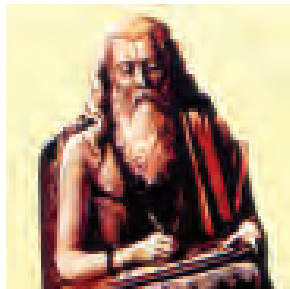


Yoga Chakra

The Wheel of Yoga

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Yoga Chakra

With kind regards, ॐ and prem

Sriani Niranjan

Yoga Chakra

The Wheel of Yoga

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Yoga Publications Trust, Munger, Bihar, India

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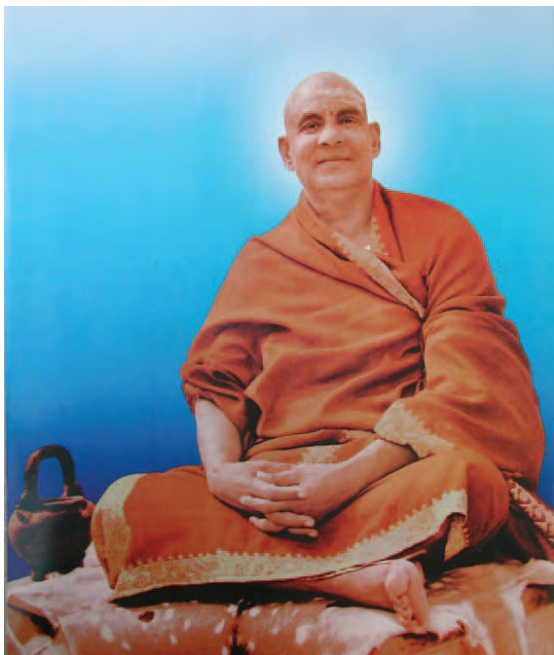
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Dedication

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

Contents

1. History of Yoga	1
2. The New Wave: From Practice to Sadhana	19
3. Dynamic Evolution of Satyananda Yoga–Bihar Yoga	45
4. Hallmarks of Satyananda Yoga–Bihar Yoga	56
5. Living the Ancient Yoga Tradition at the Gurukul	67
6. Three Stages of Yoga Practice	82
7. The Wheel of Satyananda Yoga–Bihar Yoga	89
8. Spokes of the Yoga Wheel – Bahiranga Yoga	102
9. Spokes of the Yoga Wheel – Antaranga Yoga	126
10. Growing Spiritual Vision of Yoga	153

*Such is of the course of deeds that move the wheels of
the world: small hands do them because they must,
while the eyes of the great are elsewhere.*

—J.R.R. Tolkien, *Lord of the Rings*

In August 2014 Swami Niranjan gave a series of lectures to the Yoga Instructor Course students, sannyasins, sannyasa trainees and students of the One-year Diploma in Yogic Studies at Ganga Darshan in which he explained the origin, evolution and expansion of yoga. He shared the unique history of the Satyananda Yoga–Bihar Yoga Tradition, and described the role the new teachers and sannyasins would be taking in the development of its future.

This second edition includes the satsangs given by Swami Niranjan during the ‘Ashram Life Yoga Satsang’ program held at Ganga Darshan in December 2014, during which he elaborated on the Yoga Chakra of the Satyananda Yoga–Bihar Yoga tradition. It also includes talks given by sannyasins of Ganga Darshan during the seminar.

1

History of Yoga

In 2013 the World Yoga Convention was conducted in Munger to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of the Bihar School of Yoga, and this indicated the end of a chapter. The first chapter of the yogic story finished with the World Yoga Convention. Now, after the World Yoga Convention, the second chapter in the history of yoga has started.

In the first chapter of yoga, yoga was seen as a way to improve the quality of the body, mind, emotions, and to learn how to meditate for inner, spiritual experiences. With this idea, the subject of yoga was propagated across the world by different teachers and masters of different traditions, to explore the body, the mind, the emotions, and to have a glimpse into one's spiritual nature. As part of this propagation of yoga, the first-generation teachers focused on bringing the knowledge of yoga to society according to its need at that time. With the culmination of the Convention it was felt that one aspect of yoga propagation was complete and thus the chapter of yoga propagation closed.

During the Convention itself the message was given out that one should now learn to understand yoga, not only practise yoga but understand what yoga can do to a human being, to human nature, to the human personality. In order to understand yoga and its purpose, one has to go back in history and look at the basic foundations of yoga as taught by Swami Sivananda and by Swami Satyananda. This is

what we are attempting to do at Ganga Darshan. After the World Yoga Convention in order to prepare for the next five decades of yoga training and syllabus, the ashram was closed and the teachers and others focused on developing the subject of yoga and its training. The public interaction of the Bihar School of Yoga stopped and we focused on again looking at the principles of yoga and improving those principles. This is an ongoing process that will continue to develop for the next few years, until it has taken a final shape for its new presentation.

After many years of staying in Munger, this year I also started to travel. After completion of my panchagni sadhana in March, the first Yoga Yatra, yogic tour, was held in Mumbai, then in Kolkata, then in Kathmandu, then in Delhi. In this manner, I am gradually travelling out on these yoga journeys to propagate the essence of yoga as taught by the seers of the ancient times. Along with the Yoga Yatras, this year I have also been directly involved in teaching the Yoga Instructor's Course and other courses, so that the yogic learning can be properly geared to suit the requirements that will be coming up in the next few decades. Thus, it has been a good year to rethink the future development and aspirations of yoga: to plan and to create a blueprint for the next fifty years for the next chapter of yogic history.



Yoga is a lifestyle

When looking into the aspects of yoga, certain points were noted down. The first point is, what is yoga? When you hear the word yoga, you conjure up an image in your mind of what yoga is for you. Some people think of a fakir sitting on a bed of nails, meditating, and they believe that is yoga. Some people conjure up the image of a yogi sitting in a cave in the mountains, and they associate that with yoga. Some people see a pictorial representation of kundalini moving up the spine, and they become interested in yoga. Other people go to a yoga studio and do yoga aerobics in front of full-length mirrors. They watch their bodies, observe their posture and believe yoga to be something physical that brings the body into a nice shape.

Each person conjures up an idea or an image about yoga and that is how the identification with yoga begins. There are many ideas, thoughts and images that you create in your mind which define what yoga is for you; however, yoga is not any of these ideas. What then is yoga?

In answering this question we come to the conclusion that yoga is a lifestyle. It is not a practice. It is not even a spiritual sadhana. In reality it is a lifestyle, for once you begin to live yogic principles in your life, there are chances that your perceptions, your interactions, your mind, feelings, sentiments, actions and behaviours will improve. Does this change only happen by practising asana, pranayama, relaxation and meditation, mantra and satsang? Or does this improvement happen when you take responsibility and take charge of your own development and progress in life?

It has been the vision of the seers that each individual has to take charge of their own life. They have to become responsible for their own betterment in life. Medicine can be given, yet if the patient does not take the medicine and simply keeps it in the closet, how is it going to help? You have the medicine in your hand, yet you are not taking it; you are not taking the responsibility. You are not fulfilling your duty to take the medicine to feel better.

Therefore, I see yoga as a lifestyle when you begin to incorporate little principles of yoga in your daily routine and better the daily routine. You incorporate little principles of yoga into your behaviour and better the behaviour; you incorporate a little bit of relaxation and concentration to better manage your stressors and anxieties in life. The moment you begin to bring yogic components into your daily routine, yoga takes the form of a lifestyle. If you think that yoga is to be practised only in a class by moving your body, manipulating the breath, relaxing and meditating, then yoga can never become part of the lifestyle.

Thus, the answer to the question ‘What is yoga?’ is that it is a lifestyle to regulate the behaviour of body, mind and emotions. It is a lifestyle to cultivate the qualities or the faculties of the head, heart and hands. That is the definition of yoga.

Historical roots of yoga

What is the historical truth of this yoga? Was yoga intended for self-realization? Was yoga intended for spiritual emancipation? Or was there a definite purpose to yoga? To know the purpose of yoga, you have to go back in history. In the ancient times, yoga was seen as a form of personal discipline. Different people from various ages, who today are known as masters or sages, each developed a branch of yoga. About five thousand years ago, Patanjali perfected an aspect of yoga – the mental aspect of yoga – and wrote a thesis on the subject: the *Yoga Sutras*.

Credit goes to Patanjali for writing the dissertation on raja yoga, and credit goes to Swatmarama and Gheranda for writing the dissertations on hatha yoga. Credit goes to Shandilya and Narada for writing their theses on bhakti yoga. They all maintained, however, that their work was a continuation from a prior thought. No yoga was ever seen as complete in itself; rather, each aspect of yoga complemented the other. Thus, in ancient times the sages linked their teachings, created a sequence, and developed these systems of yoga.

Yoga as a subject, though, predates the time period of these masters. Patanjali is not the founder or creator of yoga and neither is anyone else from the ancient period who wrote on yoga, since the subject of yoga existed long before them. These people simply did their doctorate theses on different subjects of yoga, which predated them by many millennia. References to yoga are found in scriptures and in histories that predate even Krishna and Rama and go into an earlier age, that of Satya Yuga.

Salutations to the original yogi

Who started yoga if not these people? The answer is given in tantra, which states that Shiva is the first propagator of yoga, and while he was describing yoga to his disciple, Parvati, other beings heard the teachings. These beings became the medium to bring the yogic teachings of Shiva to earth. Before Patanjali, Swatmarama and Gheranda, there was an existing tradition of masters starting with



Parvati and Shiva

Shiva, who brought the teachings of yoga to human society. Exactly when that was, we do not know. What we do know is that yoga existed in many of the ancient cultures and civilizations of the world.

Preservation of a universal culture

In the 1970s I undertook research on the pre-Columbian cultures of Central and South America: the Aztecs, the Incas, the Chibchas and the Mayans. Through research I discovered a lot of yoga-related evidence. In their sacred book, which is known as *Popol Vuh*, you find references to yogasanas,



Pre-Columbian statue

yoga pranayamas and the chakras. You see the images and the symbols: the triangle, the Shivalingam, the serpent coiled around the stone, the serpent ascending the spine. There are the practices of shatkarmas: trataka, nauli, the practice of kunjla. There are the postures: shoulder stand, scorpion pose, headstand, thunderbolt pose.

One finds so many yoga references: to asana, pranayama, mudra, bandha and meditation; and not only liter-

al references, but also statues now found in the reserves and museums which have been carbon-dated to 2,000 and 3,000 BC. These statues depict perfect yoga postures. Similar findings were made in the old cultures of the Scandinavian countries and in the old cultures of Africa. From all this evidence, it seems that once upon a time yoga was a global practice, system and culture. It was not confined only to India.

It is speculated that due to geological changes, climatic changes, tribal wars, invasions and migrations, many of these practices were lost; however, they were preserved by the Asian nations, which have retained remnants of the yogic tradition in their cultures even today. After a gap of many years the present revival of yoga took place from India, and therefore today yoga is seen as coming from India.

In India, yoga was protected by and associated with a specific group of people: the renunciates, the recluses, the sannyasins. The sannyasins preserved the knowledge and the tradition, and so yoga became tagged with them and people believed that they used yoga for enlightenment, for self-realization, and for awakening the dormant faculties.

It was from this point onwards that the global society began to conjure up an image of yoga in their minds. More specifically when the British came to India and encountered yoga, they saw people like me in one dhoti and said, “Oh, a fakir . . .” The association of yoga with ‘fakirism’ is a prominent idea today in the West due to the influence of the British notion that yoga is for renunciates and sannyasins seeking salvation, and is a part of the Indian religion, culture and belief system. As the British were the rulers, their mandates, writings and books were widely read and everybody held that opinion, although the British had no exposure to the culture and the traditions of India.

Yoga’s three age imprints: early, middle, present

Yoga can be divided into three, distinct periods. The early period was the period of Shiva, Dattatreya, Vasishtha, Vishwamitra, Matsyendranath and Gorakhnath. The Nath *sampradaya*, tradition or sect, came out of this early period. They were the early propagators of hatha yoga, raja yoga, kriya yoga and kundalini yoga. Although they were the propagators of all yogas, they focused more on physical discipline, on hatha yoga. That is the ‘early period’.

The ‘middle period’ is the period of Patanjali, Gheranda, Swatmarama, and so on, who are the points of reference for today’s myriad of yoga practices. The middle period of Patanjali, Swatmarama and Gheranda has also delivered their classical texts and books, which we refer to today.

The late period is the present age, the last hundred years, when yoga re-emerged. These are the three age imprints in the life of yoga. The three time-stamps on yoga are: the early



Yogi Gorakhnath

period, Shiva's time; the middle period, the time of Patanjali and others; the present period, the last hundred years of the re-emergence.

EARLY PERIOD OF YOGA



Shiva teaches Parvati

What was the aim of yoga in the early period? Shiva begins his teaching of yoga when Parvati asks him the question, "There is a lot of suffering in the world. How can it be ended?" Tantra and yoga emerged at Shiva's time to help alleviate suffering.

How was suffering defined in this early period? If you look at the scriptures, the sufferings defined in the early age are more mental and psychic, and less physical. Shiva said there are three kinds of suffering in the world: *adhyatmika*, *adhibhautika*, *adhidaivika*.

Adhidaivika means the suffering that is destined. Your understanding of life is only after you have taken birth until the point when you die, and you have no understanding of what happens before or what happens after. This journey from birth to death is known as life, and this body, this entire creation, is made up of the combination and permutation of the five elements. Sentient and insentient life both exist due to the five elements.

These five elements are conditioned. They have their own nature, limitations and areas of function, and when they come together they come with these traits, which become destined. When the five *tattwas* become imbalanced they lead to disease. Many times you are unable to manage your sicknesses. They are not due to your imbalances in life, your routine or lifestyle, rather, they are due to genetics; they

are inherited. From where did you inherit these sicknesses? You say from your forefathers. Then from where did your forefathers inherit them? From imbalanced tattwas. These imbalanced tattwas exist in you in the form of a gene, and that is a cause of suffering. Thus, destiny is a cause of suffering. Karma is another cause of suffering. Those causes of suffering that cannot be controlled are known as *adhidaivika* or destined suffering.

Another type of suffering is known as *adhibhautika*, the suffering that comes from your environment and from your society. Natural calamities give birth to plagues and other factors that create suffering, both personal and social. That is the second kind of suffering.

The third kind of suffering is self-generated and is known as *adhyatmika*: individual stress and tension; the mind and the emotions; the expectations, desires, passions, greed, envy, jealousy, ego. Yoga at the time of Shiva was a means to overcome these chronic imbalances and sufferings that restrict the creative expression of human life, the aim of yoga was not self-realization, it was overcoming human suffering.

Thus, the first teacher of yoga was Lord Shiva. The yoga that he taught to Parvati was known as Pashupata yoga. Shiva's teaching of Pashupata yoga was the first foundation of the yogic culture and tradition, which developed over a period of time. What is the meaning of the word Pashupata? *Pashu* means animal and *pat* is an abbreviated form of *pati*, which means master. Therefore one definition of *Pashupata* yoga is to become master of the animals that run wild in our life. Pashupata yoga is the yoga that leads to mastery over the lower, demonical, animalistic, tamasic tendencies of life and establishes one in the state of purity, *sattwa*. That is one definition of the word *pashupati*: one who has attained mastery over animals. The vrittis and individual tendencies are seen as uncontrolled and wild animals, each one having its own separate, tamasic, limiting characteristic.

There is a second definition of *Pashupata*. *Paash* is a noose like the lasso; once somebody is lassoed they are

held. *Pati* or *pat* is to free oneself, to extract oneself from bondage. So paashupata and pashupata are both used in this yogic description: to free oneself from the bondage, or to overcome the wild human nature.

In Pashupata yoga, five branches of yogas developed and were taught. The first was mantra yoga, the science of mantras. The second was sparsha yoga. The third was bhava yoga. The fourth was abhava yoga. And the fifth was maha yoga. Other sages such as Dattatreya, Matsyendranath, Vasishtha and Narada learned Pashupata yoga and propagated it. In the early days, the training of yoga was through the oral tradition. There were no computers, no typewriters, no ballpoint pens, no writing paper. Even today these things are not necessary in comparison to the ability of the human brain. They are inventions of human ingenuity, however, in the early days, the teaching was oral.

All the basic foundations of yoga were created in the Pashupata system of yoga. Everything that was conceived in these five components of yoga was seen as the complete form of yoga during the early period.

MIDDLE PERIOD OF YOGA

Next comes the middle period, which is the time of Patanjali, Gheranda and Swatmarama. They did their dissertations on what you know as hatha yoga and raja yoga. The names of the yogas that you know today have been given by this middle group of sages. The name of the original yoga was Pashupata yoga. That was the first and original yoga by Shiva. The five sub-yogas of Pashupata yoga – mantra yoga, sparsha yoga, bhava yoga, abhava yoga, and maha yoga – were the original yogas that later on were further compartmentalized and given different names by this second group of masters: raja yoga, karma yoga, bhakti yoga, jnana yoga, hatha yoga, kriya yoga, kundalini yoga.

This is the period when Swatmarama, Patanjali, Gheranda and other sages wrote their theses on the subject

of yoga. In this middle period the oral traditions that had continued over the ages formed into different schools of learning and training. These different schools that were run by the rishis developed the subject in a fashion and a manner that was based on their observations and understanding of nature and human society.

