The mental component starts with hatha yoga, and trataka becomes the medium to begin this process. In raja yoga, yoga nidra becomes the medium to extend the awareness into the body. People are disconnected from their bodies and from their environment too. Last year after a yoga ecology seminar a person wrote, “I have lived in my city for forty years and walked from my home to office every day. After this course, for the first time I noticed the trees on the street where I live and their beauty. The appreciation and understanding came of what they were doing for all of us.” This is an indication of how disconnected we are from our own selves. The modern trend is: remain disconnected.

Last year after the Munger Yoga Symposium, people were inspired by *manahprasad*, happiness. One person, on returning to London, started walking around town, smiling

and saying ‘Good Morning’ to everybody. The police was called – “Somebody with an ulterior motive is saying ‘Hello’ and ‘Good Morning’ to everyone and giving big smiles.” The police came and the man eventually had to apologize for smiling. The police issued an advisory: “If somebody looks at you, avoid eye contact. If somebody tries to talk to you, plug your ears with your earphones, turn the music louder and walk faster. Avoid eye contact, avoid speaking.”

This is the advisory of the modern intellectuals, who want to find happiness in life but who live a completely isolated life. They cannot look somebody in the eye, smile or say, “Hi, Good Morning,” without the other person feeling threatened. This is the mind.

It is pratyahara and dharana that will help clear this incredible cobweb, which is becoming bigger and bigger, preventing a clear vision and isolating an individual more and more from everyone else and from the beauty, joy and happiness of life. Therefore, the mind is an important subject, not because of what it does but what we can do to it: clear it, shine it and illuminate it.



Pathway to the Causal Realm

25 October 2019

From the yogic perspective, the senses are the medium to connect the causal with the material dimension. ‘Causal’ is one extreme, ‘caused’ is the other extreme. Between the two extremes is the journey, the cause. This cause is known as the subtle aspect of life. Causal is on one side, cause becomes the subtle aspect in the middle, and caused becomes the effect on the other side. The senses become the medium to connect the causal, going through the subtle, with the material.

Turning inwards

Each sense organ is like a tube. Whatever is inside is connecting with the outside through the tube, and information that is outside is coming inside through the tube. This tube of the senses goes up to the brain, and there the physical aspect changes into the subtle. The information that you have received via the senses, which was material in the beginning, now becomes a vayu, subtle. When it becomes a vayu, it becomes part of the mental dimension and the cause of impressions, archetypes, pratyayas. The yogic sadhana of pratyahara is to clear the mind of these pratyayas. Therefore, the main body of the subject of raja yoga is pratyahara: clearing the pratyayas, impressions, samskaras, archetypes, karmas, memories. The subject of dharana is given lesser space and the subject of dhyana even less.

After the clearing, when the pratyayas have dissolved, we move into another dimension where the senses, which were directed outwards, are now directed inwards. Now extrasensory perceptions take place; the other aspect of the senses emerges. The material aspect of the senses is interaction, recognition and participation in the world. When that channel is closed and the pratyayas, the links that connect you to the senses and to the world, have been cleared, then the senses turn inwards. The same sense organ is now introverted. Instead of focusing outside, they begin to focus inside.

Motion is the material aspect of the feet, the subtle aspect is the relationship of the individual with gravity, not only gravity of the earth, but gravity of thoughts and emotions. Gravity pulls you into experiencing something specific. An example is worry. The same thought keeps on going around and around. You are unable to extract yourself from the vortex of this thought which you cannot control. That is gravity. You cannot free yourself from that condition. The subtle aspect is the awareness of those influences, conditions or situations which hold the mind to this level.

The body is regulated by ida and pingala, the mental and vital energies; the mind is regulated by *raga* and *dwesha*, attraction and repulsion, the gravitational powers of the mind. They are the gravitational powers of the senses. When the karmendriya of motion becomes internalized, there is a natural awareness; balance is brought into the expressions and projections of raga and dwesha. There is harmony and balance. The first expression of this state is: no spikes, a stable mind.

The material function of the excretory organs is to eliminate waste products and toxic matter from the body. In the spiritual dimension, that excretory function relates to prana, mind and pratyayas. Apana vayu is the physical prana of elimination and at the mental level it clears the constipation of the mind. The blackboard is cleaned.

In 2009, Sri Swamiji said, "I am clearing my blackboard. I may not remember who you are the next time we meet

because I am clearing that impression, that pratyaya, that connection. I am freeing myself.” If the pratyaya is cleared then you will not recognize another person although you have spent your life with them; the pratyaya which connected you to them is gone, dissolved. The identification is not there. Recognition of a person is there, but the identification is not there.

Inner faculties

When the jnanendriyas, the sense of perceptions, fold in, inner potentials unfold. The eyes, for example, represent vision at the material level. At the spiritual, awakened, inner level it becomes clairvoyance. When the external link is cut off and the vision faculty is folded in, it becomes clairvoyant. It is not a siddhi or a psychic power. These are just effects of a condition. Vision, which connects you to the world, when turned inwards, becomes the faculty of clairvoyance.

In the 1970s, a lot of research was conducted in Russia on clairvoyance, clairsaudience and telepathy, using the yogic techniques of meditation and concentration. The purpose was to use that ability to communicate on the battlefield in case radio communications went down. Nevertheless, the researchers were looking at the possibility of exploring the potential of the mind. They did come to a point where people started having visions, but they were unable to correlate those visions with the actual reality as many pratyayas were still blocking the perception. So, vision turned inwards translates into clairvoyance.

Ears change into clairsaudience. At present you can hear sounds that are at a certain decibel. The human ear hears a range of decibels only. Below and beyond we do not hear. In yoga, the concept of sound is different; it is described as nada. *Nada* means sound that is made by striking two objects together, such as the clapping of two hands. Speech is also striking together of tongue, palate, teeth, throat; they are hitting each other to create sounds. When this stops, the sense of hearing turns inwards. At that moment

you access subtle levels in the realm of nada. Now you hear self-generated sounds, not sounds generated by striking two objects. Sometimes you have a glimpse of this nada in meditation when you begin to hear music, the sound of a flute, thunder, raindrops. Where is it coming from? There is no rain or thunder outside, yet you are hearing these sounds. As this faculty sharpens and extends outwards, you begin to hear people speaking far away. The barrier of distance at this inner level dissolves.

