

Raja Yoga Yatra 4

Satsangs: Yatra 1 and 2

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Raja Yoga Yatra 4



SWAMI SATYANANDA SARASWATI

1923~2023

CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

Raja Yoga Yatra 4

Satsangs: Yatra 1 and 2

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Discourses given by Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati during the training of Raja Yoga Yatra 1: Understanding Asana and Pranayama, and Raja Yoga Yatra 2: Understanding Pratyahara, held from 16th to 22nd August 2019, at Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth, Bihar School of Yoga, Munger.



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

Raja Yoga Yatra 4 – Satsangs: Yatra 1 and 2

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

© Bihar School of Yoga 2022

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

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

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

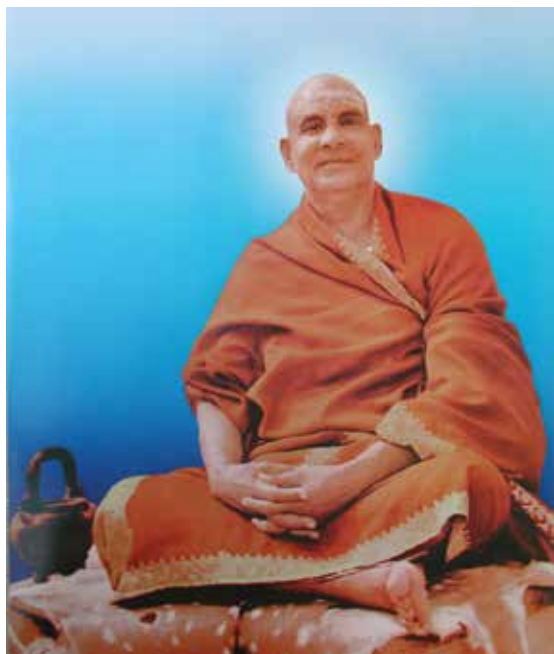
Published by Yoga Publications Trust
First edition 2022

ISBN: 978-93-94604-11-7

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

Website: www.biharyoga.net
www.sannyasapeeth.net
www.satamyogaprasad.net

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



Dedication

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



Dedication

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

Contents

Preface: The 2nd Chapter of Yoga	<i>ix</i>
Introducing Raja Yoga Yatras 1 and 2	1
Yoga Chakra – Towards a Yogic Lifestyle	6
Dimensions of Prana	21
Kaya Sthairyam	33
Clearing Pratyayas	44

Preface:

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.

Introducing Raja Yoga Yatras 1 and 2

16 August 2019



There are two yogas, one is hatha yoga and the other is raja yoga. Hatha yoga is more for the body and prana, covering the two dimensions of annamaya kosha and pranamaya kosha. It accesses manomaya kosha through its meditations and pratyahara techniques. Raja yoga has no emphasis on physical practice as the main focus is dealing with the mind. Therefore, the practices of raja yoga are more mental, covering the aspects of pranamaya kosha, manomaya kosha and vijñanamaya kosha. This is the major difference. The common link between the two, hatha yoga and raja yoga, is prana.

There are two raja yogas. Sage Patanjali is not the originator of the subject of raja yoga, rather he is one of the commentators on the subject of raja yoga. Yoga has a vedic background and the ideas of yoga are influenced by vedic thought. Raja yoga developed much before Patanjali and the guru who developed raja yoga is Shukracharya. He was the guru of the demons, meaning people who are tamasic in nature. As the guru of the demonic group, his intention was to bring them out of the destructive and tamasic state of mind into a more positive and sattwic state of mind. For that he devised the practices of raja yoga. He is the original creator of raja yoga which was later further developed by other sages like Yajnavalkya. His book on raja yoga is one of the classics, pre-dating Patanjali's raja yoga and expounding many more ideas and practices, which are defined by Patanjali.

Many thousands of years later, Patanjali came into the picture and by that time, the philosophical and religious ideas had changed in the country. When Patanjali came, it was not the vedic ideology which was prominent but the Samkhya ideology. Using the Samkhya ideology, Patanjali converted the raja yoga into a Samkhya yoga system and simplified raja yoga using the components of that system. He brought in two things. One is the idea of the witness, *drashta*. In the original raja yoga there is no *drashta*. There is no witness, only the experiencer. In Patanjali's raja yoga, there is the witness to the experience. The observer idea has been integrated by Patanjali in raja yoga.

The second idea Patanjali included is *chitta vritti*, modifications of mind. In the original raja yoga there is no *chitta vritti*. There is no modification of mind that you have to observe. The original raja yoga says you have to merge. You have to dissolve the gross into the subtle, the subtle into the causal, the causal into the transcendental. The classical raja yoga speaks of merging, whereas Patanjali's raja yoga speaks of *chitta vritti*, identify each motion of the mind. These are the two major differences between the two systems. The classical system is much richer than what Patanjali presented

in the *Yoga Sutras*. The theories of the *Yoga Sutras* are influenced by the Samkhya system of thought; the classical raja yoga is based on the vedic system of thought.

The focus of raja yoga has always been to become still, physically and mentally. This stillness is known as pratyahara. There are eight stages of raja yoga. Yamas and niyamas constitute only one part. They create the appropriate condition, positivity and balanced culture of mind to go deeper into the experience of raja yoga.

There are many yamas and niyamas. Hatha yoga has yamas and niyamas and they number twenty. People don't realize that hatha yoga has yamas and niyamas. When it comes to yama and niyama everybody begins to quote Patanjali and that is incorrect. It should not happen for the yamas and niyamas of Patanjali are of high school level. Hatha yoga yamas and niyamas are of primary school level. Therefore, we have to start with those rather than think about the yamas and niyamas of raja yoga. Here people are confused as they link the yamas and niyamas of raja yoga with other practices and into their life. It doesn't seem to work. Many people have tried and nobody has succeeded, as the whole precept and understanding of yama and niyama is cockeyed in our mind.

Asana and pranayama

Therefore, we move from the yama and niyama component and come to the third and fourth components of raja yoga – exploring asana and pranayama. Exploring asana and pranayama becomes Raja Yoga Yatra 1. When we explore asana and pranayama, what are we looking for in the body? The *Yoga Sutras* define asana as sthiram and sukham. *Sthiram* means firmness, stability, immobility and *sukham* means comfort, the ease of doing things. This is the focus, sthiram and sukham, stillness and comfort. This gives an indication that Patanjali did not speak of asana and pranayama. He only said asanas are postures in which you are still and comfortable. In the classical raja yoga there are

clear guidelines of asanas as you find in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* or any other book on hatha yoga. There are clear guidelines of asanas including which asanas to do. Most of the asanas are static and meditative.

Raja yoga follows hatha yoga. Therefore, when you come to raja yoga, the basic understanding is that you have already perfected or are practising hatha yoga and all the physical requirements are being fulfilled. Raja yoga is more for the mental, not for the physical requirement. In raja yoga, exploring asana and pranayama leads us first to bring flexibility in the body and remove stiffness and tightness. Only when the body has become flexible, can we move into other postures and be comfortable and still.

The body has to be properly tuned and for tuning the body, whether you practise hatha yoga or raja yoga, the common practice is known as *sukshma vyayam* or the subtle movements, classified in our system by Sri Swamiji as the pawanmuktasana series. The pawanmuktasana series allows the body to loosen up, removes stiffness and tightness from the joints, loosens the muscles and allows better flexibility of body. After completion of the pawanmuktasana series, you move into the advanced asanas. In the asana and pranayama section of Raja Yoga Yatra 1, we shall be dealing with the asanas that belong to raja yoga. People are not aware that they belong to raja yoga for in the *Yoga Sutras* there are no asanas. The same happens with pranayama. The *Yoga Sutras* say inhale and exhale, retain – that is pranayama, yet no technique is given. The techniques that are given in raja yoga are meant to balance the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems and this constitutes Yatra 1.

Pratyahara

Raja Yoga Yatra 2 moves on after asana and pranayama to experiencing pratyahara and dharana, the fifth and sixth components of raja yoga; *pratyahara* is sensory withdrawal and *dharana*, concentration. In your practice, you are exploring asana and pranayama and experiencing pratyahara and

dharana. Dhyana and samadhi are natural progressions, and yamas and niyamas come later so we are not discussing them now.

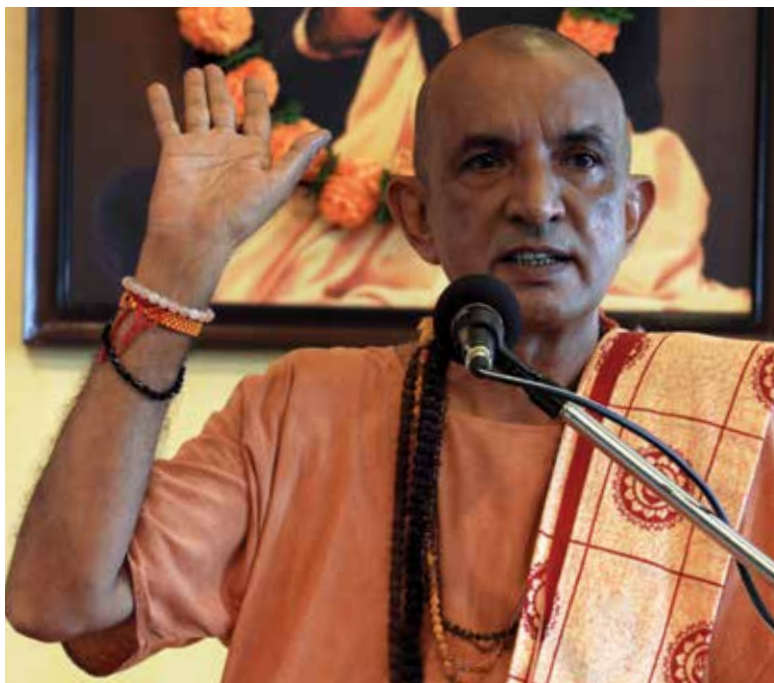
In Raja Yoga Yatra 2, Experiencing Pratyahara, the process begins with relaxation. Before you internalize, concentrate and meditate, there has to be relaxation of the whole system. This relaxation will remove stresses and anxieties that disturb the mind in meditation. Relaxation is the first practice, which is physical and psychological. The second practice is pranic pratyahara, and the third practice is mental pratyahara.

