

Progressive Yoga Vidya Training Satsangs 2016

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Progressive
Yoga Vidya Training
Satsangs 2016

With kind regards, ॐ and prem

Sriani Niranjan

* Raja Yoga Yatra 1 held from 21st to 28th October 2016 was part of this training. The discourses given during the course have been published separately in *Raja Yoga Yatra 1: Understanding Asana and Pratyahara*.

Progressive Yoga Vidya Training Satsangs 2016

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

*Discourses given by Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati during
the Progressive Yoga Vidya Training, held at Ganga Darshan
Vishwa Yogapeeth, Bihar School of Yoga, Munger,
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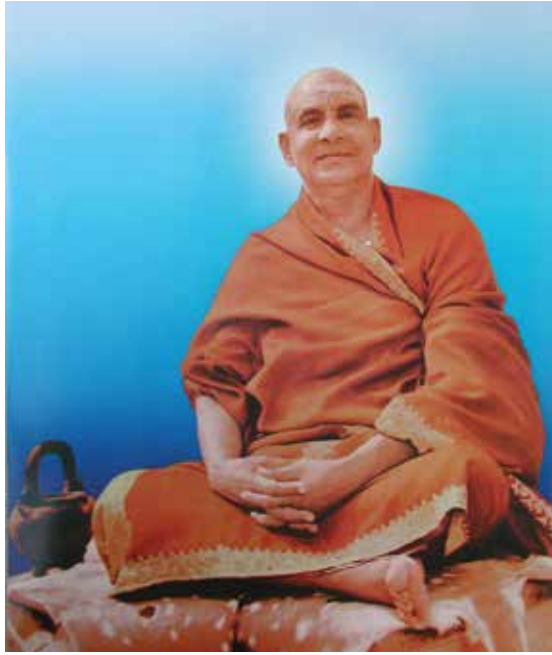
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Dedication

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

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The 2nd Chapter of Yoga

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Month of Happiness

1 October 2016

This year has been an eventful year for Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth, Bihar School of Yoga. From this year, the second chapter in the history of BSY is being written. All the programs and courses that have been held for the last fifty years have been cancelled and new programs, training courses and events have taken their place. That is important, for yoga has to be taken to another dimension of experience.

The first fifty years represented the time of yoga propagation. Now the second stage represents the deepening of our experience of yoga. Keeping this in mind, the programs that have evolved in 2014 and 2015 have indicated that we are now ready to launch the new yoga training programs and from this year, 2016, entire new courses and training programs have been introduced.

The Progressive Yoga Vidya Training is part of these new programs. It is a landmark program, as it aims to take one deeper into the yogic experience. To embark on this journey, the first rule that you have to follow is to be happy. We declare October to be a happy month! All of you have to be absolutely happy for this one month. You cannot scream at, fight or argue with anybody. There can be no animosity or adversary-ness in your attitude and behaviour. There has to be positivity, support, cooperation, consideration and happiness.

This is not a joke; it is a yogic discipline that you have to live. Make October a happy month by being happy and

making others happy. If you are disgruntled, if you get angry, irritated, negative, critical, hypercritical, then it will be marks off and you will be like a drop of lemon in the container of milk. Do you want to be that? No. Therefore, be the sugar that sweetens the milk. With this understanding and idea, that our first goal is to be happy, we begin.

During this period, the second sadhana will be to follow three items from the teachings of Swami Sivananda: serenity, regularity and absence of vanity. These are the first three of the 18 ITIES. First, learning to be serene in all situations, environments, conditions and moods: keeping the mind balanced. Second, being on time for everything, which will indicate your regularity and adherence to the routine; five minutes early and not five minutes late, whether it is for classes, meals or karma yoga. Third, absence of vanity, or ego management. Vanity is nothing but self-image and narcissism. The biggest example of narcissism is Facebook and selfies. Absence of that means you cannot take any photograph, either of yourself or of anybody else while here; you cannot use your Facebook or wi-fi. For a little while, live a simple life away from things that make you aware of your vanities, desires and needs.

These three – serenity, regularity and absence of vanity – will lead you to simplicity. If change has to come in your life, first it has to come in your mind. These ITIES indicate a process of developing awareness of your behaviour and responses, and managing and harmonizing them. Serenity or inner equilibrium is an antidote to all reactions. Regularity cultivates a discipline in life where you can identify and do something constructive and positive for yourself. Absence of vanity connects you with people in a positive and sympathetic manner, with pure intentions of heart and mind. And happiness is the call-sign of the month of October. Therefore, if you see anybody looking disgruntled, even your own face in the mirror, tell them to smile and be happy.

The Purpose of Yoga

2 October 2016

The Progressive Yoga Vidya Training lays the foundation of the yogic experience. The objective of gaining the yogic experience has been defined by our paramguru Sri Swami Sivananda.

When you enter a dark room, your first effort is to turn on the lights, second to turn on the fan, and third to open the windows and allow the air to circulate. In the same manner, in your life you first turn on the lights using the faculties of the head, then you turn on the fan using the faculties of the heart, and then you open the windows using the faculties of the hands. These are the three ideas given by Swami Sivananda for developing the yogic experience.

Contrary to the popular belief that yoga is a path of self-realization, Swami Sivananda did not give that as the aim of yoga. He made cultivation of the three faculties the aim of yoga. This is appropriate, as no yogic literature speaks of self-realization; that is a belief created by the modern commentators, who themselves are not realized. The aim of yoga is to overcome suffering by cultivating the qualities of head, heart and hands.

If you analyze the philosophies and religions of the world carefully, you will find that the eastern philosophies and religions have evolved out of one basic question: how to overcome human suffering. The foundation of Buddhism is based on three questions: what is suffering, how can you overcome it, and how can you recognize it. They speak of

nirvana, but it is only attained by those who have reached Buddhahood. In the same manner, the yogic tradition speaks of samadhi, yet samadhi is attained only by those who reach the pinnacle of yoga. For the rest, the purpose is not nirvana or samadhi; it is overcoming the sufferings in life.

The greatest strength

There are four statements mentioned in the yoga literatures, *Nasti maya samah pasho* – “There is no noose greater than delusion.” *Nasti ahamkarat paro ripuh* – “There is no greater enemy than one’s own ego.” *Nasti jnanat paro bandhuh* – “There is no greater friend than one’s wisdom.” *Nasti yogat param balam* – “There is no greater strength than yoga.”

The above statements indicate the whole process of yoga. The first process of yoga is overcoming the delusion, *maya*. Everyone is affected by delusion. Every thought, behaviour and action of yours is guided by how you perceive the reality to be in relation to you, not in relation to others. When you see the reality in relation to you and block out all other people, when you become the centre of attention, that is *maya*. All mental behaviours are coloured by the forces of *maya*. It is this delusion that binds you to one state of mind, whether it is negative, destructive, positive, optimistic, good, bad. Delusion is the cause of suffering, and yoga begins with trying to understand what suffering is.

The second aspect one has to deal with is the ego. The statement is that there is no greater enemy than one’s own ego. That is true. All the aggressive behaviours of life are due to the ego, creating responses and reactions which you are not able to manage, and when that happens, frustration and anxiety set in. This leads to further deterioration of the mental behaviour, mood and attitude.

Yoga looks at the component of *maya*, delusion, which affects the entire behaviour of life, and aggression, which is the trademark of how you live in the material world. These two represent the material nature. When you come to the

yogic nature, the first thing yoga says is to cultivate wisdom. Wisdom is not knowledge; it is the knowledge that you apply and live in life, not the knowledge which you cram in your mind and memorize. This is a result of understanding. Jnana therefore is understanding, not knowledge, although it is loosely translated as knowledge. Jnana means to express what you know, and that is applied knowledge. Applied knowledge is wisdom and understanding.

Understanding is the biggest quality in life. Not love, not compassion, not sympathy, not any other positive quality, for they all fail in the absence of understanding. How can you express love, compassion and sympathy if there is no understanding and appreciation? The understanding has to come first. It is the mother. There is no greater support in life than that of the mother. If you have the mother with you, the children will follow, which are love, compassion, kindness and sympathy. Thus, there is no greater friend in life than your own wisdom and understanding.

The biggest strength is yoga. Wisdom and yoga are on one side whereas maya and aggression are on the other side, and they have to be balanced. That is the yogic journey.

The right foundation

The yogic journey does not begin with asana and pranayama; they are only tools to improve the physical, the pranic and the psychological conditions. The practice of asana is not going to lead you into deeper states of meditation or give you emancipation. The practice of pranayama is not going to give you peace. The practice of any yoga is useless if the foundation is not created.

If you want to construct a building then you need to have the right foundation. You cannot construct a building overground and hope that it will survive just because it is big. Without a strong foundation, no building will be able to stand the ravages of nature. A building that has a good foundation will be able to withstand all the forces of nature. In the same manner, the foundation has to be created in

the body, the mind, the emotions and behaviour for yoga to become effective.

People generally practise a few asanas, pranayamas, some relaxation and meditation for maybe an hour in a classroom environment and say, “This is my yoga practice.” They don’t carry the ideas of yoga beyond the classroom to their home. They say, “I’ve done my yoga, now I am free to live my life as I want to.” Yet they expect the world from that one hour yoga session. Therefore, your own approach to yoga has to be seen and revised.

Changing the mood

Yoga begins not merely with the body but also with the mind; both have to be dealt with together. For the mind to change, for the attitude, the mood and the perception to change, the practices that are taught are yama and niyama. Along with the other practical aspects of yoga one has to practise the yamas and niyamas as well, which people conveniently avoid.

You have all been ‘practising yoga’. How many of you have practised yama and niyama? Most of you have focused on a few practices of asana, two or three practices of pranayama, one practice to fall asleep, and maybe one practice to concentrate. From these four you expect the world, and that is not going to happen. Therefore yesterday I introduced the first yama of yoga: happiness.

When the words yama and niyama are mentioned, everybody thinks of the yamas and niyamas given by Patanjali. They are not the yamas and niyamas of yoga, they are the yamas and niyamas of raja yoga only. Every yoga has its own set of yamas and niyamas. In hatha yoga there are ten yamas and ten niyamas, in raja yoga there are five yamas and five niyamas, in bhakti yoga there are twenty yamas and twenty niyamas. Every yoga has its own yamas and niyamas, as they create the basic qualitative change in the pattern of your mind and behaviour. There are some yamas and niyamas that relate to lifestyle. The first in this is *manahprasad*, which means cultivating happiness.

Practising the first lifestyle yama

If you observe the twelve-hour period when you are awake, for how many hours or minutes are you happy and for how long are you under stress, anxiety and worry? For how many hours are you indulging in critical, negative thinking, and for how many hours in positive thinking? What is the percentage during the day? If you observe yourself properly and carefully, you might be surprised to find that the period of happiness does not exceed one hour in twenty-four hours.

Can you increase that time? From one hour, can you make it one hour and ten minutes? One hour and twenty minutes? One and a half hours? Every day, increase five or ten minutes of happiness. That is the first yama of yoga.

A specific psychological pattern is represented here. Sri Swami Satyananda used to say that the first rule for people coming for therapy to the ashram was to forget that they are sick. He would say, "You have been thinking that you are sick, and by thinking that you have become sick. Now for the duration of your stay here, whether for one week, one month or four months, remove the idea that 'I am sick' from your mind." Just removing the idea, 'I am sick', and developing the idea, 'I am well', would change the understanding, the appreciation and the effect of the yogic practices which the students were going through. Similarly, you have to put aside the idea that 'I am going through suffering', and connect with the idea of happiness, make happiness your companion in life.

When happiness becomes your companion in life, you will never have any anxiety, stress or problem, whether psychological, emotional or psychic. That is the change of mental condition that yoga speaks of as the first yama. For this reason I declared that the month of October would be a happy month. You may say, "But I don't feel happy, so what do I do?" Well, at least smile. Don't publicize that 'I am not feeling happy.' What you have to publicize are your beautiful thirty-two diamonds in the mouth, and spread the virus of happiness.