An interesting research was done during the 1970s in Russia. Scientists had a mother rabbit at a lab in Moscow. They sent six of her babies under the ocean in a submarine, three thousand kilometres away. Then they started killing one baby at a time. At exactly the same time, the mother's responses were recorded through EEG. It could be seen that her waves were going haywire. That is a connection and relationship that all mothers have. They know if something happens to their children. They can sense and feel it. They may not be hundred per cent accurate as to what happened, yet they can feel the disturbance, pain, agony and distress, and they react to it. Although the killing of the baby rabbits was taking place three thousand kilometres away underwater in a submarine while the mother was at a lab in Moscow, this connection was observed. It is not an auditory or visual connection. It is the motherly connection of love. Distance does not matter. Time does not matter. This faculty is instinctive in animals, yet it has to be cultivated in human beings. When it is cultivated it is not an instinct, it becomes a sequential process of realization, as it happens gradually, step by step, not all of a sudden.

The material function of the tongue is taste. In khechhari mudra it is *amrita*, nectar, which becomes the turning point. It changes the entire concept of physical taste into ambrosial taste. The same thing happens with smell. Internally smell represents identification of moods and mental conditions. When you go into a room and there are two different smells there, one horrible and putrid and the other pleasant and

inviting, what happens? You instantly shun the putrid smell and gravitate towards the pleasing one. Can you do the same with yourself internally with discrimination? There is the dark side of your garden and the lit side of your garden. Can you remain in the lit side and not go to the dark side? Most of the time you gravitate towards the dark side and get out of the illuminated side.

All your negativities, hang-ups, eccentricities take you to the dark side. Where is your intelligence, discrimination, your ability to know the right and the correct? Smell represents that faculty. You are able to smell the putrid and avoid it by going the other way. You do not smell the putrid, investigate it and go deeper into it. That is what people do when they cannot extract themselves from the negative mentality. It becomes a mind-set, a conditioning, a nature. Through discrimination, you can differentiate between the putrid and the pleasant, and between the wrong and the right.

The correct nature, which develops as a result of applying discrimination, is the nature of *sat*, truth, where the expressions are connected to sat and not to the whims of mind. Smell is the faculty of discrimination which says, "I have to avoid that." A negative thought comes and it says, "No, I have to think differently." A negative emotion comes and it says, "No, that is damaging, harmful, restrictive, creating separation between people. Avoid the negative, the dark, and remain connected to the positive."

At the material level, the skin is the container for the body and protects it. At the subtle level, it becomes a *tanmatra*, the subtle nature, and the conductor of prana and intuitive experience. Skin is the largest sense organ of the body. It can be like a radar. If you access the subtle quality of the skin, you can be a walking radar and sense what is happening, where it is happening and what you can do to help the situation.

Experience

One day, when Sri Swamiji was practising panchagni in total isolation, he suddenly said to the swamis, “In a nearby village, there has been a fire. One house has burnt down, the father has died in the fire and the mother is sitting outside under a tree with her three little children.” How did Sri Swamiji sense this? It was due to the disturbance in the pranic field. This was further reinforced by the inner vision, clairvoyance. He could see and describe the woman sitting under a tree with three kids. Such a description is not possible without actually seeing the image, like a photograph. He knew that picture to be true, there was conviction. This is pranic connection.

There are times when you hear somebody call out your name. It is a known voice, yet the person is not there. You look around to see who called. That person is many miles away. At that moment you are connected by clairauidence. That faculty woke up for a split second and then it died again. Sri Swamiji says, “I hear Swami Sivananda’s voice, he talks to me.” I have also had a similar experience. Every fifth of the month since 2009, I have not slept. That is the day I get a download. Since Sri Swamiji left his body, I have not been able to sleep on the night of the fifth.

We had the World Yoga Convention in 2013. At the beginning of the year, I had no idea how it would be organized. On 6th February, I called a sannyasi and asked to bring a diary and a pen. I started dictating: the place, the program, the pandal, the time, the residents, the food arrangement. In one hour the whole plan was made, everything was finalized. It was the download I had received the previous night, and after that day I did not think about the convention again.

Whenever I have a question, I receive the answer on the fifth. It is uncanny: a download of information in the night in clear words. This happens due to my connection with my guru, and due to the folding in of the sense organs, the jnanendriyas. My connection is taking me to that level where I can hear him.

These are normal things that happen to people. Since it has never happened before, they are surprised and think of them as special powers. They are not. It is just the maturity of the self. When you were a child, many things that the grownups did seemed incredible. When you grew up, you found that what they did was nothing special. It is just a matter of knowing. Is a card trick a magic trick or is it knowing how to do the trick with the card? It is not a magic trick but having the skill to play with cards.

As the pratyayas dissolve, the senses fold in and inner sensory perceptions or extrasensory perceptions develop. They are the natural expressions in life and not special powers. It is the inversion of the senses and their development in the inner dimension. This is aided by the processes of vijñānamaya kośha and ānandamaya kośha.



Physical and Spiritual Senses

28 October 2019

The senses are the medium which connect the causal with the material dimension. The senses are not only physical, they have a connection, a link with the causal dimension. These physical senses send information to the brain, the sensory cortex. From the sensory cortex, the information is converted or transformed into a *vayu*. That *vayu* ascends through *ida nadi*, goes into *manas* and creates an impression, a *pratyaya*. The aim of *pratyahara* is to dissolve the *pratyayas*.