Generally, people know mental pratyahara: sit down, close the eyes, practise this meditation, practise that meditation; that is mental pratyahara, mental meditation. This mental meditation is never complete without the pranic component in it, which is prana pratyahara. Pranic pratyahara is the subject of the classical raja yoga, whereas mental pratyahara is the subject of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*. This is a brief introduction to raja yoga and your journey into raja yoga.



Yoga Chakra – Towards a Yogic Lifestyle

16 August 2019



This year is a very important year for our yoga work. Three important things are happening and have happened this year. First in relation to the Bihar School of Yoga. In the month of October last year, we had the Munger Yoga Symposium, which was by invitation only; it was not open to the public. We had strict criteria of whom we wanted

for this Yoga Symposium as it was going to introduce the 'Second Chapter of Yoga' conceived by the Bihar School of Yoga. The first chapter of the Bihar School of Yoga was yoga propagation which stopped in 2013, and an announcement was made during the World Yoga Convention that the age of propagating yoga was over. That was the Stone Age of yoga. Everybody wanted to experiment with yoga, experimented with whatever came on the market: many people did it openly and many behind the back, yet everybody tried everything under the sun, and that was the age of yoga propagation.

From 2013 following the mandate that was given to me by my Guru, Sri Swami Satyananda, I started looking into further developing yoga beyond what was already known, going back into the tradition, the scriptures and reading them, not with the purpose of teaching, but with the purpose of understanding every word and sentence that was written and said. While this was happening I also revived the original teachings of Sri Swami Satyananda.

When Sri Swamiji established the yoga movement in Munger in 1963 and began to teach yoga, his intention was to have a fellowship of people who live yoga, not practise yoga. Underneath our logo of ajna chakra is written 'International Yoga Fellowship'. It does not say Bihar School of Yoga, it says 'International Yoga Fellowship' which means that the vision of Swami Satyananda was to have a fellowship, a group of people, not thousands, not millions, but maybe hundreds who actually live yoga.

With this intention Sri Swamiji taught us in the early days, the subject of yoga in the form of the Yoga Chakra or the 'Wheel of Yoga'. This wheel of yoga contained six different yogas: three for sadhana, for perfection in one's own life, and three expressive yogas.

Yoga Chakra

Swami Sivananda had asked Swami Satyananda to leave Rishikesh and propagate yoga from 'door to door and shore to shore'. With this mandate Swami Satyananda did

nothing but travel for nine years. For nine years he travelled and went to every nook and corner of the country, visiting villages, cities, towns, interacting with people, the affluent, poor, pious, criminals, everyone. He wanted to discover what people needed in their life and how yoga could be used to fulfil those needs. Prior to that, yoga was only seen as a subject of self-realization and it had nothing to do with human society, it was only meant for sadhus and recluses. For nine years he assessed the needs of every cross-section of society.

Then he researched into which yoga branch would be appropriate to help meet these needs and he came up with the plan of 'Yoga Chakra'. From his understanding, research and the nine years of wandering he had selected for sadhana three yogas. The first was hatha yoga as per the classical sequence; the second was raja yoga; and the third was kriya yoga. The first yoga was for the body, the second for the mind and the third for spiritual and psychic development. In this way he covered the three grounds and these three yogas represented what one needs to perfect in life for they signify a progression, a level of mastery. If not one hundred percent, even ten percent is good enough in your life. In this world full of distractions, if you attain ten percent of what yoga aspires for you shall be lucky. These sadhanas of hatha yoga, raja yoga and kriya yoga prepare you and the ground for your journey from body to spirit. That is your effort to discover sattwa in life.

The other aspect of the Yoga Chakra is expressive. Sri Swamiji gave karma yoga for the hands, bhakti yoga for the heart and jnana yoga for the head. There is a connection of these six limbs of yoga – hatha yoga is connected to karma yoga; raja yoga, the mental yoga, is connected to bhakti yoga, the heart yoga; and kriya yoga, the psychic and spiritual yoga is connected to jnana yoga, the transcendental awareness. This connection between each branch of yoga made what he called the Yoga Chakra. In 1969, one of the titles that we used to address Paramahamsaji was '*Yoga Chakra Kala Nidhi*' – one who has developed the science and the art of Yoga Chakra.

That was the name we used to call him. The first generation of people, students, aspirants and sannyasins learnt the full spectrum of the Yoga Chakra.

Birth of Satyananda Yoga

When we started to travel and groups of people came together to learn yoga, we found that the majority of people could not practise Yoga Chakra: some were fat, others slim, some old, young, healthy, some sick, people of all sizes, shapes, colours and hues, problems, difficulties, illnesses and stresses. Sri Swamiji said, “No Yoga Chakra for society. People need something to ease their pain, improve their respiration and their stress, so let us limit everything to something everyone can practise.”

That became the foundation of ‘Satyananda Yoga’. Simple practices of beginner and intermediate level. We don’t teach the wheel pose, the headstand or the scorpion pose, for the body is not able to do it. We teach you what your body can do and try to take the body to its limit in doing the simple practices.

Five groups of asanas: pawanmuktanasanas, standing asanas, forward and backward bending asanas and dynamic asanas became the main practices of Satyananda Yoga. The advanced asanas were removed for the general public in society. The same thing happened with pranayama – two or three pranayamas which everybody could practise were taught: nadi shodhana, bhramari, kapalbhathi, bhastrika, ujjayi. We limited the asana and pranayama practices from one hundred percent to ten percent which everybody could practise globally. The same thing happened with pratyahara and dharana techniques; for pratyahara you only practise yoga nidra. Antar mouna and ajapa japa are the few common techniques that form part of Satyananda Yoga which applied to everyone globally. They are safe practices which anybody could do, no matter how superficial or how embedded the physical, psychological or spiritual problem was. For fifty years we taught this Satyananda Yoga.

When the chapter closed on yoga propagation, I revived the idea of Yoga Chakra, not with the intention of teaching at random to any student in order to fill our pockets, but with sincerity and commitment to experience what yoga can do. If we can experience that change, then others will be inspired also to understand and adopt the Yoga Chakra.

Yoga for ascetics and society

For five years we developed the subject of Yoga Chakra and how it would be taught as I had learnt it differently. In my time we had to attain mastery of everything that we did within one hour, even something that we had never done before. Paramahamsaji used to tell us, “Do this asana and don’t move from the asana until I come and check you.” Even if he spent half a minute with one person by the time he reached the end of one hundred, two hundred people, it used to be fifty minutes, one hour. For that duration we had to hold the posture and we mastered it, everything in one hour. We did not take years to master anything. We had to master everything within the hour; that is how he trained us. I cannot do that today, so the idea was to present the teaching in the form of a *yatra*. *Yatra* means journey into, so *Hatha Yoga Yatra* means journey into hatha yoga, not journey of hatha yoga but journey ‘into’ hatha yoga, journey ‘into’ raja yoga, journey ‘into’ kriya yoga. In these journeys we explore all the different aspects that are there.

As I was studying about yoga and the Yoga Chakra and how to present it to society, I discovered many ancient scriptures and literatures, which are not yet published or even known to people, which contain references and practices of yoga. Every yoga is in two parts – one part is for the ascetic group, which is much more intense and involved, and the other part is for society, the social group which is less intense and less involved. In hatha yoga there are two branches: one is for the ascetics and one for people living in the so-called ‘civilized’ society.

The *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* by Swatmarama is for householders, for the normal society. It is a scaled down version

of hatha yoga. For ascetics *Gheranda Samhita*, the other book of hatha yoga, is much more involved and intense. The same thing happened with raja yoga. The social raja yoga is Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* because he made the changes in raja yoga keeping society in mind and their engagements, difficulties and the causes of their stress and anxiety. He defines the causes of stress and how to deal with these stressors which he calls *kleshas*. Patanjali kept the social need in mind, after maybe a couple of thousand years of having raja yoga as part of the human culture. The pre-Patanjali, classical raja yoga was for ascetics for at that time, society was different and people were not materialistic by nature. The ideas and the process to attain higher experience is different for the person who is caught up in the web of material stresses.

In today's time, some aspects of the classical raja yoga are also important enough to be included in Patanjali's raja yoga. Patanjali's raja yoga deals mainly with mind and classical raja yoga deals with prana and mind. Here is an example – You have old memories in your mind, a good one, a bad one. Whenever you remember them, they come back with the same intensity, colour, imagery, feeling and thought as before. In antar mouna, in mind meditation, you see that event, you acknowledge and you release the event. Maybe the next time the memory comes up, either good or bad, you are more centred, more focused and less affected by its influence, however it is not dead. It is like filing a colour photograph in the album and you open the album after thirty years. It is still in pristine condition. The colours are as they were on the first day. If you expose the print to sunlight, after a few days the colours will begin to fade and after a few weeks, you will hardly see the outline, and after a few months the page will be white as if nothing had been printed on it. That is prana shakti.

You remove the colour from the mental impression. From colour it goes to black and white, from black and white it goes to sepia, from sepia it goes to dull grey and from dull grey it becomes white. While Patanjali focuses on the mental

aspect only – you see the memory and deal with it, classical raja yoga also deals with the pranic component connected to the memory and how to eliminate it. The pranic component is in the classical raja yoga which Patanjali did not include in his raja yoga. Whatever his reasons may have been, it is still half the practice.

