BIHAR YOGA®

Progressive Yoga Vidya Training

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

Progressive Yoga Vidya Training

With kind regards, ॐ and prem

Swami Niranjan

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Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

This book is based on the classes, study sessions, satsangs and discourses given by Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati during the program of Progressive Yoga Vidya Training for Satyananda Yoga Teachers held from 1st October to 30th October 2015 at Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth, Bihar School of Yoga, Munger.



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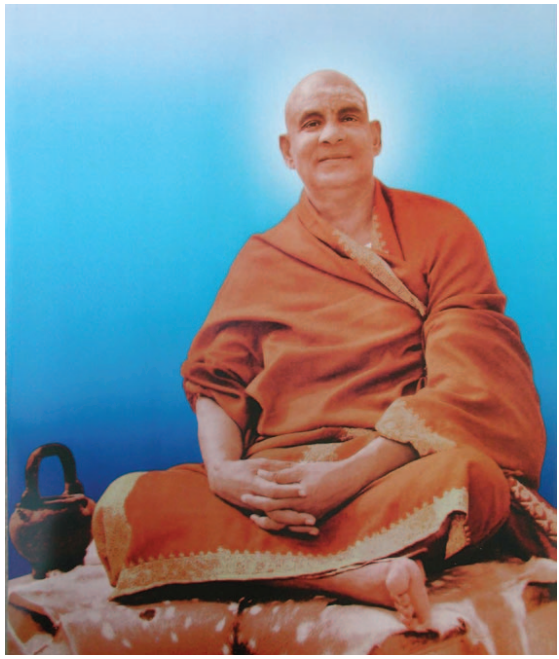
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Dedication

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

Preface

The first Progressive Yoga Vidya Training for Satyananda Yoga Teachers conducted by Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati, opened the door to a new yogic vista for all participants. It truly marked the beginning of the next chapter of yoga. The participants, 58 from 21 countries, were those who have been practising and teaching yoga for many years, even decades. Yet, this one month proved to be an eye-opener. It bestowed the vision, the experience and the understanding of the immense possibility that yoga holds to reach into the muscles that are rarely used – the physical, the mental, the pranic, the psychic, the spiritual.

The extraordinary aspect of the training was that Swamiji used the simplest of practices, the ones that all yoga practitioners are familiar with, yet he revealed their depth and profundity. He truly showed how yoga can be lived – through a posture, through the breath, through realigning the energy, through an attitude, an awareness, an understanding, an outlook.

The training was an opportunity to reconnect with the yogic tradition and the teachings, the *parampara* and the *vidya*, and go back to the source to replenish oneself. At a time in history when yoga faces the danger of becoming a fad and a means of commerce, Swamiji carried everyone back to the centre to taste the sap and the soul of yoga.

The formal sessions included asana and pranayama classes in the morning and study and satsang sessions in the afternoon. Most classes were conducted by Swamiji himself, and in his absence by sannyasins of Ganga Darshan who have been training under him. During the study sessions, the books *Yoga Chakra 1* and *Yoga Chakra 2* (Yoga Publications Trust, 2015), which elucidate the history and purpose of yoga, and the yogic yamas and niyamas of happiness, forgiveness, japa and namaskara, were read. Swamiji gave satsangs on the topics that the books brought up. In addition, a one-week program of Tattwa Shuddhi was conducted, which served as a prelude to a new practice introduced by Swamiji: Tattwa Shuddhi Part 2.

The participants were also given the opportunity to conduct classes themselves in the post-lunch sessions of yoga nidra and concentration, and feedback was given to them on their delivery and content by senior sannyasins. Shatkarma practices were done on the weekends, when the whole ashram came together in a spirit of joyful enthusiasm to cleanse themselves.

In this book Swamiji's classes and satsangs during the course are presented in the sequence in which he gave them. While the step-by-step directions specific to the practices have not been included, some of the instructions that allowed the deepening of awareness in the practices are indicated. These small details changed the class experience from ordinary to extraordinary. For example, after a sequence of practices or a particular practice when the body and breath had been taken to a certain limit, Swamiji would lead the participants into the practice of shavasana, with varied degrees of relaxation and awareness. Not only did this allow the body and mind to become harmonized and at ease post-practice, but it also led one to become aware of the effects of the practice at multiple levels, and to approach the next practice with enthusiasm and energy. To clarify this approach of balance between exertion and relaxation, the points where shavasana was introduced are indicated.

Bear in mind though that the details of the practices that have not been mentioned, such as steps, stages, benefits, contra-indications, etc., must be referenced from *Asana Pranayama Mudra Bandha*.

The book does not include Swamiji's introduction to Tattwa Shuddhi 2, as we still await his revelation of the complete practice. Impressions of some of the participants of the course are featured, indicative of the impact of the training.

Before you begin to turn the pages, however, it must be kept in mind that this is not a book of self-practice, but of self-awareness, self-understanding and self-wisdom. It is not meant for learning the practices, but for aligning oneself with the classical yogic tradition where teaching and learning go beyond the spoken word and lead one to explore one's own potential. Only if shallow waters no longer contain you and you are ready to plunge into the depths to recalibrate your practice, your thinking, your lifestyle, the champion diver's wisdom will reach into you.

Of course a book cannot do justice to what was received in the presence of a master; nevertheless, in reproducing the class sequences and the satsangs it is hoped that you will be inspired to become part of the new chapter of yoga that is being written, and rededicate yourself to the path with greater sincerity, greater seriousness and greater commitment.

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Introduction: The Next Chapter of Yoga

The program of Progressive Yoga Vidya Training has a specific purpose and intent. To understand that, you have to understand what has happened in the field of yoga in the last fifty years and what needs to be the focus in the coming decades.

Let us go back to 2013, the year Bihar School of Yoga celebrated its golden jubilee. To commemorate the occasion, the World Yoga Convention was held in Munger, in which over 50,000 yoga practitioners, teachers and stalwarts participated, in person and through the internet. At that time it became clear that the first chapter of yoga had closed, the chapter of yoga propagation. This was announced during the Convention: "The first chapter of yoga propagation is over; yoga teachers, yoga centres and yoga practitioners can be found everywhere today. Now the second chapter begins, which is focused on consolidation of yoga and better application of yoga, with sincerity, seriousness and commitment." On this note, the World Yoga Convention ended.

Assessing the second chapter

I have had one-and-a-half years since then to think about what the next chapter should contain. Thoughts came for consolidating the subject of yoga, deepening our understanding and practice, understanding our experiences

and using them as stepping stones to move to other levels. Thoughts came on how to have better access to different areas of our life through yoga. However, behind all these thoughts was one single question: how did our masters and the ancient sages perceive, practise, present and teach yoga?

Why did Swami Sivananda start the work on yoga? In 1925, he began to methodically experiment with yoga practices in Rishikesh after taking initiation into sannyasa. Sannyasa is traditionally identified with the culture, spirituality and vedic traditions of India. Sannyasa has cultural and spiritual roots, and also religious affiliations. Swami Sivananda lived this traditional sannyasa life. He was a sannyasi of the Shankaracharya order, following Advaita Vedanta, a monistic philosophy; however, he felt that this vedantic path was not compatible with modern needs. It was all right for him as a sannyasin to practise and live it, but it did not have the answers to the problems of ordinary people who would flock to him for guidance and relief from suffering. He has stated this: "If somebody suffering from a respiratory disorder comes to me and I tell him, 'You are not this body, you are not this mind, you are not the pain and the suffering, you are the Immortal Self', will that person be helped? No."

He concluded that such a philosophy is applicable for sannyasins but not for people in society who are struggling and suffering, facing illnesses, conflicts and stresses. He then started looking into yoga, the ancient form of sannyasins' exercise and meditation. Being a medical doctor, he realized the physiological and psychological benefits of yoga and thus, along with Vedanta for sannyasins and renunciates, he began to teach yoga to householders and other people of society. Over a period of time, yoga became more popular than the Vedanta lectures at the Rishikesh ashram!

Swami Sivananda then instructed his disciples to make yoga their vocation, not Vedanta. Thus disciples of Swami Sivananda, such as Swami Satchidananda, Swami Vishnudevananda, Swami Chidananda, Swami Satyananda,

Swami Venkateshananda, Swami Sahajananda and many others, became yoga propagators, as that was the mandate given by their guru. They set aside their personal sannyasa aspirations and focused on propagating yoga. When they went out to teach, they did not promulgate any other thoughts of spirituality or religious belief; they only inspired people to take up yoga. In this way, Swami Sivananda initiated people in sannyasa but trained them in yoga, not in sannyasa. The same pattern was followed by his disciples who initiated aspirants into sannyasa but focused them on understanding, perfecting and realizing yoga.

Swami Satyananda also received a specific direction from Swami Sivananda: to spread the message of yoga from door to door and shore to shore. As Swami Satyananda himself says, he had no understanding or experience in yoga. He said to Swami Sivananda, "I don't know any yoga and you are telling me to teach yoga. How do I do that?" Swami Sivananda gave him shaktipat and then Swami Satyananda left Sivananda Ashram. For nine years, he simply wandered, without seeking help from anyone he knew in Rishikesh. If you are given an instruction by your guru to go and do something like this, you will approach all the people you know and ask for help. What happens when you do that? The original *sangha*, the original group, is dissected into smaller groups, ten people are helping you, ten people are helping someone else, each going on their own ambitious path. Swami Satyananda realized this, therefore he did not encroach on his guru's area and work. He decided to propagate yoga to people who were not connected with his guru. He cultivated strangers, not those who were already on the path.

With this in mind, for nine years he wandered through the subcontinent, trying to assess the needs of people and society, and eventually established the Bihar School of Yoga in 1963. That's when he started teaching yoga and training yoga teachers. To begin with, he did not train people who live in society, the civilians, to take up yoga as a profession.

He said the first wave of yoga teachers to go out should consist of those who are committed, dedicated and devoted to propagate yoga. Therefore he trained sannyasins as yoga teachers, who had no other concern, either personal or economic, who could dedicate and devote their time to spread the knowledge of yoga. Thus the trend of sannyasins as yoga teachers started on a large scale at BSY. Everyone who was initiated into sannyasa, whether karma or even poorna, was told to focus on yoga only. That is how Sri Swamiji developed what today is called 'yoga sannyasa': sannyasins devoted to the cause of yoga, free from affiliation, dogma, belief, philosophical or religious bindings. Through sannyasins other teachers were groomed and prepared. In this way the merger of yoga and sannyasa took place. Even today, for every sannyasin in Munger the focus is yoga, not the sannyasa way of life.

When the work of yoga propagation started, Swami Satyananda also began to investigate yoga. While other propagators limited themselves to asana and maybe pranayama and some vedantic meditations, Swami Satyananda researched into other aspects of yoga such as pratyahara, pranayama, dharana, dhyana, swara, kriya, kundalini, chakras. Therefore his contribution to yoga is significant, and even today the contribution of BSY remains unparalleled.

As these trends developed, yoga became a big movement. At the same time, it also got diluted. If five people play the game of Chinese whispers, by the time the fifth person says the sentence whispered initially, it is totally different. Similarly, Swami Satyananda trained us in yoga, we trained other people, then they trained other people, and then they trained the next group; in this way many generations of yoga teachers have emerged. They all call themselves Satyananda Yoga teachers without any connection to the founding ideas of the yogic tradition.

Since 2014, I have been going on *yoga yatras* throughout India. I travelled through different cities, conducting four-

day programs at each place. During these yatras I was observing the trends of yoga that exist in society now and trying to assess the actual needs for yoga in society. The interest that I saw was massive; our programs had people over-spilling the demarcated area everywhere. It made me wonder why there was such a great interest in yoga all of a sudden.

Talking to different people who had come to these programs, the one common statement I heard was that they had come to a point of stagnation, a block, in their yoga practice. They said, "We have done this yoga, that yoga, we have done hatha yoga, asana, pranayama, we have experimented with other yogas, but we are at a standstill and there is no further growth or development." When I questioned what kind of yoga they practised, 90 percent said they practised the physical yoga, hatha yoga. The general trend in society is teaching and practising hatha yoga and labelling it as yoga. There is no deepening of the yoga experience, as it is limited to the physical experience, and the spiritual aspect of yoga is not practised. This led to new ideas on how to explain yogic precepts in a manner that people can understand yet go deeper into the yogic experience. With this in mind, the classes were fine-tuned and people did feel a deeper aspect of yoga than what they were used to or exposed to.

After concluding the yoga yatras, effort and time was put into thinking and planning what to do. How can yoga cater to the needs of people through the tools available? What can be the next stage in yoga training and teaching? Deepening the experience in yoga became the prominent idea.

In 2015, I was clear on the next chapter of yoga. The whole thing became clear after I completed the panchagni sadhana. It was as if the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle fell into place in relation to the development of yoga. I formulated a revised yoga syllabus that would be taught at Yogapeeth, keeping in mind the future aspirations of people and also not losing the aim of yoga. We are here to develop

the subject of yoga and for that, we have to look into the scriptures and the traditions, into the lifestyle, the different aspects of tapasyas and sadhanas practised by yogis and for yogis in the past.

Both aspects have to be maintained: the investigative or experimental and the teaching or propagative. The year 2015 revealed a balance between the two. Many other thoughts consolidated regarding the direction of yoga, and a sequence to understand, practise and experience yoga was developed.

The new programs

Different yoga programs were introduced at Ganga Darshan as stepping stones to come into the new chapter of yoga, even while the normal courses continued regularly. These courses and programs are setting a standard of understanding the practices and principles of yoga from the perspective of the original intentions of yoga.

Hearing is different from listening. You may hear but you may not listen. Listening and hearing are two different activities, and understanding the heard is yet another activity. Hearing, listening and understanding are three different activities conducted through the medium of the same sense organ. Ninety percent of the time people hear but they don't listen. Even when you listen, you need to then absorb and understand the idea, the thought, the connection between the sentences. Understanding is a process of connecting with and realizing the knowledge, *vidya*. When the individual connects with and realizes the vidya, he is able to understand it.

The special programs at Yogapeeth included the first Yoga Instructors Course. It laid the foundation of a new method of training so that people can imbibe and experience more of the practice, the theory and the benefits of yoga. It was a ground-breaking and successful Yoga Instructors Course. The idea is that before becoming a yoga teacher, you first train into being a yoga instructor.

Instructors should know the basic foundations of yoga. They should be able to impart that knowledge and understanding. Everything will evolve from this foundational training. The month-long Yoga Instructors Course was a unique course. By the end of it, the students said that they had begun to grasp the purpose, the meaning and the original intention of yoga. The understanding of yoga teaching changed.

Another course was the Adhyatma Samskara Sadhana, a sadhana to develop spiritual samskaras. It was a program that led everyone to look at themselves, to fine-tune certain aspects of the mind, attitude and behaviour, and allow the cultivation of positive and constructive spiritual samskaras. It was a nine-day course and the subject dealt with became a part of the series of informative literature on yoga known as *Yoga Chakra*, or 'Wheel of Yoga'.

The first Yoga Chakra series was conducted in 2014; that was to understand yoga historically and to understand Swami Satyananda's vision of yoga. People say they are connected to Satyananda Yoga and that they teach Satyananda Yoga, but what do they know of Satyananda Yoga? Asana, pranayama, mudra, bandha, shatkarma, a little bit of theory on karma yoga, bhakti yoga, some practices of raja yoga, but beyond that, what does a Satyananda Yoga teacher know? They don't even know the progression of yoga as conceived by Swami Satyananda. They don't even know the aim or the sequence of yoga as devised, experienced, seen and propagated by Swami Satyananda. Their only connection with him is through his satsangs or lectures that are published or available on DVDs and CDs. However, what was the vision of yoga that he had? How does one yoga progress and evolve into another yoga and where does it begin and end? What was the purpose of yoga when it was originally propagated? Is it what we think and speculate about, self-realization, or was there a different reason for yoga to develop?

These questions were addressed in the Yoga Chakra seminars. They presented a different picture of yoga altogether. Rather than self-realization, the purpose of yoga

was seen from the perspective of the original intention of the yogis and rishis who practised and propagated yoga.

If the knowledge of yoga is being imparted, then the purpose is to empower you to become responsible for your own efforts, sadhanas, successes and failures, and make the effort to rise up. Personal responsibility is the outcome of receiving knowledge and becoming dependent is the outcome of knowledge being withheld. The purpose of imparting knowledge is to make one take personal responsibility, not to make one dependent. That is how it should be, however, it is seen that today, in spiritual life, people tend to become dependent on guru's instructions, and that also for convenience, not with any real intention of believing or performing. That defeats the whole purpose of teaching.

If you cannot maintain your personal responsibility, self-awareness, and clarity of intention and thoughts, then you should strive for wisdom and knowledge. Knowledge brings you to that level of competence and understanding where you can be personally responsible for yourself. It is ignorance that leads to dependence. Self-empowerment and personal responsibility is the aspect of sadhana that you have to know and understand. Sadhana allows you to cultivate the sense of 'I am responsible and accountable for my actions and achievements'. The pool of yogic knowledge is immense; people are only tapping the surface at present, but in the course of time this effort will develop into something sustaining and creative.

Then the idea for this Progressive Yoga Vidya Training for Satyananda Yoga Teachers came about, for the presently existing yoga teachers to deepen their own experience and skills in yoga training. I find that yoga teachers are not teaching according to the style of Swami Satyananda. They are inventing their own methods and modifying the original intention. Therefore this training is for going back to the original teachings which the first generation of yoga teachers were exposed to. It is not meant to be an earth-shattering

experience, it uses the same thoughts that we know but puts them together skilfully, making sure that all the pieces of the jigsaw puzzle fit into each other, so one can see the complete picture.

Thus this year we have introduced four new programs: Yoga Chakra, Adhyatma Samskara Sadhana, Yoga Instructors Course and Progressive Yoga Vidya Training. They have all been path-making events that have revealed new aspects of yoga and a new, deeper understanding. By developing all this and consolidating the thoughts put forward by Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda, a picture has emerged that shows the progression of yoga in relation to human life and its creative expression.

From 2016 there is a complete change in the training programs at Yogapeeth, to develop a better understanding of yoga and yoga practices. Along with the above four, there will be specifically designed courses on hatha yoga, raja yoga and kriya yoga, besides yoga capsules for management of different conditions of body and mind. These courses reflect the new beginning in the second chapter for the Bihar School of Yoga, and will be further developed over a period of time into specialized training programs.

This is what we have been working on since the Convention in 2013 and it has come to a beautiful flowering. To have eight new programs in just two years is an achievement. I will continue to contribute to all these yoga courses, as that was the last mandate given to me by my guru: "You can leave BSY but you cannot leave yoga; you have to continue to develop yoga." Therefore, Yogapeeth will become the medium through which that yoga teaching will be developed.

International recognition of yoga

While all these yogic programs were being developed, another interesting event took place in the global scene of yoga: the celebration of the International Day of Yoga. Suddenly yoga came into the forefront and people noticed the wide impact it has on human society.

Some interesting data has been published: "Twenty-seven billion dollars are spent on yoga products annually in the US. Approximately one in sixteen Americans currently practises yoga. If the rate of growth continues, every American will be practising yoga by the year 2032. There has been an eighty-seven percent increase on yoga products spending over the last five years. There has been a thirty percent increase in yoga participation in America from 2008 to 2012. There were twenty and a half million practitioners in the US in 2012. Compared to other forms of indoor recreation, yoga towers over the competition and it is the only such activity showing steady growth. Thousands of studios and nutritional companies have reaped the benefits of this twenty-seven-billion-dollar industry." These are substantial statistics, and they only pertain to the US. If you consider the rest of the world the figures will be even more astounding.

This prominence of yoga globally has generated two important phenomena. First, there is a rapid emergence and proliferation of different types and styles of yoga. At present, there are more than seventy-five registered yoga brand names in the world, including the likes of doga (dog yoga), karaoke yoga, hillibilly yoga, aerial yoga, and these fads of yoga are based on asanas, used randomly, without any traditional or classical basis or understanding. Second, there is an unprecedented demand for yoga teachers, which has resulted in short-cut courses that are preparing yoga teachers in a week – even a month's training is too long.

There is a third phenomenon: today everyone has an opinion to offer on yoga. If you ask anybody what yoga is, they will say it is a spiritual science. They will say it is about discovering oneself and they will launch into an abstract philosophy referring to the super-consciousness, the soul, moksha, mukti, self-realization. All the ideas of liberation will be associated with yoga. Then if you ask the same person, "Which classical book of yoga do you refer to?" they will name the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali and also ask you to read

it. Then if you ask, "Have you read it?" ninety percent will say, "No." Finally when you ask, "Fine, you have given me a philosophy of mental peace and spiritual illumination, you have recommended that I read a book which you yourself have not read, now tell me, which practice do you do to reach this philosophy?" they will say, "Oh, I do a little bit of asana and pranayama once or twice a week; sometimes when I'm tired I relax and meditate."

With such a fragmented and disjointed practice of yoga, without knowledge and awareness of the tradition and purpose of yoga, people aspire for mental peace and spiritual illumination! It is a paradox. And that is the situation today. Even many of you speak of such high philosophy, but in your own practice you miss your mantra japa. If you look at what you do and what you believe in, there is a gap of miles, and that distance has to be bridged. As a yoga aspirant, let your life not be a paradox, but take the opportunity to explore the true depth of yoga.

Responsibility of yoga teachers: moving into sadhana

From this perspective, the capability, the understanding and the responsibility of a yoga teacher has to be redefined, understood and applied properly. To be a competent yoga teacher you don't need to know a range of practices or perfect your presentation, but your understanding and approach to yoga teaching has to develop to reflect the progression of yoga from a practice to sadhana. You have to move from the practice aspect to the sadhana aspect and then to yogic lifestyle.

I have mentioned that there are four aspects of yoga. The first is yoga practice: you have an expectation, an idea, a thought, a desire, you come and learn yoga for that. It may be stress management, loosening the body and making it more flexible, learning how to meditate, focus and concentrate, or back-pain relief. That is yoga practice: what you do to fulfil your needs and choices. This is the general trend, globally.

The other aspect is yoga sadhana, where you follow the aims defined by yoga. What is the aim of hatha yoga? Purification and balance of ida and pingala. If your practice of hatha yoga leads to self-purification and the balance of ida and pingala, you are fulfilling the aspiration of hatha yoga. What is the aim of raja yoga? *Chitta vritti nirodhah* – control over the fluctuations of the mind. Your efforts in raja yoga should lead you to that. What is the aim of kriya yoga? *Pranotthana*, awakening the pranas, *chakrotthana*, awakening the chakras and awakening the kundalini. There is a sequential prana, chakra and kundalini development in kriya yoga.

The moment you follow the aspirations of yoga, it becomes sadhana. The moment you follow your own choices and whims, it becomes practice. From the second phase, sadhana, you move into the third phase, yoga being a lifestyle, a behaviour and an expression. From lifestyle one moves into the fourth phase, where yoga becomes a culture which is expressed.

The first chapter of yoga focused more on propagation and the first phase of practice. The second chapter will aim for the second phase, sadhana, and the third phase, lifestyle. We are not opposing the commercial use of yoga, which is currently prevalent in society, for everybody has to survive. However, as yoga teachers you should be aware of the extent of yoga experience that you can have and begin to connect with the vidya, and that will be the focus of the Progressive Training program.

Progressive Yoga Vidya Training

In this Progressive Training we shall look into the sadhana and lifestyle component. There will also be an effort to recognize the changing moods of mind and how to manage them. This will go a long way towards countering the perception of yoga as a physical, gymnastic, aerobic practice.

We are not negating the physical aspect of yoga, for physical exercise and physical health is the need of everyone,

at the same time we cannot ignore the other components of yoga that relate to lifestyle. Therefore, we will be looking at yoga from the physical, the mental, the scientific, the practical – all aspects. We will look at our own psychology, the mind, the behaviours, the expressions and the ways to manage them. We will look at different aspects of our own nature so as to clear the blocks that restrict us from becoming established in spiritual awareness.

With sincerity, seriousness and commitment

Today we see an explosion in the number of people who want to practise yoga, learn yoga and become yoga teachers. In this sea of yoga enthusiasm the Bihar School of Yoga looks into the development of yoga, into refining the skills of yoga practice and teaching, and also into making yoga accessible to those who are looking for a specific package such as for improving their health or working life. In order to do that we will go back into the thoughts and inspiration of Sri Swamiji, and maintain his practical, secular and scientific approach.

This is the basic outline of what BSY is doing to prepare for the coming decades and the vision of yoga that is emerging. All of you are welcome to help and to participate in writing this second chapter of yoga, which aims to move beyond propagation into consolidation – with sincerity, seriousness and commitment.



History and Purpose of Yoga

STUDY: *YOGA CHAKRA 1*, CHAPTER 1

The original propagator of yoga was Lord Shiva and he represents the early period of yoga. The teachings that he gave were in the form of Pashupata yoga, which included five different aspects: mantra yoga, sparsha yoga, bhava yoga, abhava yoga and maha yoga. These five yogas contain the subjects from which other branches of yoga emerged in the later period. If you look at scriptures, such as *Shiva Samhita*, *Dattatreya Samhita*, even some of the Puranas, you will find references to Pashupata yoga as being the original form of yoga from which other yogas evolved.

Original purpose of yoga

The purpose for which Shiva taught yoga was to understand how to overcome suffering, as that was the question that Parvati asked of him. She did not ask about attaining moksha, self-realization, God-realization or samadhi. Her question was straightforward: "There is suffering in the world. What can one do to overcome this suffering?" Shiva's answer was equally straightforward: "There are three kinds of suffering: the destined over which we have no control; the environmental – climatic changes, earthquakes, plagues, the natural disasters, over which also there is no control; and the self-generated suffering – stress, anxiety, illnesses, diseases."

It is the third type of suffering that has to be managed through the yogic practices as defined by Shiva. One has to manage and overcome the self-generated suffering, and accept the destined and environmental sufferings, learn how to live and flow with them. That was the original intention of yoga.

Focus of teachings

From where did the word 'self-realization' get entangled with yoga? There is no such thing as self-realization in yoga, rather there is self-awareness, self-observation, self-knowledge. All these terms relate to discovering your behaviour in the present, for awareness is of the present. Once the awareness comes in the present, it will carry on in the future and become part of the past. Therefore the teachings have been on cultivating awareness, on cultivating the ability to observe, on becoming the *drashta*, the witness. The rishis did not talk about enlightenment, as they did not see enlightenment as something different from the experiences of life, rather they saw it as a qualitative and sattwic expression of life. After all, enlightenment does not make you into a miracle worker, that you snap your fingers and magically things begin to happen.

What you call illumination, enlightenment or samadhi is a state of consciousness, just as dreaming is a state of consciousness. You sleep at night, you dream, and while you are dreaming the dream is real; when you wake up you realize that what you were experiencing was a dream. It is the same with enlightenment or samadhi; they are states of mind that you experience when you are there, but the moment you open your eyes you are again connected to the world and the senses. Samadhi becomes like a dream; when you are in that state, you are in it, and when you are out, you are out. Therefore from that perspective too, the knowledge of self or self-awareness, of becoming the drashta is more important in the yogic context. Once you become the drashta, whether you are in the world or in samadhi, you are observing both. You are not

involved in either, you are separate from the experience. Thus observation is more important than samadhi.

Even in raja yoga, the focus is not on enlightenment but on managing the vrittis. If you can manage the vrittis, you can hold on to a particular state for a longer period. If you are happy and something disturbing comes into your field of perception which begins to remove your happiness, at that point the drashta has to kick in and say, "Don't be affected by this, maintain your original state of peace and happiness. Don't be influenced by the sad news. Don't go into depression or dejection." It is this drashta bhava that can create balance in your life. It is this ability of observation that can make you aware of the attractions and rejections, and allow you to maintain your balance and harmony. It is the same with all yogas.

The point to remember is that yoga is a system to overcome the crises of body, mind and spirit. Such crisis is experienced as pain, suffering, illness, disease, distraction, loss of peace, loss of clarity, onset of confusion, and so on. The disturbances that create disassociation from the state of purity and peace are the areas of crisis in your life. Yoga comes in as a way to manage that state of crisis and bring you back into the state of balance, harmony and creativity, where the normal activities of life can take place unhampered.



Introduction to Asana and Pranayama

In this Progressive Training the purpose is to create a better and refined understanding of yoga. I would like to introduce the basic understanding behind the practice of asanas and the different groups of asanas. There are wide opinions about the number of asanas. Some say asanas number eight million four hundred thousand. Some say asanas number seventy-two; these are the important ones. Some say asanas are five thousand or six thousand in number. In this way, each author gives a different number of yoga postures.

The scriptures also say that there is one asana for every *yoni*, life form, that the soul incarnates in, and that is where the number eight million four hundred thousand comes from. From that perspective, however, every movement of life can become an asana. Any posture that you adopt in the normal course of activities becomes an asana if it is done with awareness of the posture and the benefit that it can give. Yet if you look at any of the classical books of hatha yoga, whether *Hatha Ratnavali*, *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, *Shiva Samhita*, *Gheranda Samhita*, or *Dattatreya Samhita*, they do not define hundreds or thousands of asanas, but only thirty or forty at the most. They say, "There are many asanas, however, we are using only these ones for our purpose." The asanas these texts refer to are the major ones, such as mayurasana, paschimottanasana, bhujangasana, vrischikasana. That indi-

cates the understanding of asana as an advanced technique that can hold the body in a certain posture for an extended period of time to influence the performance and functioning of a particular organ.

There are many yoga teachers who cannot perform a single advanced posture. How many of you can practise mayurasana, the peacock pose, or bakasana, the crane pose? The majority of hatha yoga practices are never done, you confine yourselves to the beginners and intermediate group of practices. Therefore, your own practice of hatha yoga is not complete. You have only experimented with 66 percent of hatha yoga in relation to asanas; you have never practised the remaining 33 percent which comprises the advanced asanas.

The deeper benefits of asana are seen in the advanced practices, as there you work specifically with some organ or part of the body to create an altered condition. For example, the practice of poorna matsyendrasana, the full spinal twist, can improve the diabetic condition in less than a week. In that posture the heel is pressing against the internal organs. When you maintain the pressure there for a few minutes and then release it, there is a complete opening and relaxation. In this way, there is a deep effect on the different parts and organs of the body in the performance of the advanced yogasanas.

Origin of pawanmuktasana

Apart from these major asanas, however, there is another collection which is not part of the conventional groups of asanas but was practised in the yogic tradition to prepare the body for the performance of a perfect asana. This group of practices was known as *sukshma vyayama*, or subtle movement, subtle exercise. *Sukshma* means subtle, *vyayam*a means exercise or movement.

The components of sukshma vyayama were scattered all over the yogic tradition. Some belonged to hatha yoga, according to the practices that the hatha yogis were

teaching. Some were found in the *Shiva Samhita*, according to the practices that Shiva was teaching. Some were found in the *Dattatreya Samhita*, according to the teaching that Dattatreya was imparting. It was only in this present century that Sri Swami Satyananda compiled them into a group and gave them the name 'pawanmuktasana'. Therefore, those subtle movements, which were originally called sukshma vyayama, are what we today know as the pawanmuktasana series. It is important to know this historical background as the pawanmuktasana series is the most basic and the most important practice in the Satyananda Yoga tradition.

Purpose of pawanmuktasana

Classically, the term pawanmuktasana is used for a specific asana. However, Sri Swamiji used this name for the whole series to indicate a sequence of asanas that can free up the whole body. *Pawan* means air or wind, *mukta* means to be free, and *asana* is posture. Therefore, these postures form a sequence of movements that frees the body from all kinds of blocks and create harmony, health and balance. This constitutes the foundation of yoga.

What was the idea behind pawanmuktasana? Every physical body is in its own state of tightness and flexibility. The tightness, rigidity and stiffness of the body have to go first and flexibility acquired. That is the first purpose of pawanmuktasana.

The second purpose is better circulation of blood and prana. The more you move your body parts, the more the flow of blood and energy will move freely. Thus the circulation of blood and prana becomes the second focal point of sukshma vyayama.

Point three, the most important, is that the sukshma vyayama provide a complete exercise, they provide conscious movement to each and every part and joint of the body. We take many movements of the body for granted, often we are not aware of our movements, they are done unconsciously. In pawanmuktasana, there is a conscious acknowledgment

of the body and of the movements that different parts of the body can perform. You get to connect with your body, so that you become the *drashta*, the observer, of your body and the physical experiences.

During one of the yoga courses recently, a situation was observed. Many participants were first-timers learning yoga, and the biggest challenge they had was in the practice of yoga nidra, for they did not know the names of body parts. Europeans and Americans were asking, "What is an armpit?" At first we thought they were joking, but later on we realized that they actually did not know. They never bothered learning the names of their own body parts. That was an indication of how disconnected people are from their body, so much so that they are not even aware of their physical body. Especially for the young generation, the concept of body is not the same that we, the previous generation have had. There is definitely a disconnection from the body now.

The yogis made it a point to connect with the body, to free the energies of the body, and to access the deeper memories of the body. Towards that end, the combination of sukshma vyayama and asana came into existence. One of the purposes of the sukshma vyayama is to give you an awareness of the whole body and the condition of the whole body, the health, the problems, the flexibility, the tightness, the stress, the ease of the whole body. Without this you cannot move into the higher practices of asana, for the purpose of asana is to make you aware of the body and the body functions.

Asanas are not an unconscious exercise or an autonomic activity. There is a difference between normal exercise and yogic exercise. In normal exercises like gymming or aerobics, awareness is not a component of the movement, whereas in yoga, awareness plays a major role. Thus, there are three major purposes of sukshma vyayama, the subtle exercises:

1. Removal of the stiffness, tightness and attainment of flexibility.
2. Improved circulation of blood and prana.
3. To connect one's awareness with the body.

Once the mind becomes connected to the body, then you make the effort to find your own physical harmony, health and balance. This constitutes the foundation of yoga, and this is the pawanmuktasana series.

Categorization of pawanmuktasana

The sukshma vyayama, the subtle exercises, were grouped in three categories by Sri Swami Satyananda:

1. The first category of pawanmuktasana was named 'anti-rheumatic', as in this category of sukshma vyayama the movements correspond to all the different joints: the toes, ankles, knees, hips, wrists, elbows, shoulders. All the joints are being looked into, and practising this series, you connect with your body in a manner that you have never before done.

   This group of asanas prepares you for asanas that create strain on the hands and legs, such as bakasana, mayurasana, the trikonasana series, as well as padmasana. As they work with each joint, they release the pressure from each joint, allowing them the movement, the flexibility and the lubrication to function in the optimum condition relevant to one's age.

   With the regular exercising of the joints you avoid the accumulation of toxins in them, which later on become the cause of pains, inflammations, swellings, deformities, etc. Pawanmuktasana part 1 helps regulate the vata dosha. According to ayurveda, there are three humours in the body: *vata*, gas; *pitta*, bile, acidity; and *kapha*, mucus. When they are imbalanced, all kinds of conditions are experienced. When vata is imbalanced there is a greater chance of getting arthritic and rheumatic pains. So removal of excess vata, excess air or gas from the body, from the different joints, is a focus of the pawanmuktasana part 1 series.