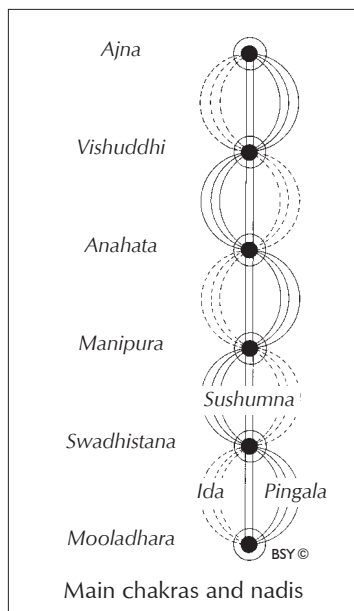
From all the five components of Pashupata yoga, which everybody used to practise as it was the most common form of yoga at that time, these different schools adopted and developed other different forms of yoga. For example, the first two components of the Pashupata system, that is, mantra yoga and sparsha yoga, became mantra yoga, hatha yoga, raja yoga and kundalini yoga. They were subdivided according to the theme that was being taken up by the different seers. Bhava yoga became bhakti yoga, abhava yoga became jnana yoga, and maha yoga became the yogic expression. Thus, these five yogas evolved into many sub-yogas, which became the dissertations of the different rishis. Patanjali wrote his thesis on raja yoga and propagated the subject of raja yoga. Swatmarama and Gheranda developed and propagated the subject of hatha yoga. Sages Narada and Shandiliya developed and propagated the practice and principles of bhakti yoga. Other sages also propagated either a theory or a practice; there are twenty-two Yoga Upanishads that were written in this period, indicating twenty-two different authors, thinkers and seers who wrote their thoughts on yoga. For example, there is the *Yoga Chudamani Upanishad*, which describes the yogic process related to kundalini and chakras. There is the *Hamsa Upanishad*, which speaks only of ajapa and the dharana practice, and the benefits of meditation as concentration in the form of pratyahara and dharana.

In this manner, many people contributed to the development of the yogic tradition. There was also a blend of the vedic and upanishadic philosophy with the yogic philosophy when the Yoga Upanishads were written down. Thus, there is a confluence of vedic and upanishadic

structure in yoga. There is also a blend of the tantric structure in yoga, and both have coexisted. It was this middle period that gave birth to much of the literature that is used today in our teaching and learning.

As it always happens, there was also a need to write down the teachings to maintain the purity and the essence of those teachings. In the oral tradition many times there is a Chinese whispers effect: you say something and the other person understands it differently. If ten people were to sit down and whisper one sentence in the ear of their neighbour, by the time it comes back to the original speaker the sentence is totally distorted. When the rishis noticed that this was happening and that there was a distortion of the teachings in the oral tradition, they decided that in order to maintain the purity and the sanctity of this tradition the thoughts and ideas had to be written down. This became the literature and the scriptures that aid us today.

Creating balance with hatha yoga



In this middle period, the focus of yoga was balancing the pranic and the mental behaviour. That is how hatha yoga is defined by Swatmarama and Gheranda. Hatha yoga is a system to balance the forces of *ida* and *pingala*, the lunar and the solar forces; the sympathetic and parasympathetic forces. The present hatha yoga system is of Gheranda and Swatmarama, which has dynamic asanas, pranayamas, mudras, bandhas and shatkarmas. These five aspects constitute hatha yoga. Hatha yoga is not only asana;

asana is only one-fifth of hatha yoga, while four-fifths of hatha yoga is pranayama, mudra, bandha and shatkarma. The purpose of hatha yoga is to realign the energy system, as it is believed that imbalance in these two energies creates illness in the body and in the mind.

They also set the foundation for yoga therapy. Gheranda defines disease as the ‘absence of ease from the body’. When the ease, comfort and harmony of the body are gone or disturbed, then that state or condition is known as dis-ease, disturbed ease: disease. In the classical literature on hatha yoga you will read statements like, ‘This asana is beneficial for removal of this ailment. This asana is beneficial for managing this disease. This asana is useful in curing this illness.’ The sages are clear and specific about it. These yogis experimented and discovered that by managing the flow of ida and pingala through hatha yoga practices, you can overcome different kinds of physical and psychological ailments and diseases. The asanas have a particular effect on the body and help to eradicate illness and disease by realigning the ida and pingala forces. This is how the first concept of yoga therapy emerged.

Patanjali’s exposition on yoga

Then the next progression was made into raja yoga, into Patanjali’s system. After you have worked through your body, work through your mind. What is the focus of Patanjali’s system of mind management? He does not say that in order to manage your mind you must attain samadhi, practise pranayama or practise asana. He says that in order to manage your mind, you must be a witness to the mind. His statement is, “To manage the mind, observe the mind.” He emphasizes the aspect of *drashta*: observation, awareness and alertness to what is happening, what is transpiring inside the head. He emphasizes the management of *vrittis*, the modifications of mind, and says that yoga is managing the different vrittis. That is his emphasis, not samadhi, like many writers believe and state.

The yoga of Patanjali does not end in samadhi; samadhi is only one stage of yoga. It is an experience of yoga, just as asana is one experience of yoga. Pranayama is one experience of yoga. Ajapa japa is one experience of yoga. Yoga nidra is another experience of yoga, and in the same manner, samadhi is an experience of yoga. It is not the finality of yoga. For Patanjali, yoga is a discipline and this idea is summarized in the first three statements of the *Yoga Sutas*. Disciples ask him, “What is yoga?”

Patanjali says, “Yoga is a form of discipline.” Sutra number one: *Atha yoga anushasanam*. Of course commentators have explained this sutra in different ways, but the point is that the discipline inherent in yoga is being referred to.

“What will happen with this discipline?”

“You will get control over the fluctuations of your mind.” Sutra number two: *Yogah chitta vritti nirodhah*.

“What will happen when you have control over the mind?”

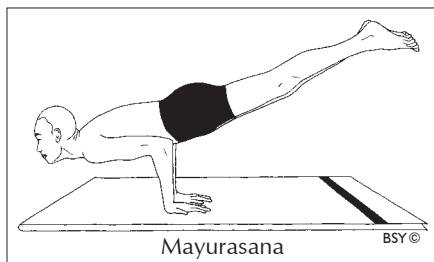
“When you have managed the upheavals of the mind you shall become the observer and realize your true nature; the peaceful, harmonious and joyous nature” – *Tada drashtuh svarupe avasthanam*. The third sutra.

Patanjali defines his understanding of yoga in these first three sutras, and the rest of the sutras are then the practices to help you to observe yourself. Patanjali places yama and niyama first. His emphasis does not begin with physical postures or breathing practices; his emphasis begins with behaviour. Start to observe and modify your behaviour. Learn to restrain your senses and mind from creating disturbances and wreaking havoc in your life. For this, yama and niyama have to be practised.

While you are managing the behaviours, the characteristics and habits of your mind, you also organize your body by becoming fixed, stable, and comfortable in any posture that you are in; that is the asana of Patanjali. In the *Yoga Sutas*, asana is defined as a posture in which you can remain

steady and comfortable for an extended period of time without movement.

When you are sitting quietly and comfortably, that is Patanjali's asana. If you sit on a chair or on the floor without fidgeting, being comfortable and still, for half an hour, twenty minutes, fifteen minutes or even ten minutes, that is asana. If you are in headstand and you stay there for five minutes or ten minutes, that is asana. If you are in *mayurasana*, peacock pose, stay there, be comfortable and steady in that posture for half an hour, that is asana.



Sri Swamiji made us understand this when he taught us in the early sixties. He used to make us do asanas in sequence, and we had to stay in one pose until he corrected each person's posture. From the time he started going around making the corrections until the time he finished it would be half an hour, and we had to stay in the asana; and we did it! We were young, we were inspired and we liked the challenge, therefore we did it. That is how Sri Swamiji's first disciples realized that even if you are standing on one little finger, if you can be comfortable and still for ten minutes, you can meditate. That is the asana of Patanjali. Patanjali's focus was not on exercise. His focus was on stillness, to stimulate mental stability and concentration.

It is the same principle with pranayama. Patanjali says that inhalation is one type of pranayama; exhalation is the second type of pranayama; and holding the breath is the third type of pranayama. According to him, the normal breath is pranayama and you do not have to breathe through your nostrils alternately or go through all the heavy breathing exercises.

From behaviour and character management he immediately shifts to stability of body, brain and mind, then to pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi. Out of the eight

stages of Patanjali's yoga, six are purely attitudinal and mental, and only two are aids to give you stability, firmness and concentration. Patanjali was not a hatha yoga teacher, but predominantly a meditation teacher.

Shandilya's bhakti yoga

Shandilya defines bhakti yoga as a means to manage one's emotions, not as devotion, rather as a scientific method of balancing the emotions. The word *bhakti* means devotion, but not bhakti yoga; they are two different things. As bhakti is devotion, people confuse bhakti yoga to be the yoga of devotion. It is not the yoga of devotion; it is the yoga of emotion. Just as raja yoga is the yoga of mind, bhakti yoga is the yoga of emotion.

There are nine stages of bhakti yoga, just as in raja yoga there are eight stages and in hatha yoga there are five stages. Going through each of bhakti yoga's nine stages allows you to observe your emotional behaviours and expressions, and then harmonize, channel, transcend, transform and sublimate them.

In the middle age, yoga developed as a means to manage the imbalances of the body, which are rooted first in overcoming physical suffering, and then developing the creative faculties of mind and harmonizing the emotions.

Inner and outer yoga

Yoga was further divided into two different categories during this middle period, *bahiranga yoga* and *antaranga yoga*.

Bahiranga yoga is the yoga that is practised externally; *bahiranga* means outer, external. Hatha yoga, raja yoga and kriya yoga are included in *bahiranga yoga*; these are the yogas in which you take up specific practices and try to perfect them in order to attain harmony in body, prana, mind and psyche, and experience the effulgence of the spirit.

Antaranga means internal, and *antaranga yoga* is the internal yoga. It is the internal aspect of yoga which allows you to observe and change yourself. It is attitudinal

yoga through which you change your inner environment, your mentality, your outlook. You find your expression of creativity and the aim of life. Karma yoga, jnana yoga and bhakti yoga are all part of antaranga yoga, the internal effort of yoga which has to be acquired. Once you have perfected the outer yogas, then your social living needs to be guided by yogic principles, and that is where the inner yogas become valuable.

CONCLUSION

In all the aspects from the early period to the middle period, yoga was never seen as a practice but always as a lifestyle. Yoga was seen from the perspective of what the sequence of progression should be in order to eradicate suffering, pain and limitations.

The teaching of yoga in Pashupata yoga begins with some questions: “What is suffering? How one can overcome suffering? How can one attain peace and creativity?” These were the questions that Parvati asked Shiva. The entire subject of yoga, as told by Shiva to Parvati, was solely for the eradication of suffering and attainment of peace.

The subsequent development in yoga indicated that the aim was to improve the distorted behaviour and the imbalance in the human personality. Therefore hatha yoga clearly says that the balance of the solar and the lunar forces brings about wellbeing and health to the body and mind. It is the mandate of hatha yoga to balance and regulate these two forces. The mandate of raja yoga is to control the distracted and dissipated vrittis of the mind.

In a similar manner, each branch of yoga has a specific mandate and aim. If you look at the mandate of these different yogas, nowhere does it say that the practice of this yoga will give you enlightenment. Only speakers and orators say that in order to create a philosophy. Nowhere in the yogic literature has it been said that the practice of yoga will give you moksha, emancipation, God-realization

or self-realization. In the early and middle periods of yoga, self-realization was not the aim of yoga. Rather, the aim of yoga was the betterment of life and a qualitative attainment in life. Nowhere is the word 'realization' mentioned.

The concept of divinity or God, as understood from the religious perspective, does not exist in the yogic literature. God is simply defined as 'Ishwara' with special attributes and qualities which you have to discover on your own. Thus, in yogic belief and principles there is no concept of God in the terms that you believe God to be. If that idea does not exist, then from where does the idea of self-realization or God-realization emerge? The attempt of yoga is to take you through the process to experience your own purity and luminosity. Therefore it should be clear that each yoga has a mandate; samadhi is not the end of raja yoga, it is a practice of raja yoga. All the practices of ashtanga yoga – yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi – have only one purpose, *yogah chitta vritti nirodhah*. Samadhi indicates a deep meditative state where you experience your own luminosity and peace, and while you are experiencing that you are also managing your mind; both states coexist. Samadhi is not illumination, and it is not as if after the experience of samadhi everything is seen from a different perspective. It is the experience of luminosity and peace, and when you open your eyes you are back again in the world where you have to sustain and maintain that experience.

These are important points of yoga which people miss. The focus of the yogic tradition is on overcoming suffering, pain and crisis in life, and to become established in the experience of peace, creativity and harmony. This has been seen in the continuation of the teachings, right from Shiva until now and in the middle period as well.

2

The New Wave: from Practice to Sadhana

The early period of yoga was dominated by the teachings of Lord Shiva. In the early period, the propagators of yoga were either people who had heard the teachings of yoga directly, or who were later considered to be incarnations of Shiva. They were followers of Pashupata yoga, the original yoga propounded by Shiva.

Pashupata yoga in its original form comprised of five different sub-yogas. The first was mantra yoga, and it appears that in the middle period concepts of mantra yoga and raja yoga evolved from the original mantra yoga of the Pashupata system. The second sub-yoga of the Pashupata system was sparsha yoga, which led to the development of hatha yoga and kundalini yoga in the middle period. The third was bhava yoga, which became bhakti yoga in the middle period. The fourth was abhava yoga, which became jnana yoga, establishment in the higher truth as a form of higher realization, higher identification and absorption in that state. The fifth was maha yoga, the expressive yoga which put together all the four aspects into creative expression.

Then there was a gap of time while people practised and perfected the Pashupata yoga. A renaissance took place in the middle period. The advancements of these sadhanas were written down as experiences, realizations and observations of the seers' understanding, during the upanishadic time when disciples would go to a *gurukul*,

place of the guru, to learn and acquire knowledge. In the collection of the Upanishads, there are twenty-two that deal specifically with the subject of yoga. They talk of kundalini, chakras, pranayama, mudra, bandha, asana, yama and niyama. According to these texts there are many yamas and niyamas. There are over thirty-six yamas and thirty-six niyamas defined by the sages to their disciples in the Yoga Upanishads.

In the middle period of yoga a tradition developed of spiritual aspirants, spiritual discoverers and spiritual travellers. Out of this group emerged Patanjali, Gheranda, Swatmarama and other yogis including Shandilya and Narada, who each wrote a thesis on a specific aspect of yoga. This became the trend. Thus, the original yoga of Shiva's time was further elaborated upon by the sages, seers and aspirants of the middle period, and that is how the practice of yoga has been retained till today.

Contemporary yoga pioneers arise

The emergence of yoga in the present age, the third timeline of yoga, begins in the nineteenth century and continues into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Initially, this was the period when the British came to India and gradually started to rule the country. During their governance they came across a group of people who were different from the normal social groups; they wore a dhoti and an angavastra, had shaved heads or had long, matted hair; there were some with just a loincloth on the body, or they were people like us who were alien to the British mentality, ideology, culture, society and civilization. We the sannyasins and sadhus were labelled by the British as 'the fakirs', and India was perceived as the land of fakirs, all engaged in practising physical contortions: one leg tied here, one arm there, standing on one leg or doing something else that appeared unusual to these people. That was the image of the yogic and the sannyasin tradition which became commonly known in the West, as the British had control of information and technology.

Out of this group of fakirs emerged some who were able to integrate and talk about the tradition in a language that the outsiders could understand. One of the first to emerge in this manner was Swami Vivekananda, who spoke on raja yoga, karma yoga, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga in the form of philosophy and theory.

During this period, a tradition of competent spiritual aspirants emerged who were associated with a remote Himalayan yogi called Babaji. These people became the advocates of Babaji's teachings: Sri Yukteshwar, Lahiri Mahashaya and Paramahansa Yogananda. Around this same period came Ramana Maharshi and Anandamayi Ma. Ramana Maharshi followed the path of jnana yoga and Anandamayi Ma followed the path of bhakti yoga. The original information about yoga was confined to the theories of hatha yoga, raja yoga, karma yoga, jnana yoga, and the teachings of kriya yoga, which first emerged due to Paramahansa Yogananda in the lineage of Babaji.

Around the 1920s and 1930s, another tradition evolved from the South, from the kingdom of Mysore, where yoga-sana was taught to army men, using different types of props. That tradition was revived by Krishnamacharya and was carried forward by Desikachar and Sri Iyengar. They became the hatha yoga trainers, and they used the props that were used in the army of the Mysore kingdom for stretching the body and for coming into specific postures.

At the same time, in the late 1920s, Swami Sivananda went to Rishikesh and started to explore the other forms of classical yogas. In the course of time he established his institution, the Divine Life Society, and in the thirties and forties he started training his disciples in yoga. After training his disciples he told them to go out into the country, into the world, and disseminate yoga.

In the fifties and sixties, the disciples of Swami Sivananda travelled. Swami Satchidananda, the founder of Integral Yoga Institute in the US, was sent to Colombo, Sri Lanka, and from there to New York. He started teaching hatha



Swami Sivananda and his disciples practising nauli

yoga and raja yoga as an integral yoga system. Swami Vishnudevananda was sent to Germany, and after spending years in Germany he went to New York and then to Canada, where he established his centre and became a strong propagator of hatha yoga. Similarly, Swami Venkatesananda went to Australia, New Zealand and Mauritius, and became an exponent of raja yoga. Swami Sahajananda went to South Africa and started teaching hatha yoga and bhakti yoga. In this manner, the different disciples of Swami Sivananda took yoga wherever they went, according to their understanding and sadhana. The theory Swami Sivananda gave them was that yoga should integrate the faculties of head, heart and hands, and that became their focus.