There are many viral illnesses going around, so let us add another virus to the human society today. Let us create that virus here and then spread it around, the virus of happiness: manahprasad. Everybody should make the effort to practise this first yama.

Practising the first lifestyle niyama

The first lifestyle niyama is japa. It is interesting why japa has been placed as the first niyama. By doing japa, you develop the ability to disconnect from the outside world. That is the only way by which you can isolate yourself from the external world and become stable inside. Mantra is the first yogic initiation and also the final one. When people commence *japa sadhana*, repeating the mantra with the mala, for many it is the first time they disconnect from the external world of senses and sense objects, for the first time they close their eyes and focus on an activity which is non-sensorial and non-mental.

Mantra does not require thinking, therefore it is non-mental. Mantra has nothing to do with the sense organs, therefore it is non-sensorial. The body is connected to the world through the senses; the mind is connected to the world through its own thought tentacles. The sensory tentacles are physical and the mental tentacles are internal. Japa is the only practice that gives you the ability to disconnect voluntarily and consciously from outside and go in and become aware internally. The ability to do this is the first process that leads you to inner discovery and deeper meditative states.

These are the first yama and niyama not of raja yoga, kriya yoga, kundalini yoga, karma yoga, bhakti yoga or jnana yoga, but of yoga lifestyle. By following them you create the right mood which allows you to become receptive to the teachings of yoga vidya. Therefore, it is a task for each one of you to follow manahprasad, the first yama, and japa, the first niyama. Increase the moments of happiness and disconnect from sensorial and mental tentacles to experience stillness and silence.

Progressing in Yoga Vidya

3 October 2016

To understand why we are conducting the Progressive Yoga Vidya Training, I would like to go back in time. For fifty years, the Bihar School of Yoga and those who were trained here travelled all over the world to propagate yoga. When the first generation undertook this task, the intention was not to prepare yoga teachers but to teach yoga. Those of us who came to Munger in the sixties did not come with the intention to become yoga teachers or make a profession out of yoga. We came because we wanted to live with Sri Swamiji and deepen our experience of yoga.

It was against this background that the propagation of yoga started. As long as there were sannyasins in any of the ashrams, it did not conduct a teacher training course. I lived at the ashrams in many countries in Europe and South America at that time, and our activities were limited to teaching yoga. The purpose of the classes was to teach yoga, not to have teacher training courses. It was the involvement with yoga that was important. The training of teachers started much later. Even then, students were not trained to become professional teachers; they were given a background of yoga which they could share with their family and friends. That was the purpose with which the first group of teachers was raised. The training that started on a small scale to lead people into yoga eventually became a big program for people who started training others. Suddenly, yoga teaching stopped and everybody was doing a yoga teacher training.

This trend resulted in a greater focus on teaching and less on one's own personal experience. Therefore, a basic point was missed: developing one's own yogic experience. Even in this course, many have come with the idea to learn new techniques so they can go back and teach them to their students. We do not subscribe to that idea or intention here. What new things can you learn when you have not been able to experience and realize what you already know?

You have to ask yourself, 'What do I know?' As a teacher, what do you know? Twenty to thirty asanas, only up to the intermediate level as you cannot do the advanced ones. You might have tried the peacock pose, mayurasana, once and then dropped it. In this manner, many things are attempted but not practised. The practical understanding of hatha yoga is limited to twenty to thirty asanas within five or six series. As for pranayama, how many do you know or teach? Three, four or five. Mudra and bandha, are these taught by anybody in a proper, sequential manner? No. The other things you teach include one technique of relaxation: yoga nidra, and maybe a few techniques of concentration such as ajapa japa, antar mouna, chidakasha dharana, yet not on a regular basis, only as something new to add to the class. This is the limit of everyone's yogic knowledge. You might have read or heard about the theory of hatha yoga, but the understanding, practice and application is no more than one percent. This is the scene globally.

You are only skimming the surface of yoga, and what you know belongs to the age of propagation where the focus was to take the understanding and the word 'yoga' to every person. For fifty years, this much was enough: thirty asanas, five pranayamas, one relaxation technique and a few meditation techniques. They were enough, and everybody survived on them. You are here due to those four items you have been teaching and practising. However, what you know is not enough if you want to deepen your understanding of yoga.

The new programs of yoga that have been introduced from this year are to deepen that experience. Before you

can do that, you have to understand the philosophy and principles of yoga as established by Swami Satyananda.

The focus of yoga

Sri Swamiji's aim was not to teach twenty asanas or pranayamas or pratyahara or dharana techniques to people, but to ensure that there is a focus and aim to the practice of yoga. This focus or aim was given by Swami Sivananda himself.

When yoga became popular in the last century, everybody thought that the practices of yoga lead to deeper states of meditation and self-realization. Yet, nowhere in the yogic literature is it said that yoga will lead to enlightenment. The focus of yoga is not enlightenment, realization, samadhi or moksha. It is management of life, in one simple sentence. This relates to two things specifically, as mentioned in the yogic traditions:

Nasti maya samah pasho.

There is no bigger bondage or noose than maya.

Maya is delusion, and the mind is always in a state of delusion. It is this delusion that has to be removed. That is point one. The second is:

Nasti ahamkarat paro ripuh.

There is no greater adversary in life than your own ego.

Observe how the yogis have played with words here. With two simple words they have defined the purpose of yoga. The delusions of the mind have to be removed and the self-centric nature has to be harmonized. Why does one have the selfish, aggressive and reactive nature? Due to desires and expectations, which are again expressions of the mind. Thus, two ideas – overcome the delusion and regulate your nature – are the foundation of yoga. The antidote to these two is wisdom:

Nasti jnanat paro bandhuh.

There is no greater friend than wisdom, understanding, knowing.

Nasti yogat param balam.

There is no greater force than yoga.

Knowledge, awareness and understanding, and yoga with its aspirations, practices and principles, together become the antidote for maya and selfishness. That is one theory: the purpose of yoga is to overcome the influences and effects of maya and make you more expansive and peaceful.

Overcoming suffering

The second purpose of yoga, as stated in the tantras, is to overcome human suffering. Most Asian belief systems, such as Buddhism, yoga, Jainism and others, started their quest for peace and realization of divinity by asking three questions: 'What is suffering?' 'How can one overcome suffering?' 'What is the nature of suffering?' Buddha started with these three questions; he did not speak of nirvana. Yet everybody says that the purpose of Buddhism is attainment of nirvana, just as they say the purpose of yoga is samadhi. Buddhism did not start with the concept of nirvana; it started with understanding the causes of distress in life and how to manage them. It is the same with yoga.

The tantric traditions describe that once Parvati, consort of Lord Shiva, asked him: "In this world there is so little happiness and so much suffering. Is it possible for people to avoid suffering and attain happiness?" In answer to her question, Shiva said that there are three kinds of suffering: one is destined, which one cannot control; the second is due to natural causes, which also one cannot control; and the third is self-generated. It is the self-generated suffering that one can control and manage.

Even Lord Shiva did not say that yoga is the solution for all suffering. Out of the three classifications of suffering,

he only pointed at the self-generated suffering. You cannot change your karma or your genetic makeup. If you are meant to get cancer, you will get cancer. If you are meant to die at a certain age, you will die. What is destined is going to happen; however, the way you deal with it will determine the effect of that suffering on you. Similarly, you cannot control the natural calamities. If there is an earthquake and houses collapse all around you, you cannot do much about it. It is only the self-generated suffering that can be managed.

Let us start with this understanding that you are suffering. It may be due to anxiety, depression, cancer, arthritis, a social problem, a family problem, a professional problem; everybody has their own level of suffering and pain. It is when suffering defeats you that there is darkness. When you are able to rise above the pain and suffering, you overcome it. Therefore both Sri Krishna and Swami Sivananda say, you have to defeat the defeatist attitude. Never think that you are defeated. If the thought comes, 'I am defeated', try to defeat that thought. If you can be aware that you are suffering, then it can help you grow. If you are caught up in the vortex of suffering, then there is more pain and the world becomes even darker. If your mind is free then you can transcend the suffering, and it is possible that in your next life you will not be affected by circumstances in the same way that others do.

When I look at my own life, I can see that the social, familial, professional and financial suffering that people go through has been absent from birth. Something must have happened right due to which I have not had to go through that route and instead the samskara and environment have been there to live this kind of life. That opportunity and possibility is there for everybody. The problem is that whenever the opportunity comes, you miss it. It is like you are groping along a wall in the dark trying to find the door. Each time you come to the door a mosquito bites you and your hand leaves the wall to scratch yourself, so you keep going round and round not finding the door. Once I did not lift my hand up despite the bite of the mosquito, therefore I found the door. That is the clue.

Thus, from the tantric point of view also, the purpose of yoga is to overcome the distress and suffering and to find one's own happiness in life, not to realize God.

No God

The third point is: yoga does not speak of God. The idea of God is non-existent in yoga. Even in the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali there are only two sutras that make a mention of Ishwara. One is with reference to *Ishwara pranidhana*, belief in the higher nature, as a *niyama*. The second defines the nature of Ishwara as a special quality; He is not bound by the qualities that bind normal people. The word used is *vishesha*, which means special. God is a special experience that goes beyond the human experience.

These are the only two statements about God. He does not appear in hatha yoga, kriya yoga or jnana yoga. He appears in the minds of people when they practise bhakti yoga. Beyond that, God does not intervene in any other practice or branch of yoga. I am telling you this for a specific reason: if there is no concept of God, then how can God-realization be the aim of yoga? Yet these are the thoughts that you continue to carry with you, that yoga leads to self-realization, God-realization, moksha, nirvana, samadhi. It is all right for those who don't know yoga to think this, but not for those who are involved with yoga. Therefore I hope that from today you will change your perspective and ideas as we try to discover the actual purpose and intent of yoga.

Even Sri Swamiji, as long as he was in Munger, only put forward the topic of yoga and not the topic of God. He did not speak on bhakti yoga while he was here. The first time he spoke on bhakti was when he settled in Rikhia, and *The Bhakti Age* was the first-ever publication on the subject by us. This indicates what Swami Satyananda wanted from yoga, and we are maintaining that tradition here. The focus is on the practice, the theory, the philosophy, and no god or goddess. If Swami Satyananda had wanted all those things to be part of yoga, he would have included them here. However, he

maintained the pure, practical and scientific approach, and we are going back to the roots to understand the meaning of yoga which he realized.

This background should indicate that what you think as the purpose of yoga is different from the real aims of yoga, which are: overcome the suffering, find equilibrium and happiness, and then the guidelines of Swami Sivananda: cultivate the faculties of head, heart and hands. This was the focus of yoga which Sri Swamiji developed in Munger.

The first teachings

After the teachers were trained by the first generation teachers, the focus shifted from personal yogic experience to what should be taught to people and how it should be taught based on the requirements of people. The focus became the body. When Sri Swamiji first went to Europe, there was a person called Richard Hittleman, who was the yoga apostle of Europe during those days. His trademark was blue leotards and yoga for beauty: trim the waistline and have the 'spiritual glow' on the face. That was how yoga was taught in the West.

When Sri Swamiji taught us, he said you are not just this physical body, you are five bodies: annamaya kosha, pranamaya kosha, manomaya kosha, vijñanamaya kosha, anandamaya kosha. His approach was simple: every asana has to access all the five koshas. Whether you were practising pawanmuktasana, surya namaskara, shashankasana or sirshasana, the training was such that we had to move from one kosha to another in the same asana. He taught five different ways to do an asana, which would allow you to focus on each kosha one by one.