Raja yoga

As Patanjali was dealing with the social mind and behaviour, he brought in the concept of *drashta*, the seer. You see yourself, you observe your own experience, you become the witness of yourself. Then he brought in chitta vritti, which is not manas vritti. Chitta is not mind, chitta is a deeper aspect of the mind. Translated as ‘modification of mind’ is incorrect. Mind is manas and Patanjali doesn’t say manas vritti nirodha, or buddhi vritti nirodha. Manas is the rational aspect in which you have *pramana* or right knowledge, *viparyaya* or wrong knowledge, *vikalpa* or dream and fancy, *nidra* or sleep and disconnection, and *smriti*, memory. In the reflective mind you need to have evidence, options, and in the reflective mind you can be confused. *Pramana*, *viparyaya*, *vikalpa* are manas vrittis. Patanjali did not identify chitta vritti, although he speaks of chitta vritti. The first three represent the logical, rational, reflective aspect, manas vritti and buddhi vritti. It is *buddhi*, the intelligence, the intellect, which decides through its knowledge, understanding, wisdom and experience, the correct and incorrect, the right and wrong.

Then what are chitta vrittis? Patanjali touches upon *nidra* and *smriti*. *Nidra* is absence of consciousness. In manas there is no absence of consciousness, and if there is absence of consciousness, you don’t need any evidence and you are not confused. Absence of consciousness is actually chitta. Memory, *smriti*, is the chitta. These are the only two aspects of chitta – *nidra* and *smriti*, which apply in the sutra, *chitta vritti nirodha* – you manage the vrittis of chitta, which are sleep, absence of consciousness, awareness and memories.

What are the vrittis of chitta in relation to memory? Each memory has its own content. The good experience has the good content in it; the bad experience has the bad content in it. Each memory is like a balloon, one filled with air, one filled with helium. The helium balloon will always go up as it is lighter; the air-filled one will always stay static in your hand and fall down because it is heavier. If you consider chitta vritti to be like this, then the positive is filled with pure air and the negative is the altered form of air, any form of gas, which is not pure air. They are the images, the good has its content and the bad has its content.

When you are observing the chitta vritti of memory, there is a mental process as well as a pranic process. In the mental process you see the event and in the pranic process you remove the energy, the *shakti*, from it so that it clears the mind and dies. The pranic and mental component have to come together in raja yoga. Drashta, the mental component, is emphasized in Patanjali's raja yoga, and merger, *laya*, the pranic component, is emphasized in the classical raja yoga.

The classical raja yoga does not speak of vrittis, but of *laya*. *Laya* means to merge, to become one with, or to become an inseparable part. Different examples are given such as *laya* meaning to dissolve completely like salt or sugar in water when you can't separate the ingredient from water anymore.

Another understanding is to become an integrated part, the lower tattwa becomes an integrated part of the higher tattwa. You have paper and pen and are writing on paper. Ink is separate and paper is separate. Once you write in your book, the ink will become an inseparable part of the paper. It won't dissolve in the paper; it will become an inseparable part of the paper where you can see paper and what is written as two different things, yet they are one. You can't remove the writing and not destroy the paper; you have to destroy the paper to remove the writing. They are so integrated. That is also *laya*, when you become an integrated part of something. What makes you an inseparable part of something higher is called *laya*.

In the classical raja yoga, you have to move from the lower elements, thoughts, behaviours, tattwas, from the lower chakras to the higher chakras and leave the lower ones behind. Don't have any connection with the lower one as you move up. Then as you move up, the higher state of consciousness will become permanent. If you keep your link with the lower level, you will be fluctuating like a torch light turning on and off, on and off. The higher state will not be a permanent state. Attainment is always first and after you attain what is to be left behind, it will be left behind automatically, you don't even have to make any effort to leave something behind.

The vedantic, classical raja yoga gives the example of a person climbing steps. Until the foot is fixed on the higher step, the lower foot does not leave the lower step. Therefore, attainment is first and then leaving, attainment and leaving, leaving becomes natural and spontaneous. You don't have to think, 'I have to leave this, I have to practise vairagya', no, it happens automatically. Merging or transforming the lower tendencies into higher qualities has a different approach. You are more aware of cultivating sattwa. Only when you are aware of cultivating sattwa and the positive in you, can you decide to merge the lower, restrictive, animalistic tendency into something better and higher.

In Patanjali's raja yoga, you don't have to move anywhere, you can be in the same spot and observe the next step and the next step and the lower steps as well. You can observe, know the pitfalls and attainments, yet there is no sadhana, no effort. You are only seeing. You are not trying to achieve. You are only happy that you have seen something, yet there is no holding on to what you have seen. There is no experience of what has been seen. That is the problem with drashta. You see and acknowledge what is behind you and in front of you, however you are not moving, you are only acknowledging. This is the problem with Patanjali's system and the possibilities of the classical system.

In hatha yoga, you can live with tamas, the different habits, nature and mental behaviours are accepted as long as you are aware of them and do not allow them to affect your life. 'I know I am angry, fine. I know I am depressed, fine, I am depressed'. 'I am observing that I am depressed and I am making the effort to come out of it. I am accepting the condition I am in and I am trying to rectify that.' There is sattwa and tamas working in unison, they are walking together in hatha yoga.

In raja yoga, sattwa takes two steps forward and tamas stays two steps behind yet they continue to walk. You are more in control of your mind, your expressions, reactions, thoughts, plans and expectations, the appropriateness and the inappropriateness. There is more sattwa in life, you are two steps ahead. At the pranic level and at the mental level, sattwa comes in.

In kriya yoga there is a definite attempt to overcome tamas. In kriya yoga, when sattwa goes to the vijñanamaya level and permeates the entire consciousness, you begin to experience bliss. In kriya yoga, sattwa becomes much more prominent, eighty percent is highlighted and tamas becomes twenty percent, just enough for you to sustain yourself in this body, live a happy life, a life which is full of dharma and be able to fulfil all obligations. Ultimately you have to realize that we all have to walk alone. We have our families, but as we grow old, our young ones grow up. They go in search of their own destinies and life and we as parents begin to wonder what to do.

Raja yoga and kriya yoga allow your mind to disconnect from those sources of attachments, from materialistic, worldly happiness and concern, but not with delusional attachment, not with mamta, not with moha, not with maya, yet free of that; that is an indication of sattwa increasing. If there is less sattwa, you will be more concerned, worried, brooding about the future, yourself and others. If there is more sattwa, there will be more lightness, more clarity and less brooding. This constitutes the hatha yoga, the raja yoga and the kriya yoga of the Yoga Chakra.

After the Munger Yoga Symposium, all the courses at the Bihar School of Yoga have been changed. No courses that were conducted here for the last fifty years are being conducted now. That is one good news.

The second good news is that this year is the Silver Jubilee of Bihar Yoga Bharati. Bihar Yoga Bharati was the first university of yoga in the world, recognized by the government. It is working as an institute of higher studies in yogic sciences. Graduates of Bihar Yoga Bharati are spread all over the country and all over the world; they are teaching yoga, some sincerely and some in their own style. We will have a gathering of BYB students from the last 25 years, and with them, we will be working to develop the second chapter of yoga in a better way.

The third good news is that after ten years of Sri Swamiji giving the instructions to establish Sannyasa Peeth, this year Sannyasa Peeth has formally come into existence. It has had its 'birth party' in June. It is born and since January, we have started all the activities of Sannyasa Peeth.

The new programs, new routines and the first few pages of the second chapter have been written. In the Hatha Yoga Yatra 1, 2, 3, 4 there is a progression from understanding the shatkarmas to understanding and practice of asanas to pranayama, mudras and bandhas, to all the systems of hatha yoga. With raja yoga, you are not focusing on the yamas and niyamas of raja yoga. You are focusing on experiencing and exploring the asana and pranayama of raja yoga, whose purpose is not to provide flexibility but to be able to sit comfortably. The asana is more static in nature. Dynamic practices are in hatha yoga and slow-moving or static postures are in raja yoga. Then you are exploring pratyahara using both ideas – Patanjali's ideas because you are familiar with it and introducing the classical ideas for you to become familiar with it. In our yatras, you shall see the practice of pratyahara and the sequential progressive development of pratyahara.

Manahprasad

Ultimately, hatha yoga, raja yoga or kriya yoga have to become part of your lifestyle and you practise yamas and niyamas as part of lifestyle, not as part of any yoga. Lifestyle starts with yamas and niyamas. To improve the quality of life, the first yama is *manahprasad* or happiness and the first niyama is *japa*.

Manahprasad is the first yama – to be happy. What is the percentage of your happiness in twelve hours of waking time? Half an hour, one hour, maximum two, two and a half, three? And the remaining nine hours? Worried, grumpy, thoughtful, angry, frustrated, pressurized. To have a disposition, to have a nature which is always happy is the first requirement of yoga. Swami Sivananda used to say that. He was an advocate of happiness. He said, “Smile. Greet everybody with happiness in your heart and mind.” Do it not as a formality or routine, but with the feeling of happiness you have inside when somebody tells you how nice you are. Can’t you reciprocate the same feeling? If I say, “You are very nice,” you feel happy. Can’t you say that to somebody else?

After the Munger Yoga Symposium where I had spoken about manahprasad, a delegation went back to England. One person tried smiling at people. He started walking the streets of London saying, “Good morning, how are you, how is the weather?” with a big smile on his face. People were so threatened by him that they called the police. They told the police, “There is some stranger walking around, smiling at everybody, saying, ‘Good morning’. We don’t know what motive he has.” The police came and took the person in and issued an advisory – ‘when a stranger looks at you or speaks with you, avoid eye contact, turn on the volume of your earphones if you are listening to music, look down and walk very fast’.

That was the advisory issued to people in London. Smiling at somebody is becoming a threat now. At least in India we don’t have that problem and I can spoil anybody’s day here. I look at strangers every morning, give them the

biggest smile and walk away. That spoils the day for them. They think, 'What did I do? Why did Swamiji laugh at me? Is my hair okay, are my clothes okay?'