Impact of information technology on human nature

In the age of Shiva, in the early timeline, yoga was used to manage and deal with self-generated, environmental, and destined suffering. In the second period, the middle period, yoga developed as a way to integrate human nature and the personality, and lead one to a deeper and higher realization of one's own potential. Yoga during this period was a means to develop the creative skills and abilities of the psyche, emotions and mind, leading to an enhanced or enlightened level of existence. This same idea was carried forward in the present day and age by Swami Sivananda, though in a more

practical form. Today, people need to awaken and integrate the faculties of the head, the heart, and the hands, and these faculties can only be awakened if there is a true inclination and yearning to open oneself. Until this happens all yoga remains merely intellectual understanding or knowledge; it does not become experience.

We must look at our society, at the present time and age, and the upbringing of the new generation. The youth in their twenties are gradually coming into the mainstream of life. What in their background helps them to find their niche and their comfort zone in life? Does technology aid human development and growth, or does it hamper and restrict human creativity?

I travel to different places, and when I go to the beach to see the water and the sunset, I see the youth sitting there, looking at their mobiles and sending Facebook messages. Hardly anybody is looking at the beach or the sunset. Sometimes they say, “Swamiji, come, let us go to see the town at night.” Six or eight people cram into a car, and I am the only one looking out the window, while the others are busy with their mobiles. We go to a restaurant, I am waiting for food, and the others are sending messages to their friends and writing on Facebook. There is no real communication.

These are bright young people with a lot of potential, energy and intelligence, however, the personal culture in their life is such that they are not sincere, they are not serious, they are not committed. Even when such people come to sannyasa, they reflect the absence of these three qualities.

Fractured mentality of hidden files

Observe the current situation of computer operators in the world, and the companies and industries in the world where computers are being used. I have asked people some questions: What do you do in your industry? What happens in your industry? What happens in your office? What happens in your area? They say, “Swamiji, there has



been a seesaw change in the last two, three, four years, in people who come to our offices now, and we have had to cut all social media feedback from our offices. No computer has YouTube, Facebook or Gmail. Today everybody expects that when they go to an office they will use the office for their personal work and not for the official work.” That is the tendency today.

On the screen they will have something official, yet privately they are doing something else, hiding it in folders and keeping it secret. This indicates the state of mind and disloyalty within each individual. That is how each one builds up their own hidden agendas in life. This is a behaviour trait; it is a character trait. There is no loyalty, understanding, connection, or feeling. Everything is manipulation. On the surface, the screen shows the work is being done, yet secretly, different things are being downloaded. Different situations are being enacted, which all ride piggyback on the organization.

This indicates people’s mentality and mindset today. Even in your personal life, all of you, in one way or the other, have many hidden folders which only you can access. When there were no computers, you had to hide it in your mind; then it was called suppression. When you hide it under layers of other things within your mind, this is called ‘suppression’, and it was once identified as a mental illness. You need to remove the blockages and to open up. As long as there is one hidden file, there will always be a problem in life.

On the one hand, your desired and expected inclination is to attain spiritual awareness, yet on the other hand the natural inclination is to hold on to what makes you an individual, unable to let go: ‘I can’t give my password, I

can't give my this. I can't give my that!' When you hold on to these hidden folders that represent 'you', your individuality, where is your sincerity, commitment and seriousness? Your intentions contradict your actions, which is hypocrisy. Even the brightest people fall into the trap of their ambitions, and that limits their progress and growth in life.

This is where integrating the faculties of head, heart and hands plays a major role. You must integrate them with seriousness, sincerity, and commitment – and with loyalty. Otherwise what connection is there? Even for a sannyasin there is no connection with a guru if there is no loyalty. Today such people, who have hidden files, hide things from their gurus and are more loyal to their friends who aid them and abet them in their actions. That is the reality, and it results in splits in families, organizations and in society, in turn creating imbalances, strife, confusion, separation, disturbance, anxiety, phobias and distance. Many complain of work pressure, yet this is the actual pressure of life that you must confront. These are the situations of life, and change can only happen if there is a personal desire to improve.

True vision of yoga: integrating head, heart, hands

The vision of Swami Sivananda and of Swami Satyananda is to live yoga in its true spirit and nature. The idea that Swami Sivananda gave on yoga is to cultivate the faculties of head, heart and hands, which combines the principles of every aspect of yoga.

There are different needs of the human personality and nature. You cannot cater to the whims of the mind all the time. Just as a wild animal has to be tamed, restrained and brought under control, at some point in life you have to restrain your wild ambitions and aspirations to discover the balance, peace and creativity within. In order to appreciate life you have to construct a qualitative life that connects you with the beauty, the *sundaram*; the good and the bountiful, the *shivam*; and the eternally existing that does not change, which is the need of each and every one, the *satyam*. Swami



Sivananda saw yoga practices as a means to integrate and awaken the faculties of the head, heart and hands, and as a means to develop a different state of mind, one in which you are connected to the purity of your self and not identified with the distorted visions of life as given by the ego, ambitions and the senses.

Ego, desires and senses are the three problem areas of each individual's life; in everybody's life, the senses, the desires and

the ego all play a major role. The purpose of sadhana is to harmonize the senses. The purpose of sadhana is to identify the desires and the practicality, reality and actuality of them, and then to use the strength of ego to realize one's Self.

Are you only a desire? You say, 'I am spirit', yet you behave like a desire. There is nothing of spirit in it. There is no logic or understanding; there is only desire. In your life, you live desire, you live the ego and you live the senses. This is how you interact with people, with the environment and with the world, and spirituality is only a concept which you want to learn. Sri Swamiji always said, "Where have you learnt hatred? Where have you learnt jealousy? Where have you learnt aggression? Where have you learnt envy?" They are natural expressions in your life. When you are connected to negativity, then the negative expressions become natural.

You want to learn how to be kind and compassionate, sympathetic and sincere. This has to be a natural expression in life. When you are connected to positivity, the positive actions should become natural, yet it does not happen. Sri Krishna says in the *Bhagavad Gita* that it is easy to have the idea that 'I can be good', however, it is difficult to actually be good. You can believe you are good and hypnotize yourself,

thinking, 'I am good, I am good, I am good'. However, what is your bar, what is your parameter, what are your qualifications for being good? Nobody can become good until he or she connects with the positive, creative forces of life.

Swami Sivananda says that just as you make a vegetable tasty, you have to make yoga tasty. You cannot have one kilo of salt in one litre of water, with one kilo of potatoes, one kilo of tomatoes, one kilo of brinjal, one kilo of condiments and expect a nice tasting vegetable. It has to be prepared in ratios: a pinch of salt and a pot of water, a spoonful of masalas and the vegetable. For everything there is a ratio; in yoga too there is a ratio. You cannot practise one hour of asana, one hour of meditation, one hour of yoga nidra and one hour of pranayama.

Yoga must be practised in different ratios, from a pinch to a kilo. If you practise asana for one hour, practise serenity for five minutes every day. If you practise pranayama for twenty minutes, practise satya for ten minutes every day. If you meditate for one hour, bring the peace from your meditation into your active life for at least five minutes every day. A pinch, a few spoonsful, a litre, a bucketful; the combination has to be appropriate. You will see that in a short time the vegetable becomes enjoyable and tasty. People who come to this stage live yoga naturally all the time, without any effort.

From shore to shore to mushrooming of yoga

During this present age period, Swami Satyananda the crown disciple of Swami Sivananda, received the mandate to teach yoga, to take yoga 'from door to door and shore to shore'. Sri Swamiji did not immediately start his mission like others do. He travelled for nine years to assess the needs of society and to decide on the best way to disseminate the teachings of yoga. He came to the conclusion that yoga should not be taught just as a physical practice, rather as a system to enhance the beauty and the harmony of life. In 1963 he established the Bihar School of Yoga (BSY), and that is when our work started.



Early Bihar School of Yoga

Fifty years have passed, and I have had the opportunity to see the first generation of yoga teachers, the second-generation yoga teachers, and to see the mushrooming of yoga teachers. The first generation were people who propagated yoga and conveyed the real knowledge of yoga. The second generation passed on the teachings of their masters and carried the essence forward. Then, when the mushrooming happened, there was a decline in the appreciation of yoga.

Yoga in Europe in the 1960s was leotard yoga: males and females both in leotards, practising dynamic yoga, propagating hatha yoga for trimming the waistline and beautifying the body. The exotic Indian culture had become popular, and all the models of the sixties would wear leotards and 'do yoga', and that is how people were attracted to yoga. Such people were also in Australia in the 1960s, yet there was also an interest in classical yoga there.

Some good teachers and good gurus migrated to the US, the 'land of opportunity', and soon the US became the supermarket of gurus. Even today it is a supermarket of gurus, with many local gurus there. In the 1980s when I was in the US, we were the imported gurus. Now, thousands of local gurus have become overnight prophets with their eyes on profit. This has happened everywhere, and it has brought about a change in how people view yoga.

Yoga research reveals hidden potential

In the 1960s, yoga was seen as a physical culture. In the 1970s, it was seen as a way to overcome stress, anxiety and tension, to focus, to concentrate, and to acquire autonomic control over the body functions. Many sannyasins and yogis were tested to see if they had any type of control over the autonomic body functions. Swami Rama of the Himalaya Institute was tested and he was able to voluntarily stop his heart for a period of eleven minutes, and then again restart it. Swami Nadabrahmananda was able to hold his breath for one hour, which is an impossible feat. I was also tested. By doing a simple meditation I was able to stop my brainwaves. Joe Kamia, leader in alpha research, was my researcher in San Francisco, and he could not believe that somebody could stop their brainwaves. In this way, this second generation of teachers contributed their bit to investigate and demonstrate what is possible and what is not possible.



Swami Niranjanananda
participating in research

In this same period, the USSR and other Communist countries conducted a series of psychic research which was later published in the book, *Psychic Discoveries behind the Iron Curtain*. It was a groundbreaking book, since they were using techniques of yoga, meditation, relaxation and concentration to enhance ESP ability. Research indicated a latent power inherent in every person and in every created form, whether it is a rabbit, a cat, a dog, or a human being. We can communicate telepathically with each other; we can have clairvoyance and clairaudience, and these faculties are awakened by going through the processes of mental training. Sometime later, further research came out of Europe and the US, which presented studies on people who had attempted

to awaken their kundalini and chakras and to explore the hidden dimensions.

Rainbow hippies and the craze for self-realization



Swami Satyananda with Swami Satchidananda, New York, 1968

This was also the period when drugs like LSD came out; the Woodstock Festival and the hippie movement started. What people do not know is that the inaugurators of the Woodstock Festival in 1968 were two sannyasins: one was Swami Satchidananda of the Integral Yoga Insti-

tute in the US, and the other was Swami Satyananda of the Bihar School of Yoga, Munger. Maharishi Mahesh Yogi was the guru of The Beatles at that time, and George Harrison sang the kirtan *Bhajo Radhe Krishna, Gopala Krishna*. This was a period when spiritual awareness was on the rise, and people wanted to know, 'Is there something different from the material and physical dimension which we are confined in?' There was a lot of interest in meditation, in managing the mind and emotions, and in learning concentration.

Buddhism then came in with meditation, contemplation, compassion and the idea of Buddhahood. Buddhists talk of coming to nirvana, *shoonyata*, nothingness, where the mind stops and there is only stillness. The yogis also say that when the mind stops there is no experience; however, beyond this there is the experience of the higher nature. Beyond the void there is the light, and you have to come to the light. You cannot just stay in limbo, you cannot just stay in a passive state of no activity. There has to be activity by overcoming the lower nature and attaining the higher consciousness. That becomes the point of light. When yogis said that there is another stage beyond the void, beyond shoonyata, the

interpreters started saying that there is a point of realization where you realize that you are divine. That became the idea of enlightenment and suddenly this idea flashed everywhere: 'You can become self-realized, enlightened'. There was a craze for enlightenment.

Yoga goes viral

After the eighties, when yoga became a more popular household word, two things happened: one, it became the subject of academic research, study and interpretation; and two, it went viral like a computer virus that goes viral. Suddenly everybody took a week-long or month-long yogasana teacher training course, read ten asana books and said, "I am a yoga teacher. I will come to your house and teach you yoga." Yoga went viral and this happened everywhere; in the US, in Europe, in South-East Asia, and this trend continues till today. However, the only aspect of yoga that became popular was asana.

Even though the revival and resurgence of yoga took place in the present age in the span of the last hundred years, the aspect of yoga that has become popular now is mainly asana, the physical component. Some groups add other components, such as pranayama, relaxation, or concentration, but the popular aspect is asana. The other yogas exist as pockets only. Some people may choose to do pranayama. Some may choose to experiment with kriya yoga so they join a kriya yoga course. Some may choose to experiment with nada yoga so they join a nada yoga program, and so on. In this manner, yoga is practised in a fragmented way across the globe. The different aspects of yoga have become like pockets of yoga which you decide whether you want to practise or not, and the only common platform is asana.

Asanas have gone viral, and everybody is creating their own group of practices of asana: hot yoga, cold yoga, tall yoga, bottom yoga, left yoga, right yoga, shivering yoga, sweating yoga, power yoga, swimming pool yoga, food

yoga, mountain yoga, ocean yoga; everybody is just in a spree of invention and various branded yogas have come into existence. Thousands of people have begun patenting their own version of yoga, without knowing anything about yoga. Their knowledge has come only from reading twenty asana books, and writing by copying from twenty other books, without any understanding of the yogic systems or personal experience. From our perspective, the wheel of yoga has been in existence for many generations, yet each one is now trying to make a wheel and say, “Look at the wheel I have made!” Everybody is trying to use or apply one little component of yoga in the name of yoga, and this distracts and diverts people’s attention from the essence of yoga.

This is one scenario: yoga going viral. Nevertheless, yoga has gained global recognition in the present age and a reflection of that is the fact that 21st June has been declared as International Yoga Day by the United Nations. This indicates a global recognition of the benefits of yoga. Of course yoga is taught in many different ways, but I am not talking of the systems of yoga, I am talking of the benefits of yoga. Yoga is gaining global recognition and if nations are planning to celebrate one day of the year as International Yoga Day, it is a big achievement for what yoga can provide for human society and civilization.

Yoga becomes an academic subject

The other aspect is that yoga has become an academic subject studied in universities, and the Bihar School of Yoga was the forerunner here. Bihar Yoga Bharati (BYB) became the world’s first yoga university, officially recognized by the Government of India as a university. We had undergraduate, graduate, and masters courses in yoga philosophy, yoga psychology, applied yogic science, and yoga ecology.

BYB built its own yoga psychology document and its syllabus is now being taught in seven universities in India. Previously the only prevalent psychology was the western

approach, which is only a couple of hundred years old from the time of Freud and Jung. What about before them?

Were the earlier human civilizations so idiotic that Freud and Jung had to come forward to show the way? No. There was a previous system of psychology, and it was not a separate subject like it is today; it was an integrated, moral, behavioural, disciplinary subject of the mind. Where there is sanyam, you do not need psychological intervention. Where there is no sanyam, you do need psychological intervention. A culture that believes in the principles of sanyam does not need the 'id' of Freud. So, BSY and BYB became the forerunner in the academic field and many others followed suit.

Shelter for all under the majestic tree of yoga

At present one sees two trends. One is the viral trend, in which everybody is trying to grab a piece of the yoga pie and gain recognition as a master of yoga. The second is an academic trend, where research is being done to bring forth the yogic practices for our use today and to understand how to apply them on a day-to-day basis. There are many people in the world who are doing yeoman jobs, commendable jobs, and there are also many people in the world who are riding piggyback on the work being done by others.

Under a tree, a yogi meditates. Under the same tree, a thief comes to divide up the booty. Under the same tree on another side, a tired traveller is fast asleep. The tree is not to be blamed for what happens under its shade. The nature of the tree is to give shade to everybody: a yogi, a crook, a traveller, a child; anybody who needs that shade. It is your intention that uplifts you in wisdom, in action, and in life.

The attempt of yoga is to connect you with that awareness, to identify the real aspiration in your life so that you can attain that fulfilment. If the awareness is there, then yoga is a valuable tool. If the awareness is not there, then it is only a subject of curiosity and you do not change yourself internally, ever. You may cram your intelligence with bookish



Bihar Yoga Bharati class

knowledge, but that will never convert into experience until and unless you become sincere, serious and committed, and open your own hidden files.

The need now: from yoga practice to yoga sadhana

During the World Yoga Convention, it was mentioned that now we have to look at yoga in a different light. Fifty years of yoga propagation has happened. We belong to a tradition of yoga starting with Swami Sivananda, that was continued by Swami Satyananda, and then all of us present here. In these last fifty years, despite Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda having paved and indicated the path of yoga, it is also time to reflect on how much we have incorporated yoga in our life. Yoga is generally being practised and limited to asana, pranayama, relaxation, and some concentration. Across the world and across the board, this is how yoga classes are conducted, taught and practised in practically all yoga centres; a little bit of asana, a little bit of pranayama, some relaxation, and some concentration.

These four aspects – asana, pranayama, relaxation, and concentration – do not depict the completeness of the yogic tradition, belief, or philosophy. They do not indicate the complete picture of yoga. They reflect only a partial

understanding of the yogic subject. Another pertinent point is that although many people practise yoga, very few follow the aspirations of yoga. They practise yoga for their own need and benefit. If there is stress in the mind, they practise a little bit of yoga to relax. If the body is stiff and tense, they practise a little bit of yoga to loosen up the body. If there is some problem or difficulty, then they practise yoga to find help for that problem or difficulty. Beyond this, people have rarely applied yoga to experience the aims defined by yoga. When yoga practice is only based on personal needs and requirement, it is a limited experience.