The *pratyayas* are unseen, like the smell of incense. If you hold an incense stick close and sniff it, you can smell the fragrance, yet the smell is limited to the stick only. When the stick is burnt and the content becomes smoke, it loses the material identity. It becomes a *vayu* and pervades the whole atmosphere. You may not have smelt the incense stick, yet you will smell the incense when it is in the form of *vayu*. The same happens in the body. The material is converted into the subtle which is known as *vayu*, the gaseous form. ‘Gaseous’ is only an expression here, *vayu* is not gas in the sense that you understand gas. It is the transformation of the material into the subtle.

The *pratyayas* have to be dissolved. After the dissolution of *pratyayas*, the external, material senses cease functioning and fold inwards. This process is known as *indriya nigraha*. *Indriya* means senses. *Nigraha* is derived from the word

grahana. *Grahana* means to receive, and *nigrahana* means not to receive. Therefore, *indriya nigraha* means ‘do not receive the information from the senses’. Or, if an information comes, it should not become a pratyaya. It should not create another circle of cobweb in the mind. The purpose of *indriya nigraha* is to transform the expression and the quality of the senses, and that is the physical dimension.

In the mental dimension, control is known as *danti*. For pratyahara, *indriya nigraha* and *danti* are important practices. There is a belief that a wormhole bends time and space. If you take a sheet of paper, the journey from one end to the other can take ten thousand light years, but the wormhole folds the space, and the journey of ten thousand light years can be completed in one light year. The same happens when the senses fold inwards. The straight line of the senses from the material to the causal is bent, and the material comes closer to the causal; you are in the gravity-field of the causal.

When the connection is made with the causal, then the spiritual senses kick in. The material senses cease to function and the spiritual senses kick in. The spiritual senses use the same sense perceptions and sense organs; however, they are not limited to the material. Normally you hear sounds that are nearby, within the range of the ears. When the hearing is transformed, it becomes clairaudience. When vision is transformed, it becomes clairvoyance. In this manner, whatever you are expressing and experiencing through the senses in the outer dimension assumes a different dimension when it becomes internal, not limited by time or space.

Indriya nigraha and neuroplasticity

To attain pratyahara, *indriya nigraha* and *danti* are the first practices. At the physiological level, *indriya nigraha* creates the optimal condition for development of the brain and neuroplasticity; it restructures the brain.

The tongue is used for tasting and eating. Being part of the mouth it also aids speech, yet its primary function is

taste. That taste is physical. There are five different tastes in the mouth: sweet, sour, salty, bitter, astringent. The taste buds for each taste are at different places on the tongue.

Besides taste, the tongue has an important connection with the brain. The tongue is used by children until the age of two for learning. Whatever you give them goes straight into the mouth: a toy, a ball, a pebble, a piece of chocolate, a spoon, anything. They do not do it because they are hungry. Putting things in the mouth is reconstructing the brain. It is awakening and activating the brain centres with the help of the tongue.

There are many nerve endings at the front of the tongue. The tip of the tongue is connected to the primitive, instinctive brain or the brain stem. Stimulation of the tip of the tongue through an electrical charge can help manage multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's and many different degenerative conditions of the body. The nerve endings are controlling everything from there. The degenerative processes are managed if you are able to stimulate the tongue in the right manner. It is said that Saraswati sits at the tip of the tongue. Saraswati is learning or neuroplasticity of the brain. Saraswati gives you the wisdom.

The nose is connected through the olfactory nerves to the brain and relates to taste, sight and memory. There is a test of five smells. Research says that if you can identify all the five smells, then your brain is in perfect condition. Identifying only three or four is an indicator that degeneration of the brain has started. If you investigate again after three or four years, you will see the decline of the brain faculties. The test determines what is going to happen to you. The ability to smell is a prediction of brain function.

Each sensory organ has its own relevance. The sensory receptors in the skin send information through the nervous system to the brain. This stimulates neurotransmitters such as serotonin, oxytocin and other good chemicals. That is why touch induces happiness. When people touch there is a sense of contentment and happiness as the sensory receptors send

information and positive chemicals are then created in the brain.

The optic nerves receive about one hundred and twenty-five million signals and send them to the brain every second. The eyes are the biggest indriya, not in terms of size or quantity, but with regard to the amount of information they receive and send to the brain. The eyes are connected by optic nerves to the back of the brain and information received is sent to the logical brain, not the primitive brain. This input becomes the cause of cerebral and mental tension. Many times when your brain is unable to process the information, you begin to feel tired, exhausted and tense. You don't know why, yet the feeling of tiredness and lethargy is there.

It has been found that trataka stops the input of this large amount of information. It allows you to change the brainwaves and reconstruct the brain. Trataka has the ability to change the brainwaves. Normally you are working under the beta wave, which is a dynamic, active wave. Another wave is the alpha wave which is more relaxed. With trataka, when the input of those hundred and twenty-five million signals is stopped, concentration takes place, calmness comes, distractions reduce and brainwaves are altered. You come into alpha, move into delta and into theta, away from beta. Trataka induces relaxation, focus, concentration. It changes the chemicals in the brain. Researches have also shown that through trataka you can produce your own melatonin. Melatonin is normally produced only at night during the period of deep sleep, between two and four in the morning. Fifteen minutes of trataka practice every day will create a condition in which melatonin is produced, calming down the agitations of the brain and nerves.

Managing the senses

Indriya nigraha, sensory control, is the first practice of pratyahara. How do you control the senses? How do you control vision, smell, touch, hearing and taste? Nigraha is not control. It is a condition where you are allowing

everything to happen without being distracted by the sensory inputs. They are not creating any spike, any response or reaction in you. Can you maintain your physical and mental equanimity in heat? Is there any way by which you can be equipoised in heat? That will be one aspect of indriya nigraha. There can be many different ways in which you can understand how to manage the senses. The main point is that the senses have to be managed.

For pratyahara, all the inputs that are received normally are blocked; however, the pranic channels remain open. The senses fold into the brain due to this open pranic channel and the same sense goes to the spiritual dimension. To manage this while remaining in the physical and mental dimensions is indriya nigraha and danti.