When he went out, he first taught asana, as that was the popular physical activity of the time. However, he taught with a difference. While everybody was doing asana as gymnastics and dynamic movements, Sri Swamiji said that while you are practising asana, become aware of the movement, become aware of the breath, coordinate your breath with the

movement, and visualize the movement in your mind while doing it. If it was toe-bending, first you did it with awareness of the toe movement, then coordinating with the movement of the breath, which took you one step deeper, away from the body.

While everybody else was only teaching the physical practices, Sri Swamiji said, “Go into the breath, exhale as you bend your toes, inhale as you straighten your toes.” In a simple manner, he brought in the component of breath and then visualization. He said that while the body is doing the movement here, you visualize the asana in your mind; with eyes closed you see the toe movement like a movie so that what you are seeing inside is what your body does outside. That was the third component. There were two more components, which will be revealed in the course of the training.

This represented how Sri Swamiji deepened the awareness of practitioners and sensitized them to yogic practices. His style became a more passive style. While everybody else was into dynamic asanas, Sri Swamiji’s style became more passive as he was taking you through different levels of concentration. He knew that he was not training anybody to be a yoga teacher, so he followed a plan. Even in India, he would go to a program, teach something, and then say, “You do this until I come back the next time.” The next time he would teach them something more, the third time something more. This is how he indirectly imparted the yoga training and knowledge to people across the globe during the sixties and seventies.

The people who were trained at that time, such as Swami Pragyamurti, Rishi Arundhati, Swami Devatmananda and others, did not do any teacher training. Sri Swamiji simply took them through the yogic experience. He did not give them a formal course, but an ongoing training. Those who were taught by him still continue to be beacons of light today, while the hundreds and thousands who were trained by photocopies of yoga teachers have disappeared into the woodwork.

The value of progression

Progression was an important factor for Sri Swamiji: evolving from one stage to another, from one practice to another, from one yoga to another. Even with yoga nidra he had a simple and unique method. Later, we started seeing many cassettes, CDs and DVDs of yoga nidra which had all kinds of additions. Some had music. Some had waterfalls and birds chirping, some had rolling drums. Different people made their own versions of yoga nidra, believing that it would lead people into deeper relaxation, yet that went against every principle of yoga nidra.

Yoga nidra is a technique of pratyahara, where the mind has to be disconnected from the senses and sensory inputs. If there is music, no matter what type, or any other sound, you will not be able to disassociate yourself from that sound or sensory connection and you will not reach the state of pratyahara. This is the point which most people miss. The yogic practices aim to disconnect the mental plug from the outer socket and put it in the inner socket. You disconnect from the dimension of unhappiness, discontentment, tension, stress and anxiety, and connect with the dimension where there is solace, strength, comfort, peace, tranquillity. That connection gives the strength to again face the crises of the material world when you come out. There has to be a disconnection; the tentacles that are reaching out in all directions have to be cut, and then yoga nidra will take place. If there is music and drums and birds chirping and lightning and thunder, then that disassociation is not happening. Therefore you are not practising yoga nidra, you are practising listening to music.

Swami Satyananda is definitely not the originator of the yoga nidra with music and other add-ons that people practise. He is the originator of yoga nidra that forms part of pratyahara, a state that you reach through a sequential practice.

Yoga today

When people identify more with the body, they tend to use the practices in that context. All the yoga studios with full-length mirrors and music, do they represent the learning of yoga or do they represent admiring and comparing oneself and making the ego bigger? Where is the spirit of yoga?

All the 'brands' of yoga, do they represent the spirit of yoga? A few years ago, there were only five or six types of yoga. Today, if you search the internet you will find over 1,500 brand names of yoga – snowga, dogga, and so on. "I am going to yoga class to practise yoga with my dog." What is your intention? Are you practising yoga or is the dog practising yoga? It is clear that your intention is not sincere or serious.

Despite the popularity of yoga, the whole subject is becoming like a joke, and there are rare people who are making the effort to experience yoga. That is why at the Bihar School of Yoga, our focus is no longer to propagate yoga but to deepen our own knowledge and experience of yoga, and try to understand yoga as a lifestyle.

Four levels of yoga

There are four levels of yoga. The first is yoga practice: something that you do to please yourself: "I like to de-stress myself so I do yoga," "I want to cure my back pain so I do yoga," "I suffer from migraines so I'd like to learn yoga." That is called yoga practice. When you have achieved your purpose, you leave yoga. When your back pain is gone, you don't need to practise yoga any more, you forget about it until it returns after one year. Then you say, "Oh yes, yoga helped me the last time, I should try it again." This is yoga practice: a sporadic, on-and-off involvement with yoga. Ninety-nine percent of people in yoga are yoga practitioners.

The next level is yoga sadhana. Here you try to live the aspirations of yoga. Every yoga has a different aspiration. For hatha yoga it is balance of ida and pingala. For raja yoga it is chitta vritti nirodhah. In this manner, every yoga has

given a goal, an aim, a focus, to its practices. At the level of sadhana, you practise yoga to experience the goal that yoga has defined for you. If you think you have been practising raja yoga, then ask yourself, have you been able to experience chitta vritti nirodhah in your involvement with yoga for the last forty years. If not, then say, “Yoga is a physical exercise that I do,” rather than preach theories which you have neither understood nor practised.

Yoga sadhana is trying to experience the goal that yoga has set out for each practice. There are seven stages of *antar mouna*, inner silence, through which you have to ultimately experience the inner silence. How many have been able to do that with their practice of antar mouna? Do you practise antar mouna to merely de-stress yourself or to come to the state where you can experience that inner silence? When you follow the aim defined by yoga and your efforts are directed at realizing that, then it becomes yoga sadhana.

The third component is yogic lifestyle. Once you begin to experience the benefits of yoga in the truest sense, then it becomes a natural part of your lifestyle and does not remain a classroom practice or a one-hour practice at home. It becomes an expression during your day-to-day activities. That is yogic lifestyle.

The fourth component is yogic culture. When you grow in sattwa, in creativity, in harmony, in peace, and express these, you create the yogic culture: the final expression of yoga. Now yoga becomes you, it is not separate from you.

Yoga practice, the first part of yoga, was related to the first chapter of propagation. “I am suffering from a backache. Can yoga help me?” “Yes, it can help you. Try these asanas.” “I am suffering from migraine. Can yoga help me?” “Yes it can. Try neti, try pranayama, try this and that.” “Oh yes, I feel better, I feel lighter, thank you very much.” That was the propagation period. You felt happy that today you helped somebody manage their migraine. You felt that you were doing good. The teacher’s ego was boosted. This is not a bad thing; it is nice, as this gave you the confidence to help

others. However, now the time has come when you have to look at yoga from the sadhana perspective so that you can deepen your experience and cover all the aspects of human experience: from annamaya kosha to anandamaya kosha.

The photocopy factor

There are times when you take a photocopy of an original document and then with the copy you keep making more copies. With the next set of copies you make even more. With each generation of the photocopy, a dilution takes place. The same thing has happened with yoga teachers. Today there are many who call themselves Satyananda Yoga teachers, yet they have never met Swami Satyananda, not known what he believes in, what books he has written or what his thoughts are. They believe the brand 'Satyananda Yoga' will help them gain recognition, therefore they use that label on themselves. This has happened until now, but it is not going to happen anymore. In order to be a competent teacher of the tradition, you will have to know the inspiration and vision of Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda, and how they approached the subject of yoga and taught it.

The Progressive Training in Yoga Vidya is a time when we can go back to the roots of our training and teaching. This is possible only while the first generation is around. After I am gone and other people who had been in association with Sri Swamiji are gone, nobody will be there to say what his philosophy, thinking and beliefs were. Most people think he was a yoga teacher and did a good job. He was not a yoga teacher; he was and is much more than that. He did not do a good job, he did an excellent job in the times and opportunities available. That can only happen if the mind is clear in relation to the aim and aspiration of yoga.

Sri Swamiji had wanted many of us to go to the Islamic countries when we were being sent abroad in the sixties and seventies. I was scheduled to go to Jordan, however, due to the war that commenced a few months before my departure, my destination changed to Ireland. Similarly, the original

destination of others like Swami Atmananda was Iraq and Iran, not Europe. Swami Satyananda could conceive even of this as he was able to present yoga as a science and not as a religion. He taught and made it acceptable to Muslims and Christians alike. The sixties were not an easy period. It used to take one week to travel from India to London by propeller planes. We were novelties: the first geru-clad people to walk the streets. All other sannyasins who went abroad would wear civilian clothes, whereas Sri Swamiji was the only one who always had his two dhotis on him. That was his trademark, and we used to look out for the flash of orange at airports when he was scheduled to arrive.

Change your perspective

I am giving you this background today to indicate why we are conducting the Progressive Yoga Vidya Training: to change your ideas. Yoga is not a subject of self-realization or God-realization. It is a way to improve the quality of life. To improve the quality of life, you have to pursue the aims as defined by yoga. As the photocopies become dimmer and dimmer with the passing of time, it becomes necessary to again look at the original document from time to time.

In the 18th century, a priest was deputed to a church. When he arrived, he found that all other priests there were busy handwriting the Bible since there were no printing presses at that time. He was quite impressed and started turning the pages of the Bible, which was handwritten in beautiful calligraphy. He came across one passage in Luke, in which Christ was telling his disciples 'to become passionate'. He wondered about that statement and asked the person who was writing, "Did you make a mistake here?" The person said, "No, I have not made any mistake. That was in the original book." He got out the original book and had a look. The sentence there was, "Be compassionate." In the process of writing, it had changed to 'become passionate'. When such things happen, it is better to look at the original document and change the wrong words that we have been reading in our

own literatures. With this in mind, we shall start our review of the yoga practices.

What we are going to learn here are the gifts of Sri Swamiji to us, and it is with a feeling of respect and honour that we should imbibe these teachings, and be sincere, serious and committed to follow them. Also remember that this Progressive Yoga Vidya Training is of no relevance if you are not smiling.



Historical Background of Yoga

4 October 2016

Many people know that Lord Shiva was the first propagator and teacher of yoga. Many people know him as the originator of yoga. The question is, which yoga did he teach? Raja yoga, kriya yoga, hatha yoga, laya yoga, mantra yoga, which yoga? None of the above.

The first yoga

The first yoga that Lord Shiva taught was known as Pashupata Yoga. The word *pashupata* is a combination of the words 'pasha' and 'pat'. Yesterday I had mentioned: *Nasti maya samah pasho* – there is no noose greater than delusion. *Pasha* is the noose, and *pat* means to remove; therefore Pashupata yoga is the yoga that removes the noose of suffering and pain.

Pashupata Yoga contains five ideas. I am not using the word *anga* or branch, I am using the word 'idea'. These ideas developed as yoga philosophy and yoga practice. The first was *Pashupata sampradaya*, a group or community of people devoted and dedicated to experience the vidya, follow the rules, disciplines and practices of the vidya. Just as ashram is a community of people who try to live a higher aspiration, a place where everyone is following the same goal, objective, philosophy and thought, the Pashupata sampradaya followed the path to overcome the crises of pain and suffering. This community developed its own *darshana*, philosophy, revolving around how the individual becomes contained, limited and restricted by the powers of maya. That containment has to be

overcome. You have to come out of that containment of maya to the higher transcendental realms, where the expansive nature of life can be experienced.

The second interpretation of the word 'pashupata' is that when you are under the influence of maya, you become a reactive animal. You may have intelligence, yet you become reactive. That is *pashu* or animal behaviour. A dog does not think. You pat him on the head, he will wag the tail. You hit him, he will run away. Call him again, he will come. He is not going by logic that 'I was beaten five minutes ago and now I am again being called.' He is going by an instinctive response. That response is what connects him with you. It is not a buddhi response or an emotional response. It is a different type of response where the connection is felt between the dog and the master. Human beings can also become reactive animals. Overcoming this animalistic tendency and connecting with the positive human qualities, moving from tamas to sattwa, is another aspect of the Pashupata philosophy. The first was in relation to the noose and maya and the other is in relation to the animalistic tendencies that have to be overcome. These two ideas are the foundation of the *Pashupata darshana*, the philosophy of Shiva.