Until now, in this scenario where you practise yoga according to your need, like and choice, you are only a yoga practitioner. As a practitioner, your involvement with yoga is limited. Once you feel better, your involvement finishes. This has been the trend of yoga practitioners across the world, with very few people making the effort or the attempt to move into another level of yoga practice, which is yoga sadhana. This is a most important point that all yoga practitioners must try to understand, as sadhana indicates the drive and the effort to follow the aspirations defined by yoga.

This is a crucial aspect that has to be considered in your own practice and growth. In order to experience and glimpse the complete picture of yoga you have to move to the next level, that of sadhana. Sadhana means sustained effort over a period of time for a long duration to achieve the aims set out by yoga. There has to be regularity and continuity in that effort, plus a belief or conviction in what you are doing. This is stated in the *Yoga Sutras* (1:14): *Sa tu dirgha kala nairantarya satkara sevito dridha bhumih* – “It (sadhana) becomes firmly grounded by being continued for a long time with reverence, without interruption.” With these three components of continuity, regularity, and a belief in what you are doing, you can move from practice to sadhana in yoga.

Once you move into the sadhana area of yoga, then the goal, what you want to experience or achieve, is not defined by you. Instead, the goal is defined by yoga. If you follow

the sequence and the system, then at the end there will be a certain result. The aim is already defined in the yogas. Each yoga branch has a particular goal and gives a particular result. The purpose of hatha yoga is to regulate the flows of the solar and lunar forces in the personality. The purpose of hatha yoga is to bring about a balance in the ida and pingala systems, the sympathetic and the parasympathetic systems. The purpose of hatha yoga is to create proper movement of energy and affirmation in the brain. With the practice of hatha yoga alone you can attain physical purification, psychological balance and concentration.

In the case of raja yoga, the purpose is managing the modifications of the mind. According to Patanjali, the raja yoga system is for harmonizing the agitated mental behaviour: *chitta vritti nirodhah*. Now, how many practitioners have made the effort or the attempt to regulate their mental expressions and behaviours in a positive, creative and constructive way? Sometimes people might have made a little effort, but it has not been sustained nor has it changed the mental conditioning. If the mental habits and conditionings do not change with raja yoga then you can never experience *chitta vritti nirodhah*. You can be a meditator for thirty years, you can be a raja yoga practitioner for life, but if you have not been able to change the *vritti* of your mind, the aspirations of raja yoga are not fulfilled. Similarly, all other yoga practices have a particular aspiration and it is the fulfilment of those aspirations that has to become the approach to yoga now.

You have to now look beyond practice into sadhana. Practice is an introduction to yoga, for whatever your need may be. Then, to experience yoga in its truest sense of the word, you have to move from practice to sadhana to experience the aims defined by the yogic principles. This has to be the approach now. If you follow the aims of the yogic principles and the yogic branches and aspire to experience them, you will notice that your practice becomes progressive, regulated and beneficial. If, however, you only practise yoga

according to your need then the practice is not progressive; it is what you choose to do. That is not the Bihar Yoga tradition.

Right from the time of Swami Sivananda, the Bihar Yoga tradition did not ever emphasize the practice aspect. Learning yes, and then after learning yoga move into sadhana. If you follow the aims of the yogic sadhana from the Bihar Yoga perspective, it is for the improvement of the entire human nature and personality and not just learning yoga for physical benefit. Of course, ninety-nine percent of people come for physical benefit, but there is one percent who will move from physical practice to sadhana.

All the teachings of Swami Sivananda are guidelines into sadhana, they are not guidelines into your practice of asana and pranayama to free your body and de-stress yourself. The entire teaching of Swami Sivananda, whether in the form of a poem, a lecture or a satsang, leads to developing the condition, the environment and the aptitude for sadhana to progress in yogic life. If you refer to asana, pranayama, relaxation and meditation as Satyananda Yoga, it is wrong. If you refer to yoga sadhana and yoga culture as Satyananda Yoga it is correct, since its aspiration and aim is the improvement of human nature and personality.

Yogic dimensions of the human personality

If the aim of yoga is to access the human personality, then how does yoga see the human personality? Is the human personality only this body? According to the yogic principles, no. There are five experiences within this body, from gross to subtle. You could compare this to Russian dolls. You open a big doll and there is another doll inside, you open this and there is another one inside, and so on. You can put them all together into the one big doll. In the same way, you are composed of five dolls. These five experiences are contained in *annamaya kosha*, the sheath or dimension of the material body, composed of matter, senses, blood, bones, muscles, nerves, etc. Then within this physical body there is *manomaya*

kosha, the mental body, the mind, the mental expressions, the habits, the conditionings, the indoctrinations, the understanding. The third is *pranamaya kosha*, the pranic body: vitality, dynamism, strength. The fourth is *vijnanamaya kosha*, the consciousness; and the fifth is *anandamaya kosha*, the spirit. The outer shape is this body; more subtle than the gross body is the mind; more subtle than the mind is prana; more subtle than prana is consciousness; more subtle than consciousness is the spirit. Thus, body, mind, energy, consciousness and spirit are the five aspects that make one whole personality.

It is these five koshas that you have to access in your yoga practice, not only the physical. All the five have to be accessed, all the five have to be fine-tuned, tightened, cleaned, harmonized. The approach of yoga is to access all these dimensions of body, mind, energy, consciousness and spirit.

Moving from annamaya, the gross body, to anandamaya, the spiritual experience, indicates the development of the total human personality. Developing the human nature and personality involves moving from annamaya, the body, to manomaya, the mind, to pranamaya, the energy, to vijnanamaya, the consciousness, to anandamaya, the experience of spirit. All aspects of the human nature and personality must rise together. Any kind of yoga practice must cater to all these five different components of your life. The chosen yoga practices for deepening your experience in sadhana must also be able to activate the experiences underlying all these five different levels and dimensions.

Development and evolution into yoga culture

You have to move from practice to sadhana, since no matter which tradition you belong to, practice is not enough. Until today across the board and around the world people have been focused only on practice. Whether you practise sun salutations on the streets of New York, pawanmuktasana in an ashram in India, or you practise your meditation in seclusion up in the mountains, these are personal choices;

they do not indicate your adherence to the principles of yoga. If you adhere to the principles of yoga then you become the centre of experience.

The approach has to involve moving from practice to sadhana, from sadhana to lifestyle, and from lifestyle to culture. When Sri Swamiji said, “Yoga will be the culture of tomorrow”, he did not mean a number of people practising yoga; he did not mean that a large quantity of people, whether in millions or thousands, would make the culture. Culture means evolution, something that evolves, something that is nurtured, something that grows.

How does one begin looking at these four aspects of yoga: yoga practice, yoga sadhana, yoga lifestyle, and yoga culture? Everybody practises a fraction of yoga. Some practise dynamic yoga, some practise slow yoga. In this fraction of yoga, you have to now become aware of your purpose: why you practise yoga. If your purpose of practising is health management, then it should remain confined to health only and not go into philosophy. If the purpose is to de-stress, the practice should remain confined to de-stressing and no philosophy. Be clear that you are using yoga to improve this particular condition of your life. If you experiment with other yogas you will not get very far, except an initial euphoria that you did feel something nice yet you will not be able to sustain it, develop it, or culture it.

From here the next stage is to move into yoga sadhana where you identify the aspirations, the aims and objects of yoga in each branch, and make the effort to experience these. After all, there are many practitioners of hatha yoga, yet if I ask them are they aware of ida and pingala, they will say no. If I ask them if their ida and pingala are balanced, they may not even know what I am talking about, since they are not aware of the purpose of hatha yoga. People are also not aware of the purpose of raja yoga. They are taught yoga nidra and they think, ‘Oh it is to have a good time and to sleep’, and that is what everybody enjoys. Do you sleep in yoga nidra? Do you drift? Are you able to maintain

awareness throughout? Why do you practise yoga nidra? Do you practise to drift off or to sleep? Or do you practise to maintain your awareness from the first moment until the last moment? If you sleep in yoga nidra then do not ask about what happens when you truly practise yoga nidra.

The idea of moving from practice to sadhana has to be clear, combined with sincerity, with seriousness and with commitment. The moment you move into yoga sadhana with seriousness, sincerity and commitment, the entire experience and dimension of yoga practice changes. Until now, you have not become aware of the different dimensions where yoga can affect you: annamaya, the physical dimension; manomaya, the mental dimension; pranamaya, the vital dimension; vijñanamaya, the dimension of consciousness; anandamaya, the inner, spiritual, pure experience. A definite effort has to be made to practise those techniques that can access all these five dimensions of your personality.



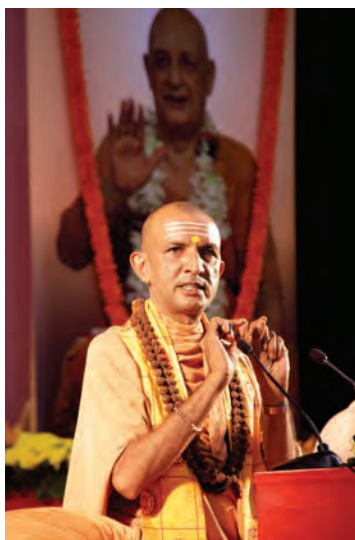
BECOMING PART OF THE NEW WAVE

Swami Yogamaya

Swamiji has been explaining to us how to move into the new chapter of yoga. He has been telling us that the need now is to move from yoga practice to yoga sadhana. He differentiated between what the purpose of yoga is and what is happening to yoga now. He differentiated between the personal, whimsical approach and the classical approach. He also explained how the purpose of yoga is to access the different koshas and balance them, how we can live the yoga of the personality by balancing and harmonizing the different koshas. Now, at this point, some of us may be wondering, have we not been trying to live the yoga of the personality? Have we not been practising integral yoga, which covers different aspects of the personality? In answer to this, I will relate a little incident.

As many of you know, Swamiji was on a Bharat Yatra throughout 2014. He travelled to different cities of India giving programs, satsangs and classes. One of these cities was New Delhi, the capital of India. It so happened that a friend of mine attended that program. This girl had been practising yoga for at least fifteen, twenty years. She had been following the Sivananda system and perhaps other systems as well, and she is a spiritual person who does her yoga with awareness. However, she had begun to feel that her practice was becoming stagnant, that she wasn't growing in her practice and she had come to a standstill. Then she attended Swamiji's program.

After the program she began to practise yoga in the way that Swamiji had taught. She began to follow the capsules, she began to follow the instructions and she completely forgot about the way she had been practising. She began a new approach, and within a month she felt that her practice had deepened. There was a dramatic difference



in the way she had been practising earlier and the way she was practising now. There was a distinct growth in her practice. She had also felt very impacted by Swamiji's talk about the yoga of the koshas and when she started doing the practices the way Swamiji had taught, she actually felt that the different dimensions of her personality were being influenced.

I think this little incident indicates something important. It indicates what is happening

to yoga and what is also happening to all of us. After fifty years of being around, yoga has reached a point where there is a definite movement away from the original purpose of yoga and as a result, there is stagnancy, and there is a risk of it going downhill. While asanas have become viral and there are all kinds of yogas all around, and while we continue to teach our antar mouna and yoga nidra as part of a course structure, the real purpose has gone out of the practice and teaching of yoga; the truth of yoga has become diluted. The focus has gone into the body rather than the personality. Even when different yogas are being practised, they are practised in a fractured way for personal aims, but not for the purpose that classical yoga has set out. Therefore, if we don't watch out at this point in time, the gap between practice and depth of experience will grow. The gap between the whimsical approach and the classical approach will grow.

In order for this not to happen, we need to ask what to do and where to go from here. And the first step is to accept that we are not truly able to access and change the different

koshas, the different aspects of the personality, in our practice or our teaching; we only touch them peripherally, superficially. We have the books, we have the practices, we have the steps and we know how to practice and how to teach, but perhaps for that very reason we have lost the spark, the spark that the yogis had.

That spark is what needs to be ignited now; there is a need to inject new life into our commitment to yoga. We do not have to necessarily reinvent yoga, we don't have to invent new practices, but we have to live the truth of yoga once again, so that the purity of the tradition is not lost. We have to tune in to the tradition of the yogis and the tradition of the gurus in order to live that purity. If we say that we have been practising integral yoga, it may be in relation to the combination of our own practices, but we have to ask: do we do it for the purpose given to yoga by the masters, which is harmonizing the koshas, development of individual koshas and practising in a way that we are able to access the koshas?

During the classes that Swamiji took this year during the Sannyasa Training and the Yoga Instructors Course, all of us felt something really different in our practices and our experience of yoga, and in our experience and understanding of ourselves. That is what needs to be experienced more deeply. So, if we want to be part of the new wave of yoga, if we really want to understand the yoga of the personality, of the head, heart and hands, if we wish to be part of the yogic vision for the next fifty years, we have to take the responsibility for tuning in to the tradition of yoga. We must tune in to the real purpose of yoga, understand and access the real purpose of yoga. We have to become open, we have to unlearn whatever we know. This may even mean that we have to put aside our own style, that we have to forget the way we have been teaching, practising or thinking, no matter how many years we have put in, and really become open to this new initiative that is being taken. That is the only way to maintain the purity of the tradition.

When we were preparing for these talks and discussing them, one of my guru sisters said to me, “Don’t say ‘forget all that you have learnt’. It’s too strong, people won’t like it. After all, they have spent years in the tradition and they have had some beautiful experiences.” Very true, but I stick to what I am saying. My experience is much smaller than yours, but I believe in the truth of my experience – that it is only when I have let go of my conditionings no matter how effective and wonderful they may have been in the past, and really opened myself to learning, that I have been able to grow and expand in my perspective. So, I reiterate: in order to become part of the yogic vision, we have to let go and let in. We have to recommit and rededicate. It is time to take a sankalpa to recommit ourselves to the yogic mission. Total one hundred percent commitment to receive the new wave of yoga, to take the new chapter of yoga forward.



3

Dynamic Evolution of Satyananda Yoga–Bihar Yoga

Time periods, masters and traditions of yoga

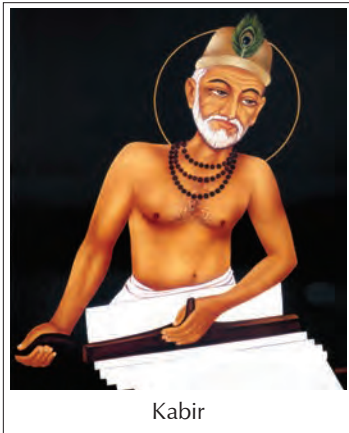
Yoga in the early period was commonly known by the name Pashupata yoga and was divided into five sub-yogas: mantra yoga, sparsha yoga, bhava yoga, abhava yoga, and maha yoga. Remnants of that lineage are still alive today, and it is known as the Nath tradition of hatha yoga. They are known as *kanphata*, ‘pierced-ear’, yogis in India, as traditionally they have to pierce their ears. They are the ancient hatha yogis.

Then in the middle period, Pashupata yoga and its aspects were classified. During the middle period these different yogas were developed by the sages of that age, and their literatures are still available today.

Then in the third period, the present day, the first exposure to yoga came through the British who learned of it in India. Then, later on came the tradition of kriya yoga, the tradition of Babaji as passed on by Sri Yukteshwar, Lahiri Mahashaya and Paramahansa Yogananda. The lineage of Krishnamacharya came from Mysore, which was pure, physical hatha yoga. Then came Ramana Maharshi, who brought in jnana yoga. Other people who lived bhakti yoga, like Anandamayi Ma, propagated bhakti yoga.

There was a period in India when bhakti yoga actually became a social movement, just like aerobics has now become a social movement. An idea can become a social movement. A practice can become a social movement. Dance and music

can become social movements. Anything according to the time and age can become a movement if it is accepted in society by large numbers.



Kabir

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, bhakti yoga became a social movement. That was the period of Chaitanya, Kabir, Mirabai and Eknath. From north to south and from east to west, one could see a revival of the bhakti culture, tradition and yoga through the effort of these people. How it was interpreted by people was another matter, nonetheless, these bhaktas had

attained the highest state. Just as Christ had attained the highest state and yet our interpretation of his teachings do not reflect the accuracy or the intention of his teachings, each one of these saints had also attained a state of realization which they lived, and their thoughts became a social movement.

Working together in unity for yoga

When Swami Sivananda's tradition came into existence, his disciples took up certain components of yoga, which created a wave. Until the 1940s or 1950s, yoga was seen in a different light from how it is seen today. When I was a child and came to the ashram, people would say, "Why are you practising yoga? It is only for renunciates. It is only for attaining moksha. You have your whole life before you." One was discouraged from adopting yoga, as it was believed to be a discipline for the recluses and renunciates, and not for people of society. If one went out to teach yoga in India, people used to say, "You have come to take us away from our responsibilities," or, "What will yoga do to us except make us more God-oriented?" That is how yoga was seen by society in my youth.

Gradually an interest was generated in society and people got involved. My guru, Swami Satyananda, along with others like Sri Iyengar, Swami Satchidananda, Swami Vishnudevananda, Swami Venkatesananda, became the first generation of yoga masters whose teachings and traditions of yoga migrated out of India.

In the decades of the seventies, eighties, nineties and two thousand, it was the first and second-generation teachers who spread the word of yoga, thus the authenticity was maintained. People looked at yoga as a way of evolving and progressing in different areas of life, and there was visible social interaction among the teachers as well.

All the first-generation yoga teachers would interact with each other and complement each other with skills and knowledge which the other person did not have. Plans were made together for the coming years of what would be taught by yoga ashrams, yoga centres and teachers. Sri Iyengar, Swami Satyananda, Swami Satchidananda, Swami Vishnudevananda, all interacted. They worked together to create a proper plan for the propagation of yoga that was uniform in all centres and countries.