Manahprasad, being happy, is the first yama and if you increase those moments of happiness, every day five minutes more, can you imagine the positive change this happiness will have in your life after one month, two months, three months? You will be much more optimistic, hopeful, joyous and positive. You will be seeing the world through rose-coloured glasses and not dark glasses. The outlook will change and suffering will reduce. Swami Sivananda says that, "Happiness is the antidote to suffering."

There are some people who suffer and dislike people who are happy as they think they are being made fun of. It is not that. It is human nature to be happy, it is human nature to be sad. So why not choose the best option possible and be happy? Why always choose the worst option possible and be more dejected and frustrated? Yama is a choice to connect with what is more uplifting. Happiness is a choice to be connected with what is much more positive, harmonious and creative.

Japa

The first niyama is japa. The people who want to pursue spiritual life, what do they receive first? It is mantra. What are they asked to do first? It is japa, and that is the first niyama which you have to practise every day. It is part of your lifestyle, whether you do your asana or your pranayama or you don't. Yamas and niyamas are to be practised independently, not in a class but at home. By practising you are altering and influencing the environment and the vibration of the house and the people who live in the house.

Do you know why japa? Yogis have come up with a really beautiful explanation. They say that we are people of the world and our nature is to be continuously thinking about the world, our expectations, desires and how to fulfil them. Even in thought we are connected to the world, our close family,

friends, society, prosperity, wealth. As long as we are people of the world, our senses are connected to the sense objects. Can we have a time when we voluntarily and consciously disconnect ourselves from the external and be centred in ourselves? They said that was possible through japa.

When you practise mantra with a mala, then for those five minutes or ten minutes, you are making a conscious effort to cut yourself off from the surroundings and find peace inside you. That is a training given to the senses and the mind – consciously disconnect from your associations and objects with which you are connected. A resilience, a training develops, so that when you want, you can disconnect from the world. That is the purpose of japa.

I received my mantra at an early age, I was eight. After receiving the mantra, I forgot it. In those days the mantra used to be whispered in the ear and not written down. I did not have the courage to go back to Swamiji and say, “I forgot the mantra.” So every evening I used to sit with my mala and think, “What is my mantra, what is my mantra?” Then one day I had a ‘eureka moment’. I was sitting quite dejected, thinking what will I tell my Guru if he asks me, “Do you practise the mantra?” Suddenly the mantra came back. I was so excited that I finished the whole mala in about ten minutes. Then again I did another one, and another one. I remembered that Swamiji had said, “Practise two malas.” So I went to Swamiji, “Swamiji, you know I have been practising my mantra,” I did not tell him how long, “and I feel two malas is little, I can finish it in ten minutes, fifteen minutes.” He said, “For how many beads are you aware of the mantra?” I had no answer to that, so I said, “I will check and let you know.”

The next time I sat down for japa, I was aware of how many beads I moved and how many mantras I mentally said. While doing this, my head suddenly went away. I was thinking and my hand was moving but the mantra stopped. Then after a few seconds I realized that my mantra had stopped and my fingers were moving so I looked at the mala – oh, about ten beads! Then again I started the mantra. I did this

for about a week, just checking the condition of my mind. Then I went to Paramahamsaji and said, “Swamiji, I think I can only practise like ten, fifteen beads with awareness, then my awareness goes, and again I have to pull it back.” He said, “That is the trick of japa. The day you remain aware of the complete mala without a single fluctuation and deviation, you will have perfected japa.”

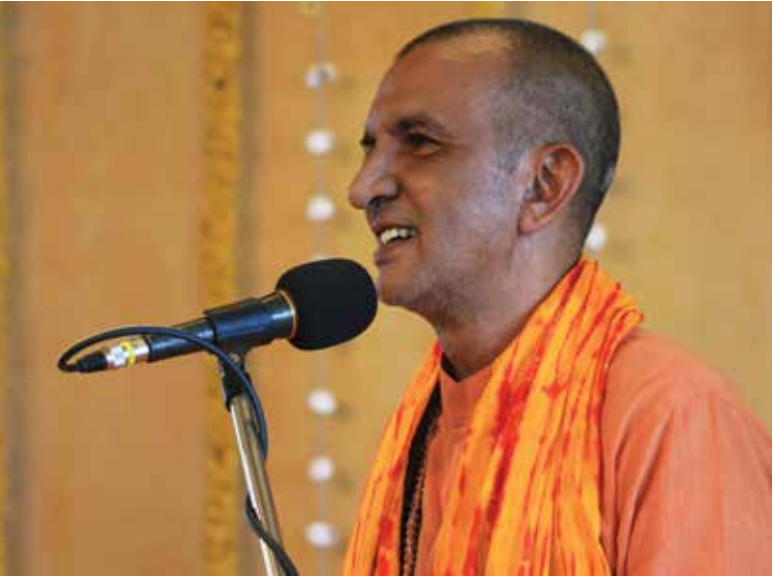
When people ask me if they can do more malas, I tell them, “Remember your mantra for every bead of one mala and tell me if you have succeeded or not.” The majority say, “No, we have not succeeded.” From two which was given to them originally they come back to one, to half a mala, and even that is difficult. Where is the awareness? Where is the discipline? If you don’t have the discipline, then what do you hope to achieve from yoga? It is just like taking a placebo for oneself – ‘I am doing my mala’. I’m doing my japa, yet along with my japa I am also travelling to America, going to restaurants, I am also window shopping, and doing everything else.

So where is discipline and focus? It is not there. For this reason, the first lifestyle yama and niyama are happiness and japa. They give you the ability to rectify the outer behaviour of mind which is distracted. When the mind is distracted, you are less happy and when the mind is focused and relaxed, you will be more happy. When the mind is less distracted, you will do your japa better. When the mind is more distracted, you may not even remember your mantra. Maybe one or two beads, and then some memory will take over.

For a yogic lifestyle, yamas and niyamas are not to be practised in a classroom situation. Pantanjali’s yamas and niyamas are higher, secondary school yamas and niyamas, not primary school. Primary school is hatha yoga and pre-primary, where we begin to train ourselves, is yoga lifestyle. We start with very simple things – happiness and japa. Yamas and niyamas constitute part of our sadhana, not in the classroom but as a routine to develop the mental culture and habit to remain positive, happy, more centred and balanced.

Dimension of Prana

17 August 2019



The story of raja yoga is an interesting story. Imagine a disturbed society in the Middle East, or any disturbed area in the world. A wise man goes to this region and becomes the master of the people. He inspires them to come out of that terror mind-set and to become more positive, optimistic and hopeful in life. Does that act of the master make him a terrorist because he is interacting and dealing with terrorists? No, he is only trying to help the terrorists by showing them a better way of life.

The same thing happened with raja yoga. The demonical people were like the terrorists today, disturbing the peace of society, looting, killing, murdering, thieving; that was the common way for those people to perform and function. One wise man lives with them and teaches them methods and ways to overcome the negative tendencies of the mind. Once upon a time, this wise man happened to be called Shukracharya and credit goes to him. There are many Samhitas, that describe the journey of Shukracharya in the land of the demons and his effort to transform and change them. Raja yoga was the outcome of that effort by Shukracharya. He devised raja yoga in a specific manner – he first gave the component of yama and niyama, and then the component of practice.

Yama and niyama are what you try to achieve in your daily routine and life. If you look at the yama and niyama of raja yoga – satya, ahimsa, asteya, aparagriha and brahmacharya – they are qualities for the demonic mind-set. Demons don't adhere to truth, there is more falsehood in their life. To regulate that lifestyle, *satya*, truthfulness, was put in place by Shukracharya. *Himsa*, aggressiveness, is a natural outcome in the life of people who are tamasic by nature. As an antidote to tamas and to become calm, peaceful and non-reactive, he brought in ahimsa. All the yamas of raja yoga are geared for people who are absolutely tamasic in nature. How can a tamasic person even understand satya or ahimsa? Even sattwic people have difficulty in adhering to satya: do you think it would have been easy for the tamasic people to understand that I have to live satya in my life? Do you think it is easy for people who are aggressive and violent, to become non-violent? It is not easy. So, the yamas and niyamas represent modification in the belief and mind-set of people who are tamasic, demonical and terrorist by nature. He put yama and niyama first as these two have to be practised in life on a daily basis, on a moment to moment basis. It was not a practice that you could do for one hour every day, connect with satya or ahimsa, and then go about your normal business.

Yamas and niyamas became part, not of the yoga practice but of yoga lifestyle, and that has to become clear today. Something that you do in a classroom environment, that is practice, training. Something you try to live moment to moment on a day-to-day basis, that is lifestyle. Yamas and niyamas represent lifestyle. Shukracharya placed them first so that the demons could understand the goal and focus for their effort to improve themselves. If you are in the habit of lying all the time, then develop satya to improve that quality. You can't be selective, 'Now I'll speak satya' and 'Now I'll speak asatya', the truth and the lie. That culture, that nature has to develop. Yamas and niyamas reflect what you do in your lifestyle to improve the quality of your mind, behaviour and expression.

Then comes the practice part, asana and pranayama for the body, pratyahara and dharana for the mind. These are the only four practices. There are so many people who say, "I teach meditation," and they teach anything under the sun in the name of dhyana. About a month ago, I had visited Rishikesh where I met some of the local teachers and I asked them what they teach. Teachers themselves are not knowledgeable: they only know ten asanas, and the rest is just invented stuff in their mind because they have never studied anything. In this situation how can any teacher become an efficient guide to anyone?

The first two practices, yama and niyama, are lifestyle changes – asana and pranayama are for body and prana; pratyahara and dharana are for the four aspects of the mind – manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara. Once this purification and harmony has taken place in the human nature, then you move into meditation spontaneously. Meditation is not something to be practised, it is a state of mind. The imaginative or fantasy meditations that people like to do – visiting heaven, seeing angels, talking to them, having a chat with God, are used for a 'feel-good-factor' inside. It is more like a fantasy visit rather than actual meditation. Although we use the word meditation, nobody teaches meditation.