   As the joints become free, the conditions which can give birth to an illness or a physical problem cease to exist. Therefore, here we are not dealing with physical problems,

but with the conditions that can create a problem. This is an important point, which you must remember as a yoga teacher. In yoga therapy we do not treat a disease. We try to create the right condition by removing the abnormal condition which gives birth to a problem in the first place. Yoga therapy is not management of a problem; it is creation of a better condition to cope with the problem.

2. The second category of the pawanmuktasana series was named anti-gastric. These movements work on strengthening the abdomen and are more muscular in nature. There is less work with the joints but more with organs and muscles. The anti-gastric series helps balance the pitta problems in the body, improving digestion, improving all the functions of assimilation, expulsion and absorption.
3. The third category of the pawanmuktasana series was named the shakti bandhas series. It helps to balance kapha, as there is more movement in the upper thoracic region in most of the asanas in this series.

So, the three groups of asanas of the pawanmuktasana series, each deal with one specific dosha of Ayurveda: pawanmuktasana part 1 with vata, part 2 with pitta, part 3 with kapha. With these doshas in balance you can step into the practice of yogasanas, for then your body is in the right condition to receive the benefits. The posture then is not an exercise, but follows the principle of *sthiram sukham asanam*, as defined by Patanjali. It is an asana in which you can be stable and steady for some time.

Fivefold awareness of asana

Sri Swamiji taught us how to deepen the yogic experience. He would say that if a movement has to become a yoga movement, then certain components of the mind should connect with it. He identified five such components and during the performance of each asana, we focused on these:

1. The movement of the body. If you are bending forward from posture 2 to posture 3 in surya namaskara, there is a

slow-motion awareness; you are observing the body move as if you are watching a movie of yourself move. There is awareness of the movement and observation of the movement.

2. Focusing on the breath.
3. Visualization of a perfect practice, comparing your practice with what you visualize as the perfect posture. Therefore, in your mind you can have the awareness of the perfect pashchimottanasana, with your head on the knee, your shoulders relaxed, your hands holding the toes. That is your visualization of the perfect posture, but you may not be able to practise like that, you may not be able to touch your toes due to the physical restriction, stiffness or tightness. However, when you visualize the perfect asana, you are actually suggesting to your body to go into that posture, and over a course of time you will notice that your body adopts the perfect posture without any effort from you to stretch and push.
4. Chakra awareness, awareness of the psychic centre being affected at the time of an asana performance.
5. Mantra awareness, repetition of the relevant mantra while doing the asana practice.

In each practice, all five aspects were looked into, and therefore our classes were not just five rounds of an asana. Each aspect was focused on for five rounds, so each asana was performed twenty-five times. Five times with awareness of the body movement, five times with awareness of the breath, five with visualization, five with chakra awareness, and five with mantra awareness. Every asana, from the most dynamic to the most stable, had to be performed in this manner, and an important benefit from this method was the development of physical stamina. Even the hand movements were done like this; today you do them at most ten times and the fingers get exhausted, but we did them 25 times, 5–5–5–5–5, maintaining that awareness, shifting that awareness, deepening that awareness. That used to be one cycle.

PAWANMUKTASANA PART I (feet movements)

Padanguli Naman (toe bending): 5–5–5–5–5; movement awareness–breath awareness–visualization–chakra awareness–mantra awareness.

SWAN tip: When you begin the practice and the focus is on awareness of the movement, be aware of the movement, observe the friction and the stretching of the muscles and the joints, and put your mind in your toes to feel that movement.

Goolf Naman (ankle bending): 5–5–5–5–5; movement awareness–breath awareness–visualization–chakra awareness–mantra awareness.

SWAN tip: Visualization of the perfect posture: the toes are touching the floor.

Note*: The specific chakras and mantras that were used with the practices during the training are not being mentioned, as some details are best left to a class experience in the presence of a master.*

This is how Sri Swamiji taught us. Therefore, no matter what practice, whether pawanmuktasana or advanced practices, we would be experts quickly following his classes, as we had to stay in a posture for so long. He would go around and correct everybody and while he did that we had to stay in the same posture. In this way, he took us through the body, to breath, to mind, to chakra, to mantra, all in the same practice. This gives the indication that an asana is not performed for just a physical purpose, but each asana has to work at the annamaya level, the pranamaya level, the manomaya level, the vijnanamaya level and the anandamaya level. Initially, practising each asana 25 times used to tire us out, so we would start with 10, and then gradually we would develop the physical stamina and overcome the physical tiredness.

Deepening awareness

When you do a posture 25 times on one side and 25 times on the other side, for the first week you will feel tired, but after the third week the body feels light and buoyant. By practising in this manner, within a short period you will experience a clear difference in your practice.

At the beginning, you start in a simple manner: watching the physical movement, or observing the breath, or visualizing, or creating chakra awareness in whichever way you can, or repeating the mantra however it comes. Later, as the understanding and the experience evolves, even these things are streamlined and you are guided on what to visualize when.

For example, how do you do your breath awareness during an arm movement? Normally, you are simply aware that you should breathe out as you fold the arm and breathe in as you open the arm. However, when the awareness deepens, you breathe through the whole arm, through the whole movement; you are not breathing through the nose, you are breathing through the movement that you are performing. As you go even deeper, the tattwic awareness is added to the breath, seeing the breath in its actual colour. Therefore, there is a progression in all these levels. The purpose and the teaching of Sri Swamiji was that every movement should connect us with all the five koshas. There should not be a separate, fragmented awareness of the body with a negation of the other dimensions.

In many of the yoga training centres, especially in studios, when yoga is being practised in front of full-length mirrors, there is only consciousness of the body, the annamaya kosha. As you are watching yourself, you are identifying with the annamaya and there is no awareness of the other experiences. In such cases yoga becomes a physical practice only and there is no deeper experience of oneself.

With this course we are to connect again with the focus of Sri Swamiji's teachings. Let us understand, imbibe and apply.

Goolf Chakra (ankle rotation): 5–5–5; movement awareness–breath awareness–chakra awareness (both clockwise and anticlockwise, with each foot and then with both feet together).

SWAN tips:

- Since the ankles are tired (after 15 rounds), say the mantra mentally, and feel the mantra moving with the breath to the ankle region, and relax the ankles. As you say the mantra, send that energy, send that mantra into the ankles.
- Try not to move the leg and keep the knee straight.

Goolf Ghoornan (ankle crank): 5–5; movement awareness–breath awareness (both clockwise and anticlockwise, with each foot).

Ardha Titali (half butterfly with each leg): Performed immediately after the ankle crank without changing the pose.

Poorna Titali (full butterfly)

SWAN tip: The butterfly is practised freestyle, without breath, chakra or mantra awareness. You just feel, visualize and maintain awareness of the movement of the knee up and down. Bounce the knee up and down like you would bounce a basketball. In order to practise the perfect butterfly, imagine yourself to be the best basketball player; your knee is the ball which must hit the ground before it can bounce up. From a yogi become a basketball player when you come to this practice, and don't be a meditative basketball player!

Janu Naman (knee bending with each leg): 5–5; chakra awareness–mantra awareness.

SWAN tip: During chakra awareness, bend with the movement but focus on the chakra.

Janu Naman (knee bending with both legs): 5–5; chakra awareness–mantra awareness.

SWAN tips:

- Instead of interlocking the fingers, just hold your hamstrings – the back of the thighs. Bend and balance, stretch and balance, bend-stretch, bend-stretch . . . Ultimately you will have to go for a three-inch target, not a three-foot target! Some people tend to have their legs quite high; you have to come down.
- When you do it with both legs, then at the beginning you can focus on the body and the breath only, without including mantra, chakra or visualization. Control the movement of the body with the help of the breath, and when you are comfortable then include the other components.
- When you bend the legs, first balance for a few moments, and when you stop the wobble, then stretch the legs out.

***Note**: Swamiji adjusted the number of rounds based on the ability and stamina of the participants; however, as he mentioned, the ideal practice consists of 25 rounds with all the five levels of awareness.*

Coordinating the breath

Breath has to become a natural part of the movement so that in any posture you are breathing correctly with awareness: when you are contracting you are breathing out and when you are expanding you are breathing in. However, when you have been practising for some time, the movement becomes automatic. Therefore, by isolating the movement you once again give full attention to it and become aware of it. Similarly, visualization is to allow you to see your own practice more clearly, so you can be your own assessor of how far you are from a perfect posture. Then eventually you can add chakra awareness and mantra.

If you are an advanced practitioner of yoga, correct breathing will happen instinctively and spontaneously with all your movements. Otherwise you have to make it a part

of your natural movement, you have to train yourself to be aware of when you are moving, when you are breathing, and how you are breathing with each movement.

PAWANMUKTASANA PART I (leg movements)

Janu Chakra (knee rotation with each leg): 5–5; chakra awareness–mantra awareness (both clockwise and anticlockwise).

Janu Chakra (knee rotation with both legs): 5 rounds; mantra awareness (both clockwise and anticlockwise).

Shavasana: 1. Body relaxation 2. Breath awareness in the abdomen.

Research on pawanmuktasana

Some time ago a particular research was done on pawanmuktasana in the USA. It was about improving the memory in the elderly. The premise was that memory is lost as one ages due to dead brain cells accumulating in the brain and stopping the electrical transmission of neurons. The scientists said that there is a hormone the body produces naturally to clear the dead brain cells; however, after a certain age the production of this hormone stops. That is when the dead brain cells begin to accumulate in the brain centres and stop the transmission of the electrical impulses, causing memory loss. They came up with a solution: an injection of the hormone every twenty years when there is a major hormonal change in the body, at the ages of 40, 60 and 80. Or alternately: practice of pawanmuktasana part 1.

The reason they gave for the second solution was that people don't exercise each and every part of their body, and this group of postures stimulates every nerve-ending and muscle so the circulation is improved in the whole body.

The pumping power of the heart improves, and with a better circulation and blood flow the dead brain cells can be removed gradually. They recommended that at the time of major hormonal change in the body the experimental group should practise pawanmuktasana part 1 for six months. They said that six months of the practice at these times will allow people to maintain their memory and they will not need injection of the hormone. I don't know how far that is true or how much they have researched, nevertheless this was one finding that has come out.

Pawanmuktasana should be practised to prepare the body for asanas. After a few months, when your body is ready and flexible and the tightness is gone, then move into other practices. Even then, every six months revisit pawanmuktasana part 1 for one month, as that will help in re-tuning the body. Many times when you do the advanced asanas, the minor movements are not made for all the muscles to remain active. If you are doing, say the headstand, or the peacock, or the camel, you are holding that posture for some time. You are holding the body in one position and not moving the body, you are not micro-managing the body when practising the major asanas, so the effect is different. Therefore, every six months come back to one month of pawanmuktasana to micro-manage your body and then again go back to your routine practices.

Thus it is recommended that in the sequence of asana training and teaching, revert back to pawanmuktasana every six months and then carry on with the normal teaching.



Mushtika Bandhana (fist clenching): 5–5; chakra awareness–mantra awareness.

Manibandha Naman (wrist bending): 5–5; chakra awareness–mantra awareness.

Manibandha Chakra (wrist rotation): 5–5; chakra awareness–mantra awareness (both clockwise and anticlockwise, both wrists together).

Kehuni Naman (elbow bending), 3 variations: forward, sideways, upwards): 5–5; chakra awareness–mantra awareness.

Kehuni Chakra (elbow rotation): 5–5; chakra awareness–mantra awareness (both clockwise and anti-clockwise).

SWAN tip: If you don't prepare your wrists and hands before doing the advanced asanas, it is possible to damage the joints as they are not strong enough. The hand movements of pawanmuktasana part 1 prepare you for the advanced asanas that involve the hands and arms.

Shavasana: 1. Body relaxation 2. Awareness of major body parts 3. Externalization.

Benefits of subtle movements

In the last five–six years, in the health management courses held at Ganga Darshan, whether for digestion, diabetes or other health problems, we begin the program with pawanmuktasana and surprisingly, by the end of the week there is no need to go to other asanas or pranayamas. People reap the benefit of health with only pawanmuktasana. Even the sugar level drops for diabetics.

When I saw this trend and heard these people saying, "I am getting better with simple movements", I started thinking why. Then I came to an understanding that many physical health problems arise due to lack of awareness of the conditions of the body, negligence of the body and lack of exercise. Neither the circulation nor the vibrancy of the muscles is taken care of and many body muscles are not properly used. The more the body is moved the more it uses its hormones, its abilities and potential, and finds its own balance, alignment and health.

Two generations ago, we did not survive with the help of vitamin, mineral and protein supplements. We survived in a natural manner with what was available around us. There were no pills to pop in the mouth until the First World War. How did we look after our health then? There were times of struggles no doubt and the mortality rate was high, yet everybody sought to be healthy without the aid of external agents. The movements of the body that were naturally performed, due to the routine that was followed, were conducive to health. For instance, people walking in the morning through the fields to empty the bowels. Even in Europe toilets have come only in the last one hundred years. When the medicines were absent, how did people look after themselves and their illnesses? Only through exercise and movement, only by keeping their body active. That situation is no longer true.

Having a gym in the home is not an indication that the people in the house are healthy. It means that people in the house need exercise. If there was normal exercising, why would anybody even think of getting a gym in the house? That means people are losing touch with their bodies. Having a cabinet full of medicine in the bathroom is no indication of health. Rather, it is an indication of how susceptible people have become to illness. A sudden change in temperature and the nose begins to run, and they have to have medication to stop that cold. People have lost physical stamina and immunity due to a stagnated lifestyle. That is one reason behind illnesses.

Pawanmuktasana is able to heal or help as it allows people to get back in the routine of moving the body, moving the toes, the ankles, the wrists, the fingers. That strengthens and builds up the physical stamina, the immunity, the resistance, and removes many physical problems which do not really need medical intervention or even yogic intervention. If you practise nothing more than pawanmuktasana, you will receive the benefits of yoga in this sequence of sukshma vyayama, subtle movements. Therefore, the pawanmuktasana series is important both from the point of view of health and as the foundation for higher asanas.

PRANAYAMA

Nadi Shodhana with internal retention: Count of 7, ratio of 1:1:1, 3 rounds.

SWAN tip: After the practice, allow your breathing to become normal. If there is any tension and agitation in the respiratory systems then become aware of it and try to relax your breathing as much as you can. Normalize the breathing and become comfortable.

Nadi Shodhana with external retention: Count of 7, ratio of 1:1:1:1, 3 rounds.

SWAN tip: When beginning the practice of external kumbhaka, rest after every round to recover your breath.

Categorization of pranayama

Sri Swamiji classified pranayamas in three categories: vitalizing, tranquillizing, and balancing. Vitalizing pranayamas are those that activate manipura chakra. Tranquillizing pranayamas are those that activate vishuddhi chakra, and balancing pranayamas are those that work with ida and pingala.

1. Dynamic breathing practices such as surya bheda, kapalbhati and bhastrika are vitalizing as they exert a direct influence on manipura chakra and activate it.
2. Tranquillizing pranayamas such as sheetali, sheetkari, bhramari, work at the vishuddhi level. It is the throat that feels the coolness when you are practising sheetali and sheetkari, and from the vishuddhi plexus it is transferred to the other centres of the body. The tranquillizing pranayamas are the ones used most in India as they are suitable for the climate here.
3. Balancing pranayamas relate more to ida and pingala. In this group the one and only stand-tall pranayama is nadi shodhana, but there are many ways of practising it; with different kinds of breathing, with internal retention, with external retention, with bandhas, and so on.

The effects of nadi shodhana are truly far-reaching and one should realize that. The right flow, which is known as the pingala flow, is connected to the sympathetic nervous system and the left hemisphere of the brain. The left flow, the ida flow, is connected to the parasympathetic nervous system and to the right side of the brain. Therefore whenever you are practising the basic pranayama of nadi shodhana, the first effect is relaxation of the two nervous systems, especially if you are regulating the incoming and the outgoing breath. In normal respiration during the course of the day, the breathing-in and breathing-out ratios are different. The breathing-in ratio is one and a half times more than breathing out, and there is more effort in breathing in and less effort in breathing out.

During nadi shodhana pranayama when a specific ratio and count is practised, the flow of breath is forced into the lower alveoli, which are like tiny air bags, and there is better absorption of oxygen. There are two parts of the lungs: the upper lobe and the lower lobe. Most of the alveoli are in the lower lobe, and the upper lobe is like a balloon that can expand and contract with the breath coming in and going out. In normal exercise people work to expand their chest to

have a 38-inch chest, to look good, therefore the emphasis is on upper thoracic breathing. As the upper lobe of the lung expands like a balloon there is a feeling, 'I am getting tougher and tougher.' However, that expansion of the upper lobe actually lessens the capacity of the lower lobe. Therefore people who work on body-building have short and shallow breaths. They cannot take long and deep breaths.

Yoga says the reverse. It says that the alveoli have to be accessed by the breath, as the oxygen there is what circulates in the blood. The oxygen is absorbed from the air into the blood in the lower alveoli and the carbon dioxide is also removed from the blood here. The deeper you breathe in, down into the lower region of the lungs, the more chances there are of health. That is why in most yoga practices the breathing is abdominal, whether it is shavasana, yoga nidra, prana vidya, or any other practice.

When you practise pranayama, there has to be an awareness of the muscular use and the muscular movement. You have to be specific about where you breathe from. You also eventually combine the practice with bandhas, which bring back the elasticity to the muscles by doing the reverse movement. Therefore, applying the yogic principles and practices properly and correctly has to be considered in sadhana now.

Nadi shodhana is one of the most effective practices for the elimination of toxins, for balancing the nervous systems and promoting health. In fact, if you ask me what is the most appropriate yoga routine for a normal person who does not wish to have enlightenment and is not looking for therapy, who just wants to live life happily, I will say pawanmuktasana and nadi shodhana. In pawanmuktasana you have all the movements, and in nadi shodhana you are balancing everything. They make the perfect combo of practices for a normal person.

Trends in Yoga Teaching

STUDY: *YOGA CHAKRA 1*, CHAPTER 3

When Sri Swamiji started yoga training, he decided to teach yoga first to those aspiring for sannyasa, those who took sannyasa for the purpose of learning yoga and propagating yoga. In the next stage, he accepted other people and made them into yoga teachers: householders, professionals, students, everybody who wanted to be a yoga teacher had the opportunity to learn yoga and teach in their own community.

Sri Swamiji chose sannyasins to be propagators of yoga as the sannyasins could connect with the vision and mission of yoga that he had. They had no other expectation, motivation or entanglement, no other distraction of daily life. In a selfless, dedicated and devoted manner, they could imbibe the teachings of yoga and propagate them, as their main interest was to bring the teaching to everyone. When householders were trained, their whole intention of learning was different: it was to develop certain professional skills and make a living, they had commercial reasons.

Two trends of teaching

Therefore, two trends started. One group was motivated by economic reasons: "I will learn yoga, then I will teach here, teach there, do this and do that." They had grandiose plans of what they could do when they became yoga teachers.

The other group had no plan. If they were told to practise headstand for half an hour, they did it; if they were told to practise pranayama for half a day, they did it. Whatever the practice, it connected them with the vision of Swami Satyananda. For those people, the priority was not their life, but the mission that was given to them. They connected with Sri Swamiji and his mission, and followed his mandate. Even today, whatever the circumstances, their focus is on yoga and they are able to maintain the connection with the vision and the mission. In this way, there are people who are still chugging on, for they are connected to a vision and a mission. In a selfless manner, they are carrying the message of yoga across to all.

There is this difference between those who follow a commercial path through yoga and those who follow a devoted path in yoga. Even in our movement, the first generation was a devoted generation, the second generation and their offspring became commercial. The Teacher Training Courses (TTC) given in many places is not to connect with the original teachings but to empower people to be economically and commercially strong. This has resulted in a dilution of the vidya, the knowledge and the understanding. Even in our own movement, for many teachers who came subsequently, whether karma sannyasins or even poorna sannysins who went back to live a normal family life, the inclination is foremost for survival. Naturally, therefore, commerce comes in. Yet there are also people who work as a group, for whom survival and commerce is important, but equally important is the connection with the vision and the mission. However, when commerce takes prominence and yoga is used for commerce, then the teachings change.

Attracting with add-ons

Imagine that I train fifty people in yoga, they all go to New York and establish a centre each in fifty different locations. Will there be competition between them, or will they remain

pure, dedicated, devoted, selfless workers of yoga? Will there not be some juggling to attract people to their respective centres and classes? In this juggling many new things are added on to the teaching to make it attractive and to stand out from other teachers. What happens then? You practise yoga with your dog and that becomes your style. People say, "Oh, you kind and compassionate person, practising yoga with a dog!" The attention goes from yoga to a dog. You do aerial yoga, hanging on ropes and doing your asanas in the air. Why would you do that? Is that the teaching of yoga, or is it something that you have added because you felt stagnation in your own learning of yoga? To create a newness and attraction for people you went and added something different, and every year you will be refining this fluff and not the teaching.

Every year, whether you conduct in-house training, progressive training, or continuation of the existing practices of yoga, rather than coming back to the essence of the teachings, you will give instructions on how to make yoga more attractive by adding this and that, subtracting this and that. The whole attention goes not to the original teachings and their purpose, but to the creation of a practice that you conceive to be attractive and inspirational for other people. Therefore, all kinds of yoga brands emerge, whether circus yoga, aerial yoga, dog yoga, hot yoga, cold yoga, swimming yoga, or surfboard yoga.

This also leads us to ask, what is your interest in yoga? Would you go for a classical yoga learning or for a doga, for hot or cold or surfboard or aerial yoga? Your adherence to a system indicates your interest. If you go to dog yoga, fair enough, your interest is not in yoga but in passing time with your dog. If you are able to perform the shoulder stand or the wheel pose while hanging from a rope, you may enjoy that but then you are interested more in the show rather than a practice that you do as a sadhana.

All these different brands indicate that people are attracted to fluff and not to the authentic teachings. They

indicate the mind-set of people. In this scenario there is no inclination towards the experience of yoga but only towards decorating yoga with various impositions. As a result, the yoga is lost and only the impositions are seen. When such choices are presented, how many people adhere to the classical teaching of yoga and follow that to the end, remains to be seen.

In this way, there is a vast dilution of yoga and more awareness of the fluff, the add-ons. "What can I do to get more people? What extras can I add in my class? What other information can I give?" With this approach, mixing takes place. The subject is kundalini meditation and suddenly crystal healing comes in and crystals are being put on the different chakras to activate them or to relax them or to intensify them. These types of things divert the attention from the intention of yoga and the yogic philosophy, practice, lifestyle and culture.

This is in relation to yoga going viral. People say, "There are too many aspects of yoga." There are not too many aspects of yoga, yoga is one and the same; the same ten asanas are taught in every yoga, but what identifies the brand names of yoga today is the fluff and the add-ons attached to the practice, making each a unique brand.

Choice to return to the essence

Just as there are choices to explore the add-ons, there is also the choice to come back to the essence and the teachings, and follow them. Just as after having seen many different restaurants and many kinds of food, you decide that one particular food is good for you and your health, the decision to pursue one path with sincerity and seriousness can happen after you have explored your options. You can start with Bihar Yoga, do every other yoga, and come back to Bihar Yoga twenty years later and recommit yourself. Once you have had the experience of everything, if you decide that this yoga is good then you have the choice to recommit and follow it to the end. The choice is always there.

Satyananda Yoga is not a brand, though many people may think it is. The attempt of this tradition is to bring the classical yoga to the forefront, if that makes 'Satyananda Yoga' a recognized name, then fair enough. However, we have been clear that every aspect that has been introduced by this tradition already existed, whether pawanmuktasana in the form of sukshma vyayama or any other technique. Previously it was not consolidated; Swami Satyananda put the sukshma vyayama together and created the system of pawanmuktasana 1, 2 and 3. Similarly, yoga nidra existed, but this specific system of yoga nidra which we practise was devised by him, so we are calling it Satyananda Yoga Nidra.

Once, in the 70s when I was travelling in Europe I came across a yoga nidra cassette. I played that and what was the difference? It had instructions and in the background it had music. Now, I was not used to music, I was used to straight instructions, and when I heard the instructions and the music together, I did not know where to focus. If I focused on listening to the music then I would miss the instruction, if I listened to the instruction then the music would be disturbing; if I was trying to count my breath the music would distract me.

This is an example of how add-ons come in; a mindset said that music would help people relax, so although it is yoga nidra the essence has been diluted. Such things defeat the purpose of the practice, as the mind is being pulled in several different directions. In this case, you are not allowing the mind to go deep into that somnambulistic state as there are too many strings being pulled; one sharp note of music and you come out. People say that their students find it relaxing as their mind is disturbed. However, for the creators of the practice, if different yoga nidras are devised with different music, where is the focus? In the yoga nidra practice or in making the music better in all the different productions and editions? From that perspective, even yoga teachers have forgotten what the teaching and essence of yoga is. That is why it is important to connect with the intention and the mission to appreciate what yoga can offer.

It is not yoga going viral; it is your inclination that is going viral, not the asanas, not the pranayamas, but how you look at yourself and what you want to do for yourself. Therefore your choice has to be right and appropriate.

Point of stagnation

Now, despite all these brands, the general trend in society among practitioners is that they have come to a point of stagnation in their practice. I mentioned that many people asked during my yoga yatras, "What do I do next? I have done so many years of hatha yoga, of this and that, but I feel my yogic journey has come to a standstill." This question indicates that there is not enough learning in society about yoga, as most people only know a bit of asana, a bit of pranayama. If somebody wants guidance, including progressive yoga, the teacher is not competent enough to provide that, as they themselves have not progressed, they are limited to whatever learning they had in their one-week or one-month TTC. They call themselves a yoga teacher, but they are yoga teachers with minimum qualifications. You have to increase your qualifications, otherwise the practices become stagnant and the intention becomes dissipated. When the practice stagnates then there is no scope for personal experience, and there is a natural tendency to add things to make it attractive to yourself. First things have to be attractive to yourself before you can tell other people, "Oh look, I find this very nice and attractive." This is the situation of yoga and society.

Deepening the experience

The purpose of this Progressive Training is to go back to the original teachings that were given by Sri Swamiji. Therefore deepen your experience now.

ON THE TRAIN OF KNOWLEDGE

Sannyasi Atmadhara, Bulgaria

I don't have enough words to express my gratitude to be part of a course that was directly taught by Swami Niranjan. In the structure, the classes, the theory – was so well organized and in such a relaxed manner that it could be easily understood.

From the first week onwards we started to gradually go deeper and deeper into the yogic practices. Everything was in the right proportion, not too much and not too little. The asanas, pranayamas, shatkarmas, meditation practices, tattwa shuddhi, together with theory, satsangs, seva, right living and positive environment were combined in a balanced manner to make the perfect yogic experience.

The course was intense, and really gave the feeling of 'progressive training', as for a period of one month we progressed from class one to higher classes.

Swamiji told us that he would be moving like a train full of knowledge, and that he would stop at some stations to give us some time to grasp the knowledge. Although the train was fast, he gave us enough time to adjust, to be comfortable and at peace.

The Yoga Teacher's Responsibility, Pawanmuktasana, Fivefold Awareness of Asana

The yoga teacher's responsibility

There are certain things you have to keep in mind as a yoga teacher and if you don't, you can never be a good yoga teacher. What are those things?

One is to follow the syllabus all the time. A nuclear physicist may be able to make a bomb in the laboratory with the right ingredients and equipment; however, if that nuclear physicist is teaching in a college then he has to teach the syllabus that has been prepared according to the level of the class. He should not teach them how to make a bomb. The yoga teacher has to behave in the same manner.

What you are practising here is meant to deepen your own understanding of yoga. That does not mean that when you return to your place you immediately start teaching the asanas with mantra to everybody. You should not do that, for the person who is practising is not the *adhikari*, not the right person to impart that vidya to. First you have to experience the practice yourself and then you have to find the right person to impart that knowledge and training to. It is not a general training to be imparted to everybody, as most people cannot handle any kind of psychic experience. Everybody is expecting to see beautiful things within themselves, and when the other stuff comes up, the unexpected, there is a possibility of going into a state of psychosis.

It is personal projection that a yoga teacher has to be aware of, such as "Look, I have just come from the ashram. For one month I did yoga there and I will teach you what I learnt." And after one week, when your students cannot handle their psychological changes, whom will you blame? Not yourself, but the system and the teacher. Therefore, if self-projection is your focus, yoga is not for you. If you are looking to become a better yoga teacher, then deepen your own understanding of yoga first. After that, find the right adhikari, the right person to whom that knowledge can be imparted. Self-projection is the downfall of a teacher.

The other thing the teacher has to do is work out the proper sequence of training. For example, when I was living in South America, we would teach the beginners class only pawanmuktasana part 1 for six months. If someone did not like it, they did not have to come, but we followed the system. That was the foundation course. We did not change because of people's opinions or demands. We had a focus, we were not teaching yoga to entertain people. We were there to propagate a *vidya*, a knowledge.

Those who underwent that process are still the inspiration behind the yoga movement today. They are solid, committed and devoted. Those who came to learn new items and awaken their kundalini, are still travelling from place to place trying to find better stuff they can be attracted by. A teacher has to maintain a goal in teaching, which is not for the satisfaction of the student but to do justice to the vidya.

Origin and classification of pawanmuktasana

Now we summarize the topic of yesterday: the practice of pawanmuktasana. The original name of pawanamuktasana is sukshma vyayama. *Sukshma* means subtle, *vyayama* means movement. These practices were never part of a structured series in yoga. Rather they were used as exercises to loosen up the joints before you performed an asana. In fact, there is a link between the subtle movements and the major asanas. In karate, for example, before you actually come into a

posture or do any sequence of movements, any kata, you have to go through a series of exercises that loosen up the limbs. That prepares the body for the performance of the final posture without any stress or tightness; the movements are then free and the impact of the practice can be felt. Similarly, the collection of sukshma vyayama was used originally to prepare the body for the advanced practices of asanas. For instance, if you have to perform chakrasana, the wheel pose, then you need to loosen your wrists. So you would do wrist bending and wrist joint rotation, and some spinal flexing, and then move into chakrasana.

For any advanced asana, it is not advisable to attempt it at the first go, you should go through a system of preparation. This is where the sukshma vyayama of yoga come into play. They were the preparatory movements before you performed the actual asana. Sri Swami Satyananda compiled the sukshma vyayama from different asana groups and classified them in three categories: anti-rheumatic, anti-gastric, and shakti bandha series. Anti-rheumatic indicates the subtle movements that affect all the joints and moveable parts of the body, and the majority of moveable parts are in the legs and arms. The second group includes exercises that affect the stomach, liver, kidney, pancreas, oesophagus, lungs, heart, and other organs in the trunk region. The third group, shakti bandhas, stretches the body in different ways and allows for a deeper flexibility to set in. It also opens up the *nadis*, nerve channels, and releases energy blocks in the body.

Now, see the progression from part 1 to part 2 to part 3 in pawanmuktasana. You start with your fingers and toes in the first part, then you work with your abdominal region in the second part, and then in the third part you go into postures like squatting, which are difficult for many people. Therefore in the third part, you lead the body into a more flexible state than before. With the completion of the three groups, you move into the practice of advanced asanas which then become much easier to perform.

Purpose and application of pawanmuktasana

The purpose of pawanmuktasana, as mentioned, is threefold: 1. to remove the rigidity and attain physical flexibility 2. to ensure circulation of blood and prana to all different parts, and 3. to make you aware of and connected with your body, so that you become the *drashta*, the observer, of your body and the physical experiences.

Now the application of pawanmuktasana. It is recommended that in the sequence of asana training and teaching, you revert back to the practice of pawanmuktasana every six months. Even when the initial training of pawanmuktasana is complete and you have moved on to other practices, every six months come back to this foundation of yoga, and then continue with the other practices. Don't say, "I have done it initially for a long time and I don't need it now." Come back to pawanmuktasana every six months.

Reassessing asana practice methodology

People find it convenient to practise an asana on an average, ten times, as it is comfortable and does not strain or tire you. For beginners, that is fine. For advanced practitioners, however, that number increases to 25. It is like the count of breath in pranayama. When you begin your practice, you can start with a count of 5 and gradually increase the number until you reach your maximum limit. The maximum allowable count in yoga is 24 seconds inhalation, 24 *matras*, units, which is the time taken to chant one Gayatri mantra. If your count is 30 or 40, it is your attainment, not the yogic instruction.

Just as in pranayama there is a count and a ratio, in physical exercise also there is a count. The count in a class of asana goes from 5 to 25. The difficult asanas can begin with 5 rounds, but gradually the number should be increased until you come to 25 times. This number is used as it allows you to move your awareness from physical to psychic in each asana. Within each asana practice you become aware of a different kosha as you focus on a different aspect every five rounds.

Kosha awareness through asana

There are five koshas: annamaya, pranamaya, manomaya, vijnanamaya, and anandamaya. When you are watching the physical movement in an asana, focusing on the movement of the muscles and the joints, you are focusing on the annamaya experience. First round: "I can feel my toes are tight." Second round, it is easier. Third round, even easier; fourth round, even easier; fifth round, fluid. That is the annamaya awareness: watching the progression, watching the physical change and experience in you as you do the asana.

Pranamaya awareness comes in when you focus on the breath, "I am breathing out so my toes are going forward; I am breathing in so my toes are pulled backwards." The movement is synchronized with the breath, and the span of the movement and the breath have to be equal. From the moment you begin a movement to the moment it stops, the entire span is one breath, not that the breath stops halfway through the movement or you need to take an extra breath as you haven't completed the movement. That adjustment has to take place. Only then will your body begin to respond to your breathing pattern and the pranamaya awareness will come.

When you are visualizing the perfect asana, it is manomaya awareness. You are visualizing the perfect posture in your mind and you are doing the posture which may not be perfect. Your physical response in an asana may be 10 percent or 30 percent of what you are mentally visualizing. You can visualize yourself performing a perfect chakrasana, you may not be able to do it but your visualization is that of a perfect chakrasana. Then mind takes over matter. After a week, ten days, fifteen days, one month or three months, with sustained practice, what you visualize is what your body will do, with that perfection.

Focusing on a chakra is vijnanamaya awareness. It is possible to visualize a chakra in many different ways: as black and white or in colour, as a 2-D image or a 3-D image, as a point of light, or just as an idea. There are also two locations

where the chakra may be visualized: the back and the front. The back or the spine is the seat of the chakra, and the front is its field, the *kshetram*. When you visualize the chakra in the back, it is to be visualized as a point of light. When you visualize it in the front, that point of light covers the kshetram and you visualize it in the form of a lotus. It is like the beam of a torchlight, where it is narrow it is a point of light, but as it reaches outwards it expands. That expansion is seen in the form of the petals of a lotus.

The teacher has to guide the students with the visualization; in the beginning one may visualize in one manner and later on cultivate the imagery in another manner. The teacher has to also guide on where to concentrate in each asana, either on the point of chakra at the back or the chakra kshetram in the front. As a teacher, it is the clarity of instruction that connects you to vidya, while garbled instruction indicates confusion and ignorance. It has to be specific; when going into vijnanamaya, into the depth of your consciousness, to the psychic dimension, it is the imagery that guides. We start with chakras but other visualizations are also used, other yantric images are also used in other stages.