Research was conducted, teachers were trained, scientific and medical investigations were conducted, specific training programs were formulated, such as stress management for industries and enhancing the learning abilities in children. In the 1980s, when I was in the US, I, along with a Bulgarian scientist, Doctor Lozanov, and Charles Smith from the US, established an organization called SALT: System of Accelerated Learning and Training. We assessed the students and the environment in many schools and colleges to try to improve the method of imparting education in classrooms; and it was a success. In this manner, there was a specific and definite plan of progression.

Then the first-generation group retired and passed on the baton to the second generation. Swami Satyananda, my guru, called me back in 1983 and gave me the

responsibility of the yoga movement. I followed this mandate for twenty-five years, until 2008. The first-generation disciples of the different traditions became the second-generation yoga propagators. Not teachers; propagators. We were elevated to that post after the retirement of the first generation, while the teaching was taken over by others.

Boom of yoga teachers and yogic studies

The interest spread and everybody wanted to become a yoga teacher. Now there are so many teachers who have not been taught by us directly but by third, fourth or fifth generation teachers. As a result, yoga has become diluted. The basic foundation of yoga is no longer understood in the right sense by people who have had no connection with the tradition or the source of yoga. I have always said, “If everyone becomes a teacher, who will be the student?” To maintain the sanctity, plan or project, there should be few teachers. You cannot have an Oxford and Harvard in every city and town. It is in one place where the teaching, projects and plans are developed and carried out accordingly by satellite colleges and centres. As it happens, human greed takes over, and the social, economic and financial needs override every other pious intention in life.

In this way, yoga went viral, and at the same time another strong movement emerged: the classical, the

academic, the traditional, and it was self-sustaining. In this category, the Government of India recognizes only four yoga centres in India as centres of national importance and national resource. Number one: Sivananda Ashram in the north, in Rishikesh. Number two:



Sivananda Ashram, Rishikesh



Bihar School of Yoga, Munger

Bihar School of Yoga in the east, in Munger. Number three: Vivekananda Kendra in the south, in Bangalore. Number four: Kaivalyadhama in the west, in Lonavla. These are the four organizations – in the north, east, south and west – that the Government of India has officially recognized as centres of yoga in India. These four centres have followed the classical and traditional systems of yoga. Out of these four, Bihar School of Yoga is at the forefront. This is not to advertise the achievements of this institution; it is a fact. The credit for bringing BSY to the top goes to its founder, Swami Satyananda, who brought about a renaissance of yoga in the twentieth century.

Now we can ask, if the most common platform of yoga is asana then what is the difference between any other yoga centre and the Satyananda Yoga or the Bihar Yoga system? Even in our tradition, and in our centres that I have seen abroad, managed by different people, they are teaching asana, a little bit of pranayama, a little bit of relaxation, yoga nidra, a little bit of ajapa japa, chidakasha dharana, or antar mouna, a little bit of concentration and meditation, a little bit of mantras and kirtans, a little bit of satsang. Across the world, this is where the activity of yoga in centres or ashrams ends. So how does this practice separate or identify Satyananda Yoga differently?

When you say you are teaching the Bihar Yoga system or the Satyananda Yoga system, what do you mean? You are not teaching anything new, you are still using the common platform of asana to highlight your brand of Satyananda

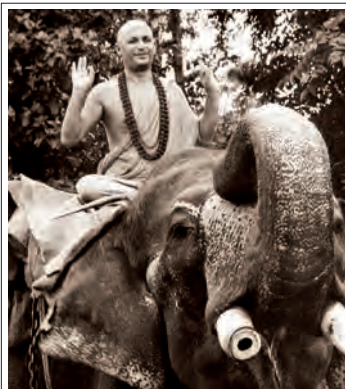
Yoga, yet beyond that name there is nothing of Satyananda Yoga in the ashrams. This is something you should be aware of. Just the practice of asana and pranayama does not make you into a practitioner of the Bihar Yoga tradition.

Nobody has understood what the Bihar Yoga tradition is, although everything has been written down. Very few people have even read the books. Teachers read only what they require for teaching. They do not read other books that can inspire them and open new doors of understanding and appreciation of the yogic subject.

Swami Satyananda's contribution to yoga

Sri Swamiji received the instruction from Swami Sivananda to propagate yoga from door to door and shore to shore, and he spent nine years after receiving this mandate working tirelessly to establish the Bihar School of Yoga.

Yoga propagation: During this period of nine years, Sri Swamiji travelled throughout each and every state, town and village of the Indian subcontinent by foot, on elephantback, camelback, on bullock carts, in boats, in the first cars, the chugging Fords, whatever was available. Sri Swamiji acquainted himself with every area, city, populace and society of India, and realized their requirements and needs. He thought about how yoga could become a tool to manage the

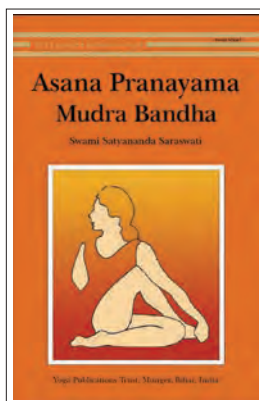


Sri Swamiji

human situation. It was from this perspective that he started developing yoga. He furthered the teaching of Swami Sivananda in a synthesized and integrated manner, which today you recognize as the Bihar Yoga tradition, not system.

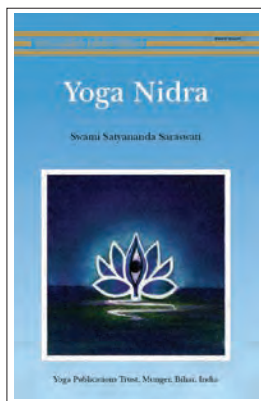
Research and classification: Sri Swamiji became the first person to classify yogasanas into forward, backward, inverted, standing and balancing poses.

His book, *Asana Pranayama Mudra Bandha* (APMB), was the first book in the world on yogasanas, pranayamas, mudras and bandhas. In 1968, the first edition of the book was published. If you compare the original edition with the latest edition, you will see that the style of printing, the information, the content, etc. has remained the same and has not changed.



Sri Swamiji did not conduct research into asana; however, he was the first person to research pranayama, pratyahara, dharana and dhyana. Initially everything was clubbed under one name: meditation. Sri Swamiji identified the practices of pratyahara and the other stages of raja yoga. The terms ‘pratyahara’ and ‘dharana’ were until recently confined to Patanjali’s teachings, without any understanding by the commentators. Commentators, teachers and students would say, “We are practising meditation”, a universal, generic term. People did not know what was what. It was Sri Swamiji who wrote the book *Meditations from the Tantras* and first identified the different practices and gave the reasons why they are beneficial and for which mental and emotional conditions. Sri Swamiji identified how the practices could alter each type of mindset, psychology, thought, idea and quality.

Yoga development: Sri Swamiji was the researcher and the developer of yoga nidra, and I was the guinea pig. My education in yoga did not begin with asana and pranayama; it began with yoga nidra, with pratyahara. As I was the guinea pig, all the stages of pratyahara and dharana were tested on me. The book, *Yoga Nidra*, mentions how a naughty boy was guided to become a better person.



Sri Swamiji was the first person to define the sequence of stages in antar mouna, ajapa japa, chidakasha dharana, yoga nidra, and the states of pratyahara, dharana and dhyana. He was the first person to start a postal correspondence course of three years in kriya yoga, in 1973. Never before had the teachings of kriya yoga been written down on paper, since it was only an oral tradition between guru and disciple. Today the kriya yoga of Swami Satyananda and the kriya yoga of Paramahansa Yogananda are the only two kriya yoga systems prevalent in the world.

Expressive yoga, connecting the inner and the outer: Sri Swamiji connected each yoga with life: how it should evolve in life for the betterment and enhancement of human skills, understanding and creativity; he did not limit it to self-realization.

If you think that by coming to the Bihar School of Yoga you can attain moksha, then you have come to the wrong place. Here the philosophy is that you do not run away from life, instead, you run into life with your arms open. That is the training and the teaching. Therefore, if you have come here with the idea of meditation, forget it. There is no meditation here. There is always the emphasis of acquiring a better understanding of yourself. At BSY you are made to confront your inner enemies: hatred, jealousy, anger, frustration, ego, passion, desire and greed. At the same time you are also given the opportunity to express your good qualities. How much you do that is up to you, however, that opportunity is always given in equal measure.

There is a story of two dogs; one is black and the other is white. They are your dogs. The black dog is the baddie: tamasic, negative, bad, dominant, all the best of the negative is in the black dog. The white dog is the goody and all the best of the positive is in the white dog. These two dogs fight with each other. Which dog will win? The dog that you feed more will win, and that is the reality in life too.

You live with these two dogs and the dog that you feed more wins the fight. The choice of which dog to feed is

yours, however, they are both with you. They are both within your body, mind and heart. Which dog you feed is your choice in life, whether spiritual life or social life. Those who feed the positive, the white dog, and make it stronger are in a better position to reach the pinnacle of life and understand what the whole game is about. Those who feed the negative, the black dog, live their life in frustration, anxiety, nervous tension, fear and insecurity. Thus, the purpose of Sri Swamiji's yoga became a way to explore the inherent human potential.

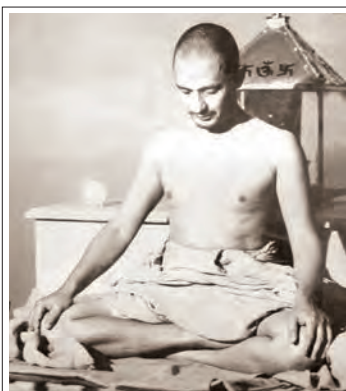
Progressive sequence through sadhana: In Sri Swamiji's system of yoga he has combined the principles and attitudes of tantra and Vedanta as well. In the sequence of progression in sadhana, he identified hatha yoga as asana, pranayama, mudra, bandha and shatkarmas. He was the first person to write on *bandhas*, the psychic locks. He was the first person to explain the *mudras*, psychic gestures. In raja yoga, Sri Swamiji defined and explained pranayama, pratyahara, dharana and dhyana.

He developed kriya yoga as the third movement. First, there was hatha yoga for body and prana: annamaya kosha and pranamaya kosha. Next, raja yoga for mind: manomaya kosha. Third, kriya yoga for exploring the inner potential, the inner psychic awakening, vijñanamaya kosha, leading to the experience of anandamaya kosha as the completeness, the fullness, the total.

These three were complemented with the inclusion of other yogas such as mantra yoga, nada yoga, swara yoga, kundalini yoga, etc. He also defined bhakti yoga, jñana yoga and karma yoga as the expressive yoga. In that, he gave a message: that the purpose of yoga is to move from self-oriented absorption in oneself to selfless, expanded awareness of everyone. This became his teaching and thus the teaching of Bihar Yoga.

In the initial stages of the development of Bihar Yoga, Sri Swamiji did give a sequence and a progression, from hatha yoga to raja yoga to kriya yoga. This sequence of

progression was published in a book containing his teachings, *Yoga and Kriya*. In this book Sri Swamiji has clearly stated that to derive the maximum benefit from yoga, the physical, the psychological and the spiritual, first perfect hatha yoga, then move into raja yoga, and then practise kriya yoga. This was the sequence he created: hatha yoga, raja yoga, kriya yoga. These are to be practised to



Yoga sadhana

cultivate the discipline of body and mind and to explode the potentials that are inherent in your life. Then learn how to use that and live it in jnana yoga, in karma yoga, and in bhakti yoga.

Thus, the sequence of progression in yoga has already been defined fifty years ago by Swami Satyananda when he said to start with hatha yoga, go to raja yoga, then on to kriya yoga. These three are the external disciplines; through hatha yoga you will be able to manage your body, through raja yoga you will be able to manage your mind, and through kriya yoga you will be able to explore your inner potential.

The expression of what you gain with the practice of hatha, raja and kriya are expressed in karma, jnana and bhakti. Sri Swamiji incorporated the concept of yoga given by Swami Sivananda – that in this present age and time yoga should be used as a tool to develop human potential and to cultivate the qualities of the head, heart and hands.

Teachings for an awakened, creative nature: In this age, it is Swami Satyananda who has done the hard work to make yoga accessible to everyone in a systematic and scientific manner. For this, he has a position higher than Patanjali, Gheranda or anybody else, since he has looked at every aspect and angle of yoga. That is what you receive today, and you will continue to receive in the future as well. Other

propagators have only given us one teaching, whereas Sri Swamiji has given teachings on all the yogas, in addition to incorporating the attitudes of Vedanta and tantra into the practical application of yoga in life.

The teachings of Swami Sivananda's 18 ITIES in the form of serenity, regularity, absence of vanity, etc.; the SWAN theory: strengths, weaknesses, ambitions and needs – are all yogic practices to develop, harmonize and regulate self-expression. Once that self-expression is correct, then you are free, creative and content. It is correct self-expression, right expression at all levels that indicates the awakened, creative nature.



4

Hallmarks of Satyananda Yoga–Bihar Yoga

There are different identifying marks of the Satyananda Yoga–Bihar Yoga tradition, and to know these you must understand how Swami Sivananda taught yoga to Swami Satyananda.

The pinnacle: kriya yoga

Not everybody in Swami Sivananda's ashram learnt yoga. Some were teachers, some were administrators, some were workers in the different departments and areas, so there was no formal learning time. The same is applicable in Munger. Not everyone here is a yogi or a yoga teacher. Some are workers, some are administrators, and some are teachers. Therefore, do not think that every guru-wearer is a master, or teacher of yoga just because they live here.

When Swami Sivananda gave the mandate to Swami Satyananda to spread yoga from door to door and shore to shore, Sri Swamiji said, "You have given me this instruction, but I do not know any yoga. I have been busy in the kitchen, in publications, in administration, as a secretary, as a well-digger. I have done everything except yoga, and now you have given me this order." Swami Sivananda said, "Come with me." He took him to his room, and in fifteen minutes initiated Sri Swamiji in kriya yoga through shaktipat. *Shaktipat* is transmission.

Kriya yoga was the yoga that Sri Swamiji learnt from Swami Sivananda; and Swami Sivananda told him that the

finality of all yoga is kriya yoga. Kriya yoga became the focus of the Satyananda Yoga–Bihar Yoga tradition. No matter what you do, whether you start with hatha yoga, raja yoga, jnana yoga, bhakti yoga, kundalini yoga or mantra yoga, you have to eventually come to kriya yoga in order to become stable in your life and in your spiritual experience. Kriya yoga has become the goal of the Satyananda Yoga–Bihar Yoga tradition. That is point one.



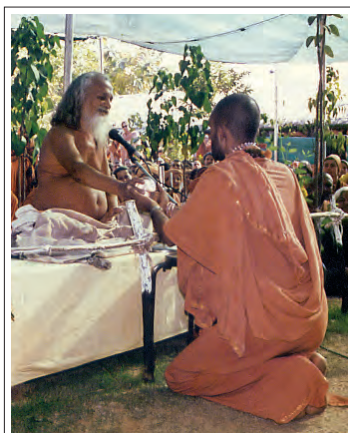
Sri Swamiji practising kriya yoga

Transmission yoga

The second point, which I have noticed and many of you have also noticed in your own life, is the role of transmission. People hear of shaktipat, the transmission that takes place between guru and disciple. What is this shaktipat? It is generally said to be the transference of spiritual power from one person to another. How can it be understood in a language? The language to understand this process is that of computers.

You have a hard drive full of information. You get another hard drive and you download the information on the first hard drive on to this second hard drive. That downloading is known as ‘transmission’. When the new, second disk receives the information, it becomes a replica of the first, original disk. The new disk has the same information. In one instant the whole of the information contained on the original disk, which took years to collect, is transferred. The new disk contains the exact replica of the content from the other disk. It is not a copy; it is a replica. This illustrates shaktipat.

A capable guru can transmit *jnana*, knowledge, to a capable disciple; not to every disciple, only to the cap-



Sri Swamiji transmitting the shakti

able disciple. Once the capable disciple receives the transmission, that disciple becomes the replica of the guru. The same information contained in the guru's mind is transmitted to the disciple's mind. This transmission has also become a hallmark of the Satyananda Yoga tradition, inexplicable as it is.

When the disciples of BSY go to teach and allow that guru inspiration to come through, they become the best teachers. How this happens cannot be explained; nevertheless, it is an experience of many teachers in this tradition. Many new people who went on yoga yatras in 2013 reported that experience on their return. When they teach and follow their inner instinct, at that time they become the conduit for the teaching that is inherent, contained within, and it flows through. In the normal state they are not able to answer the most simple, basic question, but in that state of transmission they can answer all enquiries. In that state the information simply flows, and this has also become a hallmark of the Satyananda Yoga tradition.

I also experience it from time to time: the downloading of information, the flow of understanding received from the masters. I am not using the word 'knowledge' since anybody can repeat knowledge. I am using the word 'understanding'. Something that emerges from understanding is unique and special. This is shaktipat; this is the transmission that is inherent in this tradition.

Understanding the mental dimension

Another salient point of this tradition is the focus on the mental aspect of yoga. The mind is something that people

generally do not understand or even realize they have. Whenever you have any mental problems or conflicts, you instantly seek a distraction outside and you never face your own problems and difficulties. Whenever there is any type of problem in the mind, whether it is anxiety, frustration, nervousness, depression, aggression, jealousy, love, compassion or sympathy, whatever state, you do not acknowledge it within yourself; you look for a reference point outside. Whenever there is any problem you avoid that problem by looking in some other direction. The mind has become the subject for psychiatrists and psychologists to deal with and treat, as you think, 'When there is a crisis I will go to them. Until then, I will not worry about it.'