Therefore, despite yoga being in society for the last fifty-five years, there has been no progression of human personality. There is still no peace in the minds of people who practise yoga. There is no harmony even in the life of those people who say they practise regular meditation. The outcome or the result of our practices are never utilized by us. We remain the reactive animal and we don't use the wisdom of meditation to stop being reactive to little, little things.

Drirhata and laghavam

Our understanding of yoga is lopsided understanding. The training is important, and it begins with the body as practice. Hatha yoga defines the result of asana practice by saying that – ‘When you practise asana you develop drirhata and laghavam. This is the hatha yoga statement about asana. What does this statement mean? When you practise asana you become firm in your posture, that is drirhata. Now how many of us are firm? If I ask you to be quiet for five minutes, after one minute you will be looking around to see what is happening. The thought will never come that you should just be quiet and silent. Why does that happen? Why an instruction – be silent – is not understood and you start looking at other people to see if they are silent or not? That is the lack of *drirhata* or stability of body and mind. When you practise asana that stability comes. The senses become still. When the senses are becoming still you become still, the mind stops wandering. When the mind stops wandering, you become still. That is drirhata.

Two people can be sitting here: one can be having an express train of thought going through the mind and the other a slow chugging passenger train. Now outwardly they both are quiet, yet in the mind who is more agitated? The person who has the express train is running fast. That happens to us all the time. Yesterday, we had the example of how we forget our mantra after ten, fifteen, twenty or even five beads due to the express train that takes the awareness away from the mantra into something else. We don't have

the ability to hold our mind and our senses. The outcome of raja yoga is the ability to control the senses, the pranas and the mind. Body and senses, body and prana, body and mind, when these three are in harmony with each other, then stability, *drirhata* comes in. This is the first focus of asana in hatha yoga.

The second benefit of asana as defined in hatha yoga is *laghavam*, lightness. Imagine people living a sedentary lifestyle, waking up at eight, not exercising, eating, going to the office, coming back, living a normal social life. When they begin to practise yoga or pawanmuktasana, all the stiffness of their body becomes less and eventually leaves. The circulation of prana and blood improves. Stiffness goes away, and the body feels lighter, the mind feels lighter as the pranas are active and circulation is happening properly. When you practise an asana in hatha yoga the natural feeling of lightness is what you have to focus on in hatha yoga.

Hatha yoga defines *saptabhumikas* or seven stages of progression in asana. At each level you have to experience something specific. In this way complete mastery is attained when you follow the seven stages or *saptabhumikas* of hatha yoga. When the body is in tune and you come into raja yoga practice, you focus more on the energy, the pranic system. It is pranas which cause disturbance in body and mind.

Prana

When you are under stress and unable to sleep at night, observe the condition and state of your mind when you are trying to sleep. You will see that too many thoughts come and due to these thoughts flashing you cannot relax. Why this agitation? It is either due to stress or due to prana. If it is due to stress or worry then there are methods to achieve relaxation. If it is pranic imbalance, there are other techniques you can use to create balance in prana. Here raja yoga comes in.

In relation to asana and pranayama, raja yoga does not say much at all. For asana it says *sthiram* and *sukham* is the

goal. *Sthiram* is the same as *drirhata*, stability. *Laghavam* is the same as *sukham*, comfort and lightness. The ideas are similar; only the words have changed: *drirhata* and *sthirata*, firmness and stability, *laghavam* and *sukham*, lightness, happiness, pleasure, comfort. Hatha yoga defines the asanas, raja yoga does not, yet raja yoga is dependent on perfection of hatha yoga.

The same applies to pranayama. The training of pranayama happens in hatha yoga. Raja yoga simply states that inhalation, exhalation and retention is to be considered as pranayama. No practice is given in Patanjali's raja yoga, only the sutra 'inhale, exhale and hold – that is pranayama'. A fourth pranayama is holding the breath out. This much is the only description in the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali. In the classical raja yoga, pranayama has been given more importance, for prana acts as an intermediary between the body, matter, the gross and manifest, and the mind, the subtle, causal and unmanifest.

Prana is like the neutral gear of the car. Gear one, the slow moving gear, is the *annamaya kosha*, the physical body. Gear two is *manomaya kosha*, the mental body. Gear three is *vijnanamaya kosha*, the psychic body, and gear four is *anandamaya kosha*, the spiritual body. The neutral gear which you use to move from one to the next, or reverse back and forth, is *pranamaya kosha*. *Pranamaya kosha*, the pranic sheath or body, is the intermediary between the gross physical body and the other subtle, mental, emotional, psychic and spiritual experiences of life. Access to these different dimensions happens if you are able to move with prana. Classical raja yoga focuses more on prana than on the mind, whereas Patanjali's raja yoga focuses more on the mind and not at all on prana.

In the classical raja yoga, pranic pratyahara is the first practice and in Patanjali's raja yoga, mental pratyahara is the first practice. Patanjali has by-passed the pranic system completely telling people to deal with the mind. Patanjali was teaching yoga to society, to the human community. Whereas

the classical raja yoga was more for personal emancipation. Whether it is for teaching people or whether it is for personal emancipation, the outcome is irrelevant. The method and process have to be clear whatever the outcome may be. To move into other dimensions of experience using prana is necessary. You cannot move into other dimensions of experience by using the mind as you are subject to the whims of mind. You are not subject to the whims of prana, rather you are the controller of prana. You can increase prana, you can utilize prana. Prana is not whimsical. Mind is whimsical.

In the yogic journey, you are going from the dimension of physical experience to pranic experience, from pranic experience to mental experience. This sequence has to be followed and once it is followed, your journey becomes much easier. If you try to put a car into third or fourth gear from first, it is going to be a lot of effort and strain on the engine. If you simply shift from one gear to the next, sequentially, you are utilizing the speed of the car to change the gear, which is fine. This principle has to be applied in yoga too.

Pranayama

In this sequence, first is pranayama, second is prana nidra, third is prana pratyahara and then you move into the other mental aspect of prana. You begin with pranayama, prana nidra and prana pratyahara. They constitute the beginning of pratyahara in classical raja yoga. In Patanjali's raja yoga, pratyahara begins by observing your mind, the practice of antar mouna. You close your eyes, you see the thought, you stop the thought, you create a thought, you stop the thought, you bring a thought, you stop the thought. Patanjali's pratyahara begins with mind observation and therefore he has brought in the component of witness, *drashta* – see what is happening in your mind. In the classical raja yoga, there is nothing to see, you just have to perfect one technique and go to the end of that technique, achieve the goal of that technique and simply move on to the next one.

There are two meanings of pranayama. One is *prana* plus *ayama*, which means to expand the dimension of prana. *Ayama* means to expand. So expansion of prana as prana-ayama is one definition. The second definition is *prana-yama*. *Yama* means to hold, so you are holding the prana, you are not expanding the prana. In your practice, you go through both stages. When you are practising nadi shodhana, bhastrika and kapalabhati, that is prana-yama. You are holding, working with and developing your sensitivity to prana. You are trying to discover what prana is. Is prana the same as breath? Is prana the same as oxygen? Is prana the same as air? Yogis say no.

Swami Nadabrahmananda, my guru uncle, was an adept in pranayama. He had the ability to hold his breath for one hour. To practise kumbhaka for one hour without breathing, how would a person survive? In the early 1980s, Swami Nadabrahmananda was investigated by Doctor Elmer Green at the Menninger Foundation in the United States. For the research, the doctors created three airtight glass chambers; in one glass chamber they placed a candle, in another glass chamber, a monkey and in the third glass chamber was the sannyasin. His body was sealed with wax so that all pores were closed. All the openings of the body were blocked with plugs, including the anus, nose, ears, mouth. Inside this glass chamber with all the pores of the body covered, all the openings blocked, he sat for one hour playing tabla. Playing tabla is not an easy job. He played the tabla holding his breath while he was connected to the machines which were monitoring his heart beat, ECG, EEG, GSR, EMG. Every kind of equipment was put on his body to monitor him.

After three minutes, the candle went out in the first chamber, which meant that the oxygen was finished. After ten to fifteen minutes, the monkey fell down unconscious, which meant that the chamber had increased levels of carbon, not oxygen. Swami Nadabrahmananda was playing happily his tabla. The researchers put the microphone of the tape recorder on different parts and areas of the body. All they could hear was a 'mmmmmmmmmmmm' kind of sound, as if

something was flowing in the body. Then they put a coin on the crown of his head and without anything the coin started to jump on his head. Swami Nadabrahmananda left his body at the age of 99. When the research was done, he was 78. So he was not a young man, however this research indicated that one can live without breathing by activating prana shakti.

Some yogis believe that when you hold the breath outside in *keval kumbakha*, the pranas become active inside. When you hold the breath inside, you are full and under pressure, and prana is not generated. In all the yogic scriptures, it is the external kumbakha, which has been identified as *keval kumbakha*, responsible for activating prana shakti. You don't have the ability to hold or retain your breath out for long periods. After seven seconds, after ten seconds, you start palpitating, the heart beat increases, which means that your body is not trained to adjust with the changes of breath and respiration. In pranayama this has to happen, and the ratio of pranayama is important. 24 matras belong to the *Gayatri* mantra. It takes 24 beats and each beat is a second. So when you are breathing in, you are actually breathing in one mantra, the *Gayatri* mantra, which is 24 beats.

A lot of emphasis is given on holding the breath out. If the emphasis was on holding the breath in, there would be more *Gayatri* mantras in inner kumbhaka, yet there are more numbers of *Gayatri* in outer kumbhaka. Therefore, the ability to hold the breath out has to be cultivated, and the ability to live without breathing. It is at that point that pranas become active in the body. Long years of training and perfection are required. The example of Swami Nadabrahmananda is an indication that prana is something different to breath. The focus of pranayama in all literatures of yoga is to improve external retention. After pranayama is perfected, then you move into the prana nidra component.