The third idea is that in order to live that philosophy, to transcend the pain and suffering, there has to be a system. This is *Pashupata yoga*, the practical and applicable component of spiritual awareness.

The fourth aspect is *Pashupata Astra Yajna*, a ritual to invoke the cosmic forces to help individuals transcend their animalistic nature and make the environment conducive to overcoming the limitations of the mind.

The fifth aspect is *panchagni tapas*, the austerity of the five fires. This was confined to a select group of people who had no ties in society or family and could pursue higher practices.

This was the original Pashupata vidya taught by Shiva to Parvati. Most of these ideas have been lost to antiquity. The Pashupata Astra Yajna was not performed on the planet after

the Mahabharata war. The Pashupata sampradaya exists only in pockets. The Natha sampradaya for example, still follows the original yoga. The Pashupata darshana, the philosophy, has evolved from the original to what today is the yogic philosophy.

The many ages of yoga

Everyone goes through four stages of development in life. The first is childhood: you are not mature, you are learning to use your senses and faculties; your thoughts and decisions are erratic, there is no control in these formative years of life. Then, when you gain experience and education, your thoughts and ideas change. What you used to believe in at the age of sixteen does not hold true at the age of forty. The whole mindset undergoes a change; the freedom of childhood is replaced by responsibilities of adulthood. With the responsibilities, the behaviour, the thinking, the expression, everything changes. That is the second stage of life: adulthood.

The third stage is old age. After retirement, when there is no further involvement with society or family, again the personality undergoes a change. Until retirement you are dynamic and active; after retirement suddenly you have nothing to do. People who used to salute you don't even offer you a seat to sit on anymore. The mindset has to change and be given a new direction. Finally, the faculties that helped you grow in life begin to shut down.

Formation is the first and shutting down is the last; in between is professional responsibility and the retired mind: the active mind and the retired mind. These are the four yugas of life. Similarly, the four yugas of earth, Satya, Treta, Dwapara and Kali, represent the childhood, the adulthood, the old age and the final condition of the decaying body. These are the four great changes. The pattern of living, thinking, interacting, eating, playing, enjoying, everything changes in each stage.

Yoga of Satya Yuga

Pashupata yoga was prevalent in Satya Yuga. At that time, it was practised by the sages, seers, people who would perform austerities, live in isolation and perfect their own spiritual sadhanas. This included exponents like Dattatreya, Agastya, Bhṛigu, who are considered demigods in the Indian mythology. They had that level of perfection and mastery over their body, mind and the elements, therefore they were given a higher status. Their entire focus in life was to experience the Shiva nature by transcending the fetters and bondages of mind.

Yoga of Treta Yuga

In the second period, Treta Yuga, the period of Rama, the rishis brought the concept of meditation to human society. People in society did not practise the full yoga; that was left only to the recluse group. They practised meditation, mantras and other things that could be done in the household environment to improve the quality of life. Thus, at that time Pashupata yoga came out of the rishis' ashrams into certain homes in society. That was the first introduction. Thereafter the social movement gained momentum and people started to practise mantras, meditations, some asanas and other techniques contained in the Pashupata yoga. At that time, yoga was seen in five parts.

The first was mantra yoga, which was the first yoga to be introduced to society during Rama's time, along with meditation. The first rules and disciplines of the practices were created. The first yama and niyama were introduced. The first yama was an idea put into the minds of people who were suffering: don't think of suffering but be happy. As mentioned, when a sick person came to the ashram, Sri Swamiji used to say that the first thing you need to do is to forget that you are sick and feel that you are healthy. All this time you have been thinking, 'I am sick, I am sick, I am sick.' You have been saying to the doctors, "I have this problem, I have that problem." You are living in the state of sickness

all the time. When you come to the ashram, forget that you are sick, visualize yourself as a healthy person, walk like a healthy person, run like a healthy person, not like an invalid or sick person. Counter that effect of sickness and disease by cultivating the awareness of health. Similarly, when people are suffering mentally, you have to tell them to try and be happy. To come out of that dark mental state, one has to try to forget the pain and suffering and be happy. Therefore, happiness became the first yama and japa became the first niyama.

For the yogis, japa was an on going practice. In samadhi and meditation, they would be doing their japa, the mental repetition of the mantra. In society, the purpose of introducing mantra and japa was to give an opportunity to disconnect from the world for ten minutes. You are connected with the outside world all the time, your antennae are pointing out, picking up all the transmissions from the world. All your five antennae are always active, even at night when you sleep. Japa is the only time when you consciously say, 'I am disconnecting myself and doing this practice. I am disconnecting myself from my condition, my feelings, my thoughts, my emotions, my *pratyayas*, conditionings, and I am focusing on mantra, japa and meditation.' Japa gives one the ability to disconnect from the outer world, therefore it became the first niyama.

Yoga of Dwapara Yuga

Then came the time of Krishna. By this time many other generation changes had also taken place. Mantra yoga was introduced in Rama's time, and in Krishna's time, four yogas came into existence: sparsha yoga, bhava yoga, abhava yoga and maha yoga. The mindset in Krishna's time was different from the mindset in Rama's time. In Krishna's time, of Dwapara Yuga, the adulthood, sparsha yoga, bhava yoga, abhava yoga and maha yoga were introduced.

All these yogas were integrated practices. They had asana, pranayama, mudra, bandha, pratyahara, dharana, everything on one big plate. They were not classified or separated.

Yoga at the beginning of Kali Yuga

Then came a time of crisis after Krishna: the civil war, and all the yogas receded into the background. Nevertheless, some rishis still remained active in their practice and experience of yoga in isolated pockets. These people classified yoga at that time, during the beginning of Kali Yuga. They were the likes of Patanjali, Narada, Shandilya, and many other sages. From mantra yoga the whole science of mantra was developed. From sparsha yoga emerged hatha yoga and its theories and practices. From bhava yoga came bhakti yoga. From abhava yoga came laya yoga. From maha yoga came lifestyle and jnana yoga. Other yogas also developed from the main group of practices, such as kriya and kundalini. The classical texts that we follow today belong to this period.

Patanjali's system of raja yoga developed after Krishna. Raja yoga evolved out of abhava yoga; *abhava* means absence and raja yoga is the absence of chitta vrittis. Similarly, laya yoga is part of abhava yoga, for it is the yoga of dissolution, and abhava is not having anything, no foundation, nothing to hold on to. In this manner, different yogas evolved out of the five yogas of mantra, sparsha, bhava, abhava, and maha.

Kali Yuga became the period in which all these different propagators and sadhakas of yoga started talking about it to spiritual aspirants, and the practices gained momentum. Different schools were identified. Just as you have primary school, secondary school, high school, university and specialization, yoga was also studied and practised in different ways.

Patanjali was identified as a raja yogi, Narada and Shandilya as bhakti yogis, Swatmarama and Gheranda as hatha yogis. Different people, according to their inclination, understanding and need, adopted the yogic practices and developed them in the form of oral training by memorizing the lessons. There was no paper, pen, tape recorder or mobile phones in those days; the instructions were verbal and everything had to be memorized. Therefore, the teachings were in the form of sutras. Rather than lengthy expositions, in a few words the entire process that one needed to go through

was told. ‘What is yoga?’ ‘Yogah chitta vritti nirodhah.’ You can interpret it in the manner you like. If you want to know what I think about it, you will come to me and I will teach you. In four words, the entire process of mental yoga has been defined. Now you think about how you are going to manage your chitta vritti: by becoming better or worse, by doing this or that. If you can’t work out the answer, come to me and I will teach you the methods of chitta vritti nirodhah.

That was the system of the yogis in the past. They spoke in sutra form, and people had the vocabulary to understand it. Buddha used the word nirvana and everybody understood it, across the board, from pauper to prince, as that was the vocabulary of the time. Today if the same word is used, it will take a twenty minute lecture to explain it.

Sutras were the mediums of propagating an idea or thought that people could remember, or *slokas*, verses, were used, which you could chant and memorize. Just as you chant the verses of the *Guru Stotram*, ‘Guru Brahma Guru Vishnu, Gurudevo Maheshwarah, Guru Sakshat Parambrahma, Tasmai Sri Gurave Namah’, in the same manner the yoga student had to remember *Nasti maya samah pasho, nasti ahamkarat paro ripuh; nasti jnanat paro bandhuh, nasti yogat param balam*. In these four sutras, the entire idea of yoga has been conveyed, and that became the foundation for the development of philosophies by other people who understood that in their own manner.

This happened up to the beginning of Kali Yuga. Then there was a gap, as the society was disturbed after the war. At that time, the concepts of yoga were retained by the sannyasins and sadhus living in isolation in the mountains, and they were waiting for society to rebuild itself, no matter how long it took.

Re-emergence of yoga

There are two trends of yoga. One yoga is for the sadhus: the ascetics, recluses and people with no ties to the world. For them the practices are different and much stronger.

The other is for people in society, with responsibilities, commitments, duties, families, ties and associations. The practices for sadhus and sannyasins are different from the practices for people in society. What the sadhus are practising the society does not need, as the aspirations are different. The problem is that everybody wants to become a saint with the practice of yoga, the enlightened one, yet few want to take up commitments, duties and responsibilities with clarity of mind and openness of heart.

Everybody thinks that spiritual life is to escape from the world, and few people think that it is to run right into the world with arms open. It is not negation but acceptance of life, and a positive acceptance, not a resigned acceptance. Sometimes you accept as there is no other choice, you resign yourself to the situation. We are not talking of that, we are talking of positive acceptance, in which you can enhance the faculties of life. In resigned acceptance, you will not use your faculties, you will hold yourself back. With a positive state of mind, you always cultivate your faculties to improve yourself.

During the time when the sannyasins and yogis maintained the tradition of yoga, the connection was lost in society. In the modern age, it was Swami Vivekananda who first spoke on the four aspects of yoga: hatha yoga, raja yoga, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga. He only put forth the idea that these yogas exist, but he did not teach the yogas. He revived the idea of yoga that, yes, there is something which we have forgotten. Adept yogis like Ramakrishna Paramahansa and Tailanga Swami also did not teach yoga to society. They were following the sadhu's routine in their yogic practices, not the householder's routine, therefore they could not teach it to society.

After Swami Vivekananda, Paramahansa Yogananda took the kriya yoga component to the West and to the public. In those times, people were much simpler. They could practise kriya yoga without practising hatha yoga, as the distractions and diversions were not there, the intentions were more stable and there was a drive to know something more than

the body. Thus kriya yoga was the first yoga to come as a practice.

There are only two teachers of kriya yoga: Paramahansa Yogananda and Paramahansa Satyananda. Yoganandaji's system of kriya yoga is still secretive. Sri Swamiji made kriya yoga available to all by running a three-year postal course. Then he came back to hatha yoga and raja yoga. While he took kriya yoga even to people who had no background in yoga, he then told people to come back to hatha yoga and raja yoga.

Swami Satyananda's contribution

Sri Swamiji's ashram also became one of the few places where karma yoga was introduced. In most other ashrams, there are attendants and servants to do all the work. Nobody cleans their own room, sweeps the roads or works in the garden like we do. Nobody is active like we are active. Here sannyasins work from morning until night, forgetting everything. In other ashrams, labourers and paid staff do all the work while sannyasins only give lectures. One of the Shankaracharyas once came to our ashram in the sixties and saw the sannyasins in geru sweeping, working in the kitchen and the office. He remarked, "How can you bring sannyasins into the path of karma when sannyasa is the path to avoid karma?" Sri Swamiji gave a beautiful answer. He said, "I can assure you that my sannyasins, through karma yoga, will be far more purified, balanced and centred than all other sannyasins in the country." In this manner, even in the ashram system, Sri Swamiji introduced many ideas which were not common.