When you combine an asana with mantra, you are moving into the anandamaya dimension. The absorption in mantra will lead you to the anandamaya kosha. The mantra is guiding the body now, the movement is guided by the mantra, not by the intellect saying 1, 2, 3, 4 . . . The mantra takes over and the body begins to follow and gets absorbed by the rhythm of the mantra, and that is the anandamaya experience.

Try this, and write down your experiences after one hour of practice. You will find that you feel different, your body feels different for the next twelve hours of your waking state. Experiment with this. To begin with, try with pawanmuktasana part 1: one exercise 25 times, 5–5–5–5–5, annamaya–pranamaya–manomaya–vijnanamaya–anandamaya. Then the next exercise in the same way. If you feel

tired, then rest for some breaths in between. If the toes get tired or the wrists get tired, relax for some time until your foot or hand is free and relaxed again, and then continue.

This sequence that we were taught was not just for developing physical ease, but to take our understanding from the body, the annamaya kosha, through the other koshas, all the way to anandamaya.

PAWANMUKTASANA PART I (feet & leg movements)

SWAN tips:

- Before beginning the practices, take a few moments to become aware of the whole body with the eyes closed. At the end of each practice, take a few normal breaths and relax the part that was exercised.
- We are specifically doing only the third, fourth and fifth sequences: visualization, chakra and mantra, or 15 movements. However, let the first and second sequences happen spontaneously; let the awareness of the movement and the breath become part of the movement, but you focus on visualization from 1 to 5, on chakra from 6 to 10, and on mantra from 11 to 15.

Padanguli Naman (toe bending): 5–5–5; visualization–chakra awareness–mantra awareness.

Goolf Naman (ankle bending): 5–5–5; visualization–chakra awareness–mantra awareness.

Goolf Chakra (ankle rotation): 5–5–5; visualization–chakra awareness–mantra awareness (both clockwise and anticlockwise, with both feet together).

Goolf Ghoornan (ankle crank): 5–5–5; visualization–chakra awareness–mantra awareness (both clockwise and anticlockwise, with each foot).

Ardha Titali (half butterfly with each leg): Performed immediately after ankle crank with each leg, without changing the leg.

Poorna Titali (full butterfly)

SWAN tip: After the practice, stretch the legs and bump the legs up and down.

Isolating the awareness

Remember that when you first begin to practise in this manner, at each stage of awareness, your focus is entirely on that component. For example, first you are focusing on the movement and there is no breath awareness. Then when you do the breath, the awareness is with the breath and goes away from the physical movement of the joint.

When you extend the breath back into the joint and link it, it is a later stage of practice. You can link it after you have practised each stage individually for some time. To begin with, at each stage the awareness stands alone.

PAWANMUKTASANA PART I (leg movements)

Janu Naman (knee bending with both legs): 5–5–5; visualization–chakra awareness–mantra awareness.

SWAN tips:

- If you find it difficult to do the practice with both legs, then do it one at a time. Before you attempt to practise with both legs, build up the muscles of the hips and the thighs by practising with each leg 25 times, if you can, or at least 15 times for at least a month. That will give you the ability and stamina to do with both legs and gradually increase the number of rounds.
- There might be some soreness in the abdomen after the practice, as that area is also being exercised.
- There are different styles when doing this asana with both legs. The beginners should be taught to practise it

by taking their trunk back and becoming a boat, so there is no reclining. They should not be like a surfboard, but like a boat. The body should not go beyond a 30-degree incline with the feet only three inches above the ground. Advanced practitioners, however, should try to keep the body straight. In order to find your balance you may have to go back about 45 degrees, but then try to reduce the incline. The effect of this practice is in the pull of the muscles of the thighs. The straighter you are the greater the pull.

Janu Chakra (knee rotation with both legs): 5–5–5; visualization–chakra awareness–mantra awareness (both clockwise and anticlockwise).

SWAN tip: Imagine that you have a piece of chalk stuck between your toes and you have to draw a circle with that chalk. Make the circle bigger each time. Make sure that it is not an oval but a circle.

Shavasana: 1. Body relaxation 2. Awareness of breath in the abdomen 3. Awareness of prana shakti awareness 4. Deepening of relaxation 5. Externalization.

PAWANMUKTASANA PART I (hand & arm movements)

SWAN tip: Awareness of the breath and of the movement continues to be part of your practice. If your breath is longer than the movement, then you have to either speed up the breathing to match the movement or slow down your movement to match the breath.

Mushtika Bandhana (fist clenching): 5–5–5; visualization–chakra awareness–mantra awareness.

Manibandha Naman (wrist bending): 5–5–5; visualization–chakra awareness–mantra awareness.



Manibandha Chakra (wrist rotation): 5–5–5; visualization–chakra awareness–mantra awareness (both clockwise and anticlockwise, both wrists together).

Kehuni Naman (elbow bending), 3 variations: forward, sideways, upwards: 5–5–5; visualization–chakra awareness–mantra awareness.

Kehuni Chakra (elbow rotation): 5–5; chakra awareness–mantra awareness (both clockwise and anticlockwise, each elbow).

Skandha Chakra (shoulder rotation): 5–5–5; visualization–chakra awareness–mantra awareness (both forwards and backwards).

SWAN tip: At the end of the practice, become aware of your shoulders. Move them to release the tension. Relax your shoulders. Observe the neck, the upper back, the upper thoracic area. Discover the sensations.

Shavasana: 1. Body relaxation 2. Awareness of the natural breath 3. Visualizing the breath moving from the toes to the eyebrow centre and reverse 4. Externalization.

***Note**: The practices were not done in quick succession. After each practice, Swamiji instructed to relax for a few breaths and observe and relax whichever part had been exercised. This principle was followed in every session and sequence.*

We have completed the sequence of legs and arms. One practice remains to complete the part one series: the head and neck movements. However, before we do the head, we shall start with the two little eyes – the eye movements.

EYE MOVEMENTS

Up and Down Viewing: 2 times each (with both right and left thumbs).

SWAN tips:

- Keep the body upright and straight, and lock the body in the posture. The only thing you can move is the eyes.
- When you take the thumb to its final position, which is as far as the eye can see without moving the head, then hold it there till you feel the strain in your eyes, and then bring the hand down.

Sideways Viewing: 2 times each (both right and left sides).

SWAN tip: When you feel a slight pressure in the eye, that is the time to come back to the centre.

Rotational Viewing: 2 times each (clockwise with the right hand, anticlockwise with the left hand).

SWAN tip: At the end of the practices, close the eyes and become aware of the sensations in the eye region, in the eye sockets. Become aware of all feelings here, tiredness, heaviness, or any other.

GREEVA SANCHALANA (neck & head movements)

Forward and Backward: 3 times.
SWAN tip: Follow a gentle speed and gentle rhythm of breath.

Looking Over the Shoulders: 3 times (both right and left).

Ear Touching the Shoulder: 3 times (both right and left).

Head Rotation: 3 times each (both clockwise and anti-clockwise).

SWAN tips:
- Make sure you are aware of the contra-indications – that these movements, particularly head rotation, should not be performed by those suffering from vertigo, dizziness or hypertension. If you do them despite the conditions, then do very gently, knowing that it is your choice.
- At the end of the practice, remain with the eyes closed for some time, experiencing and observing all sensations in the head, the feeling of lightness. Relax the whole body, become aware of the whole body, observe the whole body.

Not for beginners

The sequence that is being taught here is not for beginners. I am not talking to beginners right now; I am talking to you as yoga teachers.

For beginners, use only the first two aspects: movement and breath. In your public teaching go up to breath awareness and awareness of movement. If your students are receptive you can add visualization later on. However, the last two components of chakra and mantra are not for general teaching; they are only for personal practice and sadhana.

Experiment with and experience the awareness when you focus on chakra and mantra. I am asking you to experience, not to teach. Yoga is an experience.

The practices have to be gradually built up, not everything can be learnt in one day. The body, the mind and the pranas have to adapt to the practice. The awareness has to eventually move from the gross awareness of the physical movement to the subtle awareness of the mantra. When that sensitivity is not there, it becomes mere curiosity and does not help in any manner. It only lets the teacher feel, 'Now they think I know more than other teachers.' Ask yourself if you have sensitized yourself enough to guide others in these areas. You cannot control your reactions, so what will you do if something happens when a chakra is activated?

Therefore, for teaching purposes, use the body and breath awareness in general and visualization with those who are inclined. If the regular students can come to the point of visualization, that in itself is a big achievement. In fact, you have been meditating for so long, you know the practices of pratyahara and dharana, but are you able to visualize just a candle flame? After so many years of practice, are you able to do that? If you have sincerely made the effort then by now you should be seeing it. If it has been just a passing thing, 'Okay, we have to focus on the symbol and chant *Om*', then you did not apply yourself and after twenty years you are still imagining and the mind does not come to the point of visualization. Therefore, look at these little things that indicate your success at each level. Reassess how you do every small thing, and see where you can improve, where you are getting distracted and where you can become focused.

What you are learning here is for you to first apply in your own practice. Gain that experience and understanding before even contemplating telling others about it. Experience the koshas, the different dimensions of your being, in your own life, begin with that. Teach yourself rather than other people. Don't be overexcited to teach others, ensure that you teach yourself. After a sustained period of practice, when you know that you have established yourself in some experience, identify it, and then cultivate the next level.

Nadi Shodhana in stages

Stage 1: Nadi shodhana without retention, equal inhalation and exhalation; count of 7, ratio of 1:1, 3 rounds.

Stage 2: Psychic nadi shodhana without retention; count of 7, ratio of 1:1, 3 rounds.

Stage 3: Psychic nadi shodhana with internal retention; count of 7, ratio of 1:1:1, 3 rounds.

Stage 4: Nadi shodhana with internal retention; count of 7, ratio of 1:1:1, for about 5 minutes.

SWAN tips:

- Maintain a steady rhythm of counting, adjust your breath to the count, a full inhalation and full exhalation should take place in the count.
- When you end the practice, observe the natural normal breath without any ratio. Feel the breath inside the nasal passage. Feel the cool and warm sensations in the nostrils as you breathe in and out.



RECEIVING A NEW HEAD, HEART AND PAIR OF HANDS

Sannyasi Atmajyoti, Kolkata

I came with the expectation that the Progressive Training course would be an advanced Teacher Training Course. It took me a day to pleasantly realize that it was not so, that the course aimed at developing the quality of Satyananda Yoga teachers by developing the strength and the stamina at the physical level, but more importantly by becoming aware of the inner qualities necessary to be a sadhaka before imparting any knowledge to students. We were on the anvil being beaten till the golden values were shining!

Only a visionary of Swamiji's calibre could design such a holistic course and present it so simply, developing the different levels and practices systematically. Swamiji's wisdom and joy was evident throughout. He guided us to look at our practices as sadhana. The encouragement in his tone kept us on our toes, and even the most challenging asanas seemed fun.

An absolute bonus was the study sessions with the *Yoga Chakra* books. We saw our heritage of yoga in a new light: as a great body of vidya. It inspired us to remain connected to this tree of vidya beginning from its earlier roots to present-day flowering and to never forget the Saraswati tradition we are aligned to.

The whole course gave us lots to reflect upon, and hopefully – a new head, a new heart and a new pair of hands!

Ayurveda, Pawanmuktasana 2, Nadi Shodhana

In the ancient times, before the discovery of medicines, there was a treatise called *Ayurveda*. *Ayu* means age and *veda* is knowledge, so the literal meaning of ayurveda is 'knowledge on how to extend the age of body'. This implies that if the lifespan is to be extended, there have to be conditions in the body that promote health. If there are illnesses and deficiencies, they will not promote health and your lifespan is likely to reduce. In order to prolong life, there is a requirement to live a healthier lifestyle. Therefore, the subject of ayurveda focuses on managing different components of the body which, when disturbed, reduce physical immunity and open the doors to illness.

Basis of ayurveda

Ayurveda also says that there are three *doshas* or humours, conditions of the body, and these should always be in balance, just as the secretion of hormones has to be in balance. If there is less or more hormonal production, it will reflect in the body accordingly. In the same manner the doshas, which reflect the physical conditions of the organs, also have to be balanced; less of one or more of one will create illness and disease. These humours were identified as: *vata*, gas; *pitta*, acidity; and *kapha*, mucus. The beginning of ayurveda is cleansing the body to balance these three elements. When these three elements are

balanced, then there is optimum health. There is good assimilation, digestion, excretion, respiration, cardiac function, circulation. Everything happens optimally.

The focus in the early stages of ayurveda is to balance the humours, just as the focus in the early practices of yoga is to attain physical purification. Yoga begins with hatha yoga, and the first practice of hatha yoga is shatkarma, in which the purpose is to cleanse the body of toxins and impurities, creating balance and harmony. Any practice in yoga, or even life sciences in general, will always begin by creating a condition in the body or the environment of purity, cleanliness and hygiene – a condition that is conducive to attaining better health. It is only after this cleansing that you move on to the other stages of hatha yoga.

Shatkarma is followed by asana, pranayama, mudra and bandha. These are the five progressive stages of hatha yoga. Similarly, in ayurveda, the first attempt is to rectify the imbalances of the humours through:

1. Diet
2. *Aushadhi*, herbal medication
3. Exercise
4. Right living. The routine has to be proper. Also, manage your diet and live according to the season. Whatever is produced in a particular season is what the body is capable of absorbing and retaining best in that season.
5. Practising asana and pranayama.

These are the five early stages of ayurveda, to balance the doshas and start the process of extending the lifespan.

Pawanmuktasana and ayurveda

The story of ayurveda relates to the second part of the pawanmuktasana series. In the first part, which is anti-rheumatic, the movements ensure that the moveable parts remain free of toxins, deformities, pain, inflammations, and there is proper circulation of both blood and prana. Pawanmuktasana part 1 deals mainly with the elimination of gases from the different joints of the body and therefore it

fulfils the first requirement of ayurveda: balancing the vata dosha.

The second part of pawanmuktasana focuses more on the trunk region, thus affecting all the internal organs: stomach, liver, kidney, pancreas, gall bladder, oesophagus, lungs, heart, and other organs here, as well as the glands that correspond to assimilation and digestion. This area has to be exercised in a manner that is gentle, and the whole trunk has to move as one unit.

Imagine that you have a jar filled with jelly and then you put different things in it. That is your trunk: different organs in jelly. The jar is the ribcage, the spine, the pelvic bones, and inside everything is jelly-like – the muscles, the ligaments, the nerves, the membranes are all moveable, muscular, spongy. It is only because of the spine that you are able to stand upright, otherwise you would collapse in on yourself. Therefore, instead of trying to work with each organ individually, as is done later on in the yogasanas, in pawanmuktasana part 2, you are working with the whole trunk by gently stretching, contracting, relaxing and moving it, which in turn moves the major and minor organs and muscles.

An example is leg rotation. People think it is just movement of the leg, as they are aware of the strength and the pressure in the legs, but what is happening to the rest of the body? As your legs are rotating, the muscles are pulling and pushing the whole region of the trunk. With that pull and push, expansion-relaxation, the whole jelly is moving; the lungs, the heart, the intestines, the stomach, the liver, the kidneys, the back, everything is moving and churning. The more you move them, the more you create a state of peristalsis, a squeezing and releasing kind of movement. That regulated movement in turn strengthens the muscle structure of the internal organs and affects their functioning and production of chemicals, hormones, juices and fluids. Therefore, although you are predominantly aware of the stretch and pull of the leg muscles, that major movement is

controlling all the minor movements in the abdomen. As a result, toxins are ejected, fresh blood flows in, tiredness of the organs is released, weakened muscles are strengthened, nerves are stimulated, the circulation is improved, the glands behave in a more controlled and regulated manner, and there is improvement in the overall performance and functioning of all the organs contained in this region.

One of the major benefits of pawanmuktasana part 2 is the regulation of the pitta flow, the bile and acidity, as well as kapha, mucus, as both are generated in the trunk region. There are mucous linings in the stomach, the intestines, the oesophagus, the trachea, the lungs, and all have to be in perfect balance. If there is excess mucus, you want to expel it; if there is less mucus, everything feels dry and you want to regain the normal humidity of the body. Similarly, if there is more acidity, there is burning; if there is less acidity, there is indigestion. Both pitta and kapha are regulated with pawanmuktasana 2, which is therefore known as anti-gastric, related with the problems of internal organs.

Focus on relaxation in part 2

An important point with pawanmuktasana part 2 is that the majority of the practices in this series are performed while lying on the floor on your back. The body is always in a state of rest and you are able to relax whenever you get tired. You do not have to alternate between lying down and getting up. You are already in a supine position, so shavasana is the base posture of pawanmuktasana 2. From shavasana you move into the asanas and then back into shavasana. It indicates that in the practice of pawanmuktasana 2, you have to focus on relaxing the body as the movements can be slightly strenuous.

So, during the practice of pawanmuktasana part 2, the focus will be on movement and then relaxation after the movement. Each time the relaxation should deepen; the deeper your relaxation is, the better your physical movement will be.

Padachakrasana (leg rotation): 5–5; chakra awareness–mantra awareness (both clockwise and anti-clockwise with each leg and then with both legs together; each sequence followed by relaxation: feeling the breath in the leg that was exercised and experiencing a sense of expansion and relaxation. After doing both legs, experiencing expansion and relaxation in both legs and the abdomen.)

SWAN tips:
- Before beginning the practices, lie down in shavasana and take some time to relax the whole body.
- While doing both legs together, you can place your hands under the buttocks to support the rotational movements.

Shavasana: 1. Relaxation of the whole body 2. Experiencing expansion and contraction of the whole body with breath awareness.

Padotthana (raised legs pose): 2 times with each leg and then with both legs, followed by relaxation.

SWAN tip: Make sure that the spine remains flat on the ground and only the legs go up.

Padasanchalana (cycling) with individual legs: 5–5; chakra awareness–mantra awareness (both forward and backward movement with each leg, each sequence followed by relaxation as in leg rotation).

SWAN tip: Deepen the relaxation with each sequence. After completing the rounds with individual legs and before beginning with both legs, remain in shavasana and relax until the respiration returns to normal. Focus on regulating your breath. Observe the quickness of respiration and see it return to its normal pace. If cramping is experienced in the abdominal muscles then inhale deeply, gently pushing

out the abdomen and then relax the whole body with the exhalation. Do not strain.

Padasanchalana (cycling) with both legs: 5 rounds; chakra awareness (both forward and backward movement, then alternate leg movement, each sequence followed by relaxation).

SWAN tips:

- When you are cycling backwards, ensure that you stretch the leg before bringing it up. You are not just moving the feet, the legs have to be straight when they come up; it is a bend-stretch, bend-stretch movement. Also, when you are coming down stretch the legs fully, don't keep the knees bent. This will create pressure in the stomach and in the thigh muscles. Observe that.
- When you do the alternate legs as if you are actually riding a bike, you can increase the speed gradually, as if you are moving from first gear to second gear to third gear to fourth gear to overdrive, then slow down and put the brakes on. Then reversing the 500 metres that you have bicycled, back to the starting point.

Shavasana: 1. Visualizing the breath moving from the toes to eyebrow centre and reverse 2. Lengthening and deepening the experience of breath 3. Observing the breath moving through different body parts 4. Externalization.

Supta Pawanmuktasana (leg lock pose): 2 rounds; breath awareness (with each leg and then with both legs; each sequence followed by relaxation).

Note*: Practitioners should be aware that whenever it is instructed to feel the breath in a part of the body other than those that are actually engaged in the breathing process, what one is experiencing is the prana, the energy, in that body part. As it is difficult for most people to experience prana directly, 'feeling the breath' is a tangible way to move into this subtle experience.*

Supta pawanmuktasana and abdominal pressure

The supta pawanmuktasana is the only asana that has been named 'pawanmuktasana' in the tradition. If you ask a hatha yogi what is pawanmuktasana, they won't list what we do. They will go into the pose of supta pawanmuktasana. If you ask them why, they will say, "Try it when you are full of gas!"

Another point to remember is that in every posture of pawanmuktasana 2, the pressure is created from the perineum and it comes up into the abdomen, so even in supta pawanmuktasana when you are holding the knees together, it creates this pressure. The movement of the head and the shoulders is only incidental to increase the pressure in the abdominal region. However, you have to also ensure that this pressure is not excessive, and that is why you are told to exhale as you bring the knees towards the nose. If you inhale while coming up, an undue pressure can be created on the heart, even eyes, ears and brain, which can increase the blood pressure and even lead to acid reflux in the digestive tract. Those who have spondylitis should also be careful about performing this asana and avoid putting too much pressure on the neck or trying to lift the shoulders.

As a general understanding, pawanmuktasana 2 creates a reverse pressure; it is not a downward pressure but an upward pressure. It reverses apana, the downward moving force, into moving towards its generator, manipura, thereby stimulating samana. When apana moves upwards there is an anti-gravitational pull, and when samana is stimulated the digestion improves. That is the point of these anti-gastric series of asanas.



Supta Udarakarshanasana (sleeping abdominal stretch pose): 3 rounds; breath awareness (each side).

SWAN tip: At the end of the practice, stretch the legs, bring the arms beside the body, and relax the whole body. Mentally observe the physical condition. Check each and every part and organ of your body, and try to know what you are feeling physically: tired, stressed, tight, relaxed, light. Observe the physical condition.

Naukasana (boat pose): 4 rounds; breath awareness (1st round: 12 inches off the ground; 2nd round: two feet; 3rd round: three feet; 4th round: grabbing hold of the toes and finding one's balance).

Shavasana: 1. Body relaxation 2. Natural breath awareness and counting of breath 3. Awareness and relaxation of major body parts 4. Awareness and relaxation of the whole body. (During awareness of the trunk, one tries to move the awareness to every organ there and experience their condition.) 5. Externalization.

SWAN tips:

- The whole digestive system is being exercised in pawanmuktasana 2. Therefore, during the practices, be aware of the entire digestive system including the stomach, the intestines, the liver, the kidneys, the pancreas, etc.
- Whenever you feel you are out of breath, be aware of the breath in the abdomen.

Naukasana in four stages

Although the traditional pose of naukasana is only raising the legs up to 15 cm, as stated in the books, we did it in four stages. This is for a specific reason. In the first stage you are one foot off the ground and in the final stage, you are actually grabbing your toes. By doing this, you are creating a deeper pressure in the abdomen. The sequential movement creates a contraction in the area, and there is

also a downward pressure. When your legs are coming up it is an upward pressure, and when you are trying to hold the toes there is a downward pressure. Therefore both pressures are felt in the final stage. It is a method to make you aware of how the body can gradually move from one stage into another, and each progression creates a different pressure in the body system.

Counterpose for pawanmuktasana part 2

In all the practices that we have done, we have involved movement of the legs, and the pressure has been from down up. It is a movement against gravity, therefore a different condition is created in the body. The only problem in this series is that everything is a forward bend; there is no backward bend in the anti-gastric series. The lower back, the spine, the legs, all undergo a lot of strain by bending forward so much, and some discomfort can arise as well. Therefore, some counterposes need to be done. The best counterpose for pawanmuktasana 2 is vyaghrasana, the tiger pose. It flexes the spine, stretches and bends the trunk, and releases all the stress and tension accumulated in the different joints. When you move the individual legs, you are creating a stretch on one specific side and then on the other side. Therefore, everything that was out of place internally now falls back into place through the stretching. Apart from this asana, we can also use bhujangasana, shalabhasana and dhanurasana. You can also do matsyakridasana, but that is more of a relaxation.

COUNTERPOSE FOR PAWANMUKTASANA PART 2

Vyaghrasana (tiger pose): 5 rounds; movement awareness (with each leg).

SWAN tip: To get the perfect posture, sit in vajrasana first, then inhale and raise the arms up, exhale and bend forward in shashankasana, and where the hands come to

rest, come up on all fours. Don't move the knees or the hands, and that is the perfect distance.

Pranayama

We will practise nadi shodhana in a sequential way, and that becomes a meditative practice. This will involve: first, becoming aware of the breath; second, breathing to a count; third, being aware of the flow in the alternate nostrils, mentally, not physically, along with count and ratio; fourth, visualization of the colours of the breath; fifth, using the hand mudra to practise physically, but maintaining psychic awareness of the colours; sixth, including internal kumbhaka; seventh, including external kumbhaka.

This will represent the beginner's perfection of nadi shodhana. It also indicates that there is more to breathing through alternate nostrils than people are generally aware of.

PRANAYAMA

Nadi Shodhana in stages

Preparation: Kaya sthairyam (body awareness and stillness).

SWAN tip: Make sure that your body will not distract you from deepening your experience of prana; come to a full level of comfort so you can maintain the pose without any strain for about 10 minutes.

Stage 1: Focusing on the breath, observing the process of breathing; gradually lengthening and deepening the breath.

Stage 2: Equal inhalation and exhalation, with count of 7.

SWAN tip: Maintain a steady rhythm of counting and adjust the length of the breath according to the rhythm. Take a full breath in to the count of 7 and a full breath out to the count of 7. Develop this synchronicity between the flow of breath, the count and awareness.

Stage 3: Psychic alternate nostril breathing, with count of 7, ratio of 1:1.

Stage 4: Psychic alternate nostril breathing, with count of 7, ratio of 1:1, along with visualization of colours of the breath. The breath is visualized as a blue light in the left side and as a red light in the right side.

Stage 5: With nasagra mudra, physical nadi shodhana without retention, along with awareness of colours as above, count of 7, ratio of 1:1, 5 rounds.

Stage 6: With internal retention, maintaining awareness of colours during inhalation and exhalation and awareness of colourless space in the mind during retention, count of 7, ratio of 1:1:1, 5 rounds.

Stage 7: With internal and external retention, maintaining awareness of colours during inhalation and exhalation and awareness of colourless space in the mind during retention, count of 7, ratio of 1:1:1:1, 5 rounds.

SWAN tips:

- When including external retention, after each round of nadi shodhana bring the hand down and take 5 normal breaths, then start with the next round.
- If you require more than 5 breaths to normalize your respiration, take them.

End of the practice: Remain seated quietly for some time, experiencing the silence and stillness within, and then externalize the awareness.



Vidya: Eternal Knowledge

STUDY: *YOGA CHAKRA 1*, CHAPTER 5

There is a word, 'omniscience'. It means 'to know everything'. Now, the thought, the belief that there is 'one who knows everything' includes the idea that in the beginning knowledge existed. When we did not exist, knowledge existed, and when we cease to exist, knowledge will continue to exist. That is the idea of omniscience, the continuation of knowledge. When you take birth you connect with that power-line of knowledge for the period that you are alive. When you die, you are disconnected from that power-line.

The emergence of knowledge

This indicates that there are two levels of knowledge. One, the continuous stream of knowledge, and two, our connection from birth till death. The transcendental knowledge that existed before us and will continue to exist even after we die is known as *para vidya*. The material knowledge, our connection in each lifetime with the power-line of knowledge, is known as *apara vidya*. *Para* means higher and *apara* means 'not higher', lower.

Where did all the knowledge come from? From the human mind. However, the link the human mind creates with knowledge is not logical; it is intuitive. When Einstein discovered the theory of relativity, it was intuition. When

Newton saw the apple falling, he had an intuition about gravity. Only later did it become logical, and then the sequence was created and the progression was seen. The connection with knowledge always begins with intuition at the higher level. When it comes down to the intellectual level, then it becomes logical. Even in the spiritual traditions, two types of knowledge are defined: one, which you receive through intuition, grace, transmission, whatever term you use; and the other which is acquired through study, through self-effort.

There is a saying in the Bible, "There is nothing new under the sun." There is nothing new that human beings can create as everything that we are seeing today, even a simple pole, its concept, structure, dimension, everything has existed in the past, even when it was not known how to build it. Two plus two has always existed in the past, regardless of whether we could write 2+2. Mathematical knowledge and understanding came much later. The idea, the form, the understanding always existed, even before the birth of creation.

All this is included in one word in Sanskrit: vidya. *Vidya* means something that can be known. Vidya is defined as knowledge, as wisdom, as science. Whatever definition is used, it always indicates a progression, a continuation, one step leading to the next. This is one aspect, the knowledge.

Recipients of knowledge

Another aspect is the person who receives the knowledge, who develops and enhances the knowledge. Agricultural understanding is there, but each farmer will use that knowledge in his own manner. Medical understanding is there, but each medical practitioner will use that knowledge in his own style. Thus the person who receives, lives and enhances the knowledge now becomes the second component.

It is seen that in some people, due to *samskaras* or traits of consciousness, certain centres remain open which makes

learning and expression of knowledge easier. Certain people are also born with closed centres of the brain and for them learning is very hard. Nothing seems to get in, no matter how much you try, how patient you are, how much you explain and inform.

People say these are conditions of mind. That may be so, however, those conditions mean we either assimilate knowledge easily or create a block. In a thousand machines, one machine can be defective. In a thousand chappatis, one chappati can be defective. Similarly, in people too, the centres of mind that provide understanding and expressive ability do not function in the same way; they do not spark away at the same speed and frequency in everyone. You might have half a centre less active or ten centres more active than normal. You might have zero centres active. Your receptivity is indicated by how much you understand and are able to grasp.

Thus the individuals who come to experience the vidya are of two types: some with open centres, others with closed centres. Those with open centres are intuitive by nature. They become the sadhus and sannyasins, gurus and masters, who through their own sadhana and meditations, their own effort and understanding, are able to bring a change in their life, their mindset, thinking, personality and even their routine. The other group finds it difficult to adjust, accommodate, alter or manage their lifestyle and life routines.

In society, the mind is recognized either as a creative mind or a dumb mind. A dumb mind means that there is no growth. It is a damaged product; it cannot evolve in this life. A creative mind means one that is fully functional, 100 percent optimally functional, and can attain whatever it wants. Dumbness of mind indicates a closed mind and a creative mind indicates an active, effulgent and dynamic mind.

The creative mind can be in the para state and also in the apara state. In the para state, you become a philosopher,

sage or saint, like Buddha, Christ or Mahavir. In the apara state you become a genius: a musician, a scientist, a physicist, excelling in material knowledge, like Beethoven or Einstein. Thus, there is excellence in material knowledge on one side and excellence in spiritual knowledge on the other side.

Exponents of knowledge

Now the individual and knowledge get together. Those who contribute to the development of knowledge become the masters. Jesus was a master of the spiritual tradition and Einstein a master of the scientific tradition. He came to the point of learning where he was able to see the whole process, therefore he can be called the master, the guru, of the subject with which he was dealing. Jesus became the master or guru of the subject with which he was dealing. Ramana Maharshi, Patanjali, Edison, they all became masters of the subject with which they were dealing.

In both spiritual and material spheres, there are certain people who have perfected or reached the apex of their experience of knowledge. They are the experts. The term for 'expert' in spiritual science is guru. These people represent a level of expertise in their knowledge, skill and expression. It is these people who further enhance and develop the knowledge. They are the maintainers, the enhancers and the preservers of vidya. They also define what learning has to be undertaken, what understanding has to be derived, what the system of learning should be, the process, the steps, the focus. After all, even learning about the nuclear theory from Einstein's perspective will begin with a basic understanding of the subject and only later evolve into a complex theory.

Maintaining knowledge: parampara

The sequence of learning is decided by the group of experts or masters, and the moment an individual connects with promoting and understanding this knowledge, they become part of the tradition, or *parampara*. Those who become part of the tradition remain connected with the teaching and the

essence of the vidya. Therefore parampara is made up of the expert group, the knowledge itself, and the individuals. Through this expert group, there is development of the subject, and as the subject develops and more people understand, adopt, adhere to and implement it, a connection with vidya forms.

A musician will listen to the rhythm in every noise and sound. It is the natural inclination of the musician to try to discern that. If the bird is singing, he will ask, is there a rhythm to it? If the fan is moving, is there a beat to it? If the heart is beating, is there a rhythm to it? The musician hears and recreates, the artist sees and paints, the sculptor sees and carves. Two things are seen here: the mental understanding and the expression.

The mental understanding and its expression is appropriate when people become part of the parampara. The parampara provides continuous development, expansion and appreciation of what is received.

Imparting knowledge: shruti and smriti

When the teaching of the expert is imbibed, then the relationship of guru-disciple begins. In the past, this learning was of a different manner. It was in the form of *shruti*: you hear and you remember. For example, many times in satsangs you ask a question and an answer is given, and you remember it. You did not write down every word that was spoken, but you remembered what was said. That is known as shruti.

Shruti was imparted in the form of sutras. In order to make things easy to understand, to facilitate shruti, instead of long-winded explanations, instructions were given as capsules, as sutras. Instead of lecturing for hours on *Yoga chitta vritti nirodhah*, just the four words were used. Out of these four words, you can make a whole lecture. Thus a *sutra* is the essence of the subject, and that is memorized. When a sutra is memorized, it becomes shruti: what you have heard. Like children remember the stories told by their grandmother. That memory is shruti. Something that you

have heard; it has been told to you by your teacher, by your guru, by your elder.

Smriti is memory of an event that has happened. For example, the First World War happened. Today nobody is alive who saw it, but the information is there. There is nobody to tell us but the knowledge that this war happened is there. That is smriti, memory.

The Upanishads, the Vedas and the other scriptures are the outcome of shruti, the teaching that took place during satsang between guru and disciple. Just like today we record the satsangs and print them, in the same manner, the disciples of the past used to ask questions that were important and relevant, and then the answers would be memorized. The questions and answers would then be retold, like bards retelling stories through songs. These formed the Upanishads, the teachings of rishis, and their purpose was to enhance knowledge, to provide greater clarity to what people were trying to understand, explain and define a process, a system, a science. The Vedas represent that, too. They are not books of Hindu religion; they are a collection of thoughts by different seers who imparted that understanding and knowledge, that vidya, to their disciples or to aspirants. Through them the para vidya became accessible along with the apara vidya.

Respect vidya

Another important thing is that when students are being taught, it must be according to the level of understanding the student has. After all, what subjects are taught to primary class students and class six students in a school? Are they the same? No. Primary class will learn how to say ABC; they will learn how to recognize the alphabet, write it and memorize it. They will learn the basic math, the tables. The subjects will differ, change and be enhanced with each class. Does this happen in your yoga class? On the contrary, in your yoga class, instead of taking students from class one to two to three to four, you take them straight to tenth class. That

is because everybody wants to show off, "I know yoga better and I can take you to the advanced practices." That is the reality and that is why teachers make students do headstands from the first day.

Yoga teachers are people who follow the rules least, because they are into self-projection; they are not into preservation of vidya. For them, vidya is to be used for commercial gain, therefore they become the worst adherents to vidya – they project their ego and want to be identified as the best by everyone. The connection with vidya, with the parampara, is lost, and there is only a connection with their own ego and the desire to be recognized. When self-projection and ego is the driving force, no matter how much you know, disconnection takes place from the intuitive source, as you have come down to the material level. You lose that sacred spark and become a commercial yoga teacher.