Swami Sivananda says that perfection in external work represents control over the mind. Swami Satyananda often relates that if Swami Sivananda was writing something at his desk and somebody came, he would not just put the pen down and start talking. He would sort his papers, place the cap on the pen, arrange everything perfectly on his table, nothing would be out of alignment, and then talk. Sri Swamiji says it was an indication of danti, having the sensory inputs and the mind perfectly under control. It is a condition where no act is a dissipated act, every act is always a thoughtful act. Even placing the pen is a thoughtful act, not an unconscious act. The thoughtful act is known as danti.

This thoughtfulness comes when you are able to witness, observe and manage the responses of the indriyas or sensory impressions. The best way to achieve physical and mental control is to observe the response and remain free from the response. Think before you act. Don't just act. When you think before you act, there is an awareness of the right that can be done and the wrong that can be avoided. With this awareness, danti and indriya nigraha become possible, and then pratyahara begins.

The concept of pratyahara in raja yoga begins with relaxation and concentration. Pratyahara in hatha yoga

begins with observation of the sensory inputs and their management, so they do not create any spike or explosion in the mind, and the mind remains equipoised and balanced. This is aided by lifestyle.

Beyond manomaya kosha

The range of manomaya kosha is up to elimination of pratyayas and the management of manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara, or the sense-mind. After the sense-mind comes vijñanamaya kosha, the inner mind, not the sensory mind. The inner mind is composed of the subconscious, unconscious and superconscious, not the conscious. Conscious is what you are living; while swimming in the pool of the subconscious, unconscious and superconscious is vijñanamaya. Diving deep, touching the bottom and sitting down in meditation is anandamaya kosha. You can only sit there for about thirty seconds before your body again comes back up. To stay in anandamaya you need to develop some weight. If you become too light in your mind by only removing and not filling, it is difficult to stay down in anandamaya. You go down, touch the bottom, by the time you adjust, you are again floating. Therefore, one vritti has to be developed which creates weight.

You have to finish the five vrittis and you have to cultivate one vritti known as the *brahmi vritti*, the spiritual, positive state of mind. This vritti is connected to indu chakra, which has sixteen sattwic vrittis. Vrittis can be classified as interactive in the world and interactive in the spiritual dimension.

It is the traits of tamas and rajas that are interacting in the world. It is the traits of sattwa that are interacting in the internal world. Therefore, the traits of tamas and rajas have to be gradually dissipated and the traits of sattwa have to be elevated. When the traits of sattwa are elevated, those sixteen positive qualities that represent the brahmi nature, the cosmic nature, the cosmic qualities of a human being, come to the forefront. With the development of the sixteen natures, one begins to live the divine life, and that was the vision of our paramguru, Swami Sivananda.

Yoga from Moment to Moment

29 October 2019

During this Progressive Yoga Vidya Training, it has become clear that the experience of yoga is seen at four levels: yoga practice, yoga sadhana, yogic lifestyle, and yogic culture. This Progressive Training has been a move away from practice into sadhana. Now, during the course of the year, you have to move from sadhana to lifestyle, where sadhana becomes an integrated part of your routine, and that will be your achievement.

You will have to apply your mind on how to make yoga an integrated part of your routine. Remember that a little bit of yoga every hour is much more beneficial than one hour of yoga done once in the day. That is how you need to adjust your routine, depending on how much time you have and when you can apply yourself to one specific yoga activity.

The normal system is that when you wake up in the morning, you do the three mantras in bed. Then after freshening up, before breakfast, you do the asanas. After breakfast, if you have time, you can do your pranayama. All the yoga components do not have to be done together; you can break them up depending on how much time you want to spend on each activity. Even pranayama can be practised after breakfast. The physical practices are to be done before twelve noon and the mental practices after twelve noon. In the morning you are dynamic, the energies are high, therefore if you do all the physical practices in that state you

will generate vitality. In the afternoon when you are mentally exhausted, tired and fatigued, do the mental practices: the relaxation, the focusing, concentration and mantra. This will again revive you. In this manner, spread the practice of yoga throughout the day. Ten minutes, fifteen minutes, twenty minutes is good enough. Even five minutes. If you think of your routine in this manner, it will be more helpful.

The aim is to keep your yoga practice and yoga routine light and adjusted throughout the day, so that every couple of hours or every hour you are able to do one thing, even if it is one minute of pranayama. If you are a passenger in the car and someone else is driving, you can simply focus on your breath. Do the mantra *So Ham* for five minutes while you are in the carpool and that will change the quality of your mind and brain. Practise khechari mudra and neuroplasticity will take place naturally, even if you do it for five minutes while you are travelling, sitting in a bus or a train, reading a magazine, a book or the newspaper. Practise khechari mudra, breath awareness or mantra awareness for five minutes with the intention to make yoga a part of your daily routine. That will give more benefits than sixty or ninety minutes of an effortful class. The yogic practices will become effortless in the course of time and you will enter a yogic lifestyle. In this manner, during the year, perfect what you have learnt.

Know your place

Make yoga an integral part of lifestyle and not just use it as a practice to divert the attention from the stresses, tensions and problems of society for which yoga is being used right now. At the same time, always remember your place in yoga.

In education there are teachers at the first level, then lecturers, readers, professors, and finally there are scientists. It is a progression which also applies to yoga. People in society who live with their family, have their obligations, commitments and limitations, teach yoga and follow a syllabus. This is similar to the level of the teacher. They are

not interested in developing the syllabus but simply follow the syllabus as it is given to the school. Most yoga teachers fall in this category; they have a syllabus and they teach it in their centre or home.

The next level is the lecturer. They are those who can talk about and explain a particular topic. In our system, they can be compared to the acharyas who travel and lecture on asana, pranayama, yoga nidra, meditation, kirtan and bhajan. This group can speak on a subject, nevertheless they are not researchers or developers.