Swami Sivananda gave the direction and Sri Swamiji followed it by giving a practical form to yoga. Swami Sivananda said head, heart and hands is the station of yoga. Now you build the train and carry passengers with you, go to that destination by following this track. That is what Swami Satyananda did. Keeping the focus and the aim that Swami Sivananda had given, he developed the system of yoga in a practical and sequential manner. He built the train.

In Kali Yuga, Swami Satyananda stands taller than Patanjali or Swatmarama, for he defined those practices of yoga which people did not even know existed. They were exponents of only one aspect of yoga, but Swami Satyananda has touched every aspect, from kriya yoga to pratyahara to pranayama to pawanmuktasana. Which practice of pratyahara has been defined by Patanjali? Which practice of dharana has been defined by Patanjali? He refers to pratyahara and dharana, but he has not defined them. All those techniques were derived from the tantras by Sri Swamiji. Antar mouna is a tantric practice, yoga nidra is a tantric practice. Sri Swamiji described it as psychic sleep. People heard that but did not understand the meaning of psychic sleep; they took it as physical sleep.

Even today, when you practise yoga nidra, is that a psychic sleep or an unconscious sleep? Has anybody ever asked, “How do I go to that place? How do I experience the state that yoga nidra is talking about?” No. Everybody likes to use yoga nidra only to sleep. Where then is the fulfilment of yoga? You are not teaching as per the yogic principles, you are telling people to sleep whereas people have to be in the psychic state in yoga nidra, not in the dormant state. Then how do you take them to that psychic state and how do you hold their attention there so they don’t fall asleep? While giving the practice, people speak in a voice so soft that you can’t even hear what they are saying. You think you sound like you are full of peace and bliss, but it makes people go to sleep. Think about Sri Swamiji’s style. He would say in a clear, strong voice: “Do not sleep. Check whether you are sleeping or following the instructions. Remain awake and alert.” Every five minutes he would repeat that. He was trying to take you to that state where you can experience your psychic dimension. His yoga nidras are forceful, he does not speak in gentle tones, and that is so you practise yoga nidra and not fall asleep in yoga nidra. These are little things that people don’t recognize, whereas Swami Satyananda emphasized them. In this way, Sri Swamiji’s contribution to the body of yoga surpasses that of Patanjali and Swatmarama.

Emergence of Yogic Systems

5 October 2016

When you do asanas with awareness of the five koshas, it gives a different feel to the body and makes you aware of a different dimension of practice. When Sri Swamiji taught this to us, he built it up gradually and systematically by teaching over a period of three years during the sannyasa training of 1971–1973. He also modified the diet according to the practices.

There was a month when we did eight hours of asana daily. By the end of it, the body had become absolutely elastic. For one month we did pranayama for eight hours and the diet was changed to a liquid diet. We only had dalia, khichari and soya milk. He took us through the rules and regulations of each practice, including diet and lifestyle: how to practice, at what time to practise, everything in great detail and thorough. The body changed with the practices too. It was like a complete purification of the body.

The changing times and yoga practices

Today, people are not mentally and psychically free to be able to practise in that manner. There has been deterioration in human responses to situations. The mind has become more aggressive and any type of internal experience is difficult to handle. Therefore, now the teaching has to be imparted in a different and more controlled way, keeping the awareness of human psychology in sight. An example: Sri Swamiji started the teaching of kriya yoga through a postal sadhana

course, and it was open to everybody. We had more kriya yoga practitioners in the West than in India. Still nobody derailed. The mindset, the environment, the society, the family circumstances, the values were all different. There was more stability and peace in the mind and heart and less stress, anxiety and suppressions. At that time kriya yoga could be introduced everywhere.

When I returned to India in 1983, we were still conducting kriya yoga courses. Soon after, I found that people were reacting in a different manner. They were no longer coming for spiritual awareness, instead they wanted to acquire psychic powers, *siddhis*, awaken the kundalini and chakras, and use the potential to influence people or be prosperous. The idea was to utilize the powers to improve their material life. When these people had an awakening, it was a tamasic awakening, not sattwic or rajasic. When I encountered this kind of mentality, I put a brake on the teaching, and we did not teach kriya yoga for a long time. We have started teaching it again, but not as a one-time learning; it has to be done over a three-year period: kriya yoga module one for the first year, module two for the second year, module three for the third year. By building up the base over a three-year period, it allows us to observe who is serious and sincere about the learning and impart the teaching accordingly.

Today, the mind has changed even more compared to the eighties. People tend to avoid hardship, the mind has become overly fragile. Two days of heat and you are already thinking, "Too hot, I don't know if I can continue for a month here!" The ability to perform tapasya has gone. Tapasya means changing a conditioning. For one month enjoy the heat, let that be the tapasya. Instead of fighting against the heat, enjoy the heat, and let the body become strong enough to face it. That concept of austerity is too far from people's minds and the idea of comfort is too close. Comfort means acquisition; you desire what you don't have to make yourself comfortable. Austerity means accept what is there and live according to that. In austerity, the desire component is put aside and discipline is followed.

The split mind of today's sadhaka

When you search for comfort, there is always negation, whether of a situation or of good advice. That indicates a split mind. One mind says, 'I want to experience something different,' and the other mind says, 'I must have things according to my liking.' That is why instead of following a systematic path of progression in meditation, you become caught up in angels and demons. That becomes the primary focus, 'Oh, in my meditation I see angels every day.' The day you don't see the angel, you are worried, 'Why did my angel not come to me today?' The mind becomes diverted from the progressive process of attaining self-awareness and self-discipline.

How many people are able to accept and follow a simple discipline like mouna in the ashram without expressing their rebellion? No one. If this is the attitude in a place where you are trying to improve yourself, there is definitely a split. On one side there is an attempt and effort to follow a sequence, a discipline, and on the other side there is negation, 'Why should I do it?' It is this split mindset yoga practitioners should become aware of and avoid.

An effort has to be made to always connect with the positive and that was the teaching of Swami Sivananda: pratipaksha bhavana. If a thought comes, 'Why should I do it?', bring in another thought, 'Why not?' rather than going into a state of strife and conflict. Just the change of thought, 'Why not?' will change the entire interaction. A negative interaction will always snowball into bigger negativity. With a positive interaction, everybody will love, support and help you. This understanding has to come with *viveka*, discrimination. It is easy to discriminate what is right and wrong when it comes to another person, but impossible to be discriminative when you yourself are involved. There is always a justification for whatever you do.

More than the vrittis of the mind, more than the experiences of meditation, first of all one should try to overcome the split nature: the separation between intention

and action. The intention is good, 'I want to be spiritual.' The action is not supporting that intention, 'I am against everyone and every system.' This has to be the first stage of awareness, the first level of meditation: to become aware of the mental behaviour, and to know whether this behaviour is helping you and others, whether it is bringing you closer to others, making you more peaceful and content, or whether the negative behaviour is distancing you from others, creating ill-will and separation.

The problem is, people like to live in strife and stress. The opportunities to do good are always lost and the opportunities to criticize and speak ill are always sought. You have to understand this in relation to yourself. You do not have to apply this understanding to other people, but to yourself. You have to become the epitome of a state that others feel inspired by. This journey begins with developing the awareness of the split mental behaviour. Intention and action have to come together.

Yoga through the ages

It is with the idea of transcending the human condition of strife and suffering that the subject of yoga was introduced by Lord Shiva. He was the original yogi and his teachings are contained in Pashupata vidya, knowledge of releasing the fetters of mind.

The vidya of Pashupata has five components: *sampradaya*, the community; *darshana*, the philosophy; *yoga*, the practice; *yajna*, to change the external environment; and *tapasya*, to change the inner environment. We are looking at the yoga component.

Five different topics were discussed within Pashupata yoga, which became its five angas or branches. The first was mantra yoga. Mantra was the first spiritual practice to come to human society. Japa meditation, mantra sadhana, prayers, everything developed from that. The second was sparsha yoga, from which many other yogas emerged, the main being hatha yoga. The third was bhava yoga. *Bhava* means to hold a feeling, an

idea, a thought, an emotion, a sentiment, and that relates to bhakti yoga. The fourth is abhava yoga, the absence of desire, agitation, activity. From this the main yoga that emerged was raja yoga, as raja yoga is looking at stopping or managing the vrittis. Along with these, other yogas also came into existence, such as laya yoga, where everything is dissolved, the experience of matter is dissolved into the experience of spirit and all the elements merge into one. Then came maha yoga, which was more related to lifestyle, to how one can live the yogic principles in day-to-day routine and environment. Within maha yoga was also included the subject of kundalini and kriya, as they represent a state of yoga beyond the body. The term *maha* refers to that which is beyond the ordinary: the great. These five were the original yogas.

During the times of Rama and Krishna, the rishis continued to give instructions on yoga, however, the segregation was no longer maintained. If you read *Yoga Vasishtha*, containing the teachings of Sage Vasishtha to Rama, every subject has been spoken of: meditation, mantra, dissolution, breathing, withdrawing the senses, and so on. If you look at the teachings contained in the *Mahabharata*, you will find that they touch upon every subject. In these ages, everything was in one basket and everybody had the whole basket to look at.

Then, after Krishna, the contents of the basket were separated; the hardware stuff was put into one pile and labelled hatha yoga; the clothes and fabrics were put into one pile and labelled raja yoga; the food items were put into one pile and labelled as another yoga. All these piles were created by the rishis. The raja yoga pile was created by Patanjali. Raja yoga existed before him, and many had followed the system of raja yoga; however, he separated the components related to raja yoga from the main basket. Similarly, Swatmarama took the components of hatha yoga and put them together in the form of sutras and said, "This is hatha yoga and it has this purpose." Shandilya took some concepts, put them together and said, "This is bhakti yoga." In this manner, each person developed one aspect of the Pashupata vidya.

The classical and modified traditions of yoga

The hatha yoga tradition emerged out of the sparsha yoga of Pashupata yoga. It was adopted by rishis to help them manage their physical bodies when they were performing long meditations. Therefore, at that time, hatha yoga and the meditative aspects were seen to go hand in hand. This first evolute of sparsha yoga was known as ghatastha yoga. *Ghata* means container or pot, and *stha* is a root in Sanskrit which denotes 'living in' or 'being in'. Therefore, *ghatastha yoga* means 'yoga of living in a pot'. This ghatastha yoga became part of the rishi culture, of the lifestyle of rishis living in forests or gurukuls and practising hours of meditation, contemplation, prayer, havans, yajnas, and spending a lot of time sitting down. They adopted the hatha yogic practices.

The propagator of the ghatastha yoga was Sage Gheranda. He titled his work *Gheranda Samhita*, 'the teachings of Sage Gheranda', not 'Hatha Yoga Samhita'. These teachings are both practical and theoretical. It is a discussion between a king and a sage. The sage is instructing the king in yoga, and telling him that this body is the vehicle of the divine. It is through the body that you do all your *purushartha*, make the effort, and attain the final state of sublimation, union or oneness. The body is the medium and therefore it is important.

The body is called 'ghata' here; it is the container. This container has the five elements, the brain, the mind, the emotions, the spirit. Everything is packed in one body and that is you. You are the person living in that container. You are the experiencer of the container; you are contained. Disease, pain, a mosquito bite, relaxation, heat, you are experiencing it all. You are the experiencer of everything that happens in this container. However, you are not an ineffective experiencer but an effective experiencer, for you can alter what is contained. You can remove something or put new things in. You are the effective changer of what is contained. If you think that you are ineffective, then spirituality is not for you. If you think that you cannot change anything, then

don't walk this path. If you are willing to make the effort to change what is contained in the container, then the yogic path is for you.