Nobody worries about their body until they are sick, and nobody realizes they have a mind until they reach a mental crisis. Due to this situation, especially in the West, people find different practices of pratyahara, relaxation or yoga nidra quite confronting and challenging, since they are never aware of themselves. Many times people become aware of their heart palpitation in yoga nidra and get frightened. They realize for the first time in their life that something is beating inside their ribcage. This frightens them and they say, "My heart is beating very hard and fast!" For the first time in their life they have observed their heartbeat and then conclude that it is beating hard and fast, though it is simply that they did not have any awareness of it prior to that moment. In the state of relaxation or concentration, any event that is in the mind or in the memory is suddenly released, it flashes before one's awareness and triggers off certain emotions or responses caused by that event. Many people do not like it and say it is challenging and confronting.

In the West and now also in the East, people are reaching a point where they are actually disconnecting from their own mental and emotional expressions and experiences. They try to avoid these mental and emotional feelings contained within themselves and do not acknowledge them. When

it comes to yoga, you are meditating and suddenly you feel disturbed, as something is coming out. Your rational mind says, 'Suppress it! It'll bring you pain', however, your practice is clearing it. You say, 'Oh, it is too confronting. Too challenging; not for me.' It even happens in pranayama. When people become aware of their breath they start to feel suffocated. Suddenly they realize that they are breathing and it brings in fear. Whenever they become aware of the breath they feel that they are not breathing enough. This is an imaginative state of the mind that manifests when you suddenly realize you are something more than what you had perceived until now.

There are other types of people who do not go through this kind of mental crisis and who are happy and free. Even these carefree people suffer as they see other people expressing pain and anxiety, and wonder, 'Why am I happy? Something must be wrong with me! Maybe it is not being released from within. Maybe I'm not getting free; I'm holding on too tightly to my blocks.' Then they go into a different type of crisis. This is another reason why people identify more with yogasanas and less with meditation.

Meditation has become a tool to distract the mind from problems, and not to confront the mind. Meditating to clear one's stress is only a superficial approach. People also use meditation to go on an imaginative journey, seeing angels and lights and all the fantasies that they can conjure up. Who uses meditation to enhance the ability of their mind? Few people make the effort to discover their own mind. In society today, people have not experienced or realized their mind.

Discovering the mind

The focus of Bihar Yoga is not only on asana in hatha yoga; it is on all aspects of hatha yoga. The emphasis is not the physical aspects only; there is more emphasis on the pranic, since the physical is a representation of the pranic condition. If you are sick physically, the pranas are depleted. In hatha

yoga, the Satyananda Yoga tradition looks to balancing, awakening and activating prana with the use of yogasanas. Similarly, in raja yoga this tradition looks at the components of yama and niyama, along with pratyahara, dharana and dhyana; and the asana and pranayama are used as tools to internalize. There is a definite effort to discover one's mind, and that is where people find the biggest challenge, whether they be the modern sannnyasins or yoga practitioners.



Swami Sivananda, Swami Satyananda and Bihar Yoga are clear that if you want happiness, completeness and wholeness in life, this mind has to be managed properly. Sri Swamiji says, “If you have a fight with your wife or children in your home, you can sleep in separate rooms and have a good night's sleep. However, if you fight with your mind, where will you put your mind? You can't put your mind in a separate room; it will sleep with you! It will wake with you! It will talk to you. It will create problems for you. It will keep you awake the whole night. So it is better to keep this mind happy. If this mind is happy, you can live your life in a happy manner.”

In all the teachings of Sri Swamiji, he has placed emphasis on the mind. In all the teachings of Swami Sivananda, he has placed emphasis on developing the positive qualities of the mind and eradicating the negative and restrictive qualities of the mind. That has been the teaching, for through the mind you can experience your awakened nature.

Understanding the real and the unreal

Many exponents of yoga say the experiences of the mind are unreal, whereas many exponents of yoga say the experiences of the mind are real. Who to believe? If the experiences of the mind are unreal, then even the idea of *shanti*, peace, that you experience in your mind is unreal. The happiness that you experience in your mind is unreal.

If all the experiences of the mind are real, then there is no negation of anything. At the same time, there cannot be any change, as the patterns of suffering, happiness, struggle, behaviour, expectation and desire continue to be the same. The patterns of behaviour, expectation, needs and desires do not change. In childhood you play with little toy cars. When you get some money you play with real cars and get a new car every six months or every year. When you are young you play with little dolls, little he-dolls and she-dolls, and when you grow up you play with bigger he-dolls and she-dolls. You also change them many times according to your likes, fights and choices. Maybe you have lived a life like this, too.

In relation to the mind, what is reality and what is illusion? When you begin to think of yourself as a reality or illusion you miss the point. Swami Sivananda says: "Improve your present by learning from the past, and develop strength and hope for the future." You live in the present; your body, brain and mind are in the present. Yet your mind is always lost in the past, and your fears and insecurities are always about the future. You never enjoy the present, as you live in your memories of the past, are fearful of your future and ignore your present. In this situation any experience of the mind is false; it is unreal, as it does not ground you in the present condition and present reality. When you use the learning from the past to improve and excel in the present, and to be optimistic about the future, then that experience of the mind becomes real. This is how the tantras and the Upanishads describe the experience of the real and the unreal in life.

It is not a question of intellectual, philosophical analysis or understanding. It is simply a realization that when you

use the learning from the past to excel in the present then that expression, that life, that state of being is the real you. Whatever you experience at that moment is real. If, though, you are ignoring your present by living in your past memories, and you are apprehensive, fearful, insecure or uncertain about your future, then any type of experience that you have will not be the present, correct one. According to tantra, getting lost in either the past or the future is unreal, while focusing on the present is real.

This is also the progression in the mental awareness of yoga: pratyahara, dharana and dhyana. As previously mentioned, three yogas are considered important: hatha yoga for annamaya and pranamaya kosha, raja yoga for manomaya kosha, and kriya yoga for vijñanamaya and anandamaya kosha. Yoga in this context is a journey and exploration of the five sheaths, the five bodies, the five expressions of life, and enhancement of one's ability.

Children and yoga

The benefits of yoga are more visible in children than in adults. When children adopt yoga they do it in a natural and spontaneous manner, while adults come to yoga with certain expectations and needs. Once the expectations and needs are fulfilled, their association with yoga ends. Yoga does not become a part of their culture in life, whereas in a child's life whatever they learn becomes a part of their future expression; they express it later on in life. It happens in a natural and spontaneous manner. As a yoga teacher, one should focus on bringing this yogic understanding to the little ones and not wait until they reach a point of crisis in their life. That has been our experience.



BYMM children teaching yoga

When we bring yoga to children and see them grow up and join different professional areas and take on different responsibilities, there is a marked difference between them and other children who have not had the yogic exposure. A definite, clear difference can be seen between the two groups of people: the yoga group and the non-yoga group. Therefore, in Bihar Yoga there is a strong emphasis on teaching yoga to children.

Yoga around the globe



Swamiji attending RYE conference, France

In Europe we have an organization called RYE, located in Paris. The RYE movement has existed since 1976, and its job is to teach yoga in schools and colleges. In October last year, the Department of Education, Government of France, gave a statement that the Bihar Yoga system will be taught in all the educational institutions of the country. Now the Satyananda Yoga–Bihar Yoga system is official in the schools and colleges of France.

Similarly in other countries, yoga is being taught to improve the ability of students to deal with the pressures of education and society, and to find a direction in their life. In 2000, the Bihar Yoga system was introduced by UNESCO in seventeen European countries.

Yoga has come into many other countries. On the American continent there is a society known as Yoga

Education Society (YES), whose head office is based in Canada. They publish books for children and distribute the books throughout the US and Canada. You will find *Yoga Education for Children*, Volumes 1 and 2, in schools in North America.

For all of the work done in yoga, the focus and emphasis is on educating the young generation in the disciplines of yoga. If they can imbibe the culture, the discipline, the balance and the harmony that yoga aims to provide, our future will certainly be bright; better than what it is today.

Reaching out to the whole community

In this manner, yoga has reached out from the ashram to many areas. Even in the army, soldiers are given yoga to enhance their creative ability. They are not fighting all the time, they only serve in the army. Yoga is not being taught in the army to make them into a better fighting force, but to increase and enhance their creative human ability. After all, they are the young generation of the nation. They need the direction, help, support and care that any other person in society needs.

In the state of Bihar, we have been teaching the principles of yoga therapy in six medical colleges, to the MBBS students and professors. In response to a request by the Health Department, the Yoga Publications Trust also published a book, *Yogic Management of Common Diseases*, to aid the medical fraternity to use yoga. Once upon a time in Australia in 1976, 1977, 1978, doctors would prescribe medication, and in the same prescription write the relevant yoga practices for you to do. You had a choice to take medicine or yoga. Of course, when yoga went viral, all these things stopped, as the results were not good. Many of the activities that happened in the early seventies and eighties are not happening now due to yoga going viral and people losing touch with the tradition and only identifying yoga as a physical practice. However, if yoga is practised in a systematic manner, a positive change in life and in society is possible.

A classical and traditional system

The Bihar Yoga tradition developed over a period of time with the understanding that human nature has to be cultivated homogeneously. With that awareness in mind, it is one of the most classical and traditional systems of yoga at present in the world. Learning and mastering are different: learning does not take time; mastering takes time. You also have to experience the benefit that yoga can give so you can be convinced yourself. If you are convinced you will also gain commercially, as you will put your heart and soul into it and you will become a good yoga teacher.



Living the Ancient Yoga Tradition at the Gurukul

Another aspect of the Bihar Yoga tradition is ashram life, which is an important facet for those who want to explore yoga in a different environment. All the courses at the Bihar School of Yoga are residential; there are no day courses.

My guru, Swami Satyananda, once said to me, “It does not do justice to yoga when people come to study yoga for one hour and then go back to their homes and live an undisciplined life. Yoga education cannot be imparted in that manner. Therefore at BSY there should only be residential courses.” This was his guideline right from the beginning.

Following this mandate and the system of the residential ashram structure that Sri Swamiji developed, gurukul living became an important aspect of learning yoga. You may have also seen for yourself that when you first came to Ganga Darshan, you did not find yourself in a yoga centre; you came to a place where three different traditions merge together.

Confluence of three traditions

Ganga Darshan is a confluence where the three traditions – yoga, the gurukul lifestyle and sannyasa – merge together.

Yoga: One teaching is that of yoga; people come here for yoga training, they stay for the duration of the course



and then they go back. Their association and main concern is yoga. That is one aspect of this place.

Gurukul lifestyle: The second aspect is gurukul living; ashram living, communal living. What is the foundation of this lifestyle? Togetherness is the foundation of ashram living. It is not individual growth but communal growth that is encouraged in the ashram. My wish is that everybody respect,

honour and cooperate with each other. These are the components of the gurukul tradition, where one learns accountability and understanding in real life. In the gurukul, one lives the yamas and the niyamas, and makes the effort to transcend and overcome the limitations that hold one back. That aspect is known as ashram living or the gurukul tradition.

In the past, in the times of Rama and Krishna, they lived in the gurukul like normal people, forgetting their status and position, and lived with one *bhava*, with one attitude: “We are working together to further the mission of the tradition and guru. We are not working to enhance our own prestige and position.” With this idea even Rama, Krishna and the children of emperors lived with the children of poor people and developed understanding, awareness, sympathy, affection, and a sense of helpfulness and cooperation. This is gurukul life in the ashram, where a personal discipline is imbibed to connect with wisdom, not with the ego and the detrimental mental qualities. That is the purpose of ashram living, which is the second tradition.

Sannyasa: The third tradition is sannyasa. Sannyasa is a life dedicated to discovering the beauty and the wisdom within oneself. Sannyasa is self-effort.

There is the story of a man who bought a deserted, barren piece of land. Nothing grew on that land, except for weeds and rocks that had made it their home. Not a single blade of grass was a tenant there. After purchasing the piece of land this man worked hard, day and night, to clear, prepare, till and plant flowers, fruit and trees on the land. In the course of time he made that barren, rocky piece of land into a beautiful garden, which became famous. The fame of this garden's beauty invited people from all over the land to admire it, just as people go to Disneyland and Disneyworld.

One day a priest came and was wonderstruck by the beauty of the garden. While he was walking around, he exclaimed, "What a wonderful creation of God this is! Such beauty! Such peace! Such tranquillity! Such attraction! It's so colourful!" The gardener, who was walking with the priest and showing him the garden, said, "Sorry, I disagree with you. This is my hard work. You should have seen this piece of land when God was its owner! Nothing used to grow here except rocks and weeds. It was my effort and hard work that made this land into a beautiful garden." That is sannyasa.

Think about how much rubbish you have cleared out from within yourself, and you will realize where you are in sannyasa. The ability to remove the weeds and the rocks, and to convert the barren piece of land into a beautiful garden is the sannyasa tradition. These three traditions of yoga, ashram life and sannyasa merge at Ganga Darshan.

Understanding the concept of guru

Another concept that must be clarified is that of guru. In all my time as a sannyasin I have encountered very peculiar, and sometimes laughable, understandings of guru, since many people believe that guru is the enlightened one. The guru may be enlightened, however, 'guru' is a title given by students to their teacher, the guru does not call himself a guru. The guru sees himself as a disciple. It is other people who call him or her the guru. People call Swami Sivananda a guru, but Swami Sivananda was never a guru; he lived the

life of a disciple. People call Swami Satyananda guru but he did not say, “I am a guru.” He lived the life of a disciple. There has been no clear understanding of what the concept of guru actually is and it has therefore become distorted.

Those who want to see the definition of guru generally open Wikipedia, or other dictionaries, or Google, since there are only two ways that people can find answers now. One is by Googling and the other is by going to God. Google and God are the only two sources that can answer queries now. Sometimes if the right information is not contained in Google then people look at scriptures.

Whether you look at scriptures, Google, or God, where is your understanding at? In the sannyasa tradition the guru is seen in three ways: first as a teacher, second as an advisor, and third as an inspirer. These are the three definitions of the word ‘guru’:

Guru as teacher: A teacher teaches the student a system, a technique, a subject, a topic, and creates the foundation to understand the subject and the topic. That is the role of a teacher. When you join school and go through the primary and secondary class education, you are taught letters, the composition of words, grammar, math; you are given all the basic foundations, the basic building blocks. The role of the teacher is to give you the basic building blocks and teach you how to build with that – not to build for you but to teach you how to build. They do not give you the building; they teach you how to construct it. That is the role of the first aspect of guru as teacher.

Guru as advisor: In the second role, the guru becomes an advisor. When the student has understood the basic concepts, then the teacher becomes the advisor who advises on the sequence and progression of his or her effort and sadhana. When the student has imbibed and understood the initial foundation teachings of the tradition as conveyed by the guru and now begins to build the house by placing the blocks on top of one another, then at that time the guru becomes an advisor.

The guru as advisor does not provide you with solutions to your life problems, whether material, social, economic or personal. That is not the role of this advisor. He is not a social advisor. He is not a psychological advisor. He is only a spiritual sadhana advisor. He is not like a condo developer who makes the building for you to rent or buy, and then live in. No. You have to construct your own life, you have to construct your own nature, personality and character. The guru only points out the way and beyond that there is no other role. If you cannot construct then you have to be responsible for your limitations, inabilities and lack of understanding. You have to have the discrimination to know the intent of the advisor without superimposing your own idiosyncrasies on that intent or instruction. In this second aspect, the role of the guru is only as an advisor to help you reconstruct your own nature and personality in the best manner possible.

Guru as inspirer: The third role of guru is as the inspirer. After you have acquired the skills to create your own picture and make your own house, then the guru becomes an inspirer who keeps you motivated to walk the right path.

To reiterate, guru is not the person who provides solutions to all problems. The guru does not interfere in other people's lives and does not tell them what to do with their life. If there are gurus who happen to do it, then they are not competent enough to understand what their own role is. In the guise of helping others, they interfere in the lives of everyone. That is a totally incorrect understanding and behaviour on the part of both parties, the student and the teacher.

What has guru got to do with your personal life? He does not dictate how you should live in your home, what you should eat, when you should sleep. That is your routine and daily activity and you can apply your common sense in that. He is not a social consultant or a problem solver. The guru does not take responsibility and charge of the student's life and actions. If you are unable to take responsibility for

your own actions then you do not deserve a guru. The guru inspires the aspirant to become responsible for their own efforts and motivation in fulfilling their aim in life in a positive manner.

Cultivating the guru concept in day-to-day life

The guru's only role is to provide the teaching as a teacher, advice on how to build your own nature and personality according to the principles of yoga, and to be an inspiration. These are the three aspects of what is called the guru tattwa. This concept has to be translated and understood in day-to-day activity also.

The guru is a person who is totally objective and detached from everybody else, since the role of the guru is to empower you to take responsibility for your own self with wisdom and clarity. Additionally, the guru's role is to ensure that you follow the path of your dharma and to guide you in it, provided you are willing to walk this path and not just ask out of curiosity, "What is my dharma?" and then go and do whatever you wish to do.

This is how the guru concept is looked at in India, although many things might have been written. When things are written, the references are taken from many sources, but if you analyze realistically, the three main roles of the guru are: teacher, advisor and inspirer. Therefore, do not go to the gurus to talk about your problems and difficulties of life, about your partnerships and relationships, or about your frustrations. You have been given the right tools and the inspiration to deal with your own self. How you use them depends on you.

Thus, the idea and concept of guru should be understood in the right context.