The readers make another level. Here the planning begins: 'How can I present this topic in the most simplified manner for the students to absorb.' Then come the professors, who contribute to the subject with their own thesis, research and understanding. They develop one topic of the subject.

The last group is that of researchers; they are continuously developing the whole subject. In yoga, the researchers in our tradition are Swami Sivananda, Swami Satyananda and Swami Niranjanananda. This is the scientist or researcher group.

We don't have the professor group yet, as everybody is too caught up. In the reader group, there are some who can think, plan and decide what is appropriate for people. This group has become part of the Academies; they think, plan, decide, regulate and create systems. The lecturer group are those who like to travel; they move around different continents and countries, and conduct programs.

Many times teachers think that they have become researchers and project themselves like that. It is only those who are egotistical, like to self-project and be recognized as somebody unique who take on a role beyond their capacity, and that is the death knell for yoga. Therefore I say, "Don't mess with yoga, just live it to the best of your ability." People look at you to be the example of yoga. They don't look at your classes or how you conduct your classes. They look at how you live your yoga, and whether you live it or not. That is what inspires them, not your class.

You have to think, 'Do I live what I teach, or do I simply teach without living it?' You have to see your own seriousness, commitment and effort. What is the use of teaching a philosophy from which you are totally disconnected and which you don't apply in your life? If you want to be a hypocritical person, that is your call. That is not the inspiration of the tradition or of yoga. If you miss that point, you have missed everything in spiritual life.

The effort has to be: 'How do I live my life in yoga and how can I express that in the little things that I do?' For that you have to change your idea that yoga is only a classroom practice; it is a practice for moment to moment living. That is the slogan of the second chapter of yoga. The slogan of the first chapter was 'yoga from door to door and shore to shore' and now the slogan is 'yoga from moment to moment'. If you keep that in mind, you will be able to go quite a distance on your journey in yoga.



Manahprasad: Message of Yoga

30 October 2019

This year has been an active and inspiring year as we have started the training of the second chapter. Until last year, we were experimenting and during the Munger Yoga Symposium things fell into place. Every course that has been conducted this year has been a unique experience for the teachers and participants. This year I have also realized that I discover many dimensions and areas which were not looked into before. My understanding and training is also developing along with yours. It has been a wonderful year and the Progressive Yoga Vidya Training has been the crowning glory of all the events of the year.

There are four meditations which you have practised here and they have to be practised before antar mouna and ajapa japa. Until now in your meditation, you were fighting with your stressors, thoughts, impressions, and trying to find peace, harmony and balance. You did not prepare the mental awareness necessary for meditation. You prepared the mind to observe thoughts, you did not prepare the mind to come to a positive state before you embark on the journey of meditation.

These four meditations bring a positive condition to the mind. 'All is one' is positivity of mind where distinctions and duality are dropped. 'All is Brahman' means we are all evolving, changing; we are not stuck at a point. If today you have a fight with someone, it does not mean that

lifelong you will be fighting with that person. If you carry the impression of the fight, you are not evolving, you are still caught in the negativity of the mind, you still carry those negative impressions which hold you back and do not allow you to progress. You have to move on from that. The meditation is 'All is Brahman', which means all are evolving, so the difference today will be gone tomorrow and the indifference today will also be gone tomorrow. There is always hope, clarity, acceptance and cultivation of an awareness which is positive. It allows you to become a better drashta during meditation and not an involved drashta who is going through the agony of pain, suffering, memories and impressions. Instead, you become a positive drashta, a positive witness with a positive attitude and mentality. When you move into meditation with this preparation, the journey is easier.

Therefore, these four meditations are important (See Appendix). Maintain these four meditations as a daily practice before you attempt any other practice of pratyahara, dharana or dhyana, so that you are in a receptive, positive frame of mind and you are not deterred by the negatives that raise their head from time to time.

You have also lived the 'month of happiness' here, yet it does not end here. You have eleven months, so try to make all of them into months of happiness. Every day is a day to be happy, and that is the first message of yoga: manahprasad. We wish you all the best, success and progress on this journey of yoga vidya.



PRACTICE: KAYA STHAIRYAM

Preparation: Sit upright and straight. Hands on the knees in jnana mudra or chin mudra. Gently close your eyes. With eyes closed, mentally observe the whole physical body. Become aware of the whole physical body from top of the head right down to the fingertips and toes. Observe mentally all the experiences of the body: tightness, tension, lightness, heaviness, heat, pressure, comfort, discomfort. Complete awareness of the whole physical body. Extend your awareness into all different parts of the body, and in one glimpse, in one thought, see the whole body mentally.

Body yantra: Imagine that on the floor there is a triangle drawn and you are seated on top of this triangle. One corner of the base of the triangle is the right knee and the other corner of the base is the left knee. The tip of the triangle is the coccyx bone, the lower tip of the spine. The knees and the tip of the spine form a triangle, the triangle is drawn on the floor, and your body is seated on top of it. Now see the seated body encased in a triangular pyramid. The three faces of the pyramid are the three triangles that come up from the legs to the crown of the head: from the front to the crown of the head, from the right side to the crown of the head, from the left side to the crown of the head. You are seated on top of a triangle and your body is encased in a triangular pyramid.

Awareness of stability: Become aware of the physical stability. Awareness of the physical stability. The body inside this triangular pyramid is absolutely still, motionless and solid. Feel the stability of the body. Feel the firmness of the body.

Breath along the spinal passage: Now become aware of your breath, the natural breath. See the natural breath. Feel the natural breath up along the spine. When you inhale, the breath comes up along the side edge of the pyramid, up along the spine from the bottom to the crown of the head, the tip of the pyramid. When you exhale the breath goes down from the tip of the pyramid to the base of the pyramid following the spinal path. Develop this awareness of breath moving up and down the spinal passage. Make the breath slow, long and deep. Each inhalation and each exhalation is slow, long and deep.