Sage Gheranda gives the description of all the *tattwas*, elements, that make up the container and speaks of the changes that one can experience through sadhana. He also speaks of the different levels of sadhana, purification, asana, ida-pingala, pranayama, mudra, bandha, pratyahara, laya yoga. He speaks of every subject under the sun, not just the five or six topics of hatha yoga. The entire Pashupata yoga is synthesized in ghatastha yoga by Sage Gheranda.

While the yogis and recluses were practising the ghatastha yoga, one person came to learn it, and he was Swatmarama. Swatmarama was not a yogi or rishi. He was an ordinary person from town who came to the ashram to learn. He was exposed to the whole system of ghatastha yoga: the system and the tradition. He felt that some aspects of this system were applicable for people in society and some aspects were not. Thus, Swatmarama modified the ghatastha yoga for the practice of people living in society who had responsibilities, duties, families, professions and involvement in the world. The number of topics and subjects in Swatmarama's yoga was reduced from those in ghatastha yoga.

Ghatastha yoga is the classical hatha yoga, and Swatmarama's hatha yoga is the modified hatha yoga. The classical system is also indicated in other literatures such as *Hatha Ratnavali*. It is an important text on hatha yoga, and speaks of chakras, kundalini, methods of dharana, samadhi, and so on. *Dattatreya Samhita* is another text in which the classical and complete practices of hatha yoga are presented.

There are many schools of hatha yoga. Gheranda's school is one, which is practised in the rishi culture. The Natha tradition is another important hatha yoga tradition. That is also for recluses; it is not a household tradition. The Natha yogis don't teach hatha yoga practices to people of society. They only use it for their own sadhana and never divulge their practices. They are sadhakas, not teachers. It is an old

tradition that carries on without change even today. Socially, the most acceptable literature of hatha yoga is Swatmarama's, as that is a social presentation of the ghatastha yoga. Across the world, people use the modified version of Swatmarama. In our training with Sri Swamiji, we had to go through both: to know the classical system of hatha yoga and to know what is being practised by people in the world today.

Thus, in the tradition, there have been nine or ten schools of hatha yoga, out of which three survive today: the ghatastha yoga of the rishi culture, Swatmarama's tradition, and the Natha tradition. Among the three, Natha is a private system; Gheranda is known to few; and ninety percent of people use Swatmarama. The social culture is Swatmarama, the rishi or ashram culture is Gheranda, and the sadhana culture is the Natha sampradaya. These are the three main offshoots of sparsha yoga that we find today.



The Dimension of Prana

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Yoga speaks of five koshas: *annamaya*, the sheath of matter; *manomaya*, the mental sheath; *pranamaya*, the energy sheath; *vijnanamaya*, the sheath of consciousness; and *anandamaya*, the spiritual sheath.

There are five gears in a car, plus overdrive and reverse. There is also the neutral gear, which is what you use to move from the first gear to the second to the rest. Without the neutral, you cannot move from one gear to another. The same principle applies to the koshas. Pranamaya kosha is the neutral gear. Annamaya is the first gear, manomaya is the second, vijnanamaya is the third, anandamaya is the fourth. The way to move from one to another is through pranamaya, as prana is the all-encompassing substratum. It is gross and it is also cosmic. Both pranas are experienced in the body, the gross and the cosmic. Annamaya and manomaya are part of the gross, manifest prana, something which is experienceable. Vijnanamaya and anandamaya are part of the unmanifest, cosmic prana, something which we can make the effort to experience.

When you try to work with the different koshas, you have to also see how to use prana to move from one to another. When you practise pranayama, you begin with the body: hold the nose, breathe in from the left, breathe out from the right, and so on. Therefore pranayama begins with annamaya kosha. As you deepen your experience in pranayama and the mind settles down, it becomes a manomaya experience. When

the physical agitations are quietened, the same pranayama is being used to quieten the mental agitations. Therefore, both annamaya and manomaya are being guided by pranayama. For vijñanamaya and anandamaya, pranayama changes to prana vidya. There you are not holding the nose, you are still practising pranayama but psychic pranayama; you are not using the hands but using the mind. You are breathing in prana, raising prana, distributing prana, bringing prana back down. With continued practice, the experience of these visualizations begins to influence vijñanamaya kosha.

Significance of visualization

It is the normal nature of the mind and brain to be the receptacle of every input of the five senses, and the majority of sensory inputs is visual. Although there are five senses, the bulk of sensory inputs into the brain and the brainwork to sort sensory inputs, is of visual impressions. The brain is cluttered with those visual imprints. Therefore, visualization is an important aspect.

Even in martial arts, visualization is used along with body movements; the body movement is controlled and guided, and while they are moving the body they are also visualizing it. Even in a dynamic activity the mind can be tuned to visualize what it is doing rather than leaving it alone to wander around while the body does its own thing. In yogic meditations also there is a lot of emphasis on visualization. We begin and end our class with visualization. Every step of the way we are using visualization.

The purpose is to enter into the state of pratyahara. If you are able to focus on one point out of the hundred that are targeting your brain and mind, then the fixity and awareness of that one point, one noise, one sound, is visualization. If you focus on the hundred it is dissipation, and if you connect yourself with one it becomes visualization. Here all your senses are geared to have only one awareness, one experience. If a hundred musical instruments are playing, you are hearing them all, yet with eyes closed you are

focusing on only the bongo. When the bongo is not playing, you become blank, and when it plays you know it is the bongo. Visualization has to come to that level for it to have an effect on vijñanamaya kosha. One has to come into the basic dharana state through a connection with that experience.

In manomaya kosha this experience of visualization does not exist, it is a fragmented and dissipated awareness. In vijñanamaya, it is you and the target. The more you focus on the point of concentration the better the access is into vijñanamaya kosha. Prana vidya and other practices which deal with not the gross prana but the subtle prana, use visualization on chakras to bring the awareness and mind to the part of the body where the energy activity is taking place. You are trained to use that energy: first to experience it, then to raise it, increase the quantity, relax it, distribute it, even transmit it. All that is happening at the level of vijñanamaya kosha.

Working with prana

Prana is the neutral gear of the car; in the first and second gears you are working with the physical pranas, whereas in the third and fourth gears you are working with the higher, non-physical pranas. For managing the physical pranas, the practice is pranayama. For managing the higher pranas, the practice is prana vidya.

There is another technique, which is not commonly known: prana nidra. When I first taught prana nidra, it led to an interesting experience for the practitioners. In this practice you have to bypass the body, there is no annamaya awareness unlike in yoga nidra. There is just enough body awareness to relax and then you move into pranamaya kosha to see the movement of the pranas and harmonize them. When you begin to practise, there is no control over the pranas. You cannot direct the pranas from your first practice. First you learn to visualize the pranas and their movement, and harmonize that activity. This is the technique of prana nidra, which means relaxing the pranas.

Normally the pranas are not relaxed; your body might be sleeping but pranas can remain active. If the pranas are active then you will have physical agitations and mental disturbances even in sleep. There are times when you say, “I woke up ten times during the night, I don’t know why, and each time I felt I had enough energy to get out of bed and do something.” This is indicative of pranic activity during the time of rest.

Even in yoga nidra sometimes you experience jerks in a body part. The legs or the arms will suddenly jump up, and after that there is a sense of relaxation. That is pranic relaxation. If you notice carefully, before the jerk there is a peculiar sensation in the body part where the jerk is going to take place, like a drill has to go through, and then there is the jerk, which is followed by deeper relaxation. This also indicates a block in prana. When body jerks are experienced in yoga nidra, you know that there are pranic blocks in the body. If it happens often, so much so that you cannot do yoga nidra, then stop the practice and revert to pranayama. After a week of pranayama practice, if you do yoga nidra again you will find that the jerks have subsided. In that manner you can understand that it is a pranic hyperactivity. This also indicates the importance of pranayama, not as a breathing practice only, but as a technique that allows the body energies and the psychic energies to come together in a state of harmony and create the third shakti. When ida and pingala harmonize then sushumna becomes activated. When the physical and the cosmic pranas are regulated and balanced, then one can access the spiritual dimension.

In the final stage of prana vidya, when the pranas have been activated and the corresponding knowledge is there, the experience is like going through rapids. Your boat is simply carried by the force of the rapids, you don’t have to row it. After crossing the barrier of vijnanamaya, all external human efforts cease. In anandamaya you are carried by the force of the shakti.

There are people who become experts in prana and use it as therapy too. There is a group of pranic healers in the

Philippines who had come here in 1973 during the convention in Sri Swamiji's presence. They demonstrated how they use their prana to remove tumours and other diseases from bodies. Without any surgical instrument, they are able to bring about complete healing. Of course not many people are proficient in this art, but those who have practised and attained proficiency indicate that this kind of application is possible.

Many present-day alternate healing systems are devised by using prana, including crystal therapy, Reiki, and others. However, they pick up on one point of the whole subject of prana and therefore turn it into a fad. There is no deepening of understanding and gradually they dissolve into anonymity. If they were able to follow the idea through and develop it, they would become effective techniques. People learn them more for commercial reasons than development reasons, so they are not in tune with how to expand or enlarge the scope of their practices.

All this shows that prana is not just a spiritual force but it can also be a material force. If it is possible to heal cuts and stop bleeding with the help of physical prana, you can imagine what kind of a power centre the body is. If you apply it in the right manner, you can become a lightning conductor.

QUESTION AND ANSWER

Swamiji, what is the difference between dharana and visualization? You mentioned that focusing on one point is visualization.

Dharana is also visualization. We have the practices of chidakasha dharana, hridayakasha dharana, daharakasha dharana. When you are practising chidakasha dharana, all you are doing is visualizing and holding on to that visualization. Therefore, holding on to a visualization is in reality dharana. I used the example of one sound in a galaxy of noises, but dharana can be on a memory, on a thought, on anything that makes you lose the outer awareness and keeps you focused on one thing.

There is a story about Emperor Akbar, the Muslim emperor of India. Once he was in a forest hunting and the time came for offering the prayers. The hunting stopped, blankets were rolled out, everyone sat down and did namaz. While they were doing the prayers, one tribal girl came out of the trees and walked right over the blankets. Nobody dared say anything to her in the middle of the prayers, but when the namaz was over they captured the girl. The emperor said to her, "Were you blind, did you not see where you were walking?" She said, "I was lost in the thoughts of my lover whom I was going to meet, therefore I did not even see where I was walking." She added, "You were also talking to your beloved, but you were aware of everything else other than your beloved." She was so engrossed in her thoughts that walking was an automatic function of the body, the mind was not registering where the steps were going, whether she was alone or with people.

In the state of dharana, other activities become automatic, spontaneous and natural while the mind is focused on one point. If there is dharana on a memory, nothing exists other than that memory. My best meditations are dharana on the memory of Sri Swamiji; that makes me forget everything, even the body pains are forgotten. The mind, the emotions, the body, everything remains focused on one thought. Memory dharana can be a powerful medium, as all faculties come together here. Real dharana is where everything becomes awakened and you simply merge with that experience and radiate that experience. If you are seeing light, you become the light; if you are experiencing something sweet, you become that sweetness.

I have spoken about an experience during my journeys. Once I was travelling through a forest in a car and we passed by a lake, with a willow tree on its banks, which had half the roots in water and half on dry land. I looked at the tree and that was it. Without any effort, I became the tree. The ten or fifteen seconds for which I had that experience felt like eternity, for in those few seconds I could identify all the

experiences of the tree: the stiffness of the trunk, the water lapping against the roots, the little fish and creepy-crawlies going around the roots, the breeze in the leaves, the rustling of the leaves, the insects crawling up the trunk, I could feel the crawl on my body.

It was not a pleasant experience, as it hit me all of a sudden like a tonne of bricks. I wasn't expecting it, I wasn't even in that mood, I was just enjoying watching the scenery. It caught me off-guard. I did not go through pratyahara, it was instant dharana. That experience became real, it was not imaginative, I could distinctly feel it all. That gave me the first glimpse into the realm of meditation. What happened to time? In ten seconds how did my mind become aware of such a variety of experiences that the tree could have?