Those who remain connected with vidya develop the system, the path, and they continue the process of educating themselves. Connection with guru is not a membership to a club. People say, "For many years I did not have a guru so I made one. I have a guru now." For them, it is like an improved social standing, "I have a guru; you don't have a guru. My guru has written so many books, your guru has written one book. My guru is fat and big, your guru is short and thin." Different kinds of comparison come into the mind. For such people the intention is to become social climbers through yoga by riding on the back of guru. They don't connect with the vidya or the parampara, and stagnation takes place in their experience, their teaching, their learning, and they reach the end of their line.

When there is real connection, there is no reaching the end of the line ever, for vidya keeps inspiring and motivating you and making you discover new aspects. It allows you to develop your own wisdom. When there is development of wisdom, you take charge of your own life.

Few spiritual aspirants do that today. They dump the whole burden on the guru saying, "If my guru says so, I

will do it." But even then they don't do it. If I say to them, "Smile for twelve hours and don't frown", nobody can do that. If I say, "Relax and don't panic, just enjoy life and don't fight", nobody can do that. Therefore, even the idea that 'I will follow my guru' remains just an idea. So where is the learning? Where is the connection? Where is the sincerity? Where is the commitment? Where is the seriousness?

The route to vidya

Adherence and connection to vidya must give birth to certain conditions in the mind. One of them is sincerity. If there is falsehood, you can never derive the best. Focus sincerely on your individual effort to imbibe, learn, grow and express. Without that trait, progress is not possible.

Another condition is commitment: adherence to the process of education as maintained and defined by vidya and the parampara. Commitment means no add-ons. For example, don't try to mix prana vidya with crystal healing and colour therapy. Prana vidya is a stand-alone practice, and you have to be committed to understand that. If you have a flirting mind, you will never grasp the true intention of education. There has to be adherence to the process of education as defined in stages; you have to follow the progression, the sequence, without altering or adding things. The mind has to be clear about this approach and understand it.

The third condition is seriousness: connecting with your wisdom and discrimination, applying what you have learned, supporting others, expressing yourself creatively and positively. This means being responsible for yourself. That is seriousness.

Seriousness also means determination. In school, maybe you study during the year or not, but when the time of the exam comes, you 'get serious'. You don't get sincere, you get serious. What does that mean? Why do you say, "I'm getting serious now"? It means you were not serious earlier. Therefore 'serious' here means applying your understanding

to absorb, imbibe, and do the whole thing again – becoming the sponge that soaks in the water. It indicates a willing, receptive state of mind, "I am now ready to learn." It also makes you aware of your personal responsibility. You don't say, "Oh exams don't matter." You say, "I will get serious, I will study and pass." You are taking charge of yourself. You are becoming responsible for yourself. Being serious has to be understood in the right perspective.

The changing world scenario

Recently I read a report published by UK researchers. They stated that children today are deprived of sleep, and on an average they lose ten hours of sleep every week. In order to help them in studies, these scientists were suggesting that their school timing be changed, some classes should begin at seven, some at eight, some at nine, some at ten. This would allow children to sleep longer.

Now, the reason they gave for children not sleeping on time was: iPhones and iPads. They are up until late at night Facebooking, What's Apping, messaging, skype-ing. This means parents don't have the courage to tell their children the correct time to sleep and wake up. Twenty years ago, parents would say, "You can watch your favourite TV show between such and such time, and after that you can't touch the TV." Your parents used to tell you that, but you can't say that to your children. Today, due to the distorted habits of children which parents are unable to control, researchers recommend that the education system be changed. The inability of parents to guide their children is resulting in changing the system of education across the nation, and maybe one day across the world. This is the future generation you are dealing with, and they are your children.

All this indicates a chain reaction of influences and pressures, a culture of distraction and dissipation, influencing social decisions. I felt sad hearing that the educational system should be changed in order to accommodate the bad habits of children who are not on a positive or constructive

path but on a dissipated and destructive path. If this infatuation with iPad and iPhones increases, then in ten years' time people will forget how to hand-write. Everybody is using the computer in school now, even a six-year-old child knows how to use iPad, and people are forgetting how to write. In ten years' time, they will close down the schools; just transfer everything to the iPhone and let people pick up whatever they want to. Then there will be absolute chaos in the world, there won't be any order, system, regulation or discipline. And this is happening under the pretext of human rights. That is what the devil does! He entices you with 'human rights', while God's command is restraint: "No, you can't do this, it's incorrect. Do the right thing." No wonder the devil is getting the upper hand!

In fact, there is a crisis in heaven too. Saint Peter says that all the new angels don't know what to do; they keep staring at their empty hands and moving their thumbs!



RECONNECTING WITH THE TRADITION

Chandramani, Uruguay

This course has reassured my connection with the tradition from an understanding I did not have before. The reliance in this knowledge being transmitted by guru in a non-intellectual way is for me now the inspiration on this path of overcoming the negative aspects in life. My proficiency in English is medium level but even so, in the classes and satsangs with Swami Niranjan, I understood everything as if it was in my own language.

Through this course I have developed a clearer understanding of the Satyananda Yoga–Bihar Yoga system due to the insights of *Yoga Chakra*. The concepts of sincerity, seriousness and commitment have become clear to me. I have understood the need for a continuous effort to evolve, taking responsibility for oneself, expressing compassion and being aware of the receptivity of the students, deepening one's own practice as the first aim, maintaining fidelity to the sequence and progression of the practices, developing creativity regarding both the expression and understanding of appropriate actions.

Living Vidya

STUDY: *YOGA CHAKRA 1*, CHAPTER 6

Spiritual traditions believe acquisition of knowledge to be the journey of human life. Everything else that you do in between – marriages and divorces, games of love and hate – are all incidental. Just as the aim of life is to survive and whether you choose to eat Chinese, Continental, Japanese, Indian or any other kind of food is incidental, the purpose of life is attainment of vidya.

In this journey, this process of evolution, there is acquisition of greater knowledge, greater understanding, allowing for higher discoveries and achievements. From the time of Stone Age tools, today we have reached space age tools. This is continuation of knowledge. From using syllables like 'ugg-ugg' in prehistoric days to the creation of inspired poetry represents an evolution of understanding and knowledge.

The path of knowledge

Yogis and spiritual traditions have seen the human journey as a pilgrimage to acquire knowledge. They say the purpose of life is acquisition of *brahma jnana*, knowledge of the transcendental reality. Before creation, just as the five elements existed in unmanifest form, knowledge also existed in unrecognized form, in the form of essence. This

can be likened to a seed that contains the potential of a tree. When you break open the seed you don't see the tree in it, the tree does not exist there as a shape or form. It exists as a possibility and potential which, when the conditions are right, will manifest. However, if the conditions are not right, that potential will remain contained in the seed.

Pre-creation, knowledge existed, covering every aspect of the known and unknown dimensions. This is transcendental knowledge or *para vidya*, and it is a continuous stream of knowing, realizing, understanding. When creation takes place and things are conditioned to the effect and influence of time and space, things are identified and given a nature, name, form, quality. At that time the higher knowledge is used to identify and interact with the created. The higher knowledge limits itself, and becomes *apara vidya*, non-transcendental knowledge.

When the sun is shining on the entire planet, you can see the full picture. That is the higher knowledge. At night when there is no sun and you only have a torchlight, you can only see a specific area where the light is falling. The light is the same but the projector and projection of light are different, and therefore the perceptions change. In the same way, in apara vidya you focus on something specific, the senses and the sense objects. While para vidya, the transcendental knowledge, is expansive.

Messengers of knowledge

When there is vidya, there has to be somebody to live it, realize it, know it. This is where certain people are identified by nature and samskara, or ordained by destiny, to become what is called 'the messenger'. In the tribe of Jews, Jesus emerged as a messenger. What made him different from others, why couldn't others be messengers? In a tribe of thousands, Prophet Mohammad emerged as a messenger, why not any other person? In this way, in the crowd of many, one person is identified, either due to samskara or a preordained situation – something that happens beyond the

realm of human knowledge. They become the light bulbs connected to the cosmic line. They are called the special people, and they fall in the category of those who live the vidya, enhance the vidya, propagate the vidya and make it useful for the community.

The whole community is not connected to the transcendental wire of knowledge. It is only taking the knowledge from the local transformer: the individual who is living, propagating, experiencing and educating people in that vidya.

Commitment to learning

The whole purpose is to commit oneself to learning, not just to apply the learning for personal gain. Education is usually used to help oneself professionally; even yoga is used to help oneself professionally. That is all right. However, before you do that, ask what has been your level of mastery. For example, you are participating in this course. As soon as you go back, will you start saying, "Oh I learnt this, I learnt that", and start teaching this and that? Are you going to use the knowledge that you are gaining here professionally and commercially? Before you do that, ask yourself how much are you experiencing, living and perfecting what you have learnt. If you are not imbibing, living and perfecting it, then I certainly object to you using the vidya for commercial gain. If you are able to imbibe, live and become that knowledge and then you use it, that opens up a different context altogether.

When you live and become the knowledge, you apply those principles in your own life; they are not alien to you. Along with this, you also contribute with your own pool of experience to enrich the subject. That awareness must be there. So ask yourself, "Before I use the vidya to increase my earnings, do I have the ability to experience and live the principles that I am asking others to follow?" That is the question one has to ask, for spirituality is commitment to the process of education and learning.

One has to apply the three principles of seriousness, commitment and sincerity. These three words have to be understood from a different perspective. Sincerity is focusing on the individual effort to learn, imbibe and grow. That personal effort is the first thing. Your effort, your intention has to be sincere, correct and true. Not like, "Okay, I have a mantra but I do it maybe once a week or whenever I remember." Not that kind of an attitude, but focusing, making the effort on a daily basis to learn, and to live what you learn. That is sincerity.

Commitment is adhering to the process of learning and education, as maintained by the teacher or the tradition. In this commitment, you connect with the mission or the intent of vidya, and not with a personality. This is the form of commitment most people find difficult. They think of commitment as something between one person and another person. However, here we are not talking of the commitment between people; we are talking of a commitment between you and your intention.

What is your intention? Can you remain true to your intention? If you remain true to your intention, then it becomes the motivating factor for you to grow in life. When Sri Swamiji was asked what was his most memorable moment in life, his most cherished memory, he said, "The moment I put my head down in front of Swami Sivananda, my master. That was the defining moment for me and I remember it all the time." In the book *Siddhartha* by Herman Hesse, Siddhartha becomes a financier and earns a lot of riches. However, under his bed in a box he keeps the same old shoes and clothes with which he had walked into the city – to remind himself of his humble beginnings all the time.

Today people want to forget their humble beginnings, rather they want to be told of their affluent futures. Those who can remain connected with the humble beginnings are the people who learn. Those who are thinking of affluent futures never learn as they are too busy trying to put different add-ons to what they know. For them even the guru

is an add-on, that internal connection is not there, the guru is only a social identity. However, adherence to the process of education as propagated, developed and maintained by the teacher and the tradition, following the system without add-ons, is the meaning of commitment. Thus you maintain the purity, the simplicity, the sequence and the progression of the practice.

Connecting with wisdom

The third aspect is connection with your own wisdom and discrimination. Apply what you know and learn, support others, and express creativity and positivity. That indicates seriousness, for when you apply what you know, when you are supporting others on their journey to find stability, and radiating creativity and positivity, it is an indication that you have committed yourself seriously. This seriousness also makes you responsible for your own efforts and actions.

People ask what does it mean to be creative. Now, what do you create? Something that can bring happiness. That is the purpose of creation. Something that brings pain and suffering is not the purpose of creation or creativity. Therefore, creativity means the expression of the best quality in you. All the terms used in spiritual life, whether creativity or any other, indicate a connection that you need to cultivate with your own positive side. That connection is the feeding of the correct dog. You know the story. You've got two dogs, one black and one white, they both fight, which one wins? The one you feed! If you feed the one that allows you to attain happiness then you are on the right track in your life. If you are feeding the wrong one and there is continuous struggle, pain and suffering, then you have to think about what is wrong. And everything wrong is not situational or circumstantial; the mind is the train that crashes and the mind is the crane that lifts the crashed train too. Everything depends on your response to a situation. Therefore, if you can create a world of happiness around you, that is creativity.

Role of the guru

In this context you have to understand the role of the guru and the purpose of interaction with the guru. The term 'guru' does not mean the enlightened one. It simply means somebody who can help remove the ignorance, the *avidya*. Even the teacher in school who teaches you ABC and 2+2 plays that role, for the cobwebs of ignorance are being removed and the mind is being educated. However, the teachers at school and college are not equated with a spiritual guru as they deal with apara vidya, the lower form of knowledge. The spiritual guru deals with para vidya, the transcendental knowledge. In the para dimension the guru is also called a teacher, but one who imparts spiritual knowledge, who inspires one in spiritual life.

There are many kinds of gurus. There is not just one idea of guru; various kinds of gurus are identified according to the subject and the role that is required. For example, when Sri Swamiji left Ganga Darshan, he went to see Swami Maheshananda Giri in Rajasthan to ask him what he should do. Swami Maheshananda Giri told him that in order to live like a paramahamsa he needed to isolate himself and outlined certain things that had to be done. This is published in the *Bhakti Yoga Sagar* series. Now, why did Swami Satyananda go to Swami Maheshananda? Because Swami Maheshananda was the *sakshi guru* of Swami Satyananda when he was being initiated. He was the 'witness guru' who witnessed the initiation. In the classical sannyasa tradition, it is not a single guru who initiates you, but a family. The main initiator is one, but there are others who take on different roles. In the absence of your guru, you can go to them for guidance too.

When Swami Sivananda was no more, Swami Satyananda went to the sakshi guru who provided him with confirmation of his future directions. How many times did Swami Satyananda meet his sakshi guru? Only twice, first at the time of initiation and then again fifty-five years later, not in between. That is how different roles are played even by gurus.

Swami Satyananda had five sakshi gurus who were present during his initiation. Swami Sivananda was his sadguru as he had connected with him, he was his guide and inspiration, the person to whom he surrendered. This is the Indian understanding of guru, which is poles apart from the western understanding.

In India the guru is mainly seen as an instructional figure, one who provides the necessary instruction and teaching in a given capacity. Therefore there are *kula gurus*, gurus of the family, and they instruct on family matters. There are *raja gurus*, gurus for the kingdom; there are *sadgurus*, spiritual gurus; there are yoga gurus, dharma gurus, diksha gurus, sakshi gurus, and many others. There is a wide range of gurus, with many prefixes, each identifying the job they have to do. If it was guru with no prefix, only one word, then the role would be much simpler. However, this categorization indicates that gurus have to play different roles, impart different aspects of the vidya. Not everybody has the same role.

This has been the understanding of guru in Asia and therefore the culture and idea of guru thrived here. It is only recently, since the time of Swami Vivekananda and Paramahamsa Yogananda, that the notion of guru first went across the oceans, and in this first exposure they were seen as super-beings. At the same time, the religious beliefs of the West were also superimposed on these people. The classic Christian ideas of a holy saint were superimposed on people like Swami Vivekananda, Paramahamsa Yogananda and others. There was an expectation to see the values ascribed to a holy saint in these people which led to ignoring the values that they were living as something useful for everyone.

Although the practices that these luminaries took to the West were adopted, the imposition by the local populace on these individuals was cultural. Even today, many do not recognize any difference between sannyasa and monkhood. People think, 'A sannyasin is the Indian counterpart of a Christian monk.' Then both are compared: 'Sannyasins

are like this and monks and priests are like that.' Such comparison is ridiculous, for they are two different ideas, two different lifestyles, two different mindsets. This is how misconceptions are created, and due to all this, incorrect interpretations of the guru-disciple connection have come in.

There are other cultural differences in understanding the concept. In the West, the association with guru begins as friendship, then it becomes a consultant relationship, then it becomes a dependent relationship, and then it becomes an ownership issue. While in the Indian culture, it is seen as a reverential relationship, where the guru guides you to attain your own peace and contentment in life. These different trends are a reality, and if you critically analyze and observe, not just one incident but different incidents throughout history, you will discover that this is correct.

It's the music, not the musician

The relationship that must be cultivated is the connection to vidya and not to the personality. It is the music that is eternal, not the musician. Musicians will come and play their piece and go away. In one specific time and place you can enjoy the music of one musician, but the music goes on, and the *swaras*, the notes, wait until the next musician is able to play them. It is the same with vidya. When people connect with vidya, that connection is sustained, personalities come and go. Today we are here, tomorrow we will be gone, but the intent of vidya will carry on, the effort to disseminate knowledge will carry on.

Ultimately it is the management of your own mind and how you deal with the situations that you face in your life that are more important than what someone said. To have that level of understanding, there is a need to take charge of your efforts and intentions. Until and unless that effort is there, the relationship between guru and disciple cannot be successful. There will always be conflict, confusion, expectation and grief, and you will be constantly thinking, 'He is not fulfilling my expectation.' That grief and anger

will build up if you remain with your expectations. Therefore, to develop the proper relationship with guru, assume responsibility for your own life, connect with the vidya and make the effort to live the vidya.

Impression of Participant

SEVEN CONCLUSIONS

Sannyasi Vidyakiran, Colombia

I have come to seven conclusions out of the course:

1. To remain connected with the tradition, with the vidya, with the knowledge, with the parampara. The commitment to come back to the ashram.
2. To use this knowledge with respect, responsibility and love.
3. To change my approach to yoga from considering it a practice to making it a sadhana to making it a lifestyle – in my own life and for all the others I teach.
4. In lifestyle, live what I know, every day, every moment.
5. Live the yamas and niyamas, take out the negativity, the 'six friends'. Fill up with positivity, live pratipaksha bhavana.
6. Always smile. Be happy. Just as in antar mouna we bring a past thought and then drop it, do the same with the bad emotions, be conscious of not clinging to those emotions.
7. We receive negativity from the environment or other people, and this affects us, our thinking, our decisions, our emotions. We are weak and therefore we get influenced, but we can be strong. We have the capacity to apply viveka, we have the wisdom to act appropriately.

Dosha Balance with Pawanmuktasana

The practices of pawanmuktasana create a balance in the *doshas*, the humours, in the body. Pawanmuktasana part 1 primarily rectifies the imbalance of *vata*, wind; pawanmuktasana part 2 that of *pitta*, bile; and pawanmuktasana part 3 that of *kapha*, mucus.

Pancha prana and the doshas

To understand how the doshas go out of balance, you need to look into the principle of *pancha prana*, the fivefold energies in the body. These five pranas: prana, apana, samana, udana and vyana, move in different directions. *Apana* is a downward moving force, *prana* is an upward moving force, *samana* is a sideways moving force, *udana* is the force in the arms and legs, and *vyana* is the all-pervasive force. In yoga practices, whether asana, pranayama or other practices, an attempt is made to bring prana and apana together, which means reversing the flow of apana to make it go up, and reversing the flow of prana to make it go down. These are the two major pranas that interact in yogic practices.

Excessive vata, in the form of gas, is produced when the imbalance is mainly in apana and partially in prana – it is eighty percent due to apana and twenty percent due to prana. A part of this excess vata is then distributed from samana to different parts of the body, causing aches in the joints.

Excess of pitta, bile, happens to people who eat without control. With this, samana goes out of balance. When there is anxiety, nervousness and tension, or when the mind is dissipated, people react in two different ways. There is an instinctive response at that time to try and contain the hyperactivity of the system, and many people do it by eating; whenever they are nervous or tense, they eat and eat. There is another group of people, the minority, who avoid food when they are tense; they cannot eat when they are under stress or pressure.

When you eat too much there is an over-production of digestive fluids, which continuously secrete into the stomach, giving birth to a bilious feeling. On the other hand, when you don't eat or eat too little, the bile builds up and there is a sensation of acidity in the stomach. Thus both conditions, overeating and under-eating, create acidity.

Take the example of the toilet-flush in the bathroom. If you push the flush forty times during the day, there is a greater possibility of wear and tear. If you flush four times a day, at regular intervals, the life of the flush is prolonged and there is less chance of wear and tear. The same happens with the stomach. Whenever you eat, the same amount of digestive juices is secreted to assimilate the nutrients and remove the waste product. The stomach does not have a sensor to assess whether you are eating a handful of peanuts or a full meal of rice, dal and sabji, or a whole chicken. Every time some solid goes into the stomach, the digestive process begins and the juices are secreted. Whether you eat too little or too much, the same quantity of juices is flooding your system to digest the meal. If there is continuous intake of food, then it is like a bath of bile in the stomach. If you eat too little or not at all, then also there is accumulation of bile in the stomach, as it will secrete on time as per the body clock, but it will not be used up.

Pawanmuktasana part 2 specifically deals with the functioning, maintenance and health of the digestive system as a whole. Digestion is such a beautiful and complex system which

no scientist can ever create. The strength, the stamina and the energy to survive is received through nourishment, extracted by the digestive fires from the food that you eat, and the waste matter is put out. What a unique system! Each organ works independently and has a specific role to support life, yet the failure of any organ will lead to distress and eventually death.

The movements of pawanmuktasana part 2 ensure that muscle strength and health of the internal organs of the digestive system is maintained. Once that happens, there is better functioning of the digestive system including the secretion of the digestive fluids and hormones of the endocrine glands.

Importance of dietary regulation

To maintain a healthy digestive system, however, another effort has to be made in addition to pawanmuktasana: rectifying the eating habits. Pawanmuktasana part 2 combined with proper eating habits is what will create a balanced pitta. Just doing the asanas and not changing the previous patterns of either overeating or under-eating will not help in the long run. There can be some temporary relief, but the conditions will not change. There has to be dietary observation as well as conscious restriction. In the ashram, for example, the rule is to eat all meals between sunrise and sunset at specific times.

According to ayurveda, food must be consumed only between sunrise and sunset. The reason is that our nerves respond to sunlight; they are activated in daylight and become sluggish when it becomes dark. The energies of the sun activate the body. Therefore, ayurveda says, sunrise first then breakfast; before midday, lunch; and in the evening, not night, dinner. If you feel hungry at night, then have some liquid such as milk or a herbal infusion, but nothing that excites the body such as tea or coffee. These are habits that you need to cultivate. If you already follow them, then try to strengthen them. So pawanmuktasana part 2 along with better dietary habits will take you a long way.

Pawanmuktasana part 3 for kapha management

Pawanmuktasana part 3 primarily rectifies kapha imbalance. Several practices in this series predominantly affect the upper part of the trunk and create movement in the cardiovascular and respiratory systems, helping to clear the excess mucus from the lungs.

When you do the practices, observe what each practice does, where it affects you, which part of your body feels more vibrant and which part feels more tired. Observe your body from the perineum to the throat, and be an assessor of your own practice. You can even write down your observations.

Also be aware of the five components of concentration during the practices. The first is the movement. The second is the breath, which has to now flow instinctively and spontaneously with all your movements. It has to become part of your natural movement; you have to train yourself to be aware of when you are moving and when you are breathing, and how you are breathing with each movement. Look at the demonstrator to know what the perfect practice is and also integrate visualization with your practice. These three components should be experienced as a natural part of your practice and perception, and I will lead you into the other two components: chakra and mantra.

A book is not a teacher

Before we start the practices, a point must be clarified. Some people have asked why I sometimes change the sequence of pawanmuktasana from what is in *APMB*. You need to understand that a book only gives information, the sequence is taught by the teacher. A competent teacher, not someone who reads a book and gives instructions, can create a sequence according to the purpose for which the practice is being done, using their own experience and understanding. That is what you have to be aware of. The book is not a teacher; it can work as a reference provided you have trained yourself under the guidance of a teacher. Use this as a standard rule for all times to come: books are not to be

considered as the final authority. They give information, but if you want to get it right, go to a competent teacher. This, however, does not mean that you start changing everything when you teach, believing that you are 'competent' enough to do so. First develop that level of competence, experience and understanding, by deepening your own practice. Until you do so, you are better off going by the book.

PAWANMUKTASANA PART 3

Nauka Sanchalanasana (rowing the boat): 5–5; chakra awareness–mantra awareness (both forward and backward movements; followed by observation and relaxation of the body in the sitting position and normalization of breath).

SWAN tip: There should be one smooth continuous movement during the rowing.

Chakki Chalanasana (churning the mill): 5–5; chakra awareness–mantra awareness (both clockwise and anticlockwise directions; followed by relaxation as above).

SWAN tips:

- The feet are apart but not too wide apart, maximum 4 feet.
- During the practice, imagine that you are holding a big pencil in your hand and trying to draw a line on a big piece of paper which is under your feet. Your movement has to be over the feet, right and left, as you turn and twist. The twist has to happen in the lower part. If this is simple, you can separate the legs even wider, so that you feel the movement on your side muscles. It is not just rotating the arms, all these muscles are going through a circular movement.
- With each round try to bend backwards slightly more.
- Don't bend your elbows.

Gatyatmak Meru Vakrasana (dynamic spinal twist): 5–5; chakra awareness–mantra awareness, then up to as many counts as comfortable maintaining mantra awareness.

Shavasana: 1. Surrendering the body to the floor 2. Awareness and relaxation of major body parts 3. Breath awareness from the toes to the eyebrow centre and reverse in alternate psychic breathing 4. Deepening and lengthening the breath while continuing 5. Externalization.

***Note**: While in the beginning sessions all the five components (movement awareness, breath awareness, visualization, chakra awareness, mantra awareness) were practised individually, as the days progressed, practitioners were expected to have a spontaneous awareness of the first three components in every posture. The perfection of the demonstrator in each posture and Swamiji's tips helped in the third component of visualization. The specific focus was on the last two components: chakra and mantra awareness. However, in practices where Swamiji felt that practitioners had difficulty coming to terms with the physical component itself, he focused on the physical aspect along with the breath.*

Two groups of pawanmuktasana part 3 practices

The practices of pawanmuktasana part 3 are divided in two groups. The first set of practices is done with the legs extended out in front and includes rowing the boat, churning the mill, and dynamic spinal twist. The second set is done from the squatting position. However, before doing this second set, we will do another practice, utthanasana, which helps to develop the capacity to squat.

Doctors and scientists are now saying that for excretion squatting is the best pose. For millennia before the advent of the toilet seat, everybody used to squat. This habit of sitting down as on a chair is recent. Prior to that, you and me, the dogs and the monkeys, all squatted, and there is a reason. When you squat, it helps to open up the sphincter muscles, and therefore the excretion is gentler and easier. Whereas when you are sitting as on a chair, a particular muscle in the rectum responsible for maintaining continence blocks the rectum. In addition, the colons are not compressed and there is no helpful pressure to move the fluid and matter, and you

have to use more force. That damages the rectum, giving birth to conditions like internal and external haemorrhoids. The squatting movement is certainly more beneficial for the body than sitting on a commode chair and getting up from a commode chair.

PREPARATORY PRACTICE FOR SQUATTING POSES OF PAWANMUKTASANA PART 3

Utthanasana (squat and rise pose): (performed in three stages: 1st round: squatting down one-third of one's capacity or 30 percent of the full squat; 2nd round: two-thirds or 60 percent; 3rd round: three-thirds or 90 percent); 5 rounds of each stage; movement and breath awareness together.

SWAN tips:

- Keep the feet shoulder-width or body-width apart.
- The spine should be straight, only the legs are bending.
- At the end of the practice, sit down with legs straightened out in front and bump the knees up and down.

PAWANMUKTASANA PART 3 (squatting poses)

Rajju Karshanasana (pulling the rope) variation: (done from the squatting position instead of with legs stretched out in front); 5–5; chakra awareness–mantra awareness (with each hand).

SWAN tips:

- Try to keep the back straight when you squat. At the beginning you may have to bend forward to find your balance, but eventually come to the posture where the back is upright and you are not falling over.
- With each round take the hand further back and feel the stretch on your back and the sides.
- At the end of the practice, sit down, straighten out the legs and bump the knees up and down.

- From pulling the rope, we move directly into chopping wood. If you can sustain the squat for that length of period, it is good. If not, you may rest in between the two practices. Ultimately, you should be able to do at least four asanas in the squatting pose without having to change your posture.

Kashtha Takshanasana (chopping wood): 5–5; chakra awareness–mantra awareness.

SWAN tips:

- When you raise the arms, feel the pull and stretch on the whole spine.
- When you bring the arms down, feel that you are actually swinging an axe.
- At the end of the practice, sit down, straighten the legs out, bump the legs up and down, pull the kneecaps up and relax them. Support your back, keep the eyes closed, and observe all sensations in your legs, back, lower back, shoulders, wherever the movements have happened.

Namaskarasana (salutation pose): 5–5; chakra awareness–mantra awareness.

SWAN tip: At the end of the practice, release the squatting position and sit down for a few minutes so that your knees are not stressed.

Vayu Nishkasana (wind releasing pose): 5–5; chakra awareness–mantra awareness.

SWAN tips:

- During this practice, ideally you should place the fingers under the soles of the feet sideways. If that is difficult, you can simply tuck the fingers under the toes. If that is difficult, you can grab hold of your ankles. If that is difficult, grab hold of your calf muscles. If that is difficult, then just sit and don't do the practice! Just be careful that your knees are not strained. Find your comfort zone and do it comfortably.

- At the end of the practice, sit down, stretch the legs out and bump them up and down. Relax the whole body. Watch your breath come back to normal speed. If you are feeling a bit tight or achy in your knees, observe the sensation and try to relax the knee area. After relaxing, visualize the knee area surrounded by a sparkling electrical field, like a pranic field, removing all pain and providing strength and relaxation.

Brahma granthi and pawanmuktasana part 3

The squatting poses of pawanmuktasana part 3 are related to the pelvic region, which is the seat of the *brahma granthi*, the perineal plexus. Brahma granthi is not mooladhara, it is an energy plexus which has a blocking function on many levels. It is the source of blocks experienced in digestion and excretion. The location of brahma granthi is in between the colons, in the area between swadhisthana and mooladhara. When you are practising moola bandha, the perineal lock, for example, although you are saying 'mooladhara', the lock is actually occurring in brahma granthi, between mooladhara and swadhisthana. We say 'moolabandha' or 'perineal lock' for ease of comprehension, but we are actually influencing the brahma granthi.

The brahma granthi is responsible for mooladhara and swadhisthana activity. It also regulates the flow of apana, the downward moving force, which causes elimination of liquid and solid waste from the body. The seat of apana is neither mooladhara nor swadhisthana; it is the brahma granthi. If the brahma granthi is not in 'good health', it can stop the flow of apana, which stops the excretory process, causing constipation and indigestion.

When you are practising the squatting postures, the pelvic area opens up allowing for free flow of energy there. When you are sitting on a chair, the flow of mooladhara is blocked and the pressure on swadhisthana increases. There is no clear passage for the prana to move through, but when you squat suddenly for some time there is a clear opening.

If you can squat comfortably with the back straight, this is further enhanced as the whole body is aligned. At that time sushumna becomes active. Therefore in yoga, the squatting postures are used to create a condition in the body where the channels of energy are open.

Squatting also means downward pressure on prana shakti and upward pressure on apana shakti. When you come down to squat, you will feel that the pressure moves up from the perineum and moves down in the upper trunk. There is a sense of stress and tightness in the region below the navel, where the small intestines join the big intestines, and throughout the colon leading to the anus. It is this area which is compressed with the squatting postures, also allowing for easier excretion.

If advanced yogis were doing shankhaprakshalana, they would use the squatting poses and not the five poses generally used. Those five exercises are meant for general practice as people come from every walk of life to do the practice. However, yogis do the squatting practices, as they better facilitate the expulsion of toxins from the body. That is the advanced variation, meant for people who practise shankhaprakshalana regularly, not once a year or once in a lifetime. If you have done it only once then don't try the advanced variation, as it will not be good for you. It is for those whose diet is regulated and simple and therefore they don't need to drink many glasses of water for shankhaprakshalana.

In the ashram, our practice of shankhaprakshalana is completed with just eight glasses as all we are eating is vegetables, rice, dal and chapatti. Therefore, for yogis who live a sattwic life, it is the squatting postures that are used for shankhaprakshalana. For beginners, intermediates and lazy yogis, the first version should be maintained and the second variation should not be done. I am not telling you how it is done, I am only giving you information, so don't attempt it.

PAWANMUKTASANA PART 3 (squatting poses)

Udarakarshanasana (abdominal stretch pose): 5 rounds; movement and breath awareness together (each side).

SWAN tip: If you can keep the feet flat, so much the better, that's the first preference. If not, you can be on your toes.

Counterposes for pawanmuktasana part 3

The counterposes have to be integrated with the practices of pawanmuktasana part 3. In the first three postures – churning the mill, rowing the boat, and the spinal twist – the body was bending forwards each time. Then in the squatting poses, the body was folded up. Therefore, to balance these movements, counterposes have to be practised in between, and these include the practices of bhujangasana, shalabhasana and dhanurasana.

COUNTERPOSES FOR PAWANMUKTASANA PART 3

Bhujangasana (cobra pose): 5 rounds; movement and breath awareness together.

SWAN tip: You raise the head and trunk only to the point where the navel is still in contact with the floor. You are not going up to the extent that the full length of the arms is straight.

Shalabhasana (locust pose): 5 rounds; movement and breath awareness together.

SWAN tips:

- Make sure that you don't bend your knees.
- Placing the hands under the thighs helps to support the leg movement.

Dhanurasana (bow pose): 3 rounds; movement and breath awareness together.

SWAN tips:

- It is preferable to keep the knees together when you raise the legs, but if that is difficult you may separate the knees.
- Remember to raise the head and the knees in the final pose; some people only catch hold of their ankles and do not move anything else.

Variation of dhanurasana: 3 rounds; movement awareness. Upon coming into the final pose the knees are separated, then again brought together, and then the trunk and the legs are lowered back on the floor.

Shavasana: 1. Surrendering the body to the floor 2. Awareness of breath in the abdomen 3. Expansion and relaxation with inhalation and exhalation 4. Observing interaction of breath and body 5. Externalization.

Pranayama basics

The word 'pranayama' contains two definitions. When seen as the combination of the words *prana* and *yama*, it conveys one meaning: controlling prana or holding the prana. When seen as the combination of the words *prana* and *ayama*, it conveys another meaning: expanding the dimension of prana. Therefore, in the word *pranayama* itself there are two definitions: controlling or regulating, and enlarging or expanding. This is the function of pranayama practice too: to allow you to control, regulate and restrain the prana, and then to enlarge and expand it.

There are many pranayamas and Sri Swamiji was the first person to classify them in three categories: balancing pranayamas, tranquillizing pranayamas, and vitalizing pranayamas.

The balancing pranayamas relate to the balance of ida and pingala nadis. Nadi shodhana is a practice in this category. Similar to nadi shodhana is another practice that we find in kriya yoga: arohan and avarohan pranayama. They are similar yet different. They are like the

beginning and advanced version of the same nadi shodhana pranayama, and in between is the break-up of all the ratios and lengthening and shortening of breath. Therefore, on one side of the spectrum we have the simple basic nadi shodhana, and on the other side we have arohan-avarohan, and in-between is the game of ratios where you systematically increase from 1:1 to 1:4:2:2, or whatever you do to train your lung capacity and breathing capacity. So, beginning at simple nadi shodhana and ending at arohan and avarohan: this is the whole structure of balancing pranayamas.