Prana nidra

The second aspect or component is prana nidra. What is the meaning of prana nidra? *Nidra* indicates a state of relaxation,

restfulness – so relaxation in the pranic field. According to kundalini yoga, manipura chakra, the naval plexus, the abdominal region, the digestive function, is the generator of prana in the body. Prana is distributed from ajna chakra to wherever it is needed. After distribution, the excess prana is stored in mooladhara chakra. The generator is manipura, the distributor is ajna and storage is in mooladhara. In prana nidra, these three chakras become active. The energy is released from the chakra and pacified.

Prana nidra has been used for therapy. A few months ago, I was giving a practice of prana nidra and there were people with body aches which they had been having for many months. After the first session of prana nidra, the body ache went away. That was the experience of people. When people with physical pain do prana nidra, the pain goes away instantly. Prana nidra is an effective technique – you awaken prana shakti, you distribute prana shakti to the afflicted area, and healing takes place. Pranas are always in disarray in our body, and prana nidra balances them. With the balancing of prana, the physical pain for which you were taking antibiotics and pain killers for months, goes away.

Prana vidya

After the pranas have been harmonized in prana nidra, comes prana vidya, the application of prana for healing oneself and for healing others. Pranic therapy is part of the prana system and techniques. It is an effective therapy

Prana vidya is a practice which allows you to divert, direct, send and use prana to attain optimum health and balanced energy. There are people who have gone in depth to discover this prana vidya. Some people have become so perfect or adept in it that they are able to perform surgeries without instruments and anaesthesia. Healing happens as you move the hand and the wound closes; that is the power of prana. For that you need to have the expertise and be connected with that flow and channel of prana. It cannot happen to you, as you are too distracted. You are not focusing on developing

one quality, faculty or ability. People who are able to do it, can work miracles and wonders.

Prana pratyahara

After prana vidya comes prana pratyahara, the fourth and last component. In pranayama, prana nidra, prana vidya, you develop the mastery and the control over your own shakti. You develop the skills to use it for your benefit and to help others. With the fourth you are transcending the pranic level and clearing out all pranic blocks.

It is like the example of the picture you put in an album. As long as that picture is not receiving sunlight, the colours will remain crisp, sharp and defined. Even after forty years when you open the album the picture will be as clear as it was the first day. If you expose the photograph to sunlight over a period of time the photo paper will become white and the images will disappear. That is the vritti idea of the classical raja yoga: all the impressions are in your nature; all the impressions you have acquired in this life are in the mind. Everything that you have gained previously is in your DNA.

There are two aspects: one is the physical aspect and one is the mental aspect. Everything from the past is in the DNA, the building block of life; and everything of the present is in the mind in form of impressions. You all have impressions. We might have our impressions from childhood, from marital, professional and family life, some may be good, some bad, deeply ingrained as a trauma, some of happiness and joy. Everything is there; we all have it.

When we practise prana pratyahara, we bring out and expose these impressions to sunlight, which is prana shakti, and the image fades. Clearing begins to happen, and the mind becomes free from its own impressions, anxieties, fears or insecurities caused by the memory of these impressions. There is a feeling of lightness, becoming less burdened and having a new vision. This clearing removes the impressions of chitta. When the impressions of chitta are remembered and come to the forefront of the mind, they create a vritti. An

old memory of a childhood friend pushing you will remain there as part of your memory. If you are able to clear that, then the mind is blank, the blackboard has been cleaned. This happens in prana pratyahara.

Our own master, Sri Swami Satyananda, attained mahasamadhi in 2009. From 2003, he started telling people, “Now I am cleaning my blackboard and even your impression, your image, your name is being cleaned. Once the blackboard is cleaned I may not recognize you. You may think Swamiji has forgotten me, or Swamiji does not remember me, or he is losing his memory. In reality, I am consciously cleaning my blackboard, for as long as I am connected with people, memories and impressions, the binding of karma, will arise. If one has to be free of the effect of the karmas, then chitta has to be absolutely cleaned. There cannot be any impression of love, hate, friendship, family or association. The mind has to be completely blank and released from all its connections, ties and associations with the world of sense objects; and you are part of that too.”

When Paramahamsaji talked like this we could not understand, yet today we do understand – once the impressions of chitta are cleared, manas and buddhi have no role. Once the impressions of chitta are cleared, the mind is blank, it is like the mind of a new-born baby who doesn’t know anything and who has to be re-educated and retrained. This happened in the life of Paramahamsaji.

He would tell people with whom he had lived for many years, “I may not remember your name next time. I am clearing you out, don’t mind it.” The next time he would ask, “Who is this person?” Then I would tell him, “Swamiji, he is Sanjeev Bhaskar.” “Oh, Sanjeev, okay.” It was not a memory lapse, it was clearing the blackboard, clearing chitta. That was possible due to prana pratyahara that Paramahamsaji did. This focus of the classical raja yoga is important to understand. Prana is the main aspect of the classical raja yoga.

Kaya Sthairyam

19 August 2019



Why do we start nadi shodhana with the left side?

Ida nadi, the flow in the left nostril, represents *chitta shakti*, the mental force. Pingala nadi, in the right nostril, represents the pranic force, and sushumna represents the spiritual force. We start from the left so that we move from the mental to the pranic force, attaining balance and activating sushumna. It is similar to starting any practice and your awareness from the lowest chakra, mooladhara, and then rising to ajna chakra. Here we start from mental to pranic and finally attaining spiritual consciousness.

In yoga nidra it is said that true pratyahara is when you hear the first and last instruction, in-between what happened is not clear, but instructions are given to stay awake and alert which means to listen to the instructions. So by the end of the practice should one be able to remember the visualizations or other sensations? Staying awake all through is also not pratyahara. How is pratyahara different from sleep?

Pratyahara is definitely not sleep, that is *nidra*, which is absence of consciousness. The awareness of the present reality is not there. Nidra is not pratyahara. Your experience in yoga nidra of hearing the first and last sentence is also not pratyahara. It is being absent-minded. There cannot be pratyahara without awareness, therefore absence of awareness does not indicate pratyahara. Pratyahara is a means to clear *smriti*, or memories of chitta. The vrittis defined by Patanjali are not of chitta. Although he says ‘chitta vritti nirodaha’, the definition of vrittis is not of chitta but of manas. The first three vrittis, *pramana* or right knowledge, *viparyaya* or wrong knowledge, *vikalpa* or dream and fancy, belong to manas. The last two, *nidra* and *smriti*, sleep and memory, belong to chitta. The vrittis that come up in chitta are due to memories.

You remember an event, good or bad; this creates a response in your mind, in your awareness and that is the vritti that comes from the memory. Therefore, pratyahara is becoming aware of the *smriti*, the memories of chitta, and clearing them. People describe pratyahara as gradually withdrawing the senses from their sense objects, this is the first level of pratyahara, not the final pratyahara. In yoga nidra you experience the absence of consciousness or absence of awareness. According to literature, this period is the subconscious state of mind. Nowhere does it say it is the state of pratyahara. If you are able to realize the difference between the subconscious state of mind and pratyahara, you will not be confused.

You listen to the first instruction, and then to the last, and you know that you are awake, yet you have not heard anything

in between. That is the subconscious state and experience. In that state of experience, you have to remain aware and alert, awareness cannot be absent. The subconscious state of mind and the practice of pratyahara are two different things.

Is gomukhasana good for the digestive system and can it be done after a meal like vajrasana?

Every asana is good for the digestive system, however there are regulations for every asana. Simply stretching part of your stomach does not indicate that the asana is beneficial for the digestive system. Even stretching the arms up opens the digestive system, not only gomukhasana. There are many postures which extend the body backwards and which open the digestive system, the intestines and assist the process of digestion. They cannot be compared to vajrasana as vajrasana has an influence on a specific nerve in the body, the 'vajra nadi'. The vajra nadi runs from the legs up into the abdominal area and is pressed when you are sitting in vajrasana. That pressure stimulates the digestion. It is not a stretch or a movement which affects the digestion, but stimulation of this particular nerve called vajra. Vajrasana is specific for improving digestion, and other asanas can help remove blocks and toxins from the small and large intestines and the stomach, and thereby assist in the process of digestion.

Nobody practises pawanmuktanasana as people wonder what they will gain by moving their hands and feet. They want to do something more dynamic, twist and stretch the body, pull their ligaments and look in the full length mirror to see how they perform the practice. The most basic component of yoga, pawanmuktasana, is forgotten.

Pawanmuktasana is relevant as it is the only practice which will sustain you and your body until the moment of your death. You cannot practise surya namaskara, headstand or other postures after a certain age. That yoga practice doesn't stay with you. What stays with you from beginning until end is pawanmuktasana. It is the beginning and the most

advanced practice of yoga as it remains with you for life. If you are perfect in pawanmuktasana, you can do anything and everything with ease for your body is ready. You can even turn your leg and your knee, for your knee does not only move forward and backward, it can rotate also. Nobody can do it for most people focus more on physical and dynamic practices rather than working with their bodies. Few people work with their body.

Pawanmuktasana prepares the body so that it can be twisted and turned in any manner you desire. For me my yoga sadhana is pawanmuktasana. Just as pawanmuktasana is important for yogasanas and perfection of yogasanas, there is one practice which is important for the perfection in meditation and it has the same fate as pawanmuktasana, nobody practises it.

This practice is the most essential practice of concentration and meditation, which nobody does for they think it is too simple. They rather focus on the Self and God, see angels, go to heaven and stand in front of the pearly gates.