When you inhale mentally repeat the mantra *So* and when you exhale mentally repeat the mantra *Ham*. Follow the pathway of the spine. Follow the flow of breath. With each inhalation mentally say the mantra *So*, with each exhalation mentally say the mantra *Ham*. Awareness of the physical stability, motionlessness, stillness. Awareness of the breath, the movement of the breath and the mantra *So Ham*.

Externalization: Now stop this practice. Let the awareness of breath and mantra dissolve. Let the awareness and visualization of the triangular pyramid dissolve. Externalize the mind and become aware of the outer sounds. Become aware of all the outer sounds and sensations. Slowly and gently move the body, bring the hands together, rub the palms, then place the palms over the closed eyes and slowly open your eyes.

Hari Om Tat Sat.

Meditations

MEDITATION TO DEVELOP DRASHTA AWARENESS

The purpose of this meditation is to develop an understanding of what it means to be a drashta. Is it simply that a thought comes, an idea comes, a vision comes, and you keep looking at it? Is that all? No, being a drashta is much more than that, as you will discover in this practice.

Step 1: (Preparation): Sit down comfortably, body upright and straight, hands on the knees in jnana mudra or chin mudra, eyes gently closed. Become aware of the whole body. Awareness of the whole physical body. Make yourself comfortable. If there is anything tight, loosen it; if you are uncomfortable, adjust yourself and make yourself comfortable.

Step 2: For a few moments just watch the body, be the drashta of your body. As an observer, with detachment, identify the state of the body at present, identify the predominant experiences of the body – comfort, discomfort, restlessness, stillness, ease, unease, tension, relaxation, balance, imbalance, heaviness, lightness. Become aware of all the predominant experiences of the physical body. Identify them, watch them, observe them. Be a witness to every experience of the body.

Bring the body to a state of stillness and ease. With your willpower, direct your body to be steady and still. Experience the space, the silence within.

Step 3: Watch the state of your pranas, the state of the flow of energy in your body, the experience of energy in your body. Be the drashta of your pranic state. Do you experience the prana in your body as heat, as a flow, as tingling? Is there more prana in one area and less in another? Become the drashta of your pranamaya experience. With the use of the will, make the pranas balanced. Feel a homogeneous flow, a smooth river of prana in the whole body, from head to toes.

Step 4: From the pranas, take the awareness to your mind and become the drashta of your mind. Observe the state of your mind. What is the predominant state of your mind at the present moment? What was the predominant state of your mind during the day today? Identify the state the mind was in for the majority of time, whether it was restless, one-pointed, tense, relaxed, drowsy, expectant, confused, irritable, clear, happy, balanced, positive, or something else.

Step 5: In this state of relaxed one-pointedness, observe the thoughts passing through your mind. You may think that there are no thoughts, or that the only thought is 'I am doing the practice', but look deeper. See the underground thoughts, the background thoughts, the thoughts that are likely to come to you when you do your japa, your meditation, or sit quietly. Let these thoughts come to the surface, and see what they are. They may relate to a person, a situation, an experience. 'My back hurts' can be a thought, 'I met such and such person' another thought, 'I liked the sabzi, vegetable, at lunch' another thought, 'I like that person', 'I dislike that person', 'I could improve that situation'. Whatever the thoughts are, just watch.

Step 6: Pick up one thought that has rattled you, that created a negative state in you. It may relate to something that happened this morning, yesterday, last week, last month, during the year – but it is a thought that is creating disharmony in you. Identify which of the six traits this thought has triggered. Is it desire? Is it anger? Is it

delusion or attachment? Is it arrogance? Is it greed? Is it envy? Which of the six is playing in your mind? With detachment, without feeling guilty, and with total honesty, identify the trait – knowing that you are undertaking this process to be free of that trait.

Now watch the associated thoughts that come up due to this thought. Watch how the mind exaggerates a thought and spins it off into many forms. You are familiar with this process; you do it every day. Bring it into your conscious awareness. Be aware of how one negative thought multiplies into many negative thoughts. Use your discrimination to be aware of this exaggeration. Use your awareness to be aware of this mental exaggeration.

Also watch if any other influence comes in to add to that thought. Maybe someone said something, maybe you read something, maybe negative thought waves in the air added and enhanced your experience. See if you can identify these influences and observe them. See if you can separate your experience from the influence. Go deeper, explore further, go deeper into yourself, into your mind, into your psyche. Find what experiences, ideas, samskaras, impressions are stored in you that relate to these thoughts. Bring them up and watch them dispassionately.

In that deeper mind, create the experience of positivity and sattwa. Use the power of will, the sankalpa shakti, to create this positive experience. It may be in the form of a specific quality that you feel you need to counter the negative state, such as understanding, compassion, kindness, tolerance, respect, inclusiveness, humility – or it may be a general experience of positivity in the form of luminosity. Put aside any negativity or tamas from the mind and connect with a harmonious, happy and positive state.

Allow the experience of this positivity to become strong, feel it expand until it has erased all the negative impressions and thoughts that were playing in your mind. Experience

the surge of positivity. And in that positivity, allow yourself to be balanced, tranquil, calm, silent and still.

Step 7: Now let go of this experience, this inner awareness, and become aware of the outer environment. Bring your awareness to the eyebrow centre and visualize the image of a candle flame. Fix your attention on the image of the flame, breathe in deeply and chant the mantra *Om* three times.

Hari Om Tat Sat.

SWAN MEDITATION

This practice is to be done after analyzing your strengths and weaknesses. Write down all your strengths in one column, and weaknesses in another. Make sure that the number of strengths is equal to or greater than the number of weaknesses.

Step 1: Sit in a comfortable posture, body upright and straight, hands on the knees in jnana mudra or chin mudra. Gently close your eyes and lips. In this posture, mentally become aware of the whole body, observe the whole body internally. Become aware of the whole body from the top of the head right down to the toes. Acknowledge the condition, the state of your physical body. If you come across any tension, discomfort or tightness, adjust yourself and make yourself comfortable. Once you have adjusted your body, once you have adjusted your posture, become still and bring your awareness to chidakasha.