The general practice and progression of pranayama has been described in the books *Asana Pranayama Mudra Bandha* as well as in *Prana Pranayama*. The practices of the same pranayama changes when you move into sadhana where the effort is to deepen the experience of prana and to increase the capacity of inhalation, retention and exhalation. Other components of yoga practices are also added to deepen and intensify the experience. Therefore, in the sadhana aspect certain rules must be followed which do not apply in the normal teaching and practice.

The essential rule is: the fundamental pranayama is nadi shodhana. The other pranayamas are to be practised under specific conditions and guidance, either for therapy or for awakening of a chakra or for doing higher prana sadhana. Therefore, restrictions apply.

Then there are the tranquillizing pranayamas, which are used most in India as they are suitable for the climate here. The system of pranayama is clear that not all pranayamas can be practised for twelve months. In summer, the cooling pranayamas such as sheetali and sheetkari are to be practised, not kapalbhati, bhastrika or surya bheda. In winter, the heating pranayamas have to be practised, not sheetali or sheetkari.

When spring comes in March–April, followed by summer in May–June, at that time there is less humidity and more dryness in the air, then the cooling pranayamas are practised: sheetali, sheetkari, chandrabheda, etc. During the

months of monsoon, July–August–September–October, when the weather changes and a lot of *kapha*, mucus, is produced due to extreme humidity and there are more allergens in the air, people get reactions to that. At that time only the balancing pranayamas are practised, such as nadi shodhana, bhramari, ujjayi, etc., and not the heating or the cooling ones.

Thus in India, according to the climate, the winter months, November–December–January–February is the period when you practise the heating pranayamas such as kapalbhati and bhastrika, and other kriyas that heat up the body such as agnisara kriya, nauli kriya, etc. Therefore please remember that in the yogic tradition there are specific times to practise pranayama, not all pranayamas can be practised at all times. When you are teaching, it is different. Then you are training people to gear up their lungs, strengthen the lung muscles and the respiration process. However, when it comes to sustained sadhana and practice, you need to move into the rules that guide the practice of pranayama. If you practise without the rules, then it will have adverse effects on the body. This is evident now in India with people who are practising pranayama by watching television or by reading of some benefits in a book. We have had to intervene in cases where people were doing extreme heating and vitalizing pranayamas in the summer.

Yoga has in-built safeties in the practices, provided you study the yogic literature properly and follow the recommendations on how the practices should be done. Apart from the basic rules of practice, the physical composition of the individual should also be considered, whether they are capable of practising pranayama on a sustained basis. Remember, we are now talking about a sustained practice of yogic progression, not health management, therapy or a general class. When you want to progress systematically in yoga, then you have to follow the system. In a general class, you can teach the simple practices, since students are continuously changing and they are not

practising daily. Most do their practice once or twice a week when they come to your class; they are not sustaining the practice at home. However, since we are now moving beyond general into the progressive realm, you must be aware of all this information so that if you see anybody practising in the wrong manner, you are able to stop them and tell them the right method.

Keeping all this information in mind, we shall practise pranayama tomorrow.



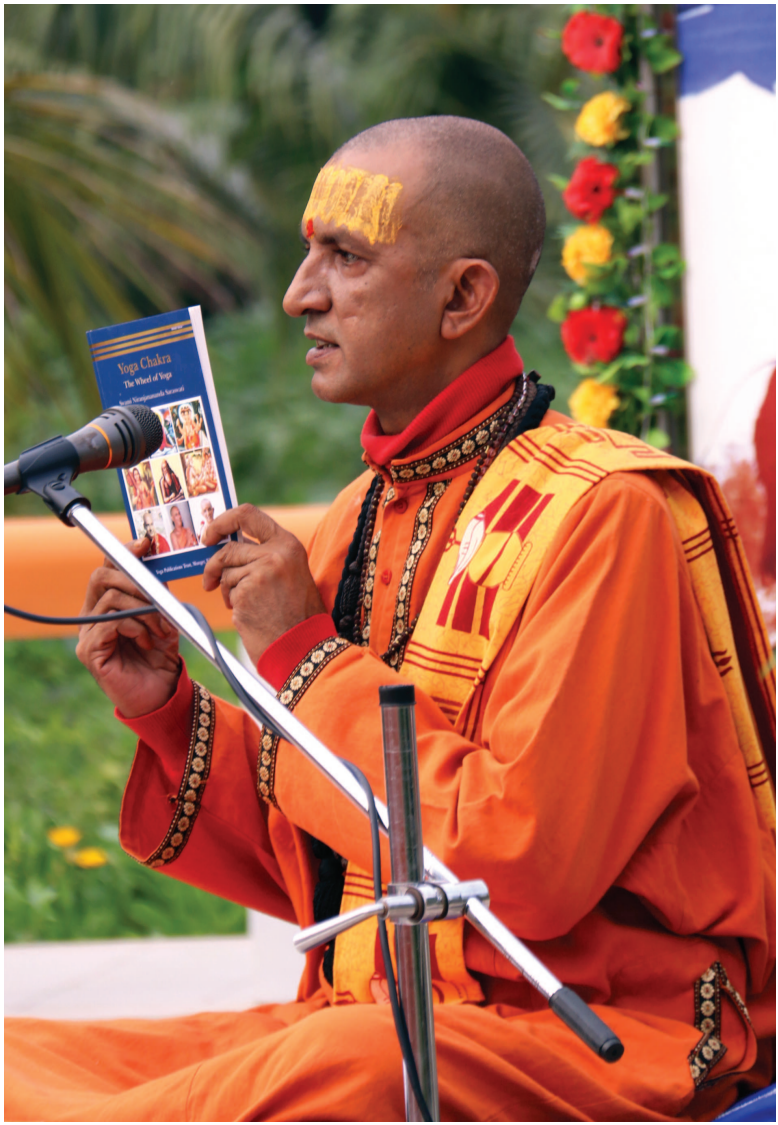
Sequential System of Satyananda Yoga

STUDY: *YOGA CHAKRA 1*, **CHAPTER 7**

Many times I ask people, "You say you are part of the Satyananda Yoga tradition, but what do you know of his yoga?" People say asana, pranayama, yoga nidra, some meditation – the practical aspects they are attracted to are picked up. Even the training that is given by our different groups dilutes after one generation. If a first generation teacher has taught ten people, those ten people will be teaching others, who will train others, and in this process dilution of the teachings takes place. Therefore, beyond the first generation, those who were trained by Swami Satyananda into the progression of yoga, nobody should claim to be a teacher of Satyananda Yoga.

Sri Swamiji did not come out of Sivananda Ashram and proclaim, "I am here to open a yoga centre – come to me." He travelled for many years through the subcontinent to assess the needs of people and to understand what would be appropriate for them. Through his observations, he devised a sequence of yoga that was needed by society. That sequence is in two parts: something that you practise to perfect yourself, that you become, and something that you express, as a part of your behaviour, attitude and life. This progression has been defined in the book *Yoga Chakra 1*. As you go through the chapters, make a checklist of what you

do know and what you don't know, to assess how much of Satyananda Yoga you have imbibed, and what you need to understand and apply.



CARRYING BACK HAPPINESS

Sannyasi Mudita, Bulgaria

The course was a great opportunity for me to check whether I am on the right track; to get direction on how to proceed and how to establish myself better in my sadhana. In the last year I have been feeling stuck in my practice of asana and pranayama, so this course came at the perfect time for me. It has helped me to deepen my experience of the practices and my understanding of Satyananda Yoga. It has also shown me what I have to incorporate in my daily life; the changes I have to make in attitude and behaviour, how to maintain the right positive attitude, and how to live in harmony with myself and others.

I am amazed how such a complex philosophy and wisdom can be explained so interestingly in such an easy and practical way with simple words. Every meeting with Swamiji was a kind of upgrading and re-programming of the mind, showing us how to overcome our conditionings and improve ourselves, how to become positive and better, and how to live, love, laugh and be happy. Every word was straight to the point, clear and precise. While sitting in the presence of Swamiji I was receiving answers to all my questions. I have never been so close to the source and I feel blessed to have had the chance to participate in this precious life-changing course.

After each visit to the ashram there is something small I take with me and I make an effort to apply it in my daily life: discipline, regularity, behaviour. This time I am full of impressions and my heart is filled with joy, happiness and gratitude.

Benefits of Pawanmuktasana 3

We shall continue with pawanmuktasana part 3, and the focus of pawanmuktasana part 3 is to remove excessive mucus from the system. To understand how this happens you have to first understand the process of mucus formation and the causes of excessive mucus.

Causes of mucus formation

There are two places in the body where mucus is formed: one, the digestive system and the other, the lungs. There is a lining of mucus around the stomach walls and the intestines which facilitates the passing of excrement without damaging the inner walls. It is like the grease in a pipe which allows the waste to flow through without any hardship. That is a vital component of the digestive system.

The other area of mucus is the lungs. Here it helps the movement of the muscles of the lungs. In the absence of mucus in the lungs, the air would dry the walls, the lungs would become hard and there would be creation of fibrosis. Mucus helps to retain the flexibility and the movement of the lungs, the lung muscles and the alveoli. It also traps the big particles of pollution, stopping them from entering the lungs and getting absorbed into the body by the walls of the lungs. That is why, when people who live in polluted places do neti or kunjal, the water they bring out is not clear but black and contains particles. You may have also noticed

that sometimes when you bring up your mucus, there is a different colour.

Mucus actually protects the body and the lungs, but conditions of cold and cough create excessive mucus in the lungs and throat, while in the digestive system an imbalance of mucus can be caused by excessive bile or indigestion. This can result in dysentery and diarrhoea, with the excessive mucus flowing out of the body along with the excrement. Overproduction of bile can also thin the mucous lining, which in turn can lead to burning the soft lining of the stomach, giving rise to conditions of ulcer.

Practices for mucus management

Purification of mucus is considered to be an important aspect of physical purification in the yogic systems. For this purpose in hatha yoga there are the practices of kunjal, shankhaprakshalana and neti. Kunjal clears the mucus from the stomach and also forces excess mucus in the lungs out by creating a reverse pressure on the trachea and the lower lobes of the lungs. In addition, it softens the mucus, so it is easier for it to come out. It is particularly beneficial for those suffering from respiratory disorders, as they have accumulation of mucus in their throat and lungs. Kunjal clears out the whole respiratory system, and allows one to inhale more deeply and easily. It particularly works on the mucus of the lungs while shankhaprakshalana is the practice to clear the mucus from the stomach and the intestines, and neti is the practice to clear the mucus from the nasal passage or the sinuses. Thus these three are the major hatha yoga practices for clearing of mucus. These practices, along with pawanmuktasana 3, help to balance the mucus in the body.

Effects of the first series of pawanmuktasana part 3

In the practice of pawanmuktasana part 3, the practices are divided in two groups, as we have seen. The first set of practices is with the legs extended out in front and include rowing the boat, churning the mill, and dynamic spinal twist.

These three clear the excessive mucus from the stomach and intestines by moving and rotating them, by loosening the hard particles of waste product from the intestines so they are easily eliminated. The movement in these exercises also creates an upward pressure in the lungs; due to the forceful, regulated and controlled breathing a gentle push takes place in the lungs and the mucus from the lungs is brought up and cleared.

Effects of the second series of pawanmuktasana part 3

The second set of practices in the pawanmuktasana part 3 series, performed in the squatting pose, increases the pressure of apana, the downward moving force. You were informed that the way people nowadays sit on the toilet seat, like on an easy chair, is not the appropriate posture for excretion. The toilet seat is a recent invention; in the past most people used to squat.

The posture of squatting opens up the intestines, and the pressure created by folding up the body pushes the excrement down. Squatting is used in shankhaprakashalana as well; you drink water, you squat, the intestines are flushed with water, and the water flows down as the colon is squeezed. However, when you sit on a toilet seat, the downward movement of fluid and matter is not facilitated. You use more pressure as there is no natural downward pressure created, and end up with haemorrhoids. You are trying to push the waste out and more muscles need to be used. Whereas when you are squatting, there is a natural opening of the anal sphincter.

The point is that the more we work with the abdominal area, the more energy flow there will be along with greater balance in the mucus production. The mucus will then be used for the benefit of the body rather than becoming a cause of illness. Pawanmuktasana part 3 helps in all this.

Nauka Sanchalanasana (rowing the boat): 5–5; chakra awareness–mantra awareness (both forward and backward movements; followed by relaxation).

SWAN tips:

- When you go back, you recline only 45 degrees, and when you come forward it is like throwing the body forward from the stomach area. You feel the pressure and movement of the breath in the chest, expelling the toxins from the lungs. The stomach is like a flexi-joint, which allows your upper body to fold forward and go back, and allows the body to be pressurized from inside for mucus to come out. Once you develop this breath awareness, any forward bend can become an effective tool to bring out mucus; you can use the breath to expel the congestion.
- At the end of the practice, support your body by placing the hands behind the back and close the eyes. In this posture relax the whole body and feel the movement of the breath from the nose to the lungs. See your lungs being filled with the inhalation and being emptied out with the exhalation. See the movement of the lung muscles during inhalation and exhalation. Watch the breath enter into the lungs and exit. Feel and deepen that awareness.

Chakki Chalanasana (churning the mill): 5–5; chakra awareness–mantra awareness (both clockwise and anticlockwise directions; followed by relaxation).

Gatyatmak Meru Vakrasana (dynamic spinal twist): With breath awareness, gradually speed up to as many rounds as comfortable.

Shavasana: 1. Surrendering the body to the floor 2. Alternate nostril psychic breathing from the toes to the eyebrow centre and reverse 3. Visualizing the breath as a blue light in the left side and red light in the right side 4. Externalization.

Saral bhujangasana: 5 rounds; movement and breath awareness together (followed by relaxation).

SWAN tip: In this simple variation of bhujangasana, the entire lower arm is on the floor. You breathe in and raise the head and the trunk, and then look up, without lifting the elbows from the ground, so you are supporting yourself on your elbows. Breathing out, you come down. In this practice, not lifting the elbow restricts the upward lift of the head and the trunk; you can only go up to a certain point and not beyond. The point you can go up to without lifting the elbows is the point you have to hold in this asana.

Bhujangasana (cobra pose): 5 rounds; movement and breath awareness together (followed by relaxation).

SWAN tip: Here you raise the trunk only to the point where the navel is still in contact with the floor.

Poorna Bhujangasana (full cobra pose): 5 rounds; movement and breath awareness together (followed by relaxation).

SWAN tip: Now the full length of the arms is straight and you are going as far up as you can, with the feet remaining together.

Benefits of the variations of bhujangasana

In the first practice of saral bhujangasana where you were resting on your lower arms, the pressure was on the shoulders and the effort is in the cervical region to maintain the posture. This is very good for the upper cervical and thoracic region, and possibly one of the best practices for spondylitis, as it gradually allows the movement of the vertebrae to become better. The bhujangasana itself, where you lift the body till the navel, creates pressure in the lower back, and is beneficial for lower back problems. Finally when you straighten the arms completely and raise the head up,

the full pressure is on the arms and the body is just hanging by its own weight from the arms. Therefore, the body, by its natural weight and gravity, is relaxing. Once you are up, relax the body so that gravity takes over and you are only supporting the body with your hands. That has to be the awareness in the third practice.

PREPARATORY PRACTCE FOR SQUATTING POSES OF PAWANMUKTASANA PART 3

Utthanasana (squat and rise pose): 5 rounds; movement and breath awareness together (three squats each time. 1st round: squatting down one-third or 30 percent; 2nd round: two-thirds or 60 percent; 3rd round: three-thirds or 90 percent).

SWAN tips:

- Keep the feet only so far apart that your body can maintain a straight posture.
- During bending, do not open the knees wide.
- At the end of the practice, sit down, straighten out the legs and bump the knees up and down, then pull in and release the kneecaps a few times.

PAWANMUKTASANA PART 3 (squatting poses)

Rajju Karshanasana (pulling the rope): 5 rounds; movement and breath awareness together (with each hand).

Kashtha Takshanasana (chopping wood): 5 rounds; movement and breath awareness together (followed by relaxation in the sitting posture: bumping the knees up and down, pull-release of kneecaps).

Vayu Nishkasana (wind releasing pose): 5 rounds; movement and breath awareness together.

SWAN tip: Whenever you are bending forward, you are exhaling, and whenever you are looking up, you are inhaling. You are exhaling while lifting your buttocks up because you are bending forward at that time, and you are inhaling when you bring the buttocks down because you are looking up and opening the chest.

Shavasana: 1. Surrendering the body to the floor 2. Observation of the physical state 3. Observation of blue and red breaths in ida and pingala respectively in alternate nostril psychic breathing 4. Externalization.

COUNTERPOSES FOR PAWANMUKTASANA PART 3

Ardha Shalabhasana (half locust pose): 5 rounds; movement and breath awareness together (with each leg).

SWAN tips:

- You can place either the chin or the forehead on the ground, whichever is comfortable for you, depending on the shape of your face.
- In this practice where you raise one leg only, make sure you are not twisting your hips while raising the leg.
- At the end of the practice, relax for a few moments, feeling the sensations in the lower back.

Poorna Shalabhasana (full locust pose): 5 rounds; movement and breath awareness together (followed by relaxation).

SWAN tip: Sometimes it is easier to do the poorna shalabhasana compared to ardha shalabhasana, as the raising of head and trunk helps to balance the body.

PAWANMUKTASANA PART 3 (squatting poses)

Namaskarasana (salutation pose): 5 rounds; movement and breath awareness together.

Udarakarshanasana (abdominal stretch pose): 5 rounds; movement and breath awareness together (each side).

Kauva Chalasana (crow walk): Going around the mat/blanket once.

Shavasana: 1. Surrendering the body to the floor 2. Relaxation and awareness of the body 3. Externalization.

COUNTERPOSES FOR PAWANMUKTASANA PART 3

Dhanurasana (bow pose): 3 rounds; movement and breath awareness together (3 times with knees together and 3 times with knees separated).

SWAN tip: You can catch hold of your feet or ankles, whichever is more convenient.

Shavasana: 1. Awareness of the position of the different parts of the body 2. Surrendering the body to the floor 3. Observation of blue and red breath in ida and pingala respectively in alternate nostril psychic breathing 4. With inhalation experiencing the prana shakti, with exhalation experiencing relaxation 5. Lengthening and deepening of breath 6. Externalization.



Deepen your experience

What we have practised here should enable you to sustain your own practice, as the intention of teaching you this is to make you practise, not to make you teach. If you start teaching all this, you are not deepening your own knowledge and experience of yoga. Until and unless you develop your own experience and are comfortable with it, and you are not trying to project yourself, you should not teach. Be committed, sincere and serious to explore, experience and develop your own understanding of yoga before setting out to be a big yoga teacher.

As a yoga teacher your focus should be on personal experience and not on teaching. If you focus on teaching only, then you become a bookish teacher. First go yourself before pushing others into areas that you have no experience about, areas that are unknown to you. Therefore don't think of this training in terms of 'what I am going to teach when I go back', but as 'how I can deepen my understanding and the practice of yoga to experience for myself the aspirations that yoga has already set out'.

Classification of pranayama

There are many pranayamas, and Sri Swamiji was the first person to classify them and teach them in a step-by-step method. Prior to him, people would not practise pranayama due to fear that it could make one go mad. This was the prevalent belief in India, that if you take up yoga and go beyond asana and do pranayama, it is possible that you will go mad. In those circumstances, Sri Swamiji identified the pranayamas, as given in the book *Asana Pranayama Mudra Bandha,* and further developed in *Prana Pranayama*.

As mentioned previously, in pranayama practice, in India the heating practices should be done in the months of November–December–January–February when the weather is cool. The cooling practices should be done with the onset of spring, March–April, into summer, May–June. The

balancing pranayamas should be practised in the months of July–August–September–October when the weather changes and there are more allergens in the air and people react to that. If you are living in another part of the world, you have to understand and apply the principles of how to practise according to the season. These are the three basic categories of pranayama and the times when they should be done. Remember, however, that this principle relates to sadhana, not to healing or therapy. It is more in relation to the sustained practice that you can do to develop the prana shakti. Do not start mixing up everything.

The first pranayama

One always begins pranayama practice with nadi shodhana, not with the heating or the cooling practices. That is because it allows one to develop a greater control over the functions of the breath and the lungs, which is of primary importance. It is stage one in the practice of pranayama: learning how to breathe in a longer, slower and deeper manner, learning how to use the lower part of the lungs, where the majority of alveoli are, learning how to extract and use the prana shakti from the air around. All this happens with the practice of nadi shodhana pranayama and through this the channels of prana, *nadis*, are purified.

When we were taught pranayama, Sri Swamiji said to us, "For one year don't move beyond nadi shodhana." As teachers you will find it difficult to follow this guideline, as you want to teach and teach and become famous as a good yoga teacher. However, as a teacher you have to try and understand the need to focus on perfecting nadi shodhana pranayama. To a student you may teach according to their need, but you need to focus more on perfecting nadi shodhana. That is the basic foundation, as it is the practice that allows you to clear your passages, to learn to lengthen and deepen your breath, to sensitize yourself to the pranic movement, as you work with the ratios, and integrate the components of retention, mudras and bandhas.

There are so many different aspects that can be included in this pranayama when you go deeper into it. However, those aspects are not explored and everybody thinks pranayama is 'close one nostril, breathe in through the other, close that one, breathe out through the first'. That is not pranayama, that is the beginner's introduction to pranayama. None of you have really experienced pranayama. You are teaching it but you have not experienced it or practised it.

PRANAYAMA

Nadi Shodhana in stages

Stage 1: With nasagra mudra, nadi shodhana without retention; equal inhalation and exhalation, count of 10, ratio of 1:1, 3 rounds.

SWAN tips:

- If you feel any agitation in the chest or shortness of breath, become aware of that and regulate your breath.
- If you feel tiredness in breathing, then reduce the count; do not force yourself, do not tire your lungs, do not become breathless.
- At the end of the practice, normalize your breathing pattern.

Stage 2: Nadi shodhana with internal retention, count of 10, ratio of 1:1:1, 3 rounds; each round followed by 5 normal breaths.

Bhramari: 7 rounds.

The Wheel of Yoga

STUDY: *YOGA CHAKRA 1*, CHAPTER 8

There is a map in *Yoga Chakra 1* in the form of a wheel. Half the wheel describes the five parts of hatha yoga, the eight limbs of raja yoga, and the three limbs of kriya yoga. These three – hatha, raja and kriya – make *bahiranga yoga* or outer yoga, yoga which is practised, developed and mastered. The *antaranga yoga*, internal yoga, is what you express; it is derived from your understanding and experience. These are the two divisions: the practical and the expressive.

The practical is used for the process of transformation of the normal conditions in life and the expressive makes you apply the principles of yoga towards a more creative and balanced expression. The practical yogas are known, as many people practise and teach them, everybody has the inclination to understand them. The expressive part, the antaranga part, however, is not known to many. People are guided by the general ideas of yoga that exist in society, without knowing the deeper aspect of the antaranga yoga. For example, people think of bhakti as the yoga of devotion, of sitting in front of an image or idol and letting the emotions flow. That is the religious connotation of bhakti yoga, not the yogic connotation. It is the same with jnana yoga, people think of it as abstract, philosophical thinking: 'Who am I? I am that which I can't perceive myself to be.'

What is the use of thinking that? What is the outcome of thinking, 'I am Brahman', 'I am the soul'? Zero.

There has to be a procedure so you can go through the dross, remove the curtains that stop the luminosity from shining through. This principle applies in bhakti yoga, in jnana yoga and in karma yoga. The phrase 'karma yoga' is often misused. Ask someone "Where are you going?" and they reply, "I'm going to do karma yoga." They feel happy to use a yogic phrase and project an idea, but there is no understanding of the meaning of karma yoga, neither is there any knowledge of the progression of karma yoga. The progressive sequence in the various yogas is what has been defined in *Yoga Chakra 1*.



ENERGY OF A MASTER

Sannyasi Premananda, Nepal

I had expected that we would be taught from the intermediate and advanced groups with in-depth explanations of these, but Swamiji started with PM 1! I have been a lover and regular practitioner of PM 1 for the last fifteen years, yet I had never experienced in such depth what I experienced in just two days time. Swamiji was teaching the same things but very differently. The difference to me lay in simplicity and clarity, which helped one to understand and experience much better. Another difference was experiencing the effects of practices from the gross (annamaya kosha) to the most subtle (anandamaya kosha) levels of our existence. This was entirely new to me. The course has given me an insight that even a simple practice can be experienced at a deeper level. It does not matter what we practise but how we practise. However, it was not only the words of instructions but the energy radiated by Swamiji's presence that made the difference. Every word was armed with energy and entered deep in the form of experience.

The *Yoga Chakra* study sessions were simple and beautiful. I adore the approach of first experiencing goodness through bahiranga yoga (hatha, raja and kriya) and expressing goodness through antaranga yoga (jnana, bhakti and karma) by cultivating sanyam.

Now, it is up to us to tread the path shown to us, starting with a single step, and to walk on without any deviation. I pray to God and guru to give the strength to be able to do that. Finally, all I can say is October 2015 was the fastest and the best month of my life.

SWAN tips:

- It is preferable to keep the knees together when you raise the legs, but if that is difficult you may separate the knees.
- Remember to raise the head and the knees in the final pose; some people only catch hold of their ankles and do not move anything else.

Variation of dhanurasana: 3 rounds; movement awareness. Upon coming into the final pose the knees are separated, then again brought together, and then the trunk and the legs are lowered back on the floor.

Shavasana: 1. Surrendering the body to the floor 2. Awareness of breath in the abdomen 3. Expansion and relaxation with inhalation and exhalation 4. Observing interaction of breath and body 5. Externalization.

Pranayama basics

The word 'pranayama' contains two definitions. When seen as the combination of the words *prana* and *yama*, it conveys one meaning: controlling prana or holding the prana. When seen as the combination of the words *prana* and *ayama*, it conveys another meaning: expanding the dimension of prana. Therefore, in the word *pranayama* itself there are two definitions: controlling or regulating, and enlarging or expanding. This is the function of pranayama practice too: to allow you to control, regulate and restrain the prana, and then to enlarge and expand it.

There are many pranayamas and Sri Swamiji was the first person to classify them in three categories: balancing pranayamas, tranquillizing pranayamas, and vitalizing pranayamas.

The balancing pranayamas relate to the balance of ida and pingala nadis. Nadi shodhana is a practice in this category. Similar to nadi shodhana is another practice that we find in kriya yoga: arohan and avarohan pranayama. They are similar yet different. They are like the

Asanas for General Toning

The pawanmuktasana part 1, part 2 and part 3 are progressive practices preparing the body to eventually move on to the higher practices of yoga. Once the basic preparation is done with the practice of pawanmuktasana, then you move into practices that tone up the whole body in general, from top to bottom, opening up areas, stretching the muscles, working on areas where you rarely apply your mind, and strengthening the little-used muscles of the body. These are the practices of general toning and general health.

These practices strengthen the internal organs and areas of the skeletal system to provide more stamina and strength, and the ability to stand more upright. Just as a building has a pillar to support it, our pillar is the spine. If this pillar is bent, then the building that is supported by the pillar also becomes weak. Therefore, after loosening the different parts of the body we come to general toning, where we work with the major joints and organs of the body, external and internal.

In how many ways can you move your body normally? First, elongation or traction. Second, lateral stretch. Third, twisting. Fourth, forward and backward bending. Fifth, inversion. These five major movements are used for general toning of the body through the standing practices including the tadasana series, the trikonasana series, and surya namaskara. Surya namaskara takes care of the forward and

backward movement; tadasana and the series of tadasana take care of the traction or stretching; tiryak and trikonasana create the lateral stretch; in kati chakrasana there is twisting; and one inversion has to happen. The simplest form of inversion is padotthanasana, the practice of lifting the legs. Only that much is enough, holding that posture for whatever period you can. When you are comfortable with this asana, you can move into viparеeta karani asana. When you become comfortable in that, you can move to sarvangasana. Therefore at each level you are working on and developing your physical stamina, resistance and muscle strength.

The combination of the above asanas creates an effective practice of physical movement and they also take the body to the extreme; they test the strength and stamina of the body. Through the general toning of the internal organs achieved through these practices, the body is prepared for advanced asanas, which you can then hold and sustain for a longer period. The main difference between yoga and aerobics is that in yoga you sustain a posture for as long as you can, whereas in aerobics you simply move into a posture and come out. Aerobic movements are faster and not sustained, while in yoga the postures are held for a longer time, sustained and observed.



STANDING SERIES OF ASANAS FOR GENERAL TONING

Tadasana (palm tree pose): 5–5; chakra awareness–mantra awareness (movement and breath awareness continue to be a natural part of the practice).

SWAN tips:

- Before beginning, in the base position, become aware of the whole body and mentally see the whole body in one straight line.
- When you stretch the arms up, imagine that you are trying to touch the ceiling with your palms.

Tiryak Tadasana (swaying palm tree pose): 5–5 (both sides); movement and breath awareness together–mantra awareness.

SWAN tip: Make sure that you do not bend your elbows while bending to the sides.

Kati Chakrasana (waist rotating pose): 5–5 (both sides); movement and breath awareness together–mantra awareness.

SWAN tip: At the end of each of the above practices, with eyes closed feel and observe the whole body mentally in the standing posture and relax.

Surya Namaskara (salute to the sun): 2 rounds; movement and breath awareness together.

SWAN tip: Make sure you are aware of the contra-indications – that people with sciatica, slipped disc, hypertension, vertigo or heart problems should not practise surya namaskara.

Shavasana: 1. Surrendering the body to the floor 2. Alternate psychic breathing with visualization of breath as blue light in the left side and red light in the right side 3. Externalization.

Smallest capsule

Most of the standing asanas are for strengthening the body and for the general toning of the muscles and internal organs. Thus, when you begin asana practice, the first stage is the preparatory practices of pawanmuktasana 1, 2, 3. The second stage is general muscular and internal organ toning through different dynamic movements. The third stage is asanas that develop stability. The fourth stage is the advanced asanas.

In the second stage, although there are many practices, I have selected five asanas which are a small capsule for general health: tadasana, tiryak tadasana, kati chakrasana, surya namaskara, and one practice of inversion. These five practices can be done by everyone across the globe, from young to old, male to female. Beyond these five, you do not need to do any other asana practice, unless there is a specific reason. The chest, the heart, the lungs, the shoulders, everything is exercised in these practices and they create a better physical response of the body.

These five practices constitute the smallest yoga capsule program. In general, it is these five asanas that I recommend for health and general toning of the muscles. Most of the time people say, "What can I do in a short period? I can devote fifteen-twenty minutes for my yoga, so what are the most effective practices that I can do for general wellbeing?" For them, this series of five is appropriate and enough. With sustained practice these satisfy all physical needs.

Three ways of doing asana movements

In our practice of asanas, we are performing the movements not just once, twice or thrice, but many times over – to sustain a movement. There are three ways of doing an asana practice. The first is the fast, quick method, a rapid movement which does not allow you to observe or work with your muscles. You simply move into a posture and then come out.

The second method is a slow practice where you move into a practice, sustain the practice, hold it for as long as you

can comfortably. Even if it is tiryak tadasana, you hold the bend for as long as you can do comfortably and then come up, and then go to the other side, hold for as long as you can comfortably, the maximum, and then come up. This slow variation creates an impact on the organ or the muscle that is being used in that specific movement. If you are holding a twist for 30, 40 or 50 seconds, the internal organs are being compressed and stretched and the effect is going deeper into the organs. You are not merely moving into and coming out of a posture.

The third style is you move in, come out, move in, come out – but you don't do it only five times, you do it fifteen or twenty times, so the same effect is created in the internal organs as by sustaining the posture. If you are teaching yoga as a gymnastic or aerobic exercise in a yoga studio, then you are likely to opt for the fast variation. However, in a yoga centre managed by yoga teachers, if you do a combination of the second and the third variations – you move in slowly, stay there for a few seconds, and then you come out slowly, and you do that fifteen-twenty times – it will create a much deeper experience in your body and allow you to go deeper into the practice. It is not a dynamic and fast movement, but a gentle, slow progression into the posture. This method allows the body's muscles, joints and internal organs to get used to that movement and the effects of staying in the final position.

In yoga ashrams like Ganga Darshan, it is the second variation that is practised. That is how Sri Swamiji taught us. That is how we were taught to sustain the practice, not to just move in and out, but to hold a posture for the maximum time possible.

I would recommend that you use the second variation in your practice, which is not a dynamic and fast movement, but a gentle, slow progression into the posture and then eventually coming out, then again moving in, holding, coming out, again moving in, holding, coming out.

Proven effects of slow and repeated movements

There was one research done during the nineties. We were training an army unit in yoga. There were two groups. One was going through the regular army routine, the push-ups, the barbells, all the hard exercises. The other group was the yoga group, practising pawanmuktasana. The yoga group initially was the object of ridicule by the army group doing their hard exercises; the yoga group was just moving their toes and fingers and hands and feet. The difference in that training, however, was that each asana had to be done 40 to 50 times. Imagine that, closing and opening the fist 40 or 50 times. The muscles get used and moving, and you are sustaining a process of developing the flexibility and the stamina.

By the end of the year when the two groups did their final tests, the yoga group was far ahead in flexibility and stamina. In the normal group, thirteen recruits failed and in the yoga group only three recruits failed. When I thought about how the yoga group won this competition of stamina, I realized that it was because of sustaining the practice: not doing each practice only five or ten times but doing each practice fifty times, every day. Therefore, each day the stamina and the flexibility increased a little more, resulting in an overall increase in stamina over a period of time.

Therefore, instead of practising yoga to feel good in the body, it is better to sustain each practice for longer periods. If this is done regularly, the body will become stronger. You will not put on muscle and mass, but whatever is there in the body will come alive and become active, and the conditions of fatigue and tiredness will lessen.

Baddha Hasta Utthanasana (locked hand raising pose): 8 rounds; movement and breath awareness together.

SWAN tip: While doing this practice, feel the opening of the shoulders and the chest, and maintain the awareness of breath.

Akarna Dhanurasana (bow and arrow pose): 5 rounds (both sides); movement and breath awareness together.

SWAN tips:

- Raise the arm to the side as if you are actually holding a bow. Then, with the other hand, you pull the string, inhaling, and feel the expansion of the chest. Open up the chest. When you exhale, it is a controlled breath, and you take the string back.
- Take a full breath in so that the chest is completely full and it feels like having an armour on the chest.

Tiryak Kati Chakrasana (swaying waist rotating pose): 3 rounds (both sides); movement and breath awareness together.

SWAN tip: At the beginning, you may find some discomfort in the waist and the side. So, be aware of the waist and the turning movement.

Shavasana: 1. Surrendering the body to the floor 2. Relaxation of the whole body 3. Externalization.

Druta Utkatasana (dynamic energy pose): 5 rounds; movement awareness.