Pratyahara begins with a simple practice called kaya sthairyam. *Kaya* means body, and *sthairyam* means to become still. This is one of the most important and valuable practices which prepares the body, mind and prana for progression in meditation. Those who can maintain stillness of the body, do so, and those who cannot maintain stillness of the body, should make the necessary movements to adjust slowly, with total awareness, quickly become still again and continue the practice.



KAYA STHAIRYAM PRACTICE

Sit down comfortably, both hands on the knees or in the front, wherever comfortable, in jnana mudra or chin mudra, spine erect, head straight, and gently close your eyes.

With eyes closed observe your physical body.

There should be nothing tight. There should be no tension in any part, muscle or joint. Just be comfortable and at ease with yourself.

Check all the body parts. Ensure that there is nothing tight, no discomfort.

If you need to adjust your body in any manner, do so now. Once you have adjusted, minimize the physical movements as much as you can and if at all you have to move for any reason during the practice do it with full awareness of the movement. Do it with full awareness of the reason for movement. Do it fast but without jerk in the body and again get settled as soon as you are comfortable.

Now, imagine that there is a triangle drawn on the ground and you are sitting on the top of that triangle, which is drawn on the ground.

The coccyx, the back of the body, the spinal cord represents the tip of the triangle.

The thighs and the knees, they represent the sides of the triangle and the gap between the knees represents the base of the triangle.

See your body sitting firmly on this imaginary triangle on the floor.

Visualize the triangle as red in colour and you are seated on top of that triangle. Red is the colour of Shakti, energy. The triangle is the Shakti triangle. And you are seated on that triangle. And your body is comfortable.

Now visualize another triangle, extending from the knees to the forehead, the crown of the head by following the path of the arms, left and right.

The head becomes the apex, the tip of the triangle, the two arms become the sides of the triangle and the hands are

placed on the knees; the gap between the knees becomes the base of the triangle.

Similarly, see your whole body encased in a triangular pyramid. See your whole body encased in a triangular pyramid. Develop the awareness of firmness and stability, just as a pyramid, a triangular pyramid is stable and firm and unmoving.

Observe complete physical stillness. Observe complete physical stability. There is no swaying of the body. Either front or back, or sideways. Your body is still, like a statue, immobile, firm, stable, still.

Now become aware of all the different sensations that you can experience in your body.

First become aware of physical stability, the immobility of the body.

Second, become aware of the sensations, either tingling or heat or touch.

Observe the right arm. Observe all sensations in the right arm. If there is a tingling feeling, observe it. If there is warmth and heat, observe it. If there is a feeling of pain observe it. If there is a feeling of relaxation, observe it. If there is any feeling of movement, observe that. If there is an itchy feeling, notice that. Whatever the feeling, external or internal, observe.

Become aware of the sensations in the right arm.

Become aware of the left arm and observe all sensations in the left arm.

Become aware of the back and the front, the trunk.

Notice all sensations. Become aware of the legs. Notice all sensations. See the whole body still like a statue.

Experience the whole body like a statue.

Experience the lightness in the body. Your body feels light. It doesn't feel heavy.

Now experience the body in the form of an empty shell, the outer covering is of skin, but inside all is empty space.

Do not identify with any body organ or part but experience space inside the body. The body is like a balloon.

Just as a balloon is empty yet it is filled with air and space. In the same manner, the body just has the outer shell of the skin. It is empty from inside and you are experiencing the space inside the body.

The physical awareness drops. Only space awareness remains. Just like an astronaut who floats in space, your awareness floats in the space of the body.

Inside the body all is silent, quiet and still, but outside the body the skin is experiencing the touch sensation.

Become aware of the skin and the flow of air, how the flow of air is caressing your skin. Where can you experience more flow of air, in which part, and in which part do you experience less flow, as the air moves around you. Be aware of skin and air. How do you experience the air touching your body?

Now, come to the second awareness – contact between the clothes and the skin. Become aware of that contact, the clothes that you are wearing and the contact of the clothes with the skin.

Move your awareness down from the neck experiencing, knowing, seeing mentally the skin in contact with the clothes that you are wearing. The experience of air touching and caressing the body parts and skin, and the experience of clothes touching the body parts and skin are two different experiences; focus now only on clothes and skin.

Now, come to the third practice. Become aware of the pressure and the weight of the body on the floor. Become aware of the pressure and the weight of the body on the chair, wherever you may be seated. Feel the contact between the floor and the body. Which areas of your body are in contact with the floor? The buttocks, the thighs, the calf muscles, side of the calf muscles, side of the lower legs, feet, and the thighs, pressure of the feet on the thighs, pressure of the body on the floor, pressure of the hands on your knees.

Just become aware of different body parts touching each other and the pressure that you feel.

And as you experience the pressure, the weight of the body on the floor, see the body merge with the triangle on the ground.

As the body becomes one with the triangle on the floor, there is greater stability, immobility, stillness and silence.

Now, stop this practice and externalize the awareness.

Become aware of the outer environment.

Become aware of the external sounds and noises that you can hear, loud and subtle both, distant and near both. Your mind is like the microphone of a tape recorder which can pick up each and every sound, distant or near, loud or subtle. *Pause*

Slowly take a deep breath in and chant the mantra *Om* with me and as you chant the mantra *Om*, feel the vibrations of *Om* travel through the whole inner space of the body, like waves reaching out to each and every corner of the physical body. Breathe in and feel the vibrations of *Om* as waves travel through the whole body.

Om Om Om

Om shanti shanti shanti. Hari Om.

Slowly bring the hands together and rub the palms. Then place the palms over the closed eyes and gently open your eyes.

Hari Om Tat Sat.

Kaya sthairyam

In the first practice of kaya sthairyam, the focus is on stilling the body. In the beginning, if you are not used to it, you want to scratch, move, adjust your clothes, and become comfortable. Then a mosquito comes and gives you a nice bite, and your whole mind is diverted in scratching that part of the body and cursing the mosquito for biting you. There is no stability either of the body or mind. The first practice in yogic meditations is called kaya sthairyam. You observe the firmness of the body, the air against the skin, the clothes against the body, and the weight of the body and the floor. That is one practice.

The subsequent practices keep on evolving. There is *indriya sthairyam*, which means stilling the senses, when you are able to still your senses. First is the body stillness, *kaya sthairyam*, then comes sensory stillness when the senses are stopped. Next is *manas sthairyam*, stillness of the mind, when the distractions and dissipations of the mind have to stop. Then you move into the first practice of pratyahara. This is the preparation, applicable for all groups of people, beginners and advanced practitioners.

According to yoga, if you are able to still the body and the senses, the pranas become harmonious. When the body is agitating, when you need or have the urge to move the body, change your posture or adjust yourself, it is an indication of hyper-pranic activity. When the pranic activity becomes hyper, you become more restless – the nervous system, the muscles and the body become more restless. As you are able to pacify the pranas, the restlessness of the body will dissipate and the body will become both stable and relaxed at the same time.

Once this sensory stillness, has taken place, you move into the practice of yoga nidra, which is relaxation. Yoga nidra, more than relaxation, is a meditation. When you practise yoga nidra lying down it becomes relaxation. When you practise yoga nidra sitting up it becomes meditation, an advanced practice of kaya sthairyam. When you are saying,

‘right hand thumb, first finger, second finger, third finger, fourth finger’ stillness is there. When you are in shavasana, relaxation is there. When you give the instructions of yoga nidra while in a meditative pose, it becomes a practice of concentration, meditation, and induces deeper stillness and awareness of the physical body. Yoga nidra is used in both ways, as a practice of relaxation and as a practice of meditation.

In the practice of relaxation, although the instructions are given ‘Don’t sleep’, people sleep. This shows that there is no control over the mental behaviour. If there is no control over the mental behaviour, why do you want to practise meditation? Some people say, “I will meditate,” they close their eyes and meditate in an un-yogic manner. They keep moving forward, backward, sideways, they keep jerking their body and say, “Oh, today I had a wonderful meditation.”

If there is no control over the mental activity, what do you expect from yoga? Don’t expect a miracle from yoga if you are not able to manage yourself. You have to manage your mind, you have to manage your body, then expect a result from yoga. If you wish to sleep in every meditation, in every yoga nidra, and you cannot control yourself, then come back to basics again. Not sleeping is a discipline of mind. This is the *amushasana*, the discipline that yoga talks about.

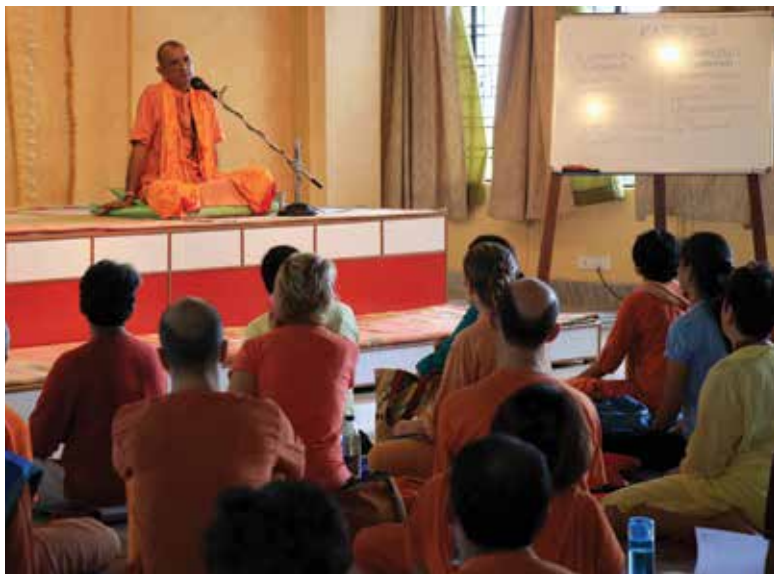
People believe in practice. People don’t believe in how they can manage their responses. I don’t believe in practice. I believe in how I can manage my responses. If my response is not appropriate to the practice, I will step back and go to a different practice where I can train myself again to take control of my own behaviour and mind. This point has to be understood clearly. For the sake of advancing on the path of yoga you cannot ignore the basic discipline of the mind. You cannot have choices preferring to do higher practices, when you know fully well that you sleep all the time. As a sincere aspirant you have to step back when you see a block which does not allow your growth. Rather than fighting against the block, come back, retrain yourself and then again move forward.