A few years ago during my tirtha yatras there was another experience, which was totally different. That was more like a samadhi experience. Until then I did not know what samadhi was; theoretically yes, practically no. I was in a particular location for three days doing my anusthana. There was a Devi temple, and in the sanctum sanctorum was a three-foot tall Sri Yantra, where no males were allowed. The chief of the place said to me, "You have to do your anusthana inside the sanctum sanctorum." I said, "That is not permitted." She said, "Yes, it is not permitted, but you can." Before entering she gave me initiation into Sri Vidya, and then I could enter the sanctum sanctorum. I sat in one corner there, against the wall, allowing other people to do their rounds and move about, with this huge Sri Yantra about ten feet away from me.

While I was doing the japa, at first it felt as if a gong had gone off, like the booming sound of the Buddhist gongs, and the sound kept going. It was like the beginning of a vibration, and as the sound went on I felt as if I was enclosed in a pyramid. The whole body had become like a pyramid and I was inside that; the top of the pyramid was just above my head. I opened my eyes, as it felt very real, and I could not see the statue, the pillar, the people, nothing. Instead, everything had turned into light. The statue was nothing

but light. I could not see the stones from which the pillars were made, I only saw pillars of light. The entire temple became a temple of light, and glittery. For about half an hour it was as if I was doing *trataka* on *Devi*, with the mantra going on. I could see people move, but they were not in their *annamaya kosha*, I was watching everything from the *pranamaya* perspective. There were no physical bodies, only energy bodies; there was no physical pillar, only an energy pillar; there was no physical statue, it was only energy. For four hours, I just sat there, unmoving, I did not even feel my body. All I remember is light and light.

When the body awareness returned, I got up and went to my room. However, for three days after that I just sat quietly, there was no desire to speak to anybody, see anybody, or even eat. If anybody came to talk to me, I would only nod. For three days, that was the only thing I could do, for no speech would come out. There was absolute silence and peace, no thoughts. I was like a stranger in a strange body. It felt as if this is not my body, I am using this body, but my body is some place else – just like when you get in a car and say, ‘This is not my car but I am using it.’ While you are using somebody else’s car you don’t feel comfortable as you would in your own car. That was the kind of sensation. That was when I understood what *Shankaracharya* was talking about, *Chidananda roopa Shivoham Shivoham*. I used to wonder about how one can detach from the body. During that experience, I realized that I was questioning myself, ‘What am I doing in this body?’ It was not a conscious effort; it happened by itself.

The first experience of the tree was *dharana*. The second experience was *dhyana*, where the experience sustained itself for three days. If the same thing happened for a month, it would become *samadhi*. The intensity of deepening of *dhyana* is *samadhi*, where outer distractions don’t divide your attention from your contemplation.

The interesting point is that the visuals were pranic. The light, the glitter – all that was a pranic experience. Whenever people have experiences of flashing lights or colours in

meditation, that is a pranic experience, which means prana is the underlying tattwa that allows the experience to be seen. Otherwise, how can you realize the experience of your consciousness? If the prana was not there to bring it to the level of your understanding, to the manas and buddhi levels, you would not know it. From the buddhi level you are watching the vijñanamaya kosha as the drashta. The drashta is the buddhi-level identity: 'I am observing', 'This is what is being observed'. That understanding and logic is buddhi. Anything that we experience is transferred from the subtle realms to our cognitive realm by prana. Thus prana is like the neutral gear that connects all the koshas.

What happens if you simply acknowledge the experience?

When you acknowledge or reject an experience, that is not dhyana. That is pratyahara. When you experience certain things, you say, 'Oh yes, I can accept it, it is a nice experience.' For certain other things, you say, 'No, this is not me.' If you see the devil in your meditation, you do not accept it. You say, 'I've been praying to God all my life, how did the devil come into my meditation?' The moment you bring in analysis to your experience, buddhi comes into play. If you let go and do not hold on to either the positive or the negative, you can flow and there is only the experience of ananda. The demon and angel are alike. If you see a demon, you can say, "Hello! How are you?" If you see an angel also, you say, "Hello! How are you?" There is no questioning on either the goodness of the angel or the naughtiness of the devil. Therefore it is the mind that has to be transcended. Chitta vrittis have to be 'nirodhed'.

Do you see naturally or do you imagine the visions?

Eventually, seeing becomes natural. First you imagine, then you feel, and then you see.

Is hypnotism part of dharana?

No, hypnotism is not part of dharana. Hypnotism is a practice that accesses a specific area of the mind. Just as yoga nidra

is a practice that accesses one area of the mind, so is hypnosis. The mind is a powerful tool. When you walk into a new place, before you become conscious of how many windows, doors, colours, fans and lights there are in the room, your mind already knows it. This has been proved by experiments. If you go to a movie theatre frequently and you are asked to recount how many fans, windows and chairs are in there, you will not be able to tell. However, in the state of hypnosis, you can say there are six hundred chairs, the carpet is red, there are twenty windows, there are ten exit gates, there is a green light above the exit gates, there are thirty fans, there are forty lights. In the state of hypnosis, the mind will connect with the memory which has not come to your conscious level. That is the subconscious dimension of the mind.

The difference between hypnosis and pratyahara is that in hypnosis you are not guiding yourself, you are under someone else's control. In pratyahara, you are guiding yourself and you are in your control. If you have listened to Sri Swamiji's talks about pratyahara, he says that the mind has to be kept engaged, even in yoga nidra. The mind is moving from the right hand thumb, first finger, second finger, third finger, fourth finger, and so on while you are repeating the name of the body part, visualizing it and relaxing it. You are doing all that mental activity, so it is not a practice of relaxation in the way people understand relaxation. You are using that activity and dharana on that activity to come to the yoga nidra state.

From the pratyahara perspective, relaxation is attained by engaging the mind, not by dulling the mind. When you lie down on your bed and think, 'Oh, I'm tired, I need to sleep, I've been working too hard,' then the mind goes into self-awareness, and from self-awareness to self-pity. Here the mind is inactive. The same thought is being thought for about ten minutes. In yoga nidra, it is change, change, change.

Even if you do a simple rotation of awareness through the body parts in the practice of shavasana, you will experience

a deep relaxation. Just that much, lying down and rotating your mind through the body will do it. No amount of instruction, 'Be comfortable, and do this and do that' will replace that relaxation. This is laghoo yoga nidra. You don't have to watch the breath, the expansion, the contraction, or anything else. Just lie down, close your eyes, rotate your awareness, and after five minutes you can get up and go do your thing.

When shavasana is used in an asana class, it is not only used for relaxing in between the practices, but also to hold the reins of the mind and to keep it on track. There the practice has to be built up gradually. The first shavasana is only nasal breathing. The second is abdominal breathing. The third is psychic breathing. In the fourth, colour is added to the breath. In the fifth, there is rotation of awareness through body parts. That is the fifth level of shavasana. If in one class you can go up to the third or the fourth level, that will ensure the depth of awareness and concentration in the practitioners and their sensitivity to the effects of yoga.

Which kosha do you reach in yoga nidra?

If you sleep, you don't go beyond annamaya. If you reach the state where you know that you are not sleeping yet you have not heard the instructions, that is pranamaya kosha. When you sleep in yoga nidra, that is annamaya relaxation: your body was tired and you slept. In the second state, it is pranamaya.

If you have an experience in a dream, will it be considered an awakening?

It will be considered as an awakening if the corresponding changes take place in the nature and mind. It will be considered imaginative if you continue to be the same X, Y, Z. Any experience should inspire you to change yourself and take yourself to another dimension of performance and living. That is the marker in reality. Despite experiencing peace in meditation, if you are not peaceful in life, then

what was the use of meditation? It is when you experience peace and it becomes a part of you that you are using that experience to transform yourself.

How can one have an experience whose effect is lasting?

It has to happen spontaneously, it should not be sought for. When you are looking for it, a mental conditioning is created. If people see an angel or something good, they expect to recreate the same thing the next time. That becomes their station and they cannot go beyond that. In every meditation, they want to have the experience which they had three days ago, 'Oh, I was so happy. I want the same thing.' Then they don't have it and the response is, 'I am so unhappy. I am not getting it. What did I do?' That changes the whole intention. Therefore, the experiences have to happen in a spontaneous way without seeking them.



Chitta: Third Level of Control

14 October 2016

The first sutra in Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* is: *Atha yoga anushasanam*. The second sutra is: *Yogah chitta vritti nirodhah*. The third sutra is: *Tada drashtu swarupe awasthanam*.

I want to bring your attention to the second sutra, which defines the purpose of yoga: *Yogah chitta vritti nirodhah*. It is translated into English as "To control the modifications of the mind is yoga." The Sanskrit word used is 'chitta', and chitta is not the mind. There are four aspects of the mind: *manas* or rationality is the first, *buddhi* or logic is the second, chitta is the third, and *ahamkara* or ego is the fourth.

The word 'mind' as it is understood in English refers only to *manas*, the thinking and reflecting process. Therefore, if you translate 'chitta vritti nirodhah' as 'controlling the modifications of the mind', it is an inaccurate statement. People tend to think of the mind as one entity: anything that happens internally. Logic is in the mind, intelligence is in the mind, everything is in the mind. 'Mind' therefore means the total mind. Here, Patanjali is not using the term 'total mind'. He is only using the name of one attribute of the mind: chitta.

From ahamkara to manas

The first evolute of human existence is ahamkara, ego. It is the first identity of an individual without awareness. From a handful of seeds if you pick one out, the seed is still a seed, but you have isolated it. That is ahamkara, selection of one,

isolation of one. The moment you isolate one from the other, it is seen as an independent unit. Ahamkara is that: the first separation from our cosmic, transcendental nature. That state is without awareness, without consciousness. There is no cognition in the state of ahamkara, only one identity of being separate. *Aham* means 'I', *akara* means 'form': 'my form'. It is a general statement; you are not saying 'my body, which has two eyes and one nose, two nostrils and one mouth'. You are only saying, 'my form', which is the total self.

From ahamkara comes chitta, and chitta is the most important subject in yoga. From chitta emerges buddhi: logic, rationality, understanding, knowing, intellect. From buddhi emerges manas: reflection, thinking, analyzing, deciding. Manas is directly linked with buddhi. If logic is there, then the thinking process will be appropriate, proper and sequential. If logic is not there, then thinking will be disjointed; you will want to travel to the moon one second and become the president of the world the next second. There will be no connection. It is a state of psychosis, where there is no connection between thoughts, events, conditions, actions. Therefore, manas is the reflective and thinking power of buddhi. Buddhi and manas can be clubbed together, while ahamkara and chitta can be clubbed together.

Play of memory

Chitta is described as the storehouse of memories, impressions and samskaras. These impressions and samskaras are memories of past events. There cannot be memory of any future or present event. What you are hearing has become the past already, and you don't know what you are going to hear in the future. You can only retain the impressions of what has been spoken, as it belongs to the past. Past begins one moment after the present. Thus chitta is the storehouse of memories of past events.

When the Spanish people came to America, they travelled in huge boats. The indigenous Indians who were there saw the boats entering the harbour, but they had no recognition

of what they were looking at as they had never before seen boats. They had no memory of what a boat was. They simply saw objects in water and did not feel any threat, as there was no memory on which to rely, no memory to signal danger. The ships came in easily and the Spaniards took over the country. The point is that when they looked at the ships in the waters, they could not link that experience with anything from the past. This memory bank is chitta.

If you have seen even a paper boat, that memory will be there so that when you see a big boat, you will associate it with your memory of the paper boat. If that memory is not there, it means there is no impression in chitta, and you will look at a boat without any association whatsoever.