SWAN tip: It is a good practice to maintain the physical alignment of the body, as most of the time when you sit you tend to push the body forward. In this practice the trick is in sitting upright, and maintaining that upright pose when you go up and down. The arms help to keep the spine straight. So be vertical and not horizontal in this practice.

Samakonasana (right angle pose): 1 round of each variation; movement and breath awareness.

Variation 1: Standard samakonasana with feet together.

Variation 2: Keep the head up and try to look at your hands rather than keeping the head down.

Variation 3: Keeping the feet apart, breathe in and raise the arms up, then breathe out and bend forward. Hold your breath here and move from the waist to the right, then move to the left, come to the centre breathing in, then breathe out standing up, and hands down.

SWAN tip: With feet together this is a difficult practice, so we have done a variation of samakona with feet apart. The actual practice is with feet together, but to give some mobility and movement in the waist it is better to initially do this variation, as this is gentler and softer. Once the ease and flexibility have come, you can practise with feet together.

Dwikonasana (double angle pose): 3 rounds of each variation; movement and breath awareness together.

Variation 1: Bending 90 degrees with arms vertical above the head.

Variation 2: Bending forward as much as possible, trying to touch the nose to the knee and taking the arms back, so that the arms become horizontal and the body is balanced.

Shavasana: 1. Surrendering the body to the floor 2. Awareness of and relaxation of major body parts and organs 3. Awareness of the breath in the abdomen 4. Externalization.

Mudras in pranayama

Today we will practise mudras and bandhas. In the early stages when one is not used to practising them, they may feel uncomfortable. One has to take one's time to get used to the practice of mudras and bandhas.

Mudra is generally translated as an attitude. However, the root from which it comes is *mud*, which means to become happy. In fact, the words *mudita*, happiness, and mudra have the same root. Thus, mudra is a practice that makes your mind happy. It balances your energies, realigns your powers in the body and mind, and makes you happy. There are certain mudras that do make you happy. After you practise them, you feel elated.

Many mudras can be incorporated into pranayama. In classical mudra is khechari mudra, the turning of the tongue. It is associated with a yogic theory which says that the bindu visarga, which is a small point on the top of the head, emits a secretion – *amrita*, or ambrosia. This secretion normally falls into the solar plexus and is consumed by the fire of the solar plexus. However, if that secretion is directed to *lalana*, the storage centre above the upper palate, through khechari mudra and not allowed to drop down, then one can attain longevity. Of course, immortality has always been the quest of humanity, some have spoken of the fountain of youth, or of other ideas for prolonging life. The yogis have used the khechari pranayama to trap that secretion so it is not burnt in the fire of solar plexus, the manipura chakra. This process helps manage the health of the body, it revives the cells and internal organs, and one lives longer.

There are hatha yogis who cut the base of the tongue to elongate it so that it can be folded easily and go up the nasal passage and catch the drops of amrita. There are other hatha yogis who lengthen the tongue without actually cutting it. Thus there are different methods that hatha yogis employ for the practice of khechari mudra. Of course you are not to cut your tongue here; this practice is simply turning the tongue back while doing pranayama.

Nadi shodhana with khechari mudra, ujjayi breath and jalandhara bandha: With nasagra mudra, jalandhara bandha during internal retention; count of 10, ratio of 1:1:1, 3 rounds.

SWAN tips:

- Breathe in using khechari mudra and ujjayi pranayama for some time, and when you have tuned in to the sound of your breath, then begin the practice of nadi shodhana.
- At the end of each round of nadi shodhana, breathe normally for a count of 7. You can release khechari and ujjayi at this time.

Bhramari in nada anusandhana pose and shanmukhi mudra: 7 rounds.

SWAN tip: At the end of the practice, mentally become aware of all the physical sensations, the feeling of lightness, relaxation, vitality, peace and harmony, stillness, silence. See all your experiences, observe them, identify them, know them.



Karma and Karma Yoga

STUDY: *YOGA CHAKRA 1*, CHAPTER 9

Karma yoga is different from karma. Karma is involvement and participation, and karma yoga is observation and immersion in that involvement in participation. When the word 'yoga' is used along with any other word, it means observe and become one with what is happening in that area. Therefore, karma yoga means observing and becoming one with the karma, bhakti yoga means observing and becoming one with the bhakti, jnana yoga means observing and becoming one with the jnana. Yoga in this context means observation of and immersion in the state that you are living or expressing.

The principle of karma

From the point of the Indian spiritual tradition, karma has an important role to play in life. Karma is the main idea that distinguishes eastern thinking from western thinking. The present modern religious thinking does not accept the theory of karma, or the idea of rebirth and reincarnation. Nevertheless, the original civilizations and cultures did accept what is known as transmigration of the soul, the possibility of reincarnation and the karmic influence in life. You reap what you sow.

From the yogic perspective, there has to be evolution, and this evolution is of the material consciousness. There

is continuation of evolution, of learning and maturing, of coming to a point of perfection in life where everything is doable and knowable. Karma relates to and aids that process of evolution, something that has been happening since the time of your birth and will continue till you die; something that has happened in all your previous incarnations and will continue in the future incarnations.

Binding and liberating power of karma

Karma is both binding and liberating. When karma becomes binding, it moulds or colours your consciousness in one of the colours of the 'six friends': *kama*, desire; *krodha*, anger; *lobha*, greed; *moha*, infatuation or delusion; *mada*, arrogance; *matsarya*, envy. If karma is tainted by the colour of one of these, it ties you down. The same karma, when performed with the intention of attaining purification and harmony, becomes a liberating force.

Knowledge of karma is gained by observing your association with the six friends and how you are attached to or detached from them. Karma yoga does not mean hard work. It does not mean sweeping the floor. Such actions are external expressions of an idea, and that idea is defined through three words used in the *Bhagavad Gita*.

First stage of karma yoga: inner purification

The first is *atmashuddhi*, which means inner purification. It indicates that your karmas, your actions, your responses can be separated from the negative expressions of your mind. If they are combined with expressions of the mind, then there is no atmashuddhi. Then your mind is expressing one of the six traits, and the karmas get coloured by them. It is detachment from the six that leads to atmashuddhi.

The *Bhagavad Gita* states (5:11): *Yoginah karma kurvanti sangam tyaktwatmashuddhaye* – "Yogis perform actions with the purpose of attaining purification." What does that indicate? The connection, the association that you have had with yourself has to be observed, revised, monitored and rectified.

Now what are you revising, monitoring and modifying? Your response to a given situation. You are not rectifying your karma, you are managing your environment and that enables you to do your karma in a better manner. For instance, if there are four people bothering you, you will not be able to perform your duties properly. It would be better to get them all on your side, so there is no opposition and they can be of help. This is the approach that has to be taken with the 'six friends'. After all, your responses are due to the urgings from these six sources. Therefore atmashuddhi, apart from all else, means separating yourself from the influences of kama, krodha, lobha, moha, mada and matsarya. Only then will inner purification and inner harmony be experienced. Thus the first point of karma yoga is atmashuddhi, disconnection from the negative components.

Second stage of karma yoga: objectivity

When you disconnect from the negative expressions of your mind then the second stage of *akarta bhava*, 'I am not the doer' comes in. When you do something good and positive, the feeling of pleasure and happiness is different from what you feel when you do something bad; there is no elation or happiness in that. In atmashuddhi, when you disconnect from the causes of distraction and disturbance, there is a separation from the negative states of mind.

With this separation, the thought that 'I am only performing my duty' comes in. That's when objectivity comes into karma. When you think you are doing something for your own gain, then subjectivity comes into karma. In karma yoga the focus is on objectivity, karmas have to be seen as *kartavya*, duties and obligations that must be fulfilled to ensure the continuation of harmony, peace, prosperity and good health.

The natural transition that follows from inner purity is losing the idea of 'I am the doer'. That is a subjective idea whereas 'I am fulfilling my duty' is an objective idea. Thus in the second stage of karma yoga the focus is on cultivation

of objectivity, creating the akarta bhava: 'I am not the doer, I am not the enjoyer, I am only a performer doing my best.' That leads to the third stage of naishkarmya siddhi.

Third stage of karma yoga: perfection in inaction

Naishkarmya siddhi means perfection in action which is not being performed by you. If an action is being performed by you there is a natural expectation, drive and motivation, but when something is not being done by you yet you are ensuring that it is 100 percent complete and perfect, that is naishkarmya siddhi, 'I do my best, but I am not attached.'

Karma yoga in life

First, the focus is self-purification. Self-purification is to be seen from all perspectives, not just the mind, emotions or intention. You have to ask yourself, 'How can I live a better, harmonious and pure life?' That thinking is the beginning of karma yoga. 'How can I achieve positivity in behaviour?' That thinking is the beginning of karma yoga. 'How can I achieve purity of reason in my thinking?' That is the beginning of karma yoga, not picking up a broom and cleaning the room with gusto. That is a necessary aspect, but the real meaning of karma and karma yoga relates to your understanding of associations in life and disconnection from those associations to come to a point of positivity and objectivity.

Once you identify the associations and disassociations, then karma yoga begins in reality. Until then it is only passing the time, keeping yourself engaged by cleaning rooms and pulling out weeds, although such work can become the medium through which you discover your own point of balance and they can become your launching pad into karma yoga.

Ultimately, wherever you are, whichever country, whichever city, whichever place, maintaining these three attitudes under all the circumstances you face at home, in the office or in social situations is karma yoga in life. Karma yoga is

maintaining the idea that atmashuddhi, inner purification, is what I seek; akarta bhava, identification with my duties, is what I seek; naishkarmya siddhi, perfection in actions which are not being enacted by me, is what I seek.



Impression of Participant

ALL THE TOOLS FOR POSITIVITY

Swami Arun Kiran, Italy

My experience of the Progressive Training course is far more beautiful and inspiring than all my expectations. I arrived here thinking, 'For sure Swamiji will teach us something new that we can teach and tell our students when we go back', but I soon realized that the point was completely different and much more interesting and uplifting.

I let go of all my intellectual expectations and fully immersed myself into the new experience and with trust and hope I started to feel the changes both inside and outside of me. Now I can finally be in the present; practise not only the physical asana, pranayama, yoga nidra and meditations, but also mentally use my awareness to come in contact with my thoughts and the 'six enemies'.

Many things were realized and understood during this course, but the most important was the greatness and truthfulness of the tradition to which I belong. I go back with the inspiration to maintain the original teachings with sincerity, commitment and seriousness. No matter what difficulties I face, I know that I have all the tools I need to overcome them and live a happy and positive life.



Deepening the General Toning

We shall begin with the practices of general toning of the body, with the short capsule, comprised of the four standing asanas and one asana of inversion, and then move on to the other practices of general toning.

SHORT CAPSULE FOR GENERAL TONING

Tadasana (palm tree pose): 5–5; movement and breath awareness together–mantra awareness.

SWAN tip: At the end if the practice, with eyes closed observe the whole body mentally. Observe the physical movements, if any, and observe the stillness of your body if you are not moving.

Tiryak Tadasana (swaying palm tree pose): 5–5 (both sides); movement and breath awareness together–mantra awareness.

SWAN tip: At the end if the practice, observe and relax the whole body. Observe the swaying of the body and/or the stillness of the body.

Kati Chakrasana (waist rotating pose): 5–5 (both sides); movement and breath awareness together–mantra awareness.

SWAN tip: At the end of the practice, with feet together, become aware of the whole body and observe the body internally, mentally. Feel the stability of your body in the standing posture. If the body sways, whether towards the front, back, right or left, observe the swaying, and then try to become still and relaxed.

Surya Namaskara (salute to the sun): 2 rounds; movement awareness.

Shavasana: 1. Awareness and relaxation of the whole body 2. Alternate psychic breathing with visualization of breath as blue light in the left side and red light in the right side 3. Energization and relaxation with each breath 4. Externalization.

Inversion asana: We shall not practise an inversion asana today, but generally in this sequence one asana of inversion should be included, and the simplest one is padotthanasana.

COMPLETE SEQUENCE FOR GENERAL TONING

Baddha Hasta Utthanasana (locked hand raising pose): 6 rounds; movement and breath awareness together.

Akarna Dhanurasana (bow and arrow pose): 5 rounds (both sides); movement and breath awareness together.

Tiryak Kati Chakrasana (swaying waist rotating pose): 4 rounds (both sides); movement and breath awareness together.

Druta Utkatasana (dynamic energy pose): 6 rounds; movement awareness.

Shavasana: 1. Surrendering the body to the floor 2. Awareness of breath in the abdomen 3. Externalization.

Samakonasana (right angle pose): 5 rounds; movement and breath awareness together.

Meru Prishthasana (spine and back pose): 3 rounds (both sides); movement and breath awareness together.

Dwikonasana (double angle pose): 6 rounds; movement and breath awareness together.

Counterpose – Natarajasana (Lord Shiva's pose): 3 rounds (both sides).

SWAN tip: In the final position, keeping the body locked, exhale and bend forward ninety degrees.

Shavasana: 1. Surrendering the body to the floor 2. Awareness of the flow of breath 3. Externalization.

Use of mudras in pranayama

We have practised bhramari pranayama in shanmukhi mudra. There are these two mudras, naumukhi and shanmukhi. *Naumukhi* means nine mouths or openings and *shanmukhi* means six mouths or openings. The nine openings are the two ears, the two eyes, the two nostrils, one mouth, the anus, and the urinary opening. In naumukhi mudra, all these nine openings are closed. Shanmukhi mudra involves the closing of six openings, the two ears, the two eyes, the mouth, and the nose as one unit.

In order to practise bhramari with shanmukhi mudra, you can sit astride a rolled up blanket with your legs in front, resting the elbows on top of the knees. This is the nada anusandhana pose. With the thumb you plug the ears, the index and the middle fingers close the eyes, the ring and the little fingers plug the lips. The sixth gate is the open nose

through which you regulate the breath. Practising bhramari pranayama in this mudra gives quick internalization, therefore it is often practised before meditation. It allows you to go deeper in your meditation through introversion of the mind and the senses. This mudra is used to develop internalization of the mind and also to make it happy, as the word mudra indicates something that makes the mind happy, something that elates and elevates the mind.

PRANAYAMA

Bhramari in nada anusandhana pose and shanmukhi mudra: 7 rounds.

SWAN tips:

- If the nails are not long you can put the thumbs in the ears to close them, as it gives a good block. If you have long nails, then just close the outer flaps of the ears.
- Keep the ears closed throughout the practice. When the 7 rounds are over, then bring the hands down.

Nadi Shodhana with khechari mudra, ujjayi breath and jalandhara bandha: With nasagra mudra, jalandhara bandha during internal retention; count of 10, ratio of 1:1:1, 5 rounds.

SWAN tips:

- When you begin the practice by closing the right nostril, breathe normally for a few breaths through the left nostril and exhale completely, then begin the practice.
- Jalandhara bandha is practised only at the time of internal retention. While breathing in and out the head is straight, you do not inhale when you are moving the head to release jalandhara bandha.
- Remember to take 5 to 7 normal breaths after each round.
- Maintain the same rhythm of the count throughout the practice.

Bhastrika with jalandhara bandha and internal retention: 20 bhastrika breaths each with left, right and both nostrils. 3 rounds.

SWAN tips:

- There should be equal force in inhalation and exhalation.
- It is only the stomach that moves; the shoulders should not move up and down.
- The 21st breath is a long inhalation with the same nostril, then holding jalandhara bandha for 10 seconds, releasing jalandhara, head up and exhaling through the same nostril. Closing this nostril, and following the same practice with the other nostril and then with both. This is 1 round.
- Take a few normal breaths after each round.

Shavasana: 1. Body relaxation 2. Visualization of the whole body 3. Relaxation of major body parts 4. Expansion and relaxation of the whole body with inhalation and exhalation 5. Externalization.

Starting pranayama with the left nostril

Many people ask if there is a specific rule regarding starting pranayama with the left nostril. There is no hard and fast rule. The simplest rule is that you begin your pranayama with the nostril that is open. If the left is open, start with the left; if the right is open, start with the right.

However, in the advanced practices of pranayama, if you start with the right then the surya nadi, pingala, gets activated, and that can create hyperactivity of the mind. Therefore it is preferred to start from the left so that the chandra nadi, the moon swara, is activated and there is no hyperactivity in the nerves or the mind. In the advanced practices you start with the left, and in the beginners practices you can start with whichever nostril is open.

Becoming the Non-Doer

STUDY: *YOGA CHAKRA 1*, CHAPTER 9

The second aspect of karma yoga, *akarta bhava*, non-doership, performing an action as if you are an actor, is the toughest. If you think of an actor – they are acting out someone else's personality and nature. Although the actor is not that person, they have to study the person in such detail that they become that person. In the same way, until and unless you identify with the karma, you cannot develop the akarta bhava, you cannot detach yourself from karma. To become an actor means to study in depth, to know the character and then to act, you cannot merely copy the character's walk and talk and think that will do. The actor is the drashta of the person whom he is going to play. In karma yoga, 'actor' means the sadhaka, one who is learning, observing and implementing. Therefore non-doership comes when you have identified with your doership and then you disconnect from that trait, character or nature.

Whatever is your greed, need or infatuation, you are living that. Then how can you become an observer of all that in one moment? You cannot. If you say at that time, "I can observe myself", it is hypocrisy. What you observe in meditation is like the tip of the iceberg, it is not the complete nature of drashta-ship. It is the kindergarten of drashta-ship when you repeat to yourself, 'I am observing myself.' It is when

you identify and then disconnect that you truly become the drashta, and that is the university education of a drashta. This is an important point in relation to karma yoga that one has to be aware of: how to become an actor. It entails observation, study, analysis and living what you have picked up.

Bad prana and good prana

Another point is being aware of bad prana and good prana in every situation. Bad thoughts and bad behaviour is bad prana, like the stench of a bad stomach. After all, what is prana? It is energy. If I keep my torchlight on during daytime, that is bad, as it is not helping anything. If I use my torch at night, it is more useful. Similarly, prana is also energy that supports, sustains, expresses and develops what you feel. So if you pass bad prana, that will spread badness all around. Negative thinking, negative talking, negative behaviour, fighting, cribbing, all those things represent bad prana and bad nature. On the other hand, if you are at peace, happy, content, undisturbed, then that is good prana. So when you think ill of somebody, know that you are passing bad prana, and when you think well of somebody, know that you are passing good prana.



BECOMING A BETTER STUDENT

Swami Savikalpananda, Greece

This course was a deep, beautiful and enriching experience and a wonderful opportunity. The classes have inspired me to make more effort in my own sadhana, to work on myself, to have my own experience, to become a better student and disciple before I transfer it to my teaching. I go back with the following thoughts:

- LEARN: About Satyananda Yoga–Bihar Yoga tradition; the deeper aspects of yoga, new practices, the wheel of yoga, and the progression of yoga according to our tradition.
- EXPERIENCE: The practice: absolutely superb classes and study sessions with Swamiji, seva and the beautiful ashram atmosphere. I have never done shatkarma with 120 people and had such fun.
- RECEIVE: An abundance of knowledge, wisdom, and care. Swamiji was constantly giving to us on all levels. The organizational team was doing such a great job, the program was flowing smoothly and done with a lot of care.
- GROW: By being in the presence of Swamiji who is inspiring us to take the next step in yoga, in spiritual life, to work on ourselves, to take charge of our own life so that we can become better human beings.
- CONNECT: With goodness, positivity, creativity.
- SHARE: All the goodness and positivity that we have received here with others, when we go back home.

The Trikonasana Series

In the practices of general toning, we shall continue with the trikonasana series. *Trikon* means triangle and *asana* is posture, therefore the trikonasana series is where the body takes on the shape of triangles. These are practices that help to bend the body laterally and in various other directions.

Before practising trikonasana, the practices of pawanmuktasana part 1 which work with the legs must be done for some time, as they prepare the leg muscles and the lower part of the body. They are like the warm-up for the trikonasana series, as the advanced practices of trikonasana cause a lot of stretching of the ankles, knees, thighs and waist. Therefore, if they are in a weak condition and the trikonasanas are done, you may not be able to perform them correctly or the placement of weight may not be proper.

GENERAL TONING WITH TRIKONASANA SERIES

Trikonasana (triangle pose)

Variation I: Standing with the legs spread wide apart, raising the arms to the sides, bend forward ninety degrees and then touch the right foot with the left hand; come to the centre and then upright; then the other side. 5 rounds (both sides); movement and breath awareness together.

SWAN tip: At the end of the practice, with the feet together and eyes closed observe the whole body mentally. Become aware of the lower back and all the feelings in the lower back region.

Variation 2: Dynamic version of the above – the same practice is done at a faster speed without stopping. 10 rounds (both sides); movement and breath awareness together.

Shavasana: 1. Surrendering the body to the floor 2. Relaxation of the whole body 3. Externalization.

Variation 3: Standing with the legs spread wide apart, without bending the knees, the right hand, placed on the side of the ribcage, slides down the right leg and the left hand comes up to the waist; stand upright; bend to the other side. 5 rounds (both sides); movement and breath awareness together.

SWAN tips:

- When you are standing in the base position, the feet are facing forward; when you bend and bring the hand down a leg, the foot turns in the same direction.
- At the end of the practice, with feet together and eyes closed observe the whole body mentally and relax it. Become aware of all the physical sensations in the body, all sensations in the sides of the body.

Variation 4: With the legs spread wide apart, slide the right hand down the right leg while bending the right knee slightly so the hand can be placed on the floor, with the left arm and hand vertical above the body; come to the centre and upright; bend to the other side. 5 rounds (both sides); movement and breath awareness together.

SWAN tips:

- Bend the knee just enough to place the palm on the floor, not too much.
- Do not bend forward to place the palm on the floor; just lower the hips.

- The palm can be placed either in front of the foot, behind the foot, inside of the foot or outside of the foot. Try all variations and choose the one that is most difficult! When you place the palm inside of the foot, you may experience a small twist in the shoulder; if that is uncomfortable then place the palm outside.
- At the end of the practice, relax in the standing pose.

Variation 5: This time bend the knee completely so the opposite side of the body and leg are in one straight line. The opposite arm remains vertical. 3 rounds (both sides); movement and breath awareness together.

SWAN tips:

- Stretch your legs as wide as you can to make the posture more comfortable. The closer they are the harder it is; the further they are the easier it is.
- As you bend the knee, bring the hips down and down until you get the posture right.
- When you come up, there can be strain on the knees and thighs. If that is uncomfortable, then don't attempt the asana.

Variation 6: Assuming the same posture as variation 5, the opposite arm now goes over the head so that this arm, the side of the body and the leg are in one straight line. 3 rounds (both sides); movement and breath awareness together.

SWAN tip: At the end of the practice, observe and relax the body in the standing posture. With feet together, observe the natural breath, become aware of the physical sensations, find your balance. There are three things that you have to do at the end of the practice: observe the physical condition, observe the breath, and find your balance by placing your weight equally on your feet.

Utthita Lolasana (swinging while standing pose): 5 rounds, swinging 5 times in each round; movement and breath awareness together.

SWAN tips:

- Be aware of the contra-indications – people with lower back problems, slipped disc, sciatica or hypertension should not practise this asana. Others should also practise it gently, without forcing the swing but allowing the body to swing naturally.
- At the end of the practice, with the feet together, be aware of the whole body. Mentally see the whole body standing upright. If the body is swaying, observe it; if the body is still, observe it. Relax.

Dolasana (pendulum pose): 3 rounds (both sides), swinging 3 times on each side in each round; movement and breath awareness together.

SWAN tips:

- In the base position when you interlock the fingers behind the neck, keep the shoulders open, keep the elbows out and chest open. Then breathe in deeply.
- At the end of the practice, with the feet together and eyes closed, relax the whole body. If you are feeling a bit dizzy or giddy, you can sit down. Otherwise, just be still and relax your body.

Counterpose – Natarajasana (Lord Shiva's pose): 2 rounds (both sides); movement and breath awareness together.

Sirsha Angustha Yogasana (head to toe pose):

Stage 1: Touching the nose to one knee. 2 rounds (both sides); movement and breath awareness together.

Stage 2: Touching the head to the floor; 1 round (both sides); movement and breath awareness together.

SWAN tips:

- Stand with the feet widest apart for ease in the posture.

• The second stage is the crown of trikonasana; however, go down only as far as you can comfortably.

Shavasana: 1. Surrendering the body to the floor 2. Relaxation of the whole body 3. Awareness of breath in the abdomen 4. Externalization.

***Note**: Practitioners were able to relax in between the postures not only with relaxation instructions but also as each posture preceded with a demonstration while Swamiji explained its fine points.*

Benefits of trikonasana series

The trikonasana series strengthens the muscles and the joints of the legs, thighs, knees and ankles. As a result, the advanced practices of yoga can be done with more ease and comfort. They also make you use many muscles in the body that are not normally used in day-to-day movements or activities. In this series you are extending, flexing, relaxing, stretching all these unused muscles and they wake up. To begin with, that may make you feel a bit stiff and achy, but with sustained practice the flexibility and stamina comes in.

The trikonasana series concludes the beginners group of asanas. It is better to try and perfect the first level rather than trying the advanced asanas, as this is the crucial aspect for the body. Once this level is perfected and you can practise your trikonasana by going to the floor and coming up without using your hands for support, then think about the next stage.

It is also good to use certain balancing postures along with trikonasana. The hard dynamic postures of trikonasanas are regulated when they are combined with the balancing postures where you are trying to stabilize your body.

Eka Pada Pranam Asana (one-legged prayer pose): 1 round (both sides), holding the breath to 7 counts in the final posture; movement and breath awareness together.

Ardha Baddha Padmottanasana (half lotus forward bending): 2 rounds (both sides); movement and breath awareness together.

Shavasana: 1. Surrendering the body to the floor 2. Alternate psychic breathing with visualization of the breath as blue light in the left side and red light in the right side 3. Externalization.

Hand mudra during pranayama

When we are practising pranayama the purpose is to activate the pranas and some mudras are also used for this purpose, as mudras create pressure on acupressure points or meridians of the body. Therefore, when you place your hands in jnana mudra or chin mudra, instead of simply putting your thumb and index finger together and relaxing the hands, the science of mudra says that exact pressure has to be exerted when you are performing the mudra to activate the nadi.

So the exact placement is the index finger pressing down on the part just below the top of the thumb – the first line of the thumb. The index finger is not just touching the line; it is exerting a slight pressure on it with the back of the nail and the thumb can curl over it slightly. The pressure that you put on the thumb with the index finger has to be 25 percent. If you press with full force, that would be 100 percent, if you press with half the force that would be 50 percent, so you press with even less force, 25 percent. That's the accurate amount of pressure in the mudra. As for the other three fingers, they are not relaxed and loose but held

straight. When this is done, all the fingers are pressurizing the thumb. This is the actual pose, not the relaxed manner in which you are used to doing it. The relaxed pose can be done while practising meditation, however, in pranayama or the practice of mudra, no hand placement is to be done in a relaxed manner but with precision and firmness with the right emphasis on pressure. That is how this mudra has to be maintained. It is not the touch that is important, rather the pressure, so the marma points or acupressure points are affected.

To practise mudra, it has also been advised to cut the nails, as the sharp point of long nails can block the flow of prana to the meridian. If you have long nails then you can simply put the front of the finger against the line, and create pressure.

The mudras practised in this manner help to open any blocks of ida and pingala, just as a yoga danda helps to open the flow in a nostril. If, at times during japa, introversion takes place and drowsiness comes, then the danda is placed under the left armpit to block the ida nadi. When ida is blocked, pingala opens and you wake up, there is no sleepiness any more. Just as the danda blocks certain nerves to open other channels, in the same manner the pressures of mudras block and open new channels. Chin or jnana mudra practised in the above manner blocks the thumb channel and the straightened fingers open other channels. You may have seen images of hatha yogis sitting with their hands held tightly in the mudra, not relaxed or loose. One may wonder why these yogis hold their bodies so tight. The answer lies in the science of mudra, where it is the requirement to enable one to block and open channels.

Nadi Shodhana with jalandhara and moola bandhas, internal and external retention: Count of 10, ratio of 1:1:1:1, 4 rounds.

SWAN tips:

- During internal retention, practise only jalandhara bandha. When you hold the breath out and do external retention, practise both jalandhara and moola bandhas. This creates pressure in the chest region; the pressure is coming down from jalandhara and it is coming up from moola bandha so you will feel the intensity in the chest.
- You may also experience a tendency to contract the abdominal muscles. When that happens, try to relax the abdomen, keeping the awareness of the pressures in the perineum and the throat, and allow the abdomen to be free, no tightening of the stomach.
- While practising the bandhas, do jalandhara first and then moola; while releasing, release moola first and then jalandhara.
- You may use ujjayi breath if you are comfortable with it. If not, just lengthen the breath. Discover your own pattern of breathing, whether it is normal or ujjayi. Those who are used to ujjayi may prefer it as it allows more control of the breath, but others may find difficulty in ujjayi breathing when combining nadi shodhana with kumbhaka. If so, use the normal breath.
- Take 5–7 normal breaths after each round and normalize the breathing.
- During jalandhara bandha, you may feel a slight pressure in the head. That's normal, everyone feels a slight sensation.

Precautions during pranayama practice

While practising any pranayama it is necessary to watch out for certain conditions so that no adverse effects take place. For instance, if, during the practice, you feel short

of breath, palpitation, dizziness, light-headedness or excessive perspiration, then you should stop the practice after completing the round, take a few normal breaths and when you feel okay, start the next round. If the dizziness or light-headedness persists when you continue and makes you uncomfortable, then simply lie down in shavasana and relax until you feel normal. Breathing has to be monitored and regulated in pranayama, as through the breath you can control and alter the functions of the cardiovascular, respiratory and nervous systems. Therefore, whenever there is hyper-anxiety or tension in breathing, you should stop the practice, normalize the breath, then again start the practice.

Do your practice comfortably and carefully. Do not overstrain at any stage of the breath cycle, inhalation or exhalation, internal retention or external retention. Listen to your body, and do only as much as the lung capacity allows. In the early stages of pranayama if you become breathless or there is palpitation of the heart, then you have to reduce the ratio and the number of rounds of the practice. With internal and external retention, it is possible for the heart to beat harder and faster. Therefore, between each round some break is required to bring the breath and the heartbeat back to their normal condition.

If you find that you are noticing the palpitation of the heart, it means that you have overextended your retention. So reduce it by one or two seconds. There should be no perceptible palpitation of the heart in the practice of internal retention. It could increase, but when you start feeling boom-boom-boom, that is incorrect. It has to be a gentle, soft beat. Therefore you have to observe your internal retention.

Cooling pranayamas

In the vitalizing pranayamas you breathe in through the nostrils while in the cooling pranayamas you breathe in through the mouth. Of the cooling pranayamas, two are famous, sheetali and sheetkari. *Sheetal* means to cool, *sheetali* means 'the breath that cools'. To do the practice, you stick your

tongue out, make a tube out of your tongue, and breathe in through this tube, feeling the cool sensation in the tongue and the throat. Once the full breath has gone in, you close the mouth and exhale through the nostrils. A count of 10 seconds breathing in and 10 seconds breathing out is the ideal duration of breath, less or more will have no effect; this is the perfect combo.

PRANAYAMA

Sheetali: 10 rounds, count of 10.

Be a witness

Be a witness to whatever happens during the practice. Observe and monitor the effects. It is possible to presume certain effects when there are none or when they are due to a different cause. It is only after a period of sustained practice and observation that one can understand and differentiate between the effects of the practice and passing occurrences. Therefore, you should not head-trip over anything that you feel, but simply observe and monitor it. In the course of time you will be able to discover the effects of the practice. That is what you have to identify with, and not with the occurrences that can happen due to a state of mind or other psychological factors.



LEARNING HOW TO BUILD

Swami Yogajyoti, Ireland

We came viewing yoga and ourselves with the light of our own small torches, until Swamiji said, "Look up, open the eyes fully and see by the light shone by the masters of the tradition." This light showed a much broader perspective on ourselves, the knowledge, experiences, understanding, ability, possibility, and increased the glow in us to a burning radiance.

The Progressive Training has created the feeling of connection to vidya, of being linked to the rich understanding lived, expressed and handed down by the masters of this tradition. We were also given an insight into the greater purpose: by making the effort, going step by step, we gain the understanding of how to manage the body, mind and emotions. Even though we might be on one step, the whole picture is kept in view all the time. We have let go of the idea of seeking depth by getting through all the stages and instead realize that all the steps have the depth as long as we can see, hear and understand them. The different lessons were repeated so that gradually all the bits could fit together and become familiar. Swamiji taught us how to build. He explained the importance of a foundation and how to build it.

Swamiji has the ability to bring enthusiasm and draw out the strength, the possibility and the determination in all of us. He could do this as he taught. As a result, we also felt the desire to see the effect of the practices on

the mind, on our behaviour and interactions. The study sessions brought all the different aspects together. They unfolded the aspect of living yoga. From APMB classes to study, to satsang, to ashram life, each revealed a new dimension and new understanding. They highlighted our responsibility to hold clear in our heart, mind and expressions the light and the vision we have received from this tradition. Throughout this course there was joy, lightness and seriousness of purpose.

Swamiji reflects what he teaches. He brings yoga alive. He brings, not only the teachings, but Sri Swamiji and Swami Sivananda themselves to us.



Recognizing the Subtle Aspects

The purpose of this course is to develop the understanding of yoga in the way that the rishis and the tradition developed it, and realizing that not everything revolves around asana and pranayama. There are many other aspects to take into consideration as well. If you can experiment with this and imbibe it, only positive benefits will be reaped. Keeping this in mind, only when you feel confident of your own experience and mastery over the subject, think of teaching others, and then also only to those who are the right recipients of the knowledge, not to meet your ambition of 'I must be better than other teachers.'

Shed the layers

Vidya can only be imparted to the right person, the right recipient. What is the use of awakening the kundalini if people cannot handle it? So why teach kundalini yoga? We have published books on kundalini yoga; however, the book only gives the information. Kundalini yoga has not been taught by BSY to anybody unless they are the right recipient. Everybody has their own hang-ups, and for kundalini to awaken one has to be free from all hang-ups. Therefore the training is not given, only the information is given. Similarly, we have the book *Dharana Darshan*. Information on various aspects of dharana is given, but the training is not given. That is because there are still many

layers of the onion that have to be removed before you can find your own centre.

As yoga teachers you have to recognize the layers of the onion. If your intention is to be a hatha yoga teacher only, then this is not the place and those expectations will not be fulfilled. However, if there is an expectation to discover yoga then the attempt has to be made, the layers recognized and shed.

Recently somebody told me of a dream he had before coming to the ashram. He saw that Sri Swamiji was sitting with other sadhus and sannyasins, and he walked up to him. Sri Swamiji looks at him and says, "What do you want?" The man says, "I have a question which I was going to ask Swamiji but now that you are here I will ask you." Sri Swamiji says, "What is the question?" The man says, "What is the mind? I've been trying to figure out what is the mind." Everybody starts to laugh in the dream. Only Sri Swamiji remains serious and says in Hindi: "*Tumhare bheetar jo hai usako chhod ke, sabhi cheez man hai*." "The thing which is inside you, except that, everything else is the mind."