Step 2: In chidakasha, the space in front of the closed eyes, the space of chitta, observe the movement, the arrival and departure of colours, streaks of light, shapes, figures, movements. Whatever you can see happening in chidakasha, observe it. As you observe chidakasha, mentally see the emergence of a jyoti, a flame, in the centre of chidakasha, a flame that appears out of nowhere. It emerges from the dark shadows and takes a luminous form. Move that luminous form to the centre, to the middle of the chidakasha space.

Step 3: While maintaining the awareness of the jyoti in chidakasha, think of three qualities or strengths that you are able to see in yourself. Think of three constructive, creative, positive qualities that you express in your day-to-day life, not in reserve, but in use all the time. Not qualities that you want to have, but ones that you have. Something that is an expression of the positive, harmonious, kind and compassionate you. Identify the three qualities. From the list of strengths that you wrote down earlier, pick three with

which you identify now. These should be three strengths that you are able to use on a day-to-day basis, expressing the positive, the harmonious and the creative in you. Now out of the three, pick the one which you consider to be the weakest of the three. Out of the three which you selected, identify the one which you consider to be weakest and which can be strengthened and cultivated to its full potential.

Step 4: Look at the next column of weaknesses, shortcomings and limitations. Identify three. Be objective and clear about these. Identify the three weaknesses which are the medium for you to express the negative, something you experience and live on a day-to-day basis. Out of the three which you have identified, pick the one which is the strongest. Pick the strongest weakness and take a sankalpa to work with it for one month in order to overcome it.

Step 5: This was in relation to yourself. Now, think of a person with whom you interact: a friend, a companion, an associate, a wellwisher. Think of a person. Look at the three strengths of that other person from your perspective. What could those three strengths be in the other person? Once you have identified the three qualities or strengths in the other person, whether associate, friend, partner or family member, whoever it may be, identify the one which is the strongest quality, the best quality.

Step 6: Just as you thought of the other person's qualities and strengths, think of three weaknesses in that person. Think of three shortcomings, limitations and weaknesses in the other person in whom you just saw the three good qualities. Out of the three, pick one. Identify one that you feel is hampering the process of improving your connection, relationship, understanding and happiness. Out of the three shortcomings, pick one, and make a sankalpa to help the person overcome that weakness.

Step 7: You have been looking at yourself, your weaknesses and strengths. Then you have been looking at a person with whom you interact on a regular basis, considering

that person's strengths and weaknesses. You have taken a sankalpa to cultivate positivity and to overcome the limitation which you have identified in yourself. You have also taken a sankalpa to help the other person overcome a limitation, difficulty or problem. Finally, take a sankalpa to bring strength, life, joy and fulfilment in your own life and in the life of the other being.

Step 8: Now stop this practice and externalize the mind. Externalize the awareness. Become aware of the external environment. Breathe in deeply and chant the mantra *Om* three times.

Hari Om Tat Sat.

MEDITATION TO DEVELOP POSITIVITY

Happiness is not the quality of the world; it is the quality of the mind.

—*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*

ALL IS GOOD

Step 1 (Preparation): Sit down comfortably, body upright and straight, hands on the knees in jnana mudra or chin mudra, eyes gently closed. Become aware of the whole body. Awareness of the whole physical body. Make yourself comfortable. If there is anything tight, loosen it; if you are uncomfortable, adjust yourself and make yourself comfortable.

Step 2: For a few moments just watch the body, be the drashta of your body. As an observer, with detachment, identify the state of the body at present, identify the predominant experiences of the body – comfort, discomfort, restlessness, stillness, ease, unease, tension, relaxation, balance, imbalance, heaviness, lightness. Become aware of all the predominant experiences of the physical body. Identify them, watch them, observe them. Be a witness to every experience of the body.

Step 3: Now begin the practice of reviewing the day. Go step by step through the day, recreating certain situations, encounters that appear in front of your closed eyes. Out of all those moments, choose one which was disturbing, unsettling or irritating. A moment which caused you annoyance, pain or hurt. Identify your feelings and the cause. Identify the reason behind your feelings – is it an opinion, a critical, judgemental attitude? Identify your likes and dislikes, your raga-dwesha, your attraction and rejection of something. Be honest and accept your reaction and feeling fully. Accept your irritation, your anger, your pain and disappointment.

Step 4: Looking at the same situation, make an effort to see something positive in it. Besides the negative feeling, is there any aspect to the situation that is positive? Any insight, understanding, anything that may help you to see not only the dark side but may give you a glimpse of light. Maybe in the external circumstance there were positive, even beautiful and uplifting elements. Look at the other person or the other people who were part of the encounter – not everything is negative about them. See and identify the positive side and elements. Look at yourself, were there feelings other than those of pain and frustration? Were there positive feelings which you can identify now?

Step 5: Look at the whole situation again. Balance the good and the bad, the negative and the positive. Be honest. Even if the negative and hurtful still weighs heavier, accept also the good. Nothing is only bad, dark and negative, if you want to you can see light and the ray of hope everywhere.

Step 6: Now say to yourself 'All is good'. Let this be your final conclusion: whatever happened, whatever you may have felt in regard to the situation, the other people and yourself, whatever reaction you may have had – it is all good. Feel it from the bottom of your heart. Accept the goodness with a sense of relief that, yes, the heaviness has gone. Accept with a smile, 'All is good'.

Step 7: Externalize. Breathe in deeply and chant the mantra *Om* three times.

Hari Om Tat Sat.

ALL IS ONE

Step 1 (Preparation): Sit down comfortably, body upright and straight, hands on the knees in jnana mudra or chin mudra, eyes gently closed. Become aware of the whole body. Awareness of the whole physical body. Make yourself comfortable. If there is anything tight, loosen it; if you are uncomfortable, adjust yourself and make yourself comfortable.