If you draw a horizontal line and intersect it with a vertical line in the middle, all that is to the right of the vertical line is the future, and all that is to the left is the past. Everything that has happened in the past is not part of your buddhi or manas, it is part of your chitta. Thus, when we say '*chitta vritti nirodhah*', chitta is referring to something specific. At that level, the limitations created and experiences derived from your past become the vrittis. Ten years ago you had a fight with someone. When you see him today, it is that vritti, that memory, which is triggered. That is chitta, not manas, not buddhi.

The five vrittis

There are five vrittis in chitta, as defined by Patanjali. The first is *pramana*, cognition, and cognition is always dependent on memory. If there is no memory, there is no cognition. However, this cognition is not happening right now through your senses, mind or logic. It is not the present cognition, but past. That is *pramana*. A child who has put his hand in fire will have that memory even twenty years later when he sees fire: 'In my childhood I burnt my hand.' That is *pramana*.

Now, if as a child you were about to put your hand in fire and your brother removed it, you will not have any memory of your hand burning in fire, maybe a vague memory of

heat and singeing, but no memory of actual burning. This becomes *viparyaya*, when you are not aware of the final outcome and you waffle around in the periphery. When you have no association or experience with the final outcome, then it becomes *viparyaya*: ‘I am not sure.’

The third *vritti* is *vikalpa*. You remember something of the past and say, ‘I could have handled that better’; you see the choice that you had before you and begin to curse yourself, ‘Why did I not do that?’ That is *vikalpa*.

Nidra is the fourth *vritti*, stopping the flow of information coming to the conscious mind. There is a time when you just block the flow, for you need to remove yourself from the activity in the mind, from the stress and the anxiety. Therefore you stop, relax and rest, to maintain the balance.

The fifth *vritti* is *smriti*, which means memory. However, as a *vritti* the reference is not to long-term memory, as long-term memory has become part of your impressions. The short-term memories are *smritis*: ‘What did I have for breakfast yesterday?’ You do not remember what breakfast or lunch you had one week ago, but you remember what you had today or yesterday. These short-term *smritis* have to be revived in order to enter into *pratyahara*. Thus, *smriti* as a *vritti* and as impressions contained in *chitta* are two different things. The impressions of *chitta* are carried forward, the *smriti* is of the moment.

The latent impressions in the consciousness of *chitta* are not called *smritis*; they are called *pratyaya*, which means a seed of information. You have hundreds of *pratyayas* in your mind, or hundreds of seeds of information. It is like the bytes in the computer; *pratyayas* are the kilobytes and megabytes in your mental computer. They fill up your hard disk and every week you have to spend time clearing it. The less *pratyayas* you have, the easier it is to access your files and documents. The impressions in *chitta* are *pratyaya*, whereas impressions in *manas* and *buddhi* are *smriti*. That is the difference.

Third level of control

When we say the purpose of yoga is to manage the modifications of chitta, then we are not looking at the first level of manas and buddhi. We are looking at the third level, and from the third we go to the fourth level since the vrittis will also affect ahamkara, the self-awareness: how you perceive yourself, as positive, optimistic, pessimistic, critical. All these perceptions are formed.

Working with chitta vrittis is accessing the third state, the third expression of the mind. To manage the first level of manas, pratyahara is enough. To manage the second level of buddhi, dharana is enough. For chitta, you require dhyana, meditation, as it takes you into your inner psyche. For ahamkara, you need samadhi, for only there the dissolution of the ego can take place.

Chitta vritti is the third level of control that you acquire in your life. This process begins from raja yoga. Prior to this, manas and buddhi have to be dealt with through the practices of hatha yoga. In hatha yoga there are systems of concentration, such as trataka, which allows you to settle down, focus, internalize. The mental chatter, the manasic chatter stops with trataka. The other meditative techniques in hatha yoga also lead you to manage the behaviour of manas and buddhi. Raja yoga is not the subject of the mind; it is the subject of chitta and ahamkara.

Is chitta part of consciousness?

Chitta can also be called consciousness and it has been called consciousness by many interpreters. If you think of chitta as the total consciousness and manas and buddhi as the interactive consciousness, then there are conscious, subconscious and unconscious conditions in the realm of chitta.

The Last Word: Experience Yoga

29 October 2016

We have discussed many topics during this training. However, the most important aspect is not what is mentioned in the topics but what you have experienced and understood. There might be hundreds of topics, yet you might have understood only half, one-fifth or one-tenth of them. Therefore, it is the understanding that should be considered.

From my perspective, during this training the first two aspects of Yoga Chakra have become clear: hatha yoga and raja yoga. The Progressive Training itself has been a mix of many things: hatha yoga, raja yoga, tattwa shuddhi, a glimpse of antar darshan, and so on. All this provided the opportunity to experience methods of different yogas. Nevertheless, the first understanding is the difference between hatha yoga and raja yoga. Hatha yoga has to be perfected first, and raja yoga is the secondary school.

The understanding of raja yoga should be clear by now as a way to improve the expressions and behaviours of the mind – a process which begins with practising yama and niyama. Asana and pranayama of raja yoga are only meditative, therefore that is not the focus of raja yoga. What everyone has ignored is the focus of raja yoga, which is yama-niyama, along with pratyahara and dharana. Not asana, pranayama, dhyana or samadhi. Four angas are out and only four remain: yama, niyama, pratyahara, dharana. They are the actual practices of raja yoga.

Asana and pranayama aid what you are doing, with the understanding that you have already mastered these in hatha yoga. Here you only have to sit quietly, passively, observantly: *sthiram* and *sukham*, stillness and comfort. With pranayama you have perfected the balance between inhalation, exhalation and retention, and now it is only used as an aid to develop a specific mental condition in which the mind can become receptive to new positive inputs.

Pratyahara and dharana are disconnection and focus. You disconnect from those causes that create disturbance and imbalance, and sustain and maintain that which gives you harmony, balance and peace. Thus pratyahara is disconnecting from everything that causes disturbance and imbalance, and dharana is focusing on the pure, the good, the positive, and sustaining and developing that. Dhyana is only an extension of this state and samadhi is a further extension of the focused awareness and mind, which goes on its journey of discovering itself and becoming illuminated. The further you go away from maya and Prakriti and the closer you are to the gravity field of the transcendental, the concentration in the field of maya will convert into the state of meditation in the field of Shiva. Dhyana and samadhi are only extensions of a state that you experienced in dharana, but now it is unwavering. This is the theoretical difference between hatha yoga and raja yoga. Hatha yoga fulfils all the conditions necessary to assist the growth in raja yoga, through the asanas, the pranayamas, the purification practices. The basic preparation and foundation is created in hatha yoga.

During this Progressive Training, the exposure to the various approaches to yoga has been fruitful in understanding how yoga can be applied. Ultimately, in order to live yoga one has to follow the yogic aspirations. You may have been involved with yoga for a certain number of years; nevertheless, the deepening of experience has to happen in your involvement with yoga, where you move away from your aspirations and connect with yogic aspirations. Until now you

have been doing yoga to feel good, whatever feeling good means to you, whether removal of your back pain, getting rid of your stress. Even your interaction with the teacher is to feel good.

You want to feel good as you are feeling bad, simple as that. If you were feeling good, then you don't need to feel good again. You are in that state. If you need to feel good, then the bad is highlighted within you, whether in the form of a physical debility or limitation, or a mental condition or limitation. When you do something to rectify that, you feel good. As long as you continue to feel good, yoga will not become a sadhana for you, it will remain a practice. Today you have a heavy head, so you do this to feel good; tomorrow you have lower back pain, so you do that to feel good; another day you have blurry eyes, so you do trataka to feel good. Every day, you are focusing on something bad in your body or mind, and you try to improve that and feel good. I call that yoga practice, not yoga.

When you do yoga for chitta vritti nirodhah and not to feel good, then you are following the aspirations of yoga. That is the necessity now and that is the focus of the trainings at BSY. If you don't want to follow the aspirations of yoga but use it for the feel-good factor, then you should go to some other centre. If you want to live yoga, experience yoga and follow the aspirations of yoga, then you should come here: to understand what those aspirations are and what one can do to go in that direction.

This idea will be reinforced here in the coming years and it will be applied to everyone, more specifically to the yoga teachers. They don't have a yogic bent of mind; they have a commercial bent of mind. Whatever they learn is for their commercial benefit; even before learning something they are already planning how they will teach it. That has to change. You have to experience yoga before you can think of teaching it. Therefore, when you come here your intention and actions have to be to follow the aspirations of yoga and not to commercialize the learning that you gain from here.

The time has come when the serious-minded people should think of becoming exponents of yoga. They should think of becoming real exponents of yoga by imbibing the true vidya of yoga and not the commercial vidya of yoga. Use the commercial vidya to survive, sure, but use the spiritual vidya to grow. That will be the fulfilment of the aspirations of Swami Sivananda, Swami Satyananda and ours.

I wish you all the best, and I again emphasize that treat this vidya with seriousness, sincerity and commitment.





THE FIRST CERTIFICATE

Rishi Arundhati: I have been asked to give the first certificate of the course. This certificate for the Progressive Yoga Vidya Training goes to Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati. The certificate says:

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati of Sannyasa Peeth has conducted with excellence and perfection Progressive Yoga Vidya Training at Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth from 1st to 30th October 2016. This Progressive Training imparted the vidya of yoga by encouraging the students to imbibe the teachings of Swami Sivananda Saraswati of Rishikesh and Swami Satyananda Saraswati of Munger. The training in yoga vidya given by him opened the door to the next chapter of yogic learning and inspired the students to connect with the classical yogic tradition with sincerity, seriousness and commitment.

*With prayers of peace,
Rishi Arundhati*

*on behalf of all the teachers of yoga
at Bihar School of Yoga*



Swamiji: This is my first yoga training certificate. So this Progressive Training was useful for me also!

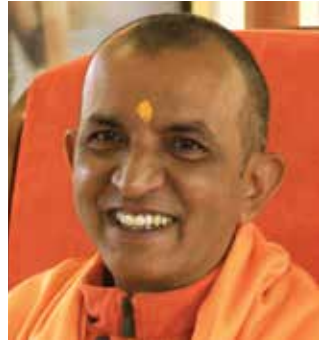
When I first travelled abroad, I was living with Rishi Arundhati and Rishi Vasishtha in Newcastle-upon-Tyne in the UK. Rishi Arundhati used to give classes in the evening, and that was my first introduction to teaching yoga in the West. Prior to that I was used to teaching yoga in India, but the way to teach in the West, the vocabulary, the learning, I received from her. This time, after nearly forty years, just to get a comment from her, I asked, “How was I teaching?” She was silent but today she gives me a certificate – my first ever!

Notes

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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 paramahansa sannyasin and in 1993 anointed spiritual preceptor in succession to Swami Satyananda Saraswati. He established Bihar Yoga Bharati, the first university of yoga, in 1994, Yoga Publications Trust in 2000, and a children's yoga movement, Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal, in 1995. He travelled extensively to guide seekers around the world until 2009, when he received the command to commence a new phase of sannyasa life.

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

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

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

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



At the World Yoga Convention held in 2013 on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the Bihar School of Yoga, Swami Niranjanananda announced: “The first chapter of yoga propagation is over. Now the second chapter begins, which is focused on consolidation of yoga and better application of yoga, with sincerity, seriousness and commitment.”

In writing the second chapter, a complete change in the training programs at Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth has come about since 2016. The new programs are setting a standard of understanding the practices and principles of yoga from the perspective of the original intentions of yoga.

Among these programs was the second Progressive Yoga Vidya Training held in October 2016. It strengthened the participants’ understanding of how to move from perceiving yoga as a practice to experiencing yoga as a sadhana and a lifestyle and connect with *yoga vidya*, the essence of the knowledge of yoga.

This book presents the satsangs given by Swami Niranjanananda during the program.