What a beautiful message this person got in the dream! Everything that you experience is the mind, nothing else. You don't live beyond your mind. All the actions are directed by the mind. Every behaviour is guided by the mind. All the rational and irrational thinking is a product of the mind. All interactions happen due to the mind. Elation and dejection are moods of the mind. Happiness and sadness are moods of the mind. Everything in the world is the mind. Your relationship with the world is the mind. These are the layers of the onion, and you have to be aware of all these different layers to truly experience yourself.

Therefore, apart from asana and pranayama, there are many other aspects of yoga that one has to experience. This Progressive Training is aimed at that: the transmission and development of yoga vidya. This is a job that was given to me by Sri Swamiji when, after relinquishing the presidentship of BSY, I asked him, "Now that I am free, do I leave Munger?"

He said, "No. You cannot leave Munger. You don't have to live in Ganga Darshan, live someplace else in Munger and continue to work for yoga. Continue to develop yoga as one activity and develop Sannyasa Peeth as another activity. Be helpful and useful to Rikhia, that's another activity. Travel and propagate, that's another activity. Do your sadhana and experience sannyasa, that's another activity." Therefore, my effort will be to do justice to the trust my guru has placed in me, to the best of my ability, and I hope you are able to participate and help me in that effort.

Practices for general health

We begin with the standing practices for general health: tadasana, tiryak tadasana, surya namaskara, samakonasana, trikonasana, and the balancing asanas. We will do them a bit dynamically, with less chances of relaxation in between.

***Note**: Being a Monday following the break of Sunday on which laghoo shankhaprakshalana was practised, all participants seemed to need an energy push. Therefore Swamiji opted for a more dynamic mode of asanas – once again indicating that a yoga teacher must be able to gauge the need of a group and deal with the practices accordingly.*

GENERAL TONING PRACTICES

Tadasana (palm tree pose): 7 rounds; movement, breath and mantra awareness together.

Tiryak Tadasana (swaying palm tree pose): 7 rounds (both sides); movement, breath and mantra awareness together.

SWAN tip: At the end of the practice, with the feet together and eyes closed, observe the whole body. Observe the swaying of the body or the stillness of the body, whatever the case may be. If the body is swaying then try to centre yourself, and become still. If the body is still, try to see on

which side you are placing your weight more – right heel, right toes, left heel, left toes, and try to have equal weight on both feet.

Kati Chakrasana (waist rotating pose): 5 rounds (both sides); movement, breath and mantra awareness together.

SWAN tip: At the end of the practice, again place your weight equally on your feet. Try to locate the centre of your body in perfect alignment with the floor. Once you locate your centre you will be perfectly still. Until you locate your centre, your body will swing. Observe the weight on your feet, on your soles; see whether the front or the back, the left or the right is taking more weight, and try to distribute the weight equally.

Surya Namaskara (salute to the sun): 2 rounds (2nd round is dynamic); movement awareness.

Shavasana: 1. Awareness and relaxation of the whole body 2. Alternate psychic breathing with visualization of the breath as blue light in the left side and red light in the right side 3. Becoming Ardhanarishwara, experiencing Shiva tattwa on the right side and Shakti tattwa on the left side 4. Externalization.

Samakonasana: 5 rounds; movement, breath and mantra awareness together, followed by relaxation in the standing pose.

Tiryak Kati Chakrasana (swaying waist rotating pose): 3 rounds (both sides); movement and breath awareness together; followed by relaxation in the standing pose.

SWAN tip: At the end of the practice, relax in the standing pose. If you feel giddy, sit down. See the placement of weight on your feet. If the body is properly centred, there will be a deeper relaxation.

Trikonasana (triangle pose) variation: Slide the hand down one leg without bending the knee while the other hand slides up to the waist; then down the other leg; then both hands slide down both legs to the feet with the trunk bending forward. 4 rounds (all three movements); movement and breath awareness together.

SWAN tip: At the end of the practice, again observe the placement of body weight on the feet. Observe which side your body is tilting towards, how it is swaying, which side has to compensate more for you to stand upright. See the natural state of your body and then try to place equal weight on the soles of the feet.

Counterpose – Natarajasana (Lord Shiva's pose): 2 rounds (both sides).

SWAN tip: When you bend forward, the arm and spine move together. You do not start moving the arm first and then the torso; the whole body has to move together.

Eka Pada Pranamasana (one-legged prayer pose): 2 rounds (both sides); in the first round coming into the posture and releasing it; in the second round holding the posture for 10 breaths.

SWAN tip: Count the 10 breaths while you are holding the posture, not when you are going up or coming down but when you are still.

Shavasana: 1. Surrender the body to the floor 2. Awareness of the breath in the abdomen 3. Expansion and relaxation with each breath 4. Externalization.

Prana and koshas

I was asked, "Sometimes the sequence of the koshas appears differently in instructions or in books. In some books the sequence is annamaya–pranamaya–manomaya–vijnanamaya–anandamaya, while it is annamaya–manomaya–pranamaya–vijnanamaya–anandamaya elsewhere. Which is correct?" The answer is, such differences are neither unintentional nor intentional. After all, what moves from kosha to kosha? How do you move from one kosha to another kosha, to another dimension? What vehicle do you use? You use the vehicle of prana, not the mind. Imagine that you have a car with its first, second, third and fourth gear. Now the way to move between the gears is through the neutral gear. That is what connects all the different gears. In the same manner, prana shakti is the neutral gear that you use to move from annamaya to manomaya to vijnanamaya to anandamaya. It allows you to connect with one and disconnect from another and vice versa: prana helps the transition through the koshas.

For the sake of seeing the progression from gross to subtle, yes, first comes the solid body, then the energy, then the mind, then the consciousness, then the spirit. From that perspective the sequence is annamaya–pranamaya–manomaya– vijnanamaya–anandamaya. However, when we are thinking of ways to move around from one dimension to another, prana comes in the middle as the neutral gear. The first gear is annamaya, then you move into pranamaya, and then it is a short path to manomaya. It is a straight movement with only a split second gap in neutral when you move from the first gear to the second. When you move from the second to the third gear, from manomaya to vijnanamaya, again you have to go up to the neutral point, and then move. Here it is the prana that is the neutral point carrying you from the second gear, manomaya to the third gear, vijnanamaya. From vijnanamaya to anandamaya, again there is a shift, a disconnection, the neutral gear, and then anandamaya. Again prana is utilized there. Therefore, prana

is the substratum, the basis of the movement of awareness in deeper states of meditation or even in samadhi.

Subtle layers of prana

The concept of prana and pranic understanding is not simple. We make it sound simple, but the principles are complex. An example: there are five major pranas in the body: prana, apana, samana, udana, and vyana. Then there are five minor ones: krikara, devadatta, naga, kurma, dhananjaya. There are even additional minor ones that regulate the *karmendriyas*, the organs of action. There are even subtler ones that control the *jnanendriyas*, the organs of perception, connecting the mind with the senses and sense objects.

These pranas eventually convert into tattwas. What is a tattwa? It is the collection of a specifically defined manifestation of prana. That is the prana shakti contained in fire, water or air. After all, when you practise pranayama, you are inhaling air, not prana, yet it enhances your prana. That is because the prana shakti has become part of the air as an element, as a *tattwa*. Similarly, there is prana shakti in earth too, as growth potential. It is there in space, too. The tattwas represent the concentrated form of prana while the five pranas in the body represent the functional form of prana. Therefore, even the minor elements play an important role in regulating the pranic balance.

When you yawn, for instance, there is a specific pranic activity taking place. Yawning gives a feeling of completeness and if you don't feel that completeness, you keep on yawning until you feel it. When there is an accumulation of toxins in the lungs, a build-up of carbon-dioxide, and not enough oxygen is going in, there is drowsiness and you yawn. However, what is really happening here? By breathing in long and deep you are eliminating the build-up of carbon-dioxide. You are not necessarily sleepy; it is just the accumulation of toxins that is making you drowsy. Therefore, yawning helps to remove the accumulation from the lungs

and again recharge it with prana, with the vital components of the breath. When you have yawned five or six times, you feel better. You do not go to sleep but there is a physical feeling of relaxation as all the accumulated stress, which was forcing the prana to over-generate to compensate for the build-up of toxicity, is now being removed by breathing in a large quantity of air and then breathing out. So, yawning does not help you to sleep; it compensates for a lack of prana in the body which makes you drowsy. The act of yawning is the function of a minor prana, krikara, which is associated with the main prana that helps with inhalation. Krikara acts as an aid to prana.

Similarly, sneezing is aided by the minor prana devadatta. While in yawning there is a long inhalation, in sneezing there is forceful exhalation. To expel is a function of apana, so devadatta works in association with apana during sneezing. But what is it that's being expelled? Prana. There are cases of people having a heart attack while sneezing, as they sneeze in such a manner that the pressure is on the heart. There is also the old saying that when you sneeze the spirit leaves and the devil can come in, and therefore you say 'God bless'. That is not entirely incorrect as prana, the inward going force, is being expelled and in that swift moment there is the possibility of the negative going in – not the vital energy but the dark energy.

Another example. When a full body check is done at customs, many times they ask you to cough. That is because when you cough, the sphincters open up and if anybody is carrying anything in their body, it is pushed out. There is a specific prana at work here, which is creating an automatic motion in the body to push out whatever has been pushed in. The cough is also a pranic expression, not just a disease of the throat and in this case it becomes an aid to apana. The customs officers see that from the physiological point of view and yoga observes the pranic principle. Likewise, belching is caused by the minor prana naga. It works in association with the major prana samana which takes care of the overall

digestion. In this way, each major prana is associated with a sub-prana and their functions help the other pranas to function. Therefore, it should be clear that pranayama is not only a breathing practice, but it works on the various manifestations of prana shakti.

PRANAYAMA

Nadi Shodhana with jalandhara and moola bandhas, internal and external retention: Count of 10, ratio of 1:1:1:1, 3 rounds.

SWAN tips:

- This time, during the external retention, let the abdomen be free to adopt any posture of contraction, without you making the effort to do it. You just focus on jalandhara bandha and moola bandha.
- When you do the bandhas in external retention, do jalandhara first and then moola; while releasing release moola first and then jalandhara.
- Do not inhale or exhale while releasing the bandhas, but only after you have released them fully.
- Before beginning the practice by closing a nostril, take a few long and deep breaths through both nostrils with the hand held in nasagra mudra.
- When you complete the practice, take a few moments to become aware of your physical state and the sensations in the body.

Bhramari: 5 rounds.

Shavasana: 1. Surrendering the body to the floor 2. Alternate psychic breathing with visualization of the breath as blue light in the left side and red light in the right side 3. Externalization.

Cultivating Spiritual Samskara

STUDY: *YOGA CHAKRA 2*, CHAPTER 1

In *Yoga Chakra 1* we studied the subject of yoga, and in *Yoga Chakra 2*, we study the cultivation of spiritual samskara. This is an aspect much ignored by people, as they believe that physical exercise and practices will lead them to better health of mind. That does not happen. Swami Sivananda used to say that essentially you are divine, but in reality you are not. In essence you are That, but in reality you are not That. So what are you? He used to say try to discover what you are not, by recognizing what you are today. In this context he gave a yogic idea known as *pratipaksha bhavana*, cultivating the opposite thought. Whenever a negative thought comes to the mind, instantly cultivate the opposite thought. If you feel envious towards somebody, develop the opposite of that. Instead of feeling envy, feel love. If you feel hatred for somebody, instead of living that, change it into the opposite quality.

From negative to positive

Indian thought systems at large do not speak of sin and virtue, as spoken in religion. On the contrary, the scriptures state that if you are experiencing pain and suffering and if, because of you, others are experiencing pain and suffering, then that is sin. If you are feeling happy and, because of that, others are feeling happy, then that is virtue. Therefore in the

Indian thinking pattern, sin and virtue are expressions of the human mind. The ability to make others happy and yourself happy, and the ability to make others suffer and yourself suffer – that is virtue and sin. When we talk of sin or virtue, we are talking of an act that can bring a change within us and in the environment around us.

Pratipaksha bhavana is recognizing those moments, thoughts, flashes and expressions that cause disturbance in life and lead you towards the path of sin or suffering, and replacing those flashes, moments, ideas, thoughts with positive, virtuous thoughts, ideas and acts that will bring contentment and joy. Make the effort to create the opposite of the negativity you are experiencing at present. Traditionally pratipaksha bhavana has been part of the pratyahara and dharana systems of meditation. For instance, in the practice of *antar mouna*, observation of thoughts, when you are watching the negative traits and patterns, then instead of allowing them to simply flow or blocking them, you try to cultivate the corresponding positive qualities.

Patanjali's yamas and niyamas

In this manner, pratipaksha bhavana was part of the pratyahara and dharana series, but certain yogis like Patanjali felt that it is too late at this stage. Coming to the stages of pratyahara and dharana to deal with your mental negativity is too late. Therefore he suggested that you should pick up some crucial positive ideas that can help you manage your mind till you come to the meditative state. He thought there is an absence of *satya*, truthfulness, in the lives of people, so let there be satya. There is an absence of compassion in the lives of people and a greater tendency to harm others, so let there be *ahimsa*, non-violence, the corresponding opposite. Everybody likes to collect things, so let us see who can leave whatever they can, so bring in *aparigraha*, non-possessiveness. *Asteya*, honesty, *brahmacharya*, continence, is another aspect he mentioned to regulate life and the mind that interacts with life.

Patanjali listed these pratipaksha bhavas as five yamas and five niyamas and they deal with the basic negative tendencies. He said that if these can be practised from the very beginning of yoga, then when you reach dhyana, the meditative state, the mind will be easier to deal with. It will know what satya is, what ahimsa, asteya, aparigraha, brahmacharya, shaucha, santosha, tapas, swadhyaya and Ishwara pranidhana are. These yamas and niyamas will become the foundation stones for carrying you into the higher meditative dimensions, for you will identify with a state or quality of your own self which is pure.

Therefore, from the vast body of yamas and niyamas Patanjali took ten, which he felt would help people deal with day-to-day situations and guide one to manage the expressions and behaviours of the mind by creating the opposite positive condition. This is pratipaksha bhavana: accessing the dictionary of positive qualities for any negative quality. All the words in this dictionary are the yamas and niyamas, which are numerous.

Those who have read the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali hold on to the five yamas and niyamas given by him. However, the yamas and niyamas of Patanjali correspond only to raja yoga, to deeper mind management. The yogic literatures describe many more yamas and niyamas.

Moods of the mind

You have to understand the yamas and niyamas as moods of the mind. When you are angry, it is a mood, and it alters your behaviour at every level. Fear and insecurity alter you at every level: mental, emotional, intellectual, physical, everything becomes taut. Such a mental mood is like rain on a nice sunny day. You are out there to enjoy the sunlight, when suddenly there is a thunderstorm and rain, and you have to run in.

People tend to ignore yama and niyama, thinking that these are ethical and moral principles created out of some yogi's perception and therefore they need not be followed.

They would rather focus on asana, pranayama and dhyana, the physical and the meditative aspects. If you also think in this manner, you are missing the whole idea of transforming the lower quality of the mind into a better quality of expression. Transformation of the mind from its lower nature to a better, higher nature is mental evolution.

Shifting from tamas to sattwa

Another yogic thought is that the mind must be shifted from its identification with the tamasic vrittis to identification with the sattwic. Your effort in meditation should not be shutting your eyes, isolating and cutting yourself off from everything, saying to yourself, 'Oh I am exhausted, I need to isolate myself, I need peace.' No. Your effort in meditation has to be to shift your mind from its tamasic identity and fix it in the sattwic identity.

When you fix the mind in the sattwic identity, then the corresponding mood has to develop. You cannot be a sattwic person with a dark mood. If you are tamasic you can have a dark mood and if you are sattwic you must have a light mood. Light is the nature of sattwa, and the yamas cater to creating the sattwic nature. Just as cloud-cover can stop the sunlight for some time, tamasic cloud-cover can stop the inner light for some time. At that time the yamas and niyamas must be used to manage and illuminate the darkness of the tamasic cloud-cover. Once the yamas and niyamas are identified and cultured, they become one's natural expression. That is known as samskara. That natural expression of the mind, which is harmonious and constructive, is known as *samskara*.

Be happy, be aware

The yamas and niyamas begin a process to bring out a positive awareness and quality. That quality is the mood or nature of mind. Therefore, the first yogic yama is happiness. I always say that the first requirement in life is to be happy, and all of you think, 'Oh, Swamiji says that to everybody: be

happy', but nobody thinks why Swamiji says be happy. It is the first yogic yama called *manahprasad*, without which you don't move forward. Without that drive, that motivation, that inspiration, that zeal, you don't move forward. The quality of the mind does not change until you become happy. Try to tickle somebody who is in a state of depression, you will be slapped right back. In that state of mind there is no laughter. In a happy state of mind, the whole mind becomes the receiver, the expressor of happiness.

The first yogic niyama is japa. Why? To know when to connect with the senses and when to disconnect from the senses. When you are not doing japa you are identifying with everything. The moment you do japa, there is disconnection from the outside and you become focused and centred. That is the beginning of two things: awareness and concentration, and these are the requirements for the commencement of any yogic effort. Japa is not only to internalize the mind, it is to cultivate the ability to become aware, 'I am doing this.' During the day you are not aware of what you are doing, but when you sit down to meditate you have to consciously remember, 'I am doing this.' You bring your mind into the present and that is awareness and concentration, the opposite of dissipation.

Thus happiness and japa are the first yama and first niyama. Adherence to these yamas and niyamas enhances the meditative experience, you go deeper and realize the purpose of yoga; you discover the luminosity within. Therefore, in order to cultivate spiritual samskara and mental aptitude, to realize and express the spiritual nature, connecting with the positive aspect of your personality is of paramount importance. That is living the yamas and niyamas.

IN THE PRESENCE OF STHITA PRAJNA

Swami Yoga Gnana, Bulgaria

The Progressive Training course was a great inspiration for me. It gave me a deeper understanding of the teachings and also the vision of our guru, Swami Niranjanananda, about yoga and the new stage of its development.

I looked at myself and made a sankalpa to be more serious and sincere, to live yoga and become a better sadhaka, sannyasin and human being. The course helped us to reconnect with the source, the guru and the teachings. The morning classes helped us to realize how much more we need to work with our bodies and prana and gave us a new direction for hatha yoga sadhana as per the goals of yoga. Only after practising this personally, we should share with others, keeping this precious knowledge pure and in its original form. The lectures, satsangs and discussions showed us where we are in our journey, pointed out the aims of yoga and the importance of the tradition and connection with guru.

The course was structured in such a way that it helped purify in every aspect. We did shatkarmas to purify our physical body; mudras, bandhas and pranayamas to unblock the pranic flows. The lectures and satsangs and meditations had the aim to clean our mind from illusions and misunderstandings. I personally realized which quality from the 'six friends' I should work on and how, and I am very thankful for this. The difficult theory was

given with many examples, stories and humour, so that we could understand easily.

We received something for each of the koshas and the result is that we feel charged, optimistic and happy. We received so many spiritual treasures. Swamiji gave us so much knowledge, wisdom, energy and love. He is our inspiration and we will continue the path of yoga with strength and motivation. He is truly in the state of sthita prajna! Whenever he appears he radiates light and joy.



Finding Balance in Your Practices

GENERAL TONING PRACTICES

Meru Prishthasana (spine and back pose):
Variation 1: With the feet together, 3 rounds (both sides); movement and breath awareness together.
Variation 2: With the feet apart, 3 rounds (both sides); movement and breath awareness together in the first two rounds, and also mantra awareness in the third round.

Dwikonasana (double angle pose):
Variation 1: With the feet together, bending forward ninety degrees, with the arms coming up in the vertical position behind the back; 3 rounds; movement, breath and mantra awareness together.
Variation 2: Bending forward down to the knees, or as far as possible, with the arms also coming forward as much as possible; 3 rounds; movement, breath and mantra awareness together.

Counterpose – Natarajasana (Lord Shiva's pose): 3 rounds (both sides).

Druta Utkatasana (dynamic energy pose): 3 rounds; breath and movement awareness together.

Trikonasana (triangle pose):

Variation 1: With the legs spread wide apart, bend one knee and slide the hand down the leg, placing the hand on the floor, with the other hand vertical above the body; 2 rounds; breath and movement awareness together.

SWAN tips:

- Try to keep the opposite side of the body in one straight line. It is not like a mountain, it is a forty-five degree incline. Push your hip down so that you can put a straight ruler against your body.
- At the end of the practice, observe the whole body. Observe all the sensations in the body. All the sensations of stretching, bending, straining, whatever it is, just observe the sensation in the specific part of the body where it is prominent, and try to infuse that part with energy, lightness, health and happiness. See your cells smiling.

Variation 2: The same practice as above, except in the final position the opposite hand goes over the head; 2 rounds; breath and movement awareness together.

SWAN tips:

- When you take the arm up, feel the stretch along the whole arm and side.
- At the end of the practice, once again, with feet together and eyes closed, observe the whole body. Feel the sensations of stretching and lightness, feel your balance.

Sirsha Angustha Yogasana (head to toe pose):

Stage 1: Touch the nose to one knee. 2 rounds (both sides); movement and breath awareness together.

Stage 2: Touch the head to the floor; 1 round (both sides); movement and breath awareness together.

Shavasana: 1. Surrendering the body to the floor 2. Awareness of the breath in the abdomen 3. Expansion and relaxation with each breath 4. Counting the breath back from 30 to 15. Externalization.

Pranayama: flow with your body, not your ambition

In the practice of pranayama, if you experience strain during internal or external kumbhaka, you need to reduce the count. At the same time, try to find a balance between strain and your level of comfort. A certain amount of strain has to be there in order to condition the lungs and make them stronger. The strain should be not 100 percent so that it is explosive, and it should not even be 50 percent. It should be approximately 10 to 20 percent which is comfortably manageable. That will gradually enhance the stamina of the muscles.

Do not put your ambition above the need of your body; follow the requirement of the body. Your ambition may be reaching a count of 10 or 20, but your manageable limit may be 5 or 6, so reduce it to that level. Listen to your body and increase the pressure only gradually, remaining in your comfort zone. If you go out of your comfort zone, the pranayama practice will not be effective, as more energy will be spent in balancing the physical condition of pain or stress, and less emphasis will be placed on the actual awakening of prana. Therefore, always remain within your comfort zone and gradually, 10 percent at a time per week or per month, increase the ability and the capacity of the lungs.

Including maha bandha in pranayama

We will now integrate the third bandha in nadi shodhana. This becomes the practice of maha bandha. In this practice you have to find a comfortable sitting posture in which you can press down on your knees with the hands. Both knees have to be close to the ground. If you are in sukhasana, that's all right. Vajrasana is also good. Keep the spine upright. Any meditative posture in which you can put pressure on your knees is fine.

During internal retention, practise jalandhara and moola bandhas only. During external retention, add the uddiyana contraction. No counting in this, simply hold for as long as you can comfortably. During this practice, an intense pressure

is built up in the chest cavity, and it is felt in the heart and lungs, therefore do only as much as you can comfortably. You should not notice any palpitation of the heart. If you become aware of the palpitation, it is too long. While releasing, release uddiyana first, moola next, jalandhara last.

After each round, take 10 normal long breaths, then begin the next round, at a comfortable pace. See where you had difficulty in the first round and try to remove it in the next round.

PRANAYAMA

Nadi Shodhana with jalandhara, moola and uddiyana bandhas, internal and external retention: 2 rounds; count of 7 in the first round, at one's comfortable pace in the second round; ratio of 1:1:1:1.

SWAN tips:

- Before beginning, observe the breath flowing in through the left nostril for a few moments. When you close the right nostril, breathe out completely through the left nostril and then begin.
- You can begin with a count of 7, and gradually increase.

Purpose of pranayama

It was mentioned previously that there are seasons when certain pranayamas should be practised and certain pranayamas should not be practised. As a general rule, however, the only pranayamas that can be practised universally in all seasons, by all people with all conditions and restrictions, are the balancing pranayamas. In the rains they are practised exclusively, but at other times they may be combined with the other pranayamas.

Commonly in the yogic tradition, nadi shodhana along with its variations is practised; the vitalizing and cooling pranayamas are practised only when there is a need to create

a condition in the body either for health reasons or for advancement in yogic sadhana. If there is a need to awaken a chakra, for either spiritual or therapeutic reasons, then these pranayamas are used for some time to bring the body to a certain condition, and then one can again continue with the balancing ones. Therefore, it can even be said that the heating and cooling pranayamas are subsidiary to the balancing pranayamas.

The purpose of pranayama is to activate the prana shakti, to enlarge the dimension, the *ayama*, of prana so that you acquire the ability to hold prana, use prana in the right manner and not waste it. Sri Swamiji used to say, "The brain is like a battery. The more you use it, the more energy it uses. The less you use it, the less energy it uses." Normally, the brain cells become depleted by the end of the day. Yogis are able to charge those rechargeable batteries by working on their prana while ordinary people charge them by sleeping. The time of exhaustion is when you recharge your spent batteries and activity is the time when you use the power of that battery, which is prana shakti. Therefore think of sanyam in yoga.

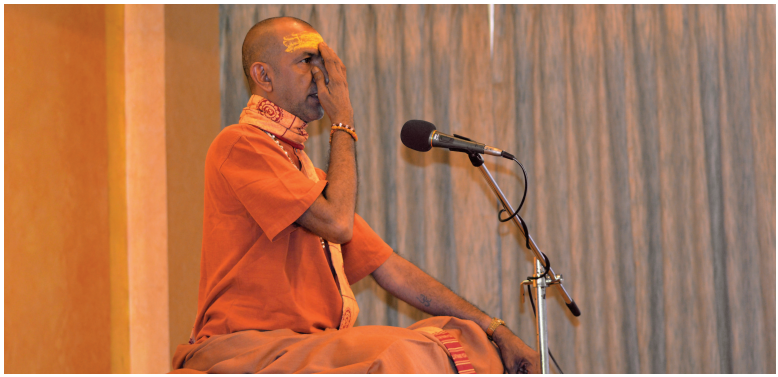
Sanyam means to restrain, to hold back. Hold back the prana shakti, by not doing this or that, by using different methods. Even mouna is a method to preserve prana shakti, as speech is a direct agent of pranic consumption. When you curtail useless speech, you save prana shakti from wastage. In this way, many indications are given in yoga to educate people that prana must be conserved, developed and utilized for the growth of the human personality and nature.

Prana in the human body has two major divisions: pingala prana and ida prana. The *pingala* flow represents the vitality and the *ida* flow represents the mental force. The vital force is the physical aspect and the mental force is the internal aspect, and the interaction of these two energies is what creates the experience of life. It is the balancing and raising of these two energies which is the purpose of pranayama, not tiring yourself out.

To avoid misuse of practices, pranayamas like kapalbhati, bhastrika and surya bheda are not generally taught, except for a specific health reason or achievement in sadhana. After all, medicine must be taken in a limited quantity and if you overdose it will be harmful. Similarly, if in order to gain the benefit of a pranayama you overdo it, the results will be the opposite. As yoga teachers you must understand where you should put your focus. Be knowledgeable and apply the yogic rules governing pranayama with regard to body and climate.

As you go deeper into the perfection of pranayama and begin the use of mudras and bandhas, these other pranayamas, except nadi shodhana, are set aside. They are not used for spiritual sadhana any more. You use them if you want to create a condition in some chakra. For example, if you feel the need to activate manipura or improve the digestion, you may practise bhastrika. Otherwise, just continue with nadi shodhana and go deeper in it.

In this course we are focusing on nadi shodhana with different ratios, mudras and bandhas, and doing the heating and cooling pranayamas only in a general manner without going into their advanced versions. Even for the attainment of samadhi it is nadi shodhana which is more effective than bhastrika. This is how you understand the vidya of yoga. Practise what is relevant and appropriate and go into it deeply to experience it.



Being the Change

STUDY: *YOGA CHAKRA 2*, CHAPTER 2

The first yama and niyama have been described: happiness and remembrance or japa. This is the beginning of the journey that the spiritual aspirant makes in yoga to rectify the negative and connect with the positive. This is also the final sadhana of yoga. After all, for how long will you do asana and pranayama, and how much? There is a limit to how much the body can do. Moreover, being involved in asana and pranayama will not bring any qualitative change in the behaviour of the mind as they do not access the mind, in the way that meditation or awareness would.

Colours of the mind

Ultimately, to deepen the yogic experience one has to alter the natural or the conditioned behaviour pattern. This pertains to the six traits, characters or *swabhava*: *kama*, *krodha*, *lobha*, *moha*, *mada*, *matsarya*: passion, aggression, greed, infatuation, arrogance and envy, the six colours of the mind. Just as when light passes through a prism you see a range of colours, when the light of any information passes through the mind, it is seen in relation to one of these colours. An idea or thought comes and becomes your kama, another becomes your krodha, your lobha, your moha. Anything that comes to the mind from outside is separated

into one of these colours of mental expression, and that is what is perceived.

The same situation can be viewed and responded to differently by different people based on which of these conditions they are experiencing. A peaceful man, an aggressive man, an envious man or a greedy man, all respond differently to the same situation. Each one of you would respond differently to that same situation and deal with it in your own manner. Even two people will not agree on the same method of doing the same job, so why would the six that crowd your mind agree?

Foundations of change

To change this nature and these traits, the first requirement is happiness. That is the first yama, and that is what is often absent in the mind. The moment you acquire happiness, there is zeal to enjoy life, to be part of life, to express the best in life, to be optimistic and do good in life. Happiness is the foundation of any positive change that you seek in your mind, in your internal nature. It is like the solid ground on which construction can take place, construction of the positive and the virtuous.

The second requirement is japa, repetition, remembrance. It is a beautiful concept: you remember or bring into the field of focus and awareness something of a higher quality than what is there in the normal awareness.

If somebody puts a pile of dirt on one plate and a pile of flowers on another and places both before you, you will naturally look towards the plate of flowers as it represents beauty and is more attractive. You will naturally gravitate towards the flowers. Often in life the opposite happens, you don't gravitate towards the good but towards the negative, towards the reactive nature. Although you are seeking good for yourself, you are not giving out good from yourself. This shows the connection with the material world, where the expressions of mind are not spiritual.

The need for goodness

From the beginning of the history of humanity, spiritual masters have always said do good, do the positive, do what is right, and have faith. Whether it is this or that system of belief, all spiritual traditions always emphasize the need to be good. This need is identified as there is an absence of goodness in life; to acquire goodness is a motivation and drive in people.

The natural behaviour is not good, according to the law of the 'six'. When these are active, there is an absence of everything that is good and positive. Sri Swamiji used to say that people come to the ashram and ask how they can become better in bhakti, how to become more compassionate, loving and kind. These questions relate to the goodness that you want to acquire. If you don't do anything, the weeds will begin to appear. If you don't do anything, the principle of evolution will not apply. You can create a beautiful garden and then if you neglect it, what will happen? In the course of time it will become a weed garden and the beauty will be destroyed. Hard work has to go in to change the barren quality of the land into a beautiful quality.

The natural law in prakriti is to be tamasic, therefore the natural behaviour will always be tamasic. The negative traits are the instinctive behaviour of this body, this mind, this life and this prakriti. This tamas indicates the absence of sattwa. If sattwa increased then tamas would reduce, therefore the search for goodness in life. The yamas and niyamas fill in that absence of the good.

Disconnecting and connecting

Japa is a niyama that allows you to disconnect from the experiences you were connected with until now, the sensorial, the sensual, the emotional, the social, the familial, the external – and the continuous identification with them day in and day out. That identification with the material world has to be broken somewhere.

There are people who have never done japa in their life. They struggle, achieve success or failure, and just survive.

They may be good people, kind, considerate and charitable, but is the character of their mind truly evolved and better? One can also express goodness circumstantially without it being the nature of the mind. Just as sometimes you give a forced smile for the sake of another person, but that is not you. You can force an act of kindness and goodness, but that may not be the natural state.

When you disconnect from the external sources, there has to be a connection someplace else. Here the concept of ishta devata comes in. *Ishta* means something that you like, and *devata* means the form. Therefore ishta devata does not mean Shiva or Rama or a specific deity but any form with which you feel a closeness, an affinity. It is any form that inspires you and can for a moment separate your awareness from sense objects and connect you with a different idea, an idea of goodness, peace, grace, strength, support. The ishta devata can also be an abstract symbol, a yantra, an image, a mandala. Whatever it is, its purpose will be to disconnect you from the association with the senses and sense objects.

This idea has to be remembered. It is like a socket into which you put your plug. Imagine that there are two sockets, one of material life and the other of spiritual life, and you are a single plug. You have put your plug into the material socket and you are there for 23 hours and 50 minutes. Then you take your plug out and put it in the spiritual socket for 10 minutes. You have disconnected from the material socket and are receiving the current from the spiritual socket now. That is japa. When you finish the japa, you can pull out from the spiritual socket and again put your plug into the material socket to live there for 23 hours and 50 minutes.

It is the changing of the socket that makes one into a yogi. If you remain connected to the socket of samsara you are a bhogi. What makes you into a yogi is your ability to disconnect from samsara and connect with the spiritual identity.

Returning home

Japa is that intention to look within, into a different source, in another direction, to have that in your memory. Just as the world is in your memory out there, what should be in your memory in here? No matter where you travel in the world, you have your home as the reference point. You can stay in any country for one, two or three or any number of years, but then you will return home. Just as your reference point is your home where you have collected everything dear to you, in the same manner the internal home has to be discovered. When you disconnect from the outside world, that inner home is what you move towards. The discovery of that home happens through japa; discovering the place of your ishta devata where you have everything you like, your most cherished wealth. Remembering that on a daily basis, connecting with that on a daily basis is *smaran*, remembrance, it is japa.

What you are acquiring through this is the flexibility, the resilience to move between two dimensions of the mind, the material and the spiritual, and neither can be negated. In spiritual life you cannot negate the material but the percentage of spirituality is more. In material life you cannot negate the spiritual but the percentage of material is more.

Thus the yamas and niyamas play an important role in forming traits and patterns of mind which are different from the normal traits and behaviours of mind. That is why if you meet a real yogi, an enlightened being, you will notice that all their responses are different. The stories of saints illustrate this. Where other people were struggling with life, they accepted the challenges that life was throwing at them with a different attitude, perception and motivation. Peace comes when you are connected with that inner source of support, the real home, where your ishta devata lives. Japa connects you with that inner home, with that internal person whom you like and who is dear to you.

THANK YOU, SWAMIJI

Swami Maitreyi, Colombia

How privileged and fortunate we are to have been given this new vision and experience of yoga. However, with privilege comes even greater responsibility – to carry the tradition forward with sincerity, commitment, and seriousness.

In the beginning of the course Swamiji told us about the need in society to make the bridge between the mere physical yoga and lofty ideas of the ultimate aim of yoga. In the Satyananda Yoga system that bridge has always been there, but with our limited and fragmented understanding even though we have been given the different pieces we haven't been able to put them all together. Now Swamiji has put all the pieces of the puzzle together for us. For me personally this course has been a new discovery and opening of new doors, of body, mind and spirit. I had no expectations, but it has been beyond my imagination.