Ashram life: bringing alive the disciplines of yoga

Common to both the yoga people and the sannyasa people is ashram life. This concept also requires clarification. What is an ashram? Many people say ashram is a community, a

spiritual centre, or the place where the guru lives. You have all developed your own understanding of ashram. There are many types of ashrams in India: *balak ashram*, place for children; *yogashram*, place for yoga; *vidhava ashram*, place for widows; *vridhha ashram*, place for old people. 'Ashram' is a word which is used in conjunction with many prefixes, and it indicates a group of people coming together with the same purpose. Our ashram is generally called yoga ashram, the place of yoga. That is the registered name: yoga ashram, the telegraphic name. The registered name is Bihar School of Yoga. When we call the Bihar School of Yoga 'yogashram', it means the centre of yoga. When Sri Swamiji established the Bihar School of Yoga, the intent was clear: it was only a school, a place of learning where people come and people go. Therefore, ashrams have a mobile population, they are not managed by a permanent group of people. Everybody who comes here for a little while for a program, a course, or a session, pitches in to help in the activities of the ashram.

Nowadays ashrams are sometimes defined as retreats. That is an incorrect concept. The word 'ashram' is composed of two words: *a* means 'to come' and *shram* means 'to work'. Thus the literal meaning of ashram is 'come to work'. 'Come to work' means for a specific purpose. Even a hospital can be called *bimar ashram* or *rogi ashram*, as ashram is a generic word indicating a place where a role is being fulfilled. Everyone who comes in to the ashram with the same aspiration and the same objective becomes a part of fulfilling the vision of the place.

Ashrams are guided by certain principles. Until and unless there is identification with the place, where you



feel that you belong to it and it belongs to you, there is no connection between you, the individual, and the centre of activity. Therefore, it is encouraged that everybody in the ashram should participate together; there are no students, there are no teachers, everyone is one family. That is ashram.

In the ashram, the first factor is identification with the place; the second is understanding the intent of the place; the third is cooperating in the place; the fourth is communicating with people; and the fifth is supporting people. These are the five aspects of an ashram.

The rules and guidelines are all part of ashram living. How much you are able to live that depends on you. People generally cannot live a disciplined life, which I notice here in Ganga Darshan. People have difficulty adhering to a system or discipline. Instead of appreciating and trying to understand the discipline and the system, in your search for comfort you try to modify them. An example: *mouna*, silence. It is a tradition, yet who follows it? People in geru? Students? Guests? Does anybody truthfully follow it? Although it has been in place for years, it is seen as a restriction, not as a yogic teaching. If that is your understanding and your intention then you must ask yourself why you are here. Sometimes people tell others, "We are told not to speak in the ashram", giving a negative impression of the ashram practice. Very few people say, "Yes, we are practising *mouna*. It is a *sadhana* we need to do." If you do not understand the intent of the ashram, it creates disturbance in the systems, routines and disciplines of the ashram.

This is one example that illustrates how people always look at the negative rather than the positive aspect of the ashram discipline. It is the inability of these individuals to appreciate and understand the systems and disciplines of the ashram that makes them have a distorted view of what happens. People also do practices without understanding them and when they speak about them, their opinion is totally different from the original intention of the practice.

Therefore, these five components of ashram living should be clearly grasped: identification, understanding, cooperation, communication, and support.

Ashram living based on ancient yogic precepts

Ashram life is based on disciplines that are referred to in ayurveda, in the Upanishads, in the Vedas and in the tantras. The disciplines here are not self-created. If you have the eyes to see and the wisdom to understand, you will discover that each system placed here, and which has been in place for a long time, represents an aspect of ashram living as enunciated in the tradition.

An example: from Guru Poornima to August, for one month breakfast is stopped in the ashram. Many people cannot tolerate it. They think, 'Swamiji has stopped our breakfast.' Some people even ask: 'Why am I being denied my morning breakfast?' They do not recall that we do this practice every year, for according to the rules of ayurveda, a one-month period during the monsoon season should be without breakfast for health purposes. Episodes like this, which people believe to be odd decisions of the guru, the management or the administration, are based on principles of ayurveda, disciplines of the Upanishads, the Vedas and the tantras. They are not my whims, neither the whims of my guru nor the whims of Swami Sivananda.

Overcoming the attachment to daily comforts

Today you are accustomed to comforts and you face difficulty when you live in an environment where you have to be responsible for your own things, clean your room and live with strangers; things which you have not done before, yet you have to do at the ashram. The emphasis on cleanliness and order is not an ashram discipline only; it is *shaucha*, the first niyama of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*. It is easy to talk about shaucha as a philosophy and not live it in real life. If you keep unwashed glasses in your room and speak of shaucha, it is hypocrisy. At home you can throw your things here,

there and everywhere. If you come to the ashram for even fifteen days your roommate is somebody from another part of the world who is a total stranger, and you have to share the room. Therefore, you must keep your room properly and learn the discipline of maintaining yourself.

Why is it difficult to keep clothes properly and fold them neatly? Does it take hours to do that? It takes seconds. How much time does it take to straighten out bedsheets? It doesn't take an hour. When you don't make your bed you excuse yourself and say, "I did not have the time." You don't have thirty seconds to make your bed? Instead, you are willing to accept your laziness and justify your weakness by giving the excuse that you did not have the time. That is not adherence to shaucha; it is an excuse to avoid following the mandate of shaucha. If you do not keep your things neatly in the closet or in other places, how can you consider yourself to be a teacher of shaucha? If you cannot live yoga, you have no right to speak on yoga.

These are the challenges of ashram life. Non-adherence to the ashram culture represents a disturbed, distracted and dissipated mind; an immature and lethargic mind.

Fusion of action and intention



Karma yoga

Why is it difficult for you to feel a sense of belonging and a sense of duty and responsibility? These are in place for your own betterment. In theory everything sounds good to you, however, in practice there is resistance. Sri Swamiji says, "There is always a split between what people think and what they do." This is the cause of conflict, frustration, tension and anxiety. There is a difference between what you think, what

you believe and how you perform and act; they are never compatible. When idea and action get fused in the life of an individual, that person becomes a model from whom others take inspiration.

Therefore the learning in ashram life is the union or coming together of intention and action. If the intention is cooperation then action has to be cooperative and should not be guided by your mind, ego, ambition, negativity or positivity. Just as an arrow flies true to its mark without deviation, without turning left or right, human intention and action should have a clear focus when performed. Action has to be like an arrow, based on wisdom and understanding; not on ambition or on petty thinking. Thinking in life should be: 'God, help me to maintain my true direction in life. Let me begin my day like a new day that I've never lived before, and not carry the memories of the past, which restrict my happiness and joy today.' That is my prayer.

If you observe yourself objectively and cultivate humility and understanding, then you can consider that the purpose of ashram life is attainable: just simple understanding, simple cooperation and a simple smile. Swami Sivananda says, "Eat a little, drink a little, smile a little, frown a little, laugh a little, dance a little, sleep a little, meditate a little, do asana a little." For him everything was in little doses. In your case you take a big dose all the time. When you are happy you want to collect all the happiness; when you are angry you want to collect all the aggression, not just a little bit. By cultivating little things, little by little you become big. After all, the ocean is made up of little drops of water.

Discovering the real self by clearing the rubbish

Sannyasa is the cultivation of the garden; ashram life is imbibing the yamas and the niyamas and a positive culture. Naturally when you are cleaning a drain, the rubbish comes out; that does not mean that the drain is the rubbish. The rubbish that accumulates in the drain is only there for the reason that you have never cleaned it. If it is kept clean,

there will not be any accumulation of rubbish. You have to learn how to clean your mind. Just as your body follows a natural course of correction; you eat and you expel, in the same manner, the mind should also absorb and release. If it releases, then moments later you are a normal, happy person. If it does not release, then you can be struggling for years with the stress and anxiety of something that happened years ago.

The yamas and niyamas, and the guidelines that Swami Sivananda has given that you sing, “Serenity, regularity, absence of vanity . . .”, the 18 ITIES, are what? Are they only the ramblings of a God-intoxicated saint or do they have some relevance in your life? They form a part of ashram living. The yamas, the niyamas, the vedantic and yogic principles underlie ashram living. You have to constantly and continuously remember this.

Swami Sivananda says, and Sri Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita* says, it is difficult to do the right thing and easy to do the wrong thing. To do the right thing there has to be proper understanding, analysis and awareness in which the negative never becomes perceived as a mountain; it only becomes a speck of dust. People see the negative as a mountain; however, it is only a speck of dust. What is the cause when a simple problem that should be like a speck of dust is perceived as a mountain? Ego, and your reaction to it. If there is no ego and no reaction, that problem will not even exist.

What is the role of a hospital? You go to hospital to get healthy. However, at the hospital you do not see health anywhere. You only encounter disease, viruses, bacteria, big injections and big machines; nothing indicates any symptom of health there. In the doctor’s clinic you will not see health anywhere, although people go to the doctor to get healthy you will only see disease. Health is the outcome of managing the diseased condition. In the same manner, wisdom, understanding and peace are the outcomes of managing the conditions of the mind and ego.

Tools of yama and niyama

In this life that you are born into, you have been given the necessary tools, yet you have never utilized them to discover your real self. So much time has passed that you have even forgotten how to use those tools, and have instead identified with your ego. The ego does not allow you to use the tools, since it is a virus itself. The ego is not a doctor; it is a virus. The doctor is your intention and your action coming together. When you find this doctor then healing can begin. In order to bring intention and action together, the yamas and niyamas are used. Patanjali has described only five for his purpose; however, yamas and niyamas are contained in every yoga, not just the raja yoga system. Hatha yoga, bhakti yoga, and other yogas have identified different yamas and niyamas according to their purposes. In the yogic literature there are many other yamas and niyamas.

Each yama and niyama relates to the development of one aspect of your nature, cultivating one flower in your mind. In ashram life it is the identification with this that is important. All the other stuff that keeps happening due to the perspective of your ego and the identification with your own ego is irrelevant. Problems will not even exist if there is no ego and no reaction. In the same manner, how you react in your mind is your nature, yet it is not the nature of ashram life. The nature of ashram life is to make you aware of the different seeds that you can plant in your mind in the form of the yamas and niyamas of yoga, the Vedas and tantra.

In this process of clearing the land, be ready to remove the rocks. Hold them in your hand and look at them objectively and then throw them away. Be ready to pull the weeds, which have large roots reaching into the ground. Although they look small on the top, weeds have huge roots. You have to pull them out. There is no need to fear this; you are recognizing the limiting, restricting and containing quality in yourself. Why be afraid, fearful or insecure about that? Rather, you should be happy that, "Today I was able to eradicate my jealousy, and now I can cultivate the seed

of love.’ To be fearful about feeling jealous and going into panic about it is a useless behaviour of the mind.

Instead of identifying with the negative, be happy that now you have the opportunity to do something better and more positive. This is the purpose of ashram life. How you face your negativity is your head-trip, for example, in response to a yama or a niyama, such as shaucha. How you maintain your closet and room is your response to the idea of shaucha. If I go walking around the ashram and say, “It is dirty here. Please clear it up”, it is not that I am trying to force something on you; it is making you aware that you are living in an incorrect manner in a place where you have the opportunity to learn to live correctly.

Let Thy will be done

The state of realization is when an idea becomes a sadhana, and does not remain a mere intellectual concept, guiding the actions and the behaviours of life. Learn simply how to look, how to hear, how to use the hands, how to use the heart, and what the purpose is in using all the sense faculties. After all, the senses are the form of tejas.

Tejas means fire, luminosity, warmth. Senses without tejas are ineffective; and senses with tejas become the active principle. Tejas is material and transcendental both. When you offer tejas and the sensory connection to the world, they feed ego, hatred, jealousy, aspirations, needs, connections and relationships based on mundane, physical and sensorial ideas and identities. When tejas, awareness, and the focus of the senses are given a goal to associate with, and the senses begin to identify with that higher goal and higher nature, that is the real conversion of an idea into an action. When you are looking for beauty, peace, harmony, cooperation, and generating a sync in unity, then ego, hatred, mind, jealousies, greed, everything has to be left behind, and you have to connect with the spirit of the divine.

You have to become humble. You have to become free from your own obsessions. This humility eventually

manifests the awareness of the higher reality, that ‘I am only an instrument in the hands of the higher power’. Humility brings forth the realization, ‘Let Thy will be done’. Humility brings the understanding that we move together, many people as one, and do not create a division between two. When your senses begin to function in that manner, this is the state of Ishwara pranidhana. It is Ishwara pranidhana when the eyes look at the beauty, when the ears listen to the harmony, when the hands reach out to help and not to grab, when the feet do not falter and instead walk towards excellence and perfection, and when the heart is open to love.

This awareness has to be cultivated by following the yamas and niyamas. It is not a challenge to confront one’s mind. It is a challenge to connect with positivity and that is the purpose of ashram life: to identify what is positive and to connect with that.



6

Three Stages of Practising Yoga

I see the practice of yoga and what it does to the practitioner in three stages. First it is a physical practice, second it is self-discovery, and third it is awakening your creative potential by the energy of grace.

Three progressive stages of yoga

At the first level, as a physical practice, many people do yoga like aerobics, many people do it dynamically, many people do it gently, many people do it consciously and slowly. This is the learning and practice that you do in a studio, in a jungle, in a forest, at home, in the ashram. You experience the body, the pose, the inside of the body, the breathing, the awareness of body. Whatever the manner you practise, the yoga practices influence the body, free up the stiffness and tensions of the body and make you feel more energetic, relaxed, free and light. That is the first level of yoga experience.

The second level of yoga experience involves connecting with yourself. In this stage, you combine different practices and systems to create the right, tasty vegetable. You know the example of cooking tasty vegetables: so much quantity of water, of salt, of condiments and of vegetables, all in proper proportion to each other. When you do yoga in this manner you get in touch with yourself: with your nature, with your personality, and with your body-mind unit together as a whole. What you have been learning here at the Bihar School

of Yoga is an indication for the second stage, in order to begin your journey to connect with and realize yourself.

If you recall the things that you have done in the classes taught here: breathing has been combined with posture; mantra has been combined with posture; movement has been combined with posture. When yoga is practised in this manner, any experience taking place in your body is not alien to you; rather, you are able to identify what is happening within yourself. There is a deeper awareness of what your physical body is capable of; of how you can de-stress the mind; of how you can relax; of how you can breathe better; of how you can focus and concentrate better. This awareness makes you aware of your own expressions, and how to modify and rectify them. This is the beginning.

Then there is the third stage of yoga, which is spiritual. The conductors of human creativity awaken and the channels of human receptivity open completely. The dormant faculties awaken. Your creativity develops and you become a channel for the guru's energy or for God's energy, in whatever way you express it or feel it.

I will focus on the second aspect, as most are familiar with the first aspect of yoga. The second definition of yoga is also associated with the third stage of yoga.

Second stage of yoga practice: realizing your nature

In the second stage of yoga practice, a deepening of awareness takes you through to the realization of your nature. At present your nature is conditioned, formed and preset, with little scope to change or improve until you really want to. You have to ask yourself, "Do I really want to change?" Most people do not want to change, although they like hearing about it. They like it as a lofty ideal, yet when it comes to their own life they are unable to change it. Why? Human conditioning is like a habit. How do you spell 'habit'? H-A-B-I-T. If you want to remove a habit, what do you do? You remove the H first, then 'a bit' remains. Then you remove A, and 'bit' remains. Then you remove B, and 'it' remains.



This is a vicious circle in life. When you reach the last point you discover that a habit still continues to exist; the conditioning, the form, the shape, the understanding, the container that you live in is still there. The outer garb remains, although inside it is hollow. The formed, determined, preset conditioning is what you are in your mentality, character, knowledge, expression, skill

and understanding. These are different in each individual, therefore people do not all think in a similar manner.

How can experience take place in yoga when positive ideas are held only as lofty ideals? For example, if I say that anger is bad and it is like a deep well in which you fall and cannot come out again, you will nod your head and say, “Yes, correct, it is really like a deep hole. Oh yes, if I get angry then it is very difficult for me to extract myself from that depth. Swamiji is right.” However, you have not realized that anger is a deep hole and you should not fall into it; you have only heard it. If you had realized it, you would make the effort to ensure not to fall in the pit again. That realization is absent. The same thing happens with envy, jealousy, hatred; and with love, compassion and sympathy.

Whatever you identify with in your life is your clinging post and you do not realize that it is a pit. You go to that pit every day until the realization dawns, “Yes, for the last twenty years I did not realize it was wrong, for I never identified it. It was only a lofty ideal. For twenty years I’ve been hearing that this is wrong, and today I am realizing that it is wrong.” When you get a slap in the face, and you feel the agony and the pain, then you realize that it was not a lofty ideal. It was a pit in which you took shelter every day of your life that

you had to avoid, yet you did not. This happens in virtually everyone's life.

Overcoming pitfalls

I have seen people who have succeeded once they have identified these pits and avoided them. When your awareness deepens, you become aware of your conditioning, habits, nature, traits, behaviour, skills, abilities and needs; everything. That is how you connect with the body, with the mind, and with life. In this context, yoga practice is not only aerobic exercise; it becomes a tool to connect with the body-mind unit and with life. That is the second stage. The effort of the second stage is not physical; it is not hatha yoga. On the contrary, the effort of the second stage is raja yoga: to connect with the body-mind unit.

The first aspect, the deepening physical awareness, learning and practice that you do as physical exercise, can be related to hatha yoga. The second aspect of yoga experience is the deepening awareness, which can be associated with raja yoga, as it deals with the inner personality, the inner nature. You realize your conditioning and, developing a new set of positive traits, habits and conditioning, you alter the old, detrimental and restrictive into strength and something qualitatively better. Patanjali was clear in his exposition that raja yoga must begin from the basics; not from Ishwara pranidhana, but from shaucha. Ishwara pranidhana is the fifth niyama. You have not started with the first. Ahimsa, satya, asteya, aparigraha and brahmacharya are the five yamas. Shaucha, santosha, tapas, swadhyaya and Ishwara pranidhana are the five niyamas. Until and unless you pass the first class, the second class, and so on, you cannot arrive at the fifth class. Therefore, in the *Yoga Sutras* Patanjali has been clear about the steps to a gradual discovery of yourself.