Step 2: For a few moments just watch the body, be the drashta of your body. As an observer, with detachment, identify the state of the body at present, identify the predominant experiences of the body – comfort, discomfort, restlessness, stillness, ease, unease, tension, relaxation, balance, imbalance, heaviness, lightness. Become aware of all the predominant experiences of the physical body. Identify them, watch them, observe them. Be a witness to every experience of the body.

Step 3: Now begin the practice of reviewing the day. Go step by step through the day, revisit a situation, an encounter that caused strife, conflict or disharmony between you and someone else. Identify your feelings of separation, irritation or anger. What were the reasons behind the tension and resentment? Look at the cause, the other person and yourself. Be honest.

Step 4: Looking at the same situation, make an effort to bridge the distance. Replace differences with connection. Make an effort to find a meeting point between you and the other person. Try to list five points you have in common and five points where there is divergence of opinion and expression. What could possibly unite you? What do you have in common? Ensure that on the scale the common elements outweigh the differences. See that the differences are superficial, temporary and no reason to suffer any discord. Examine the situation, the other person and yourself with the strong motivation to create harmony and express goodwill.

Step 5: Now remember a situation where you have changed your opinion. You have become friends with a person you used to dislike, avoid or quarrel with. Remember a person who was a good friend and now you are estranged from or disinterested in. Perhaps you have developed a dislike for the person whose company you used to cherish. Be aware of the short-lived nature of likes and dislikes.

Step 6: Return to the initial situation of disagreement. Look at the whole situation and the other person again. Now say to yourself 'All is one'. Accept the underlying thread which connects you with every living being. This thread is eternal. It is above and beyond the pettiness of personal whims and fleeting identification. Know that you can disconnect from the lower sentiments and become one with higher sentiments of acceptance, friendliness and unity among all. Cherish the feeling of lightness and positivity. Accept with a smile that 'All is one'.

Step 7: Continue, adding the affirmation, 'All is good'. Know that the unpleasant situation served its purpose. If you are able to overcome strife to find balance and harmony, then you can give meaning to the initial conflict. Now truly 'All is good' for there is no longer any separation. You are aware of the thread connecting you with everything.

Step 8: Continue. Accept that this thread is sacred, it is the most sacred part of your existence. It is the most intimate part, it is you. Say to yourself, 'All is sacred' and feel the presence of this thread in whatever way as light, colours, sound, any form you feel drawn to.

Step 9: Feel the union between you and your immediate environment. Slowly expand the environment into the distance and feel connected with everything you encounter. Give a name to this connection, the unifying force and field you are a part of. You may call it the spirit, the Self, atman or soul, consciousness, bliss or love; you may call it God. Repeat to yourself, 'All is God (Brahman)'. Intensify the feeling of oneness. Know that you can have this feeling

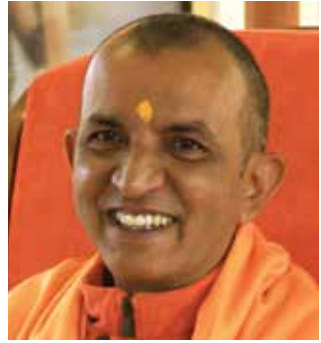
at any time in any circumstance. Feel peace within you and emanating from you.

Step 10: Externalize. Breathe in deeply and chant the mantra *Om* three times.

Hari Om Tat Sat.



Swami Niranjanananda was born in Rajnandgaon (Chhattisgarh) in 1960. Guided from birth by his guru, Swami Satyananda Saraswati, he came to live at the Bihar School of Yoga in Munger at the age of four where he received training in yogic and spiritual sciences through yoga nidra. In 1971 he was initiated into Dashnami sannyasa, and for twelve years he lived overseas, acquiring an understanding of different cultures and helping further his guru's mission to spread yoga 'from door to door and shore to shore'.



He returned to India in 1983 to guide the activities of Bihar School of Yoga, Sivananda Math and Yoga Research Foundation at Ganga Darshan. In 1990 he was initiated as a paramahansa sannyasin and in 1993 anointed spiritual preceptor in succession to Swami Satyananda Saraswati. He established Bihar Yoga Bharati, the first university of yoga, in 1994, Yoga Publications Trust in 2000, and a children's yoga movement, Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal, in 1995. He travelled extensively to guide seekers around the world until 2009, when he received the command to commence a new phase of sannyasa life.

In 2010, he established Sannyasa Peeth, to enable seekers to experience the spiritual and cultural traditions of India in their essence. The year marked his entry into a phase of higher sadhana and tirtha yatra.

In 2013, he conducted the World Yoga Convention in Munger to celebrate the golden jubilee of the Bihar School of Yoga, and launched a new era of yogic renaissance. In 2013 he also commenced the arduous panchagni sadhana. In 2014, he embarked on a Bharat Yatra, an all-India tour, transmitting the gift of yoga to all. Since then, Swami Niranjan has been working to develop the next stage of yogic training and teaching, and has initiated several programs to help people deepen their experience of yoga and imbibe the traditional wisdom. Simultaneously, he has revived various ancient knowledge systems and practices of India.

In 2017, he received the Padma Bhushan, the third highest civilian award given by the Government of India, for the outstanding work in the field of yoga.

Author of many classic books on yoga and other spiritual streams, Swami Niranjan is a magnetic source of wisdom on all aspects of yogic philosophy, practice and lifestyle. He ably combines tradition with modernity as he continues to work for his guru's mission.



The Progressive Yoga Vidya Training held at Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth, Munger, is a hallmark training of the second chapter of yoga initiated by Swami Niranjanananda. For one month in the year, select participants who are serious, sincere and committed to the yogic journey are taken through a process of learning and unlearning. The aim being to create a state of awareness where one is able to live yoga vidya from moment to moment and experience a qualitative change in one's whole life rather than merely practise yoga.

This book presents the satsangs given by Swamiji during the training in 2019. He takes us through progressive levels of understanding of the yogic aims for the body, prana and mind, which allow us to discover the luminosity of the spirit. The wisdom of the ancient yogis once again comes alive in Swamiji's words as he combines scriptural knowledge with experiential knowingness.