I feel like I have suddenly woken up to a new and beautiful world to be discovered and experienced with all its beauty; the complexities and the simplicities both, of the body and mind, and in the interactions and involvements with the outside world. Every day during this course Swamiji has opened new doors, new windows, with new views, and letting more fresh air in. He has opened our eyes to the beauty of life and shown us what a wonderful and joyful experience it is to live and to

be. There is a whole beautiful world to experience and enjoy and a vast universe to travel in silence. I open my eyes every morning wondering what new experiences, learning, joys, smile and delights Swamiji is going to give us today. And close my eyes with a smile on my lips and a heart filled to the brim, happy and content, happy to live and happy to be. I feel incredibly lucky to be here at this time.

Sri Swamiji said he was a conqueror of hearts, and he opened the doors of many hearts wide and now Swamiji is filling our hearts with true happiness, giving us the tools to break the conditionings and remove the negativities, so that we are able to experience the happiness and joy of life.

I would like to end with giving my thanks to Swamiji for sharing his light, inspiration, experiences and precious time with us. I will carry this precious gift with me and protect it.



Beyond the Body through the Body

GENERAL TONING PRACTICES

Surya Namaskara (salute to the sun): 2 rounds; movement awareness.

SWAN tips:

- Before beginning, keep the arms beside the body and close your eyes. First in this standing pose become aware of the physical balance. Try to place equal weight on your feet. Find the centre, the balance of the body.
- At the end of the practice also, become aware of the balance of your body. The placement of weight on the soles of the feet should be equal. If your body sways, let it, but then make the effort to centre it. Once the body has stabilized, you can lie down in shavasana.

Shavasana: 1. Surrendering the body to the floor 2. Awareness of breath in the nostrils 3. Awareness of warmth and coolness of the breath 4. Externalization.

Trikonasana (triangle pose) variation I: With the legs wide apart, raising the arms to the sides, bending forward and touching the right foot with the left hand; coming to the centre and upright; then the other side. 6 rounds (both sides); movement and breath awareness together.

SWAN tip: Each time you come up fully and then bend forward.

Variation of above: At the time of going down, first bring the body parallel to the floor and then turn and touch the opposite toe. After 4–5 rounds at normal speed, the movement gradually becomes more and more dynamic and is performed as many times as is comfortable.

SWAN tip: The dynamic movement should be done as one flowing movement.

Shavasana: 1. Surrendering the body to the floor 2. Awareness of contact of different body parts with the floor 3. Awareness of sensations in the front of the body 4. Externalization.

Utthita Lolasana (swinging while standing pose): 4 rounds, swinging 5 times in each round; movement and breath awareness together.

SWAN tip: Be aware of the contra-indications – that the asana should not be practised by people with lower back problems and definitely not by those who suspect slipped disc or sciatica.

Dolasana (pendulum pose): 4 rounds (both sides), swinging 3 times on each side in each round; movement and breath awareness together.

Counterpose – Eka Padasana: 3 rounds (both sides).

SWAN tip: This is not a backward bend but it is a very good counterpose to stretch everything that has moved forward.

Shavasana: 1. Surrendering the body to the floor 2. Alternate psychic breathing with visualization of the breath as blue light in the left side and red light in the right side 3. Feeling the movement of breath, prana, luminosity, warmth, lightness and healing energy travelling up and down each side 4. Externalization.

Understanding agnisara kriya

Agnisara kriya is a practice that prepares you for uddiyana bandha, and it is rather strong on the abdomen, so be careful. We will do this practice standing up.

To do the practice in the standing position, with feet shoulder-width apart, breathe in deeply, then breathe out bending the knees, placing the hands on the knees, bending the body forward so that the body is at a sixty-degree angle. Holding the breath out, contract and release the abdomen five times, then relax the abdominal muscles, stand up and breathe in. Do not breathe until you are upright and straight. The lungs have to be relaxed, the muscles have to be released of their contraction.

Some people tend to pump their stomach very fast in the beginning. If you do that, you are creating an unnecessary stress on muscles that you rarely use, and you will feel stiffness later on inside the ribcage. Therefore don't begin with rapid movements, it should be a controlled movement. It should be a regulated and controlled contraction and release.

There are certain other precautions to be taken while doing this practice. You will notice that when you are holding the contractions, a pressure is felt inside the ribcage. If that is uncomfortable then do not do the practice. That is the first rule. It means that some organ has moved in the wrong manner and maybe the diaphragm is being pushed against the heart and the lungs, therefore you are experiencing discomfort. If that happens know that you are doing it wrong and re-analyze your practice. Maybe you are pushing more on one side and less on the other side. That can happen, it is a natural tendency to use one side of the body more and this applies to the abdomen too. When you contract, the stronger side may contract more and the weaker side less, and that can also be the cause of organic imbalance and the experience of pressure. Gradually you have to develop the strength of the weaker side, and as you do that you will feel that the discomfort dissipates. Observe this while doing agnisara kriya in the standing pose.

A variation of agnisara kriya is done in vajrasana with the hands pressing down on the knees. However, in the beginning, to train people to feel and control the movement of the abdominal muscles it is done standing so it does not become a flappy, unconscious movement, but is done with awareness and control in moving the muscles.

To build up the practice, do the first round at 33 percent of your optimum speed; the second round at 66 percent; and the third round at 99 percent. In these three different rates of movement, you are gaining different degrees of control so that eventually when you hold the contraction you are able to automatically pull in everything. If you can feel that complete pulling in, and if you can maintain that while holding the breath out, that is the beginning of uddiyana bandha. When nothing is in between your front and the back, everything has shifted up and down, that is the beginning of uddiyana bandha. Then, when you release the movement or the bandha, you have to consciously push your abdomen out, so that everything gradually comes back in its right place. Only then do you breathe in. If you come up breathing in, and the organs begin to fill up the space while you are in the movement, the pressure will continue to be there even when you are relaxed and you may feel slight discomfort. Therefore, inhale only when you are standing up fully.

PRE-PRANAYAMA

Agnisara Kriya: 9 rounds; allowing the breath to normalize after every 3 rounds.

1st set of 3 rounds: Count of 5 breaths.

2nd set of 3 rounds: Count of 5 breaths in the first round, 8 breaths in the second and third rounds.

3rd set of 3 rounds: Count of 10 breaths, increasing the speed in each round from 33 percent to 66 percent to 99 percent.

Pranic physiology of bandhas

If you are under stress, three areas are most affected and become tense: the perineum, the abdomen, and the neck. These are the areas where the bandhas, moola bandha, uddiyana bandha and jalandhara bandha, are performed.

The tightness in the perineum blocks the flow of apana so that mooladhara and swadhisthana become stagnant, as the energy is not moving. The tightness in the throat blocks the energy in vishuddhi; you will notice that sometimes the voice goes under stress or sounds strained, indicating an energy block in vishuddhi. Likewise, the tightness of the abdominal muscles indicates a block of manipura energy.

During the practice of bandhas, the pressure that is felt in these areas during stress is consciously created and then released. What happens at an unconscious level during stressful periods of our life is recreated consciously in a controlled manner and then released in a controlled manner. That opens those blocks, and also trains you to be aware of and to open the blocks that begin to form when you are under stress.

Understanding the practice of maha bandha

In the practice of maha bandha, which includes all the three bandhas, only external retention is used in our class, there is no internal retention. We will do the practice in the following manner: breathing in deeply from the left nostril, without any count, long and deep, filling yourself, whatever time it takes. Once you have filled yourself, bring the hand down, exhale through the mouth, empty out completely. When the last bit of the air is out, hunch your shoulders and then assume jalandhara, moola and uddiyana bandhas, in that order. Hold the bandhas and the external retention for as long as you can comfortably without straining your lungs or heart. Then release uddiyana, moola, jalandhara, in that order. The release of jalandhara is identified by bringing the shoulders down and the hand back up for nasikagra mudra. Then the same sequence is repeated with the right nostril. That makes one round, no break in between. First you do

it with the left nostril, then with the right nostril, without normal breaths in between the practice.

When you are practising the bandhas, as you come into jalandhara bandha say mentally, 'vishuddhi, vishuddhi, vishuddhi'. When you are contracting the mooladhara, say, 'mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara'. When you do uddiyana, say, 'manipura, manipura, manipura'. While releasing uddiyana, 'manipura, manipura, manipura'; while releasing moola, 'mooladhara, mooladhara, mooladhara'; while releasing jalandhara, 'vishuddhi, vishuddhi, vishuddhi'.

PRANAYAMA

Nadi Shodhana with maha bandha: 3 rounds.

SWAN tip: To begin with, do the practice without a count of breath, just finding your comfort zone in breathing and in retention of breath.

Shavasana: 1. Surrendering the body to the floor 2. Alternate psychic breathing with visualization of the breath as blue light in the left side and red light in the right side 3. Awareness of lightness during inhalation and relaxation during exhalation 4. Externalization.



Living the Yogic Wisdom

STUDY: *YOGA CHAKRA 2*, CHAPTER 3

You have to understand the subject of yama and niyama not just as theory but as something that has to be applied in life. As you study yoga in depth, you will find that asana and pranayama are insignificant and there comes a time when they are even stopped, for the purpose is over. Nevertheless, the advancement of mind continues. That is the cultivation of better qualities, developing the better nature, better habits and traits that allow you to integrate with your spirit while you live in the world.

Impact of associations

There is a statement that Sri Krishna makes in the *Bhagavad Gita* on how the associations of mind create desire (2:62–63):

> *Sangaat sanjaayate kaamah kaamaat krodho'bhijaayate.*
> *Krodhaad bhavati sammohah sammohaat smriti vibhramah;*
> *Smritibhramshaad buddhinaasho buddhinaashaat pranashyati.*
>
> From attachment desire is born; from desire anger arises. From anger comes delusion; from delusion the loss of memory; from loss of memory the destruction of discrimination; from the destruction of discrimination he perishes.

In this statement, he is talking of the connection with the sense objects and the outcome of that connection. He says that any association with sense objects will create a connection, which will lead to the birth of a desire. If the desire is not fulfilled, it will lead to anger, aggression. Once the aggression comes, you are swallowed up by the idea of the desire and the drive to attain it, then the mind becomes deluded, nothing else is seen, only what you wish to acquire. In the deluded mind the memory of good and bad, the knowledge and the concept of right and wrong recede to the background. When the understanding of right and wrong recedes to the background, then the faculties of intelligence die. The discriminative ability, *viveka*, is gone and then you are finished. Your life is finished; you continue to live but it is like a living death as you are totally sucked into the depths of your own tamas. This is the progression that Sri Krishna has warned of in relation to associations with the world, for a person who is not observant and careful of their impact.

Leaving the 'six' behind

This path to darkness is furthered by the six traits of kama, krodha, lobha, moha, mada, matsarya. They belong to the tamoguna dimension, which is the sensorial, sensual, physical, material dimension. The traits of rajoguna and sattwa guna are different. The rajoguna dimension is mental, while the sattwa nature is the opposite of tamas. What is the opposite of *kama* or desire? To be desireless, *anasakta*. What is the opposite of *krodha* or anger? To be *shanta*, peaceful and harmonious. What is the opposite of *lobha* or greed? To be *santoshi*, content. The opposite of these six tamasic qualities define the sattwic nature.

People ask, "What do I do when I get rid of these six negatives?" It is like asking, "How do I climb steps? I have to leave one rung, where do I place the next foot?" The obvious place is to put your foot on the higher step. There is no manual on how to climb steps: first stand in front of the steps, look up and down, count how many there are,

then pick up your left leg, inhale, place the leg on top of the first step, ensure that you are steady, then exhale, pick up the other leg, move forward. There is no steps manual or walking manual, certain things are known instinctively. After all, how does a child learn to walk? By reading a manual on how to walk?

There is something called instinctive knowledge, but people are forgetting how to trust their instinct. They are becoming caught up in the web of logic, and instinct and intuition have taken a backseat. When instinct and intuition take a backseat you will not see the options. Options become visible only when instinct and intuition are active. If they are not there, you will only see the path full of trouble. If there is instinct and intuition, you don't even need a map. You can look at the road, the farm, the field, the river, gauge its depth and know whether you can cross or not. You do not need a GPS to decide where you are and how deep the water-body is for the car to go through. Instinct and intuition are the important factors that give you the awareness and understanding of how to move from the negative to the positive. In their absence, no matter how good a guru you have and how good a disciple you try to be, there will not be compatibility of understanding.

Working on two fronts

When you are trying to alter the six restrictive traits, then the focus is not only on eradication of the negative but also on developing the positive. You have to work on two fronts: leave one step, and put your foot on the next. Generally, people work only on one aspect, on lessening the negative. However, there needs to be an understanding of how to fill the vacuum that is created. Always remember that there are two aspects: one that you leave and one that you adopt. Without this dual awareness, yoga is never complete.

Yoga is not the singular awareness, 'This is what I want to become and I don't know any other thing.' With that attitude, when you encounter your limitations you wonder

why you are not able to progress. You say, 'My destination is there and I am being blocked here.' It is because you are looking at only one aspect, you haven't looked at the other aspects. If you empty something from a pot, some other thing will fill the vacuum, even if it is only air. In the same manner, if you are removing kama you have to fill the space with something else: santosha. If you are lessening krodha, fill up with shanti. You have to see how the negative can be compensated with a positive attitude, idea and expression.

Seven levels of purification

Another important idea is that of purification. In the *Yoga Sutras*, the first niyama is shaucha. The five niyamas are *shaucha,* cleanliness; *santosha,* contentment; *tapa,* austerity; *swadhyaya,* self-study; *Ishwara pranidhana,* developing your conviction. Among the five niyamas, the first is shaucha. If you read commentaries, the commentators speak of shaucha as cleanliness, without defining the levels of cleanliness. They refer it to a physical attribute only, whether personal or environmental.

When Patanjali used the word shaucha or shuchi, he was not referring to merely one aspect of shuchi, the cleanliness which is physical or environmental, he was using the idea of cleaning oneself to become pure. When you work in the field and mud covers your body, you take a shower to remove the dirt, change the clothes and then go to the dinner table. Why do you do that?

This concept has to be taken to other levels of the mind too. In this context, seven levels of shuchi or purity have been defined: shuchi, nirmal, vimal, shuddhi, vishuddhi, pavitra and ujjwal.

Cleaning out impositions and deformities

Now, before we understand the seven stages of purity, let us ask: what is it that needs to be purified? Two things: mala and vikara. *Mala* means impositions; *vikara* means deformities. If you don't clean your room for a week, you will

see a thin layer of dust all over the room that has come from outside. That is mala, something imposed over an existing object.

The second idea, vikara, is where the natural state is altered. If you are born with six fingers, two heads, one eye – that is vikara, a deformity in the tattwa itself, the content itself. If you are mixing cement to make a house, and unknown to you a big pile of mud also falls into the mixture, the binding ability of the cement will be impaired. If you use that cement, the structure will be weak. Similarly, deformity is where the inherent weakness is in the thing itself, what is called the Achilles heel. There is a weak point in everybody's life and that indicates the deformity. That is the idea of vikara.

Through the seven steps of purity, mala and vikara, impositions and deformities, are cleared, and that is the purpose of shaucha, cleanliness, in yoga. Cleaning the mala and vikara is an internal process. Mala is what you receive from everybody the whole day long, and you become influenced and affected by that. The opinions of others shape your thoughts, behaviours and actions, rather than your own wisdom. If you applied your wisdom, then the opinions of other people would have no impact on you, you would be able to look at things through your own perspective, your own eyes. However, you don't know how to use your wisdom or knowledge, and therefore you use the opinions of other people to form an understanding of a situation or person without firsthand exposure or experience. An example is slander. If one person slanders somebody, many people will believe it. That person's thoughts and opinions will influence your thoughts and opinions. If they tell you something good, you will be influenced by that and your thoughts will be good. If they tell you slanderous things, you will be influenced by that and your thoughts will be slanderous too. The mind is not strong enough. People say, "We are masters of our own life and our destiny." No. Other people are the masters of your

life and destiny, as it is their influence that makes you act and respond in a specific manner.

Living yoga moment-to-moment

The idea of shuchi is to clean the mind of all impositions at level one, to be a witness of what is coming from outside, how it is influencing your thoughts and behaviour, and to judge whether it is according to *dharma* and *nyaya* or not, according to appropriateness and natural justice or not. At this level you can deal with situations like you do in antar mouna. You can observe a situation, a condition, a thought, a reaction, an emotion, then stop it, modify it, change it, alter it, bring it in or remove it. That is an ability you need to acquire and the practices of yoga aim to give you that ability. After all, what do you do in antar mouna? You look at a thought, but you do that only when you sit down to practise antar mouna. You have to be able to do that in normal situations in life. You don't because you are not connected with wisdom.

The same principle applies to emotions also. If you are able to look at your thoughts, you should be able to look at your emotions too. If you are able to stop a thought, you should be able to stop an emotion too. If you are able to create a thought, you should be able to create a positive emotion too. Why do you fail in that?

I practise antar mouna when I am walking and not when I am meditating. Self-witnessing becomes a part of my observations during the day. That is the meaning of living yoga. Living yoga means applying yoga on a moment-to-moment basis. Everything can be managed provided you have the strength and the conviction to deal with it.

The association with one of the six friends that is active in any given moment has to be managed. *Matsarya* or envy, for example, can be such an overpowering state of mind that the concept of right and wrong simply dissolves into nothingness. It is at that time that you have to be able to apply the yogic principles. That is the challenge in life, to apply these principles in moment-to-moment situations

during the day as you interact in life, being the *drashta*, the observer, and rectifying your direction. Whenever you take a wrong step, you yourself have to step back on to the path.

Be a yogi

The process of *shuchita*, purification, leads you through that awareness and understanding. The first stage is *shuchi*, which means cleanliness. The second stage is *nirmal*, which means the absence of impositions. The third stage is *vimal*, which means sparkling with the opposite of the impositions. The fourth stage is *shuddhi*, which means seeing the transparency, the clarity. The fifth stage is *vishuddhi*, which means becoming even clearer. The sixth stage is *pavitra*, which means pure, and the seventh stage is *ujjwal*, which means luminous. Luminosity follows purity. When something is pure, it becomes luminous.

Purity is the hallmark or the theme of yoga, not samadhi. Samadhi is the theme of raja yoga: a state of mind which is attainable and which is great. Each yoga has different aspirations, which reflect what it is aiming for with the perfection of its process; however, the subject of yoga in totality leads to shuddhi. As the *Bhagavad Gita* states (5:11), *Yoginah karma kurvanti sangam tyaktvatmashuddhaye* – "All the efforts of yogis are to attain self-purification." That self-purification for the yogi is the state of realization, moksha, samadhi, God-realization. It is self-purification that the yogi aspires for, not God-realization. That is the focus of yoga.



TOWARDS A BETTER WORLD

Swami Vedantananda, UK/Portugal

It has been a wonderful course. I came with no expectations and even if I had any, I cannot verbalize them. I feel that we've been very privileged to have the classes with Swamiji and be students, because as yoga teachers we are not very often students. I also feel privileged to have been part of the group; I felt that everybody was open-hearted and open-minded.

Swamiji taught us with simplicity, simple practices and simple language, and took us very deep, which just goes to show that we don't need complicated practices to have an experience.

Swamiji has given us so much on so many different levels that I feel that everybody leaves with a full heart and renewed inspiration to continue to do what we do to the best of our ability. More importantly, however, he has taught us the need for practising ourselves. So many yoga teachers don't do any personal practice and now is the time for us to truly live yoga and practise sadhana, become a sadhaka rather than a practitioner, and keep our hearts open to receive vidya from the source.

From the reading of the *Yoga Chakra 2*, we got the yamas, happiness and forgiveness, and the niyamas, japa and namaskara. If we can bring all of these into our lives to change ourselves into better people, maybe there is a hope that the world can become a better place.

Concluding Message

We have come to the conclusion of the Progressive Yoga Vidya Training. I am sure that during your time here you have learned something of yoga and have been able to have a glimpse of the intention with which Sri Swamiji propagated yoga. Until now, BSY was focusing on the general teaching of yoga. It taught you the basics, and how you taught to others, what add-ons you put on, was your choice. BSY did not tell you to do that.

The training was given and for fifty years, across the world, people have practised this yoga. That was the first chapter of yoga. Now, after the World Yoga Convention, the second chapter of yoga has begun. That involves deepening our own understanding and commitment to yoga, to experience what yoga desires of us. During the last fifty years we have not experienced what yoga desires of us, rather we have used yoga to fulfil our own desires. This second chapter should be introduced to those who wish to follow the aspirations of yoga. This Progressive Training is transmission of vidya, not a class of hatha yoga or raja yoga.

During the World Yoga Convention, there were many people here but few who knew the real intent of yoga. All the teachers of the Satyananda Yoga tradition are not first generation teachers; they are a photocopy of a photocopy of a photocopy of a photocopy of the original.

The teachers of yoga should review their commitment to yoga. Do they only wish to use yoga to teach for their social, personal, economic gain, or do they also want to deepen their own personal experience and commitment? People ask me many times, "What can I do to help you?" To those people I say: "Live what you have learned."

Live the learning

If you want to help me in any manner, then live what you have learned. The intention of Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda was to deepen human experience. If you need to use yoga commercially, do it, but know where to draw the line between your material aspirations and your personal spiritual development.

For teaching in society keep to general practices, don't go beyond. The deeper aspects that you have learned, practise them yourself. Right now you have learned them partially, you have not practised them, you have not experienced them. It is my recommendation that you practise in your own manner with sincerity, commitment and seriousness. Practise to go deeper into your own self.

Explore the depth

Remember the point that I have been emphasizing: asana and pranayama will not give you inner peace. They will give you health and nothing beyond it. Also keep in mind the understanding that although people do talk of the high philosophy of yoga, that is usually only hearsay. They have not studied any yogic literature themselves. They do not have any understanding of the yogic process yet they profess a high philosophy based on what they have heard from someone else. While their practice is limited to a little bit of asana, a little bit of pranayama if their teacher knows it, a little bit of concentration if their teacher knows it, they wish to attain the high philosophy they talk about. That is never going to be possible. Even their meditation will not lead them there, as they use meditation only for stress

management, not to manage the vrittis of the mind. You cannot be swimming on the surface and expecting to see the bottom of the ocean; you have to dive deep for that.

Until now, the practices of yoga that were given out were to cultivate an awareness of the possibilities that exist in yoga. Now, the onus falls on you to be serious, sincere and committed, to deepen your own aspirations and understanding of yoga. What we have undergone here is not meant for general training, it is meant for those who have spent time in yoga. If someone has been involved with yoga for some years, it indicates that there is some attraction to it, they are interested in it and practising it. To such people, inspiration can be given to deepen their own experience. However, that should happen only after you have established yourself in the practices and the understanding, after you have experienced yourself.

You have the tools

In this program, we have offered a new perspective. We went through certain practices of asana, a limited number of pranayamas, a basic introduction to mudras and bandhas, and an introduction to the new, advanced practice of Tattwa Shuddhi 2 along with the practice of Tattwa Shuddhi 1. The reading of *Yoga Chakra 1* and *Yoga Chakra 2* gave you a perspective on the history of yoga and an understanding of the yogic yamas and niyamas: happiness, forgiveness, japa and namaskara.

Many of you also gave classes, and now you know where you stand in your own practice, understanding and delivery. If you have the wisdom, you will rectify the shortcomings of your training and teaching. Continue to do what you have been doing till now. The onus is on you. You have been given the tools to deepen your knowledge, and the tools will be further available as you progress in life.

Connect with the new chapter

Therefore, with dignity and respect, pride and honour, connect with the next chapter, which is yoga sadhana. The first chapter was yoga propagation and practice, and that

will also continue to be part of the second chapter. You will continue to teach yoga as you have done till today, but in your own life, you now have to become a yoga sadhaka rather than being a yoga practitioner or a yoga teacher. Deepen that understanding and awareness in yourself, and then inspire others to become yoga sadhakas, to deepen their understanding and their awareness.

Your intention should be commitment to the yoga vidya tradition. It is through this that one can feel the responsibility to maintain, protect and transmit this knowledge which is part of the human heritage. You also have to understand what your responsibilities are, for your responsibilities as practitioner and as sadhaka of yoga do not begin and end with the classroom only. You have a separate responsibility in the classroom: there you are guiding people according to their needs. You have a separate responsibility in your own commitment to yoga and the yogic tradition: to deepen and to experience, to become what yoga wants you to become. If you can try to walk that path, you will definitely see a beautiful flowering of your nature, personality and life. Therefore, maintain, preserve, be responsible.

To use the knowledge and the wisdom properly, one has to be responsible. Irresponsible application of knowledge always leads to destruction while proper application of knowledge and wisdom always constructs a better environment and life. Our responsibility is to connect with knowledge and wisdom, to have clear and independent thinking, to be responsible for our own efforts, to preserve, to protect and to promote. This is not just Swami Niranjan's duty. These are your duties too. Swami Niranjan will come and go, but the mission will carry on. It is the connection with the vision and the mission that will sustain us in the future. Just as friendship sustains us now, the common vision and mission will sustain us in the future. So, if you can do your duty in the right manner, then a positive change will definitely be seen. If you can't, then it reflects your inability to use the wisdom, and there is no use claiming to be a yogi.

Therefore, remember to be serious, sincere and committed. With this you will also strengthen the bridge built by our masters. Remember the message of the World Yoga Convention: the monkeys made the bridge for Rama, they carried the big rocks, and little squirrels carried the sand to fill the gaps between the rocks. Our ancestors made the yogic bridge a long time ago. It is our duty now to be like the squirrel who strengthens the bridge by shaking sand into the gaps between the huge rocks that form the bridge. We can't carry stones and rocks, but we can definitely carry the purity of our intention, and work with conviction, commitment, sincerity and seriousness, to ensure that the bridge that we walk upon is strong and others can also use it once we are gone. So, carry the good and do the good.



FROM THE HEARTBOOK OF A PROGRESSIVE TRAINEE

Thank you for all and everything.
You were the stretch, the pull and push,
Brought nose to knee and hands to toes
With bones and joints of those past sixty.
You were our balance, grace and ease,
The count and flow of our breath,
The red and blue, the sound and image.
You were the innocence, the tender courage
In those young teachers, bright and ready
To tread the path of learning
Without the need for fluff and fancy.
You were our salt, music, laughter,
The pooja, havan, gods assembled;
You took us through the magic wheel,
From the Supreme to Mother Earth and back.
You were our happiness, forgiveness,
Our japa and namaskara,
Our sweet prasad and inspiration.

You are our Rama and our bridge.
From doors and shores you lead us now
To the light of yoga vidya.

—Swami Yogatirtha, Ganga Darshan,
Course Coordinator

Appendices

Appendix 1

Preparing the Body and Mind with Shanti Path

The importance of bringing the body and mind to a state of relaxation and one-pointedness before the start of asana and pranayama practices is often underestimated. However, in Swamiji's classes, in every session the preparation for Shanti Path was a complete practice in itself. A transcript of one such opening practice is reproduced below.

Sit in a comfortable posture. Body upright and straight. Hands on the knees in jnana mudra or chin mudra. Eyes gently closed. With eyes closed mentally observe the whole body. If there is anything tight, if there is any tension in any part of the body, then become aware of it and relax yourself as much as possible, and become comfortable. Total awareness of the whole body from the top of the head right down to the toes.

Become aware and observe the whole body mentally. See yourself as clearly as I can see you with my eyes open. Develop the same awareness, develop the same visualization of yourself. Try to see your body reflected on the mental mirror. Observe the whole body, see the whole body just as you are now: your posture, the condition of relaxation or stress in your body, the feeling of discomfort or comfort. Be a witness to what your body is experiencing right now, without being part of the body. Just be the witness to what your body is experiencing right now.

Become aware of the state of silence and stillness in the body. Experience the stillness which is physical, and experience the silence which is mental. The silence of the mind enforces the stillness of the body, and the stillness of the body enforces the silence in the mind. Merge yourself with the experience of physical stillness and mental silence.

Now bring your awareness to the eyebrow centre and focus at the centre of the dark space, the black curtain that you see in front of the closed eyes. In the centre of the dark space visualize the image of a candle flame. At first you are imagining the flame but as the mind becomes still, focused, one-pointed, relaxed and connected with its internal faculties, the image of the flame gradually becomes visible and one can visualize it. Develop the visualization.

With the attention on the image of the flame, breathe in deeply and chant the mantra *Om* three times with me.

(*Om* chanting and *Shanti Path*)

Appendix 2

Visualizing Colours of the Breath in Shavasana

A novel aspect of the Progressive Training program was visualizing the colours of the breath during shavasana. A transcript of one such practice is reproduced below.

Lie down in shavasana. Lie down comfortably, feet slightly apart, arms beside the body with palms facing up, head straight. Gently close your eyes and mouth. In shavasana, relax the whole body. Become aware of the body lying in shavasana on the floor. Surrender the whole body to the floor. There is nothing tight. There is nothing tense. You are in a state of comfort and relaxation.

Become aware of the natural breath. See the breath come up through the left toes to the eyebrow centre and go down from the eyebrow centre out through the right toes. Then again coming in through the right toes to the eyebrow centre and going down the left toes.

Visualize the breath, and this time add colour. Blue light flowing with the breath from the left side up to the eyebrow centre at the time of inhalation, red light flowing with the breath going down the right leg and out at the time of exhalation. Red light flowing in with the breath from the right side up to the eyebrow centre and blue light flowing with the breath down the left side and out of the left toes. Left blue, representing ida; right red, representing pingala.

With each inhalation feel the body getting recharged with prana shakti, becoming lighter. With each breath out, feel the body relax a bit more than before. Alternate nostril psychic breathing. See the breath in the form of blue and red flows, as you breathe in left out right, in right out left. In this manner, develop the visualization of the breath moving through the body.

The whole left side of the body is blue at the time of inhalation and exhalation through the left nostril, and the whole right side of the body is red at the time of inhalation and exhalation through the right nostril. See this red beam coming up with inhalation through the right side, blue beam going down the left side with exhalation. Blue beam coming up the left with inhalation, red beam going down the right with exhalation. In this way, develop a colourful awareness of the breath with every inhalation and exhalation, seeing the colours of ida and pingala. The whole right side of the body is to be visualized as being filled with a ray of red light. The whole left side of the body is to be visualized as being filled with a ray of blue light, visualize the whole left side as blue.

Become the symbol of Ardhanarishwara. The right side red, the left side blue, the right side pingala, surya, the Shiva tattwa; the left side, ida, chandra, the Shakti tattwa. See the microscopic image of Shiva and Shakti tattwas in you in the form of red and blue light, representing Ardhanarishwara.

Now stop this practice. Become aware of the outer environment, become aware of the body, the place, the people around you, the sounds, wind, floor, sensations. Slowly move your toes, feet, ankles, fingers, hands, arms, head from side to side. Take a deep breath in, stretch the whole body and then gently sit up.

Appendix 3

Developing Kosha Awareness

A specific meditation practice to develop awareness of the pancha koshas was given during the program that followed immediately the Progressive Training – the Yoga Chakra. It is included here in order to better understand these subtle aspects of the personality and to develop the ability to incorporate their awareness into the asana practices.

Keeping the eyes closed, become aware of the whole body, observe the body condition. The feeling of warmth, the feeling of activity, the feeling of dynamism, whatever may be the feeling in the body, just observe it.

Experience the solidity of the body, experience the weight of the body, the heaviness in the body, the matter of the body. Observe your body, like a statue made up of matter: still, motionless, solid, heavy. You are observing the body of matter, *annamaya kosha*. Experience the solidity, experience the mass, experience the weight.

Now drop this awareness, and become aware of the *pranamaya* dimension. See yourself like an empty shell with the covering of skin only, and inside the skin, inside the shell, the body is totally empty. In that emptiness of the body, within the shell of the skin, experience prana in the form of warmth, in the form of light. Develop an awareness of lightness. Develop an awareness of warmth and vitality. If any visual imagination happens, just observe it. Movement

of lights and colours in this pranamaya kosha indicate the flow of prana. The little points of light that move around in the body space, the subtle movements which you can perceive with the eyes closed, the little luminous dots that are seen in the black space, these are all various expressions of pranamaya kosha. In that space, experience the feeling of warmth.

Now move into *manomaya kosha*. Drop the pranamaya awareness and move into manomaya, the space of the head. Anything that happens inside the head is an expression of manomaya. Words will appear, thoughts will appear, in the form of images, words, ideas. Whatever is emerging in the mind, be a witness to that. Whatever emerges in the mind, try to see the colour of that. If it is tamoguna see whatever is emerging dressed in black: a thought, a concept, an idea, an imagination, whatever it may be. If it is rajoguna, see it as red. If it is sattwic, see it as white. Observe your feelings, observe your thoughts, observe your imaginations and visualizations, observe your ideas, whatever comes to the surface. See its colour – white, red or black. Identify the guna of whatever emerges in the mind.

Now drop this awareness, and move into the feeling of space all around you, within you. The feeling of expansiveness, the feeling of infinity, the *vijnanamaya kosha*, the realm of consciousness, where individual or independent ideas do not exist, but everything becomes part of the same source. Just a space, from where everything emerges and in which everything dissolves. Space is the container from where all the contents of creation appear, and space is the container where all the contents of the creation also dissolve.

Now drop this awareness, and develop the awareness of *anandamaya kosha*. Connect with the feeling of silence, peace, contentment and happiness. No mind awareness, no prana awareness, no sensory awareness, just the feeling of peace, happiness, contentment. Develop that perception, develop that awareness, develop that experience. It should not be an idea, it should become an experience:

contentment, happiness and peace. Become the experiencer of anandamaya kosha.

Now stop this practice and once again become the observer of your physical body, the annamaya kosha. Awareness of the body, the surroundings, reconnect with the senses. Become aware of the hearing, become aware of the smells, become aware of the taste, become aware of the other senses and what they are experiencing. Move your mind from one sense organ to another sense organ, one sense perception to another sense perception, and acknowledge their presence. Acknowledge their connection with you and tell them, "You will be my friend and you will help me attain my aspirations of life. You will not be an obstruction in attaining those aspirations."

Now breathe in deeply and chant the mantra *Om* three times with me.

Hari Om Tat Sat

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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 paramahamsa sannyasin and in 1995 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.

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 first Progressive Yoga Vidya Training held at Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth, Munger, in October 2015 was a ground-breaking program, opening the door to the next level of yogic learning. Conducted by Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati, it led the participants into understanding how to move from perceiving yoga as a practice to experiencing yoga as a sadhana and a lifestyle. The emphasis was on connecting with, imbibing and expressing the *vidya* of yoga, the essence of the knowledge of yoga, whether in an asana, a meditation practice, or in one's interactions with the world.

This book presents the classes and satsangs given during the training, through which Swamiji explained the principles of yoga and delineated the path for the future. The wisdom contained here will help the serious and committed yoga aspirants to connect with the classical yogic tradition. It will also allow them to assess where they are in their yogic journey and inspire them to become part of the next chapter of yoga that is being written.



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