The object of kaya sthairyam is to be able to stop the dissipations and distractions of the mind, and to harness the powers of the mind. This journey begins with kaya sthairyam and not any other practice of yoga. Not even chidakasha dharana, antar mouna, or ajapa japa. No other meditation can improve the quality of your body and mind. To improve it you have to start with the basic kaya sthairyam. There are different levels of kaya sthairyam which become more involved, intense and engaging. You have to train, you have to take command and then can you walk the path of yoga.



Clearing Pratyayas

22 August 2019



Can you comment on the brand ‘Mindfulness’ coming from the USA and which is in vogue nowadays in western countries?

Yoga does not speak of mindfulness but of mind-emptiness. Mindfulness is the first step to mind-emptiness. There is a lot of cultural difference. In Asia, people don’t need mindfulness as the culture, samskara, routine and belief system are different. From childhood they are taught to observe and be aware. That does not happen in western countries.

Last year Swami Prembhava had undertaken a yoga ecology tour. After the tour, we received a letter from one participant of the program, saying, 'I have been living in my city for the last forty years, but after this seminar, for the first time as I walk from my home to my office, I notice the trees and the grass. For forty years I did not notice the beauty of the trees, or the greenness of the grass.'



Travelling the same road for forty years, every day from home to work, this person begins to notice the trees, plants, flowers and fruits. It was nice to tell us, yet it also indicates that people are not aware of their own environment. For such people mindfulness is the beginning of awareness in life.

Mindfulness is the first step a child learns to take before walking, and running is mind-emptiness, the philosophy, theory and aspiration of all spiritual traditions. There is mindfulness in yoga too. What you do in yoga nidra is mindfulness. Many people practising yoga nidra for the first time, say that for the first time they connected with their five toes. Previously they did not even know that they had feet as they see their feet only with socks and shoes. In yoga nidra they realized that they had toes, that they could go inside the toes and experience them. Is that not mindfulness?

In yoga there is a process of progression from no awareness to maximum awareness to transcendental awareness. You are at the state of no awareness, with yoga you develop *sajakta*, awareness, and the *drashta*, the ability to see, realize, know; and that is mindfulness. Indriya pratyahara is mindfulness. If you connect with the mindfulness of yoga, it increases the awareness, the ability to observe and respond appropriately to all situations. Then you come to the mind-emptiness state where the chatter is finished.

How does ujjayi pranayama help to activate prana in ajapa japa meditation?

Any type of breath awareness is the beginning of awareness of prana. How do you become aware of prana shakti? If you look around, it is in the environment. If you look within your body, it is in form of heat, light and colour. There are different experiences of prana outside and inside. Prana inside is experienced as a sensation and prana outside is in the air. How you breathe is irrelevant; whether you breathe through one nostril or both nostrils, as long as the breath is going in, prana is going in. When you practise ujjayi you are using the breath and prana is also going in. Therefore, any practice of breathing will bring prana to the body.

Is the drashta of Patanjali and the kshetra kshetrajna of the *Bhagavad Gita* the same in relation to classical raja yoga?

The drashta idea of Patanjali does not come in the classical raja yoga. The *Bhagavad Gita* speaks of *kshetra*, dimension, and *kshetrajna*, the knower of the dimension. Patanjali speaks of *drashta*, the witness. There is a difference between knower and witness. A child can be a witness to a cartoon on the TV screen. The child is the drashta of the cartoon on the TV screen. There is no knowledge, only seeing. Drashta is only seeing, knowing is different. Knowing what is happening and what will be the outcome indicates knowing. It is not drashta. The *Bhagavad Gita* idea is of knowing the dimension, Patanjali's idea is seeing yourself, and classical raja yoga is about transcending the lower, merging the lower into the higher and progressing.

How to use manahprasad in the family?

People notice that manahprasad is happening more easily outside, and at home it is difficult. Outside, you can laugh at others, at home who will you laugh at? Yourself or the children? Nobody will like it. Manahprasad is definitely difficult at home. Smile, laughter or happiness are different things. Happiness is a positive and creative state of mind. Laughter is 'ha ha ha', a smile is expanding the lips.

Happiness is a state of mind and if you are content at home, you will be happy. If you are discontented at home, you will be unhappy. Decide if you want to smile, laugh or be happy. If it is personal contentment you seek, then what happens at home should not bother or affect you.

During class we practised taste pratyahara and we were asked to remove prana. Is it removing the emotion and feeling attached to raga and dwesha? Or do we imagine to remove a light or a colour?

There are two components to any experience: one is a mental and one is a pranic component. When you associate with something, the mental and pranic components begin. The mental component decides on *raga* and *dwesha*, attraction and repulsion, which become an impression. If you like something there is raga, attraction. If you don't like something, there is dwesha, repulsion. Both create an impression on the mind, known as pratyaya. That impression has to be removed in pratyahara. The impression of raga and dwesha, which happen on a moment to moment basis, on a day-to-day basis, have to be cleared just as you clear your stomach every day. If you don't clear the stomach every day, constipation and sickness will happen. The same principle applies to likes and dislikes.

They have to be removed through meditation on a daily basis. What you like today and what you dislike today should not carry on tomorrow. Clear it tonight. You don't live in a dirty room. You clean the room, make your bed, organize the room so that it pleases you and you feel comfortable. You go into a dirty room and you won't feel comfortable, yet you can live with your dirty mind and it does not affect you.

As soon as the body becomes ill, you go to the doctor. If the house is dirty, you will clean it. What about the mind? You sleep with a dirty mind and you wake up with a dirty mind. The dirt continues to build up during the day, and again you sleep with an enhanced dirty mind and wake up with the same dirty mind the next day. There is no clearing of the mental stuff or dross. Therefore, every night, you should clear

the mind of these mental impressions of raga and dwesha. If you want to succeed in spiritual life, more than meditation, it is the clearing on which you have to focus on a daily basis. If the mind is not clear, meditation won't do anything.

The mental component of raga and dwesha is one aspect. For your own child, there is attachment and attraction which becomes your infatuation. This raga is not observed. Can you eliminate that raga and accept the person as a being with his or her own destiny to live? This raga and dwesha is an ongoing activity in life. You look at a person, there is raga or dwesha. When you look at somebody's face, you like it or you dislike it. You hear somebody speak, you like it or dislike it. There is always raga and dwesha. The mind is continuously going through this process of like and dislike and creating impressions or pratyayas.

Every night these pratyayas have to be removed so that your blackboard is clean in the morning, like in a classroom. Do you keep your blackboard ready for tomorrow? Or do you keep on writing over yesterday's writing and over the writing of the day before yesterday, until eventually nothing can be read on the blackboard of the mind and there is only confusion? Therefore, the mental component is an important aspect and cannot be ignored.

Pranic component

The second component is pranic. Pranic means you give life to something. You can have a discussion with four people, yet if one person says something which does not conform to your ideas and thoughts, that one person will be highlighted out of the four. You will think the person to be an adversary or a person always objecting to what you say. There is the mental component yet there also comes a deep rejection from inside which is pranic. You can feel that prana coming up in form of anger, hate or aggression. At that moment, can you put down the prana and be harmonious and at peace within yourself? No. The removal of prana happens by removing the colour, heat or light.

Mind and prana have to be cleared every night, so that you are fresh in the morning. If there is an old memory, it is not something which is affecting your present as it is in the form of a memory. That memory has a lot of pranic content. When you bring up a memory, remove the colour from it. Let it become black and white. When you bring up a memory, remove the vibrancy, heat and light. If you react, there will be vibrancy. If you detach yourself, it will die. To remove the vibrancy, light, colour and heat, you have to disassociate yourself from that experience which you were not able to do so far. Here the effort has to be made by every aspirant – affirming that you are unaffected by an experience. You are simply a witness to the experience. It does not hold any sway over you anymore. It is a dead picture which can be thrown away. In this manner, working with the mental and the pranic components will help clear a lot of the blocks which you experience within yourself.

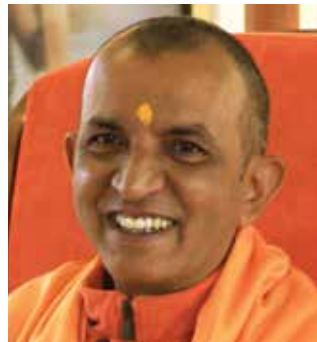
Hatha yoga is for the body and senses, *indriyas*, giving a basic training to understand and experience prana and mind. Raja yoga is more for the mind and pranas deepening the awareness of your deeper layers of consciousness. Hatha yoga and raja yoga become a powerful combination.

Maintaining a good practice of asana along with a good practice of raja yoga will be enough to sustain you for life, and if you are sincere and committed you will progress. To be serious, sincere and committed is the slogan of the second chapter of Bihar School of Yoga.

Previously, there was the slogan, ‘yoga from door to door and shore to shore’, for the propagation of yoga. That slogan does not exist anymore. The new slogan is ‘yoga from moment to moment’, indicating how yoga has to be lived in your day-to-day life from moment to moment. You have received the tools and with the right application of the tools, you will be able to experience the aims that yoga has envisioned for all of us as we progress truthfully on the yogic path.

Notes

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 were the Raja Yoga Yatra 1: Understanding Asana and Pranayama, and Raja Yoga Yatra 2: Understanding Pratyahara, during which the focus was on understanding the asana and pranayama of hatha yoga and placing the practice in the broader context of yoga and spiritual life.

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



ISBN : 978-93-94604-11-7