Building a foundation by perfecting the basics

At the second stage of yoga practice is the fine-tuning of your external mental behaviour. People say satya means 'be

truthful', yet do you know the meaning of being truthful? The real meaning of being truthful is that you are naked in front of yourself. You do not put on a different type of mask for each situation and circumstance; instead you are your natural self. The more you are your natural self, the more you adhere to the principles of satya, since you reflect what you truly are and not what you expect or project yourself to be.

Satya is also fine-tuning the mind. Satya develops an attitude of the mind that allows you to see the unreal in the environment and the untruth in your surroundings. A person who lives satya is able to know and recognize the nature of other people; to know if another person is a hypocrite or a sincere person. The person who lives satya does not hide behind an imposed identity or mask, and can therefore know the nature of other people.

It is hypocritical to talk of Ishwara pranidhana and to not talk of shaucha or santosha, which are the basic foundations for accepting life and experiencing peace in life. Patanjali said spirituality does not begin with *Ishwara pranidhana*, belief in God; no religious, spiritual or psychic experience begins with God. The first step is reorganizing, purifying and balancing the mind. *Shaucha*, cleanliness, is the first of the niyamas. Perfect that and pass the first class. Shaucha, the cleanliness and the purity of mind is reflected in how you live and how you think and act.

Your bedroom is a reflection of your mental state. Your closet is a reflection of your mental state. Your house is a reflection of you, whether you live your life in a disorderly manner or in an orderly manner, in a systematic manner or in an unsystematic manner. The *shuchi*, the purity, that you experience inside reflects outside in the environment as well. If you want to see the shuchi or the state of a sannyasin's or sadhaka's mind, go and see how their room and closet is. If you want to see the state of your mind, go and see your room. This is a simple, undeniable fact.

The second niyama is *santosha* or contentment. As long as there is discontentment in life, can there be any type of

spiritual awareness? No. Spiritual awareness does not begin with discontentment, as discontentment is more external and not internal, mental. Discontentment relates to the senses, needs, expectations, desires and ambitions; 99.9 percent of discontentment is in relation to the world, society, the family, and your own self. How can you realize your pure nature in a fractured personality?

Therefore, the basic precept that Ishwara pranidhana is yoga is inaccurate. The simple idea is that organization and purity are the beginning of your journey of discovery. The simple idea is that cultivating contentment in life is the beginning of your journey. This second stage or experience of yoga, enables you to make yourself a better person by realizing your traits and behaviours. Once you have attained that level of realization, and are able to modify certain traits within yourself and experience enhanced awareness and clarity, then you move into the third experience of yoga.

Third stage of practice: force of grace

The third aspect can be associated with kriya yoga. This third experience of yoga is psychic and spiritual. At this point you begin to work with kundalini, with chakras, with the energies that surround you, and with the inherent abilities within you that are presently dormant.

When you reach the third level, you become the channel for grace, whatever shape that grace takes. Grace can take the shape of love, so you become the channel of love. Grace can take the shape of peace; you become the channel of peace, you radiate peace. Grace can become the channel of bliss; you radiate bliss.

When you begin to experience this spiritual force known in religious terminology as 'grace', then there is a sense of completeness, wholeness and connectedness. You feel that your heart is connected with something much more powerful than what you can identify with your senses. That is the third experience of yoga.

From inspired to inspirer

The Sivananda and the Satyananda Yoga traditions focus on the second and the third stages of yoga practice, as most of the people who come here to the Bihar School of Yoga have had exposure to the physical hatha yoga stage, whether in a large quantity or a small quantity. Using that experience they then move into the second stage of yoga. Those who are able to fulfil the process of the second become inspirations to human society. Those who complete the process of the third become an inspiration to human civilization.



The Wheel of Satyananda Yoga–Bihar Yoga

The yogic theory is that if you are able to regulate all the aspects of your body, including the physical, the pranic, the mental, the consciousness, and the psychic dimensions, then any condition can be effectively managed. Even in the case of disease or a life-threatening illness, whether it is physiological, psychological or psychic, the yogic theory is that if you are able to harmonize all these five levels of your existence, you may regain balance and maintain your health.

Stress, anxiety, imbalance in the mucus-bile-wind system, obsession and hypertension are all indications of imbalances and disturbances in one's system. They are indications of different states that one goes through in one's life. When there is anxiety or worry, what tools can be used to overcome that particular expression of one's nature in the shortest time and simplest manner?

Yoga capsules for health

The system of Satyananda Yoga–Bihar Yoga covers all aspects, even for the management of stress: asana deals with the muscular and nervous stress; pranayama deals with nervous stress; yoga nidra deals with mental stress; mantra deals with the unconscious stressors; and meditation creates a bridge between your mind and the experience of peace while living in an environment of stressors. These practices of asana, pranayama, pratyahara, yoga nidra, relaxation,

concentration and mantra put together create one capsule of yoga. The minimum from all of these different aspects becomes one yoga capsule.

In order to get relief from a headache, you need only have one tablet, by which your headache will go away in ten minutes. By swallowing ten tablets, your headache will not go away in one minute. It will still take ten minutes, however, consuming ten tablets is damaging to your health. It is better to take one and have the same benefit, and similarly with yoga practice. Doing twenty practices creates more stress in your body and mind system, and will have the opposite result; while you are expecting something to happen, you will undergo a different experience. The yoga capsule deals with the minimum that you can apply in one situation and the shortest time period that you can do it in. If you can do the whole routine in fifteen minutes, that is a capsule; and the appropriate one. If you are able to sustain it you will create a conditioning whereby, in the future, stress will have no effect.

I live surrounded by stress; I do not live in spiritual bliss! I do not live in inner peace. I live surrounded by perpetual clouds of the stress, anxiety and phobias of everybody around me. Even when I go out, I am surrounded by the expectations of people and what each one desires of me. Even within the ashram, the expectations of everyone surround me. I am never free from these stressors. I do not live in spiritual bliss, samadhi and ananda; they are a distant reality in my life. Despite that, with yoga I have the skill to manage the stressors so I can be smiling all the time. While others are frowning during the day, I am smiling. That is a skill and an ability that is developed where the stressors do not affect one; a positive conditioning, nature and habit are created.

Yoga capsules therefore are an important aspect of yoga, as they help to create a positive condition by eradicating that which frequently affects the peaceful state of the body and mind. That is the reason for the yoga capsules. All the different practices that you learn in your classes – asana, pranayama, concentration and meditation techniques of

self-help, and the different ways to observe yourself – are put together in the capsules.

Disconnection from your own self

Since the time of birth, you are conditioned to look outwards and to keep yourself entertained. Entertainment, pleasure and enjoyment become the main focus in life. When these become the focus of life and they lead you towards sensorial gratification, then being in touch with yourself is lost. For everything you are dependent on healers, doctors, therapies and medicines. If you have a headache, you will take medicine, yet you will not change your environment, your routine, your lifestyle or your mindset. If you have anxiety you will take tablets and visit a psychologist or a psychoanalyst, and not learn how to relax the stresses and the stressors. This is the situation in which you live, and it is going to intensify in the future.

The dependency on outer agents to find happiness and health will increase in the future. That is the meaning of the word ‘materialism’. Everyone is attracted by it and there is not a single soul upon this planet who can say, “I am free from my attractions to and the hypnosis, of materialism.” After trekking many days, one traveller reached the Himalayan mountains and at twenty-one thousand feet saw a cave, inside which there was a yogi meditating. He approached the yogi, bowed down and said, “Master, please tell me the purpose of life.” The yogi said, “Hold on for five minutes, I’ll go and check Google and give you the answer.” Even in the high mountain caves there are computers and Wi-Fi connection!

Many people know their computer more than their own body and can sort the problems of their computer when they arise, but they cannot sort the problems of their own body in which they live all their life. That is how disconnected they are from themselves. Some yoga students are not even aware that they have armpits or where the armpit is located! That is how disconnected people have become from their own body.

There is a disconnection from the body and mind in everyone's life. My guru, Sri Swami Satyananda, says that our actions are not compatible with our wisdom. Actions are guided by greed and need, passions and ambitions, and not by wisdom or understanding. You desire understanding and sympathy, yet you are not able to express these in your own life. This is the real encounter in the spiritual journey, the encounter with yourself. Asana and pranayama reflect only a small component of this yogic journey.

In order to understand the breadth and depth of yoga, you need to understand the 'yoga chakra', the wheel of yoga, which illustrates the different aspects of the Bihar Yoga system.

Early, ancient wave of yoga



Sage Dattatreya

Before understanding the wheel of yoga, however, we refresh our memory regarding the history of yoga. The early period of yoga begins with Shiva, the propagator of the Pashupata yoga system. Its five yogas constitute the original yoga: sparsha yoga, mantra yoga, bhava yoga, abhava yoga, and maha yoga. In that period Nath yogis developed the teachings of Pashupata yoga as hatha yoga, raja yoga, kriya yoga, and kundalini yoga.

The aim of yoga in the early period was never God-realization. When Shiva expounded the theory of yoga and of tantra, the purpose was to remove pain and suffering, whether self-generated, destined or environmental. The purpose was to transcend pain; attain peace from the distractions and diversions of the senses and mind; follow dharma, the obligations, responsibilities, commitments and duties in the right manner; and act creatively to fulfil the aim of human destiny, which is *poornata*, wholeness and perfection.

Pashupata yoga was a system which in its initial stages was based on the understanding of the life process, how one lives in the world, and the circumstances and situations that one faces in the world. The science of yoga did not emerge to take one away from the world. This is a vital point for you to know. The science of yoga did not develop to create recluses or to make you renounce the world; it developed from an understanding of life and how the conditions in life can be improved. The deteriorating conditions in life represent situations of suffering, pain and discomfort. The improving conditions of life represent peace, health and prosperity.

When Shiva taught the subject of yoga and when later on it was propagated by the tribe of sadhus, yogis and rishis, the main focus was how yoga can help one face the challenges of normal day-to-day life: the illness, the dissipation and distraction of the mind, the uncontrolled emotions, the stresses that one faces. These are the natural expressions of the human personality. Stressors may change, reasons may change, nonetheless, one's personality responds as one's ancestors responded to these situations of stress, tension and threat. It is an instinctive response.

Thus, in the early period, the aim of yoga was to improve the quality of life, and it became a developing subject like the history of modern medicine. The idea of therapy and of present-day allopathic knowledge started with the discovery of penicillin just before the Second World War. Something that started small has today grown vast with many disciplines and branches, which all form part of the same therapeutic system. Similarly, yoga started in a simple manner, acknowledging the conditions of life, and which factors improve these conditions to live a better life. Then, as people started to look into the subject of yoga and develop a specific aspect of yoga, the theory evolved out of the experience of these sadhakas, who were the practitioners trying to discover how far yoga can take each one.

THE EARLY PERIOD

Shiva *Pashupata Yoga*

1. Mantra yoga
2. Sparsha yoga
3. Bhava yoga
4. Abhava yoga
5. Maha yoga

Matsyendra Nath *The Nath Tradition*

1. Hatha yoga
2. Raja yoga
3. Kriya/Kundalini yoga

Sage Dattatreya *Dattatreya Prokta Yogashastra*

1. Mantra yoga
2. Laya yoga
3. Hatha yoga
4. Raja yoga

Purpose: Removal of pain and suffering in life.
Attaining peace, following dharma,
acting creatively.

Second, middle wave of yoga

The earlier period formed the schools of yoga, and then in the middle period the practitioners of yoga wrote their theses on particular aspects of yoga. The originators of the hatha yoga system that you follow today are Gheranda and Swatmarama. Raja yoga is Patanjali. Bhakti yoga is Shandiliya and Narada. Similarly, there are other yogas described specifically in the twenty-two Yoga Upanishads; such as *Yoga Chudamani Upanishad*, which is devoted to kundalini yoga and speaks of chakras and kundalini. Similarly, there are dissertations by different sages and practitioners of yoga in twenty-one other Upanishads on the different yogas.

By looking at their writings and their teachings, you can see that the purpose of yoga at that time was regulating the lifestyle. That emphasis is predominantly visible in the upanishadic tradition of yoga. The premise is that your lifestyle, how you live, your routine and your environment, determines how far you can advance in the experience of yoga. The purpose of yoga was to discover one's self. To discover the self that interacts at the outer material level in the world of senses and sense objects, and the self that exists beyond the fetters of the senses, sense objects and mind; and with this realization, to live righteously. That was the second generation of the middle period of yoga.

Specific ideas came out of Pashupata yoga: the asanas, the pranayamas, the mudras, the bandhas, the chakras, the kundalini, the kriyas, the shatkarmas, the raja yoga systems: the yamas, the niyamas, the pratyahara, the dharana; and in the middle period developed an identity of its own. If you look at all the different branches of yoga and their scriptural references, you will discover that they indicate the attainment of a particular state of consciousness, of perception, of knowing, of behaving, of acting, in the appropriate manner.

Even in the scriptural references to yoga, there is no connection with self-realization. Samadhi is not the aim of raja yoga; it is one of the angas to experience chitta vritti nirodhah. It is a practice. Samadhi is a state that cannot be sustained for more than a few moments, otherwise there will be a short circuit and a fuse will blow in the brain. Samadhi is a state that one can only have a glimpse of. Only when the attachments to the world are totally disconnected can you live in that state continuously. As long as the attachments to the world remain, samadhi is only a glimpse, an experience, a practice to give you the experience of chitta vritti nirodhah. It is one of the eight limbs to attain the cessation of the mental vrittis.

This as an example to illustrate that these different yogas were developed by the different sages, seers and rishis and by those groups that were collectively going through this

process of yoga according to their own experience. Hatha yoga, raja yoga, karma yoga, kriya yoga, mantra yoga, laya yoga and nada yoga all evolved out of this one big body. Today they have become our reference point; each has become a complete subject and topic.

THE MIDDLE PERIOD

Hatha yoga Sage Gheranda
Yogi Swatmarama

Raja yoga Sage Patanjali

Bhakti yoga Sage Shandilya
Sage Narada

Other yogas 22 yoga upanishads
Other sages.

Purpose: Regulating lifestyle, discovering the self, living righteously.

Third, contemporary wave of yoga

There have been many yoga propagators in the present period. Swami Vivekananda presented the theory of the four yogas: raja yoga, karma yoga, jnana yoga and bhakti yoga. Then emerged the tradition of Babaji, Lahiri Mahashaya, Sri Yukteshwar Giri and Paramahansa Yogananda. Paramahansa Yogananda brought forth the teaching of kriya yoga. A contemporary around that time was Swami Sivananda, who taught integral yoga to his disciples. His disciples became the first-generation teachers and propagators of yoga in the world.

Sri B.K.S. Iyengar brought to the forefront the concept of the South Indian hatha yoga for connecting with the body. Similarly, Ramana Maharshi propagated the concept of jnana yoga, the self-discovery by questioning yourself, 'Who am I?' Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada propagated an aspect of bhakti yoga. Anandamayi Ma propagated bhakti.

Swami Chinmayananda propagated jnana yoga. Baba Muktananda propagated mantra yoga.

Apart from these mainstream propagators, there are still many other practitioners of yoga who live yoga, practising in isolation in the



Swami Sivananda and Anandamayee Ma

mountains or away from social interaction. Sometimes people visit them and learn a particular aspect of yoga from them, however, it does not belong to the mainstream of yoga; it is the particular sadhana of a person who is living that lifestyle in isolation. These are the unnamed yogis who use yoga as a personal sadhana. Sometimes they teach to one, two or three people, who then go out and teach that, yet it is not in the mainstream of yoga.

The purpose of yoga in the contemporary age is, again, not emancipation. The purpose of the present-day yoga is uniting the faculties of head, heart and hands: the 'triple H'. By uniting these faculties you discover the creative self; and by discovering the creative self, attain samadhi. Samadhi here is not Patanjali's definition of samadhi; it is Swami Niranjan's definition of samadhi: the integral expression of your awakened self. *Sama* means equal, harmonious, balanced; and *dhi* is intelligence. Thus *samadhi* is not the state of illumination; it is a state where you attain balance in your intelligence. You do not steer to the right or to the left; you tread the middle path. That is the state of samadhi. This is also a statement by Sri Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita* when he was asked, "How do you define a person who has attained the state of samadhi?" Krishna says, "That person is equipoised in intellect, *sthita-prajna*. One who is equipoised, balanced and harmonious in intelligence attains samadhi." That is following the middle path.

In the present-day situation, it is clear that the name of yoga is used, but yoga is not practised. An aspect of yoga is practised, which is fragmented, fractured, and related to the personal needs that are presently highlighted; yoga is not practised as a discipline or as a regulatory condition of life. Even many sannyasins do not practise yoga either here or outside, though there are also sannyasins who do live yoga, here and outside, so you have both groups. Each one practises according to their inclination, 'Oh, I feel more comfortable with karma yoga, I don't need hatha yoga or raja yoga,' yet they identify as a sannyasin and a spiritual aspirant. Many think, 'Oh I feel more comfortable in bhakti yoga, I don't need to do raja yoga, I don't need to do meditation, just devotion and faith are enough for me.' This indicates that you are living your whims and choices. You are not practising yoga sadhana nor are you adhering to the disciplines of the system. You do not understand the progressive nature of the system.

THE PRESENT/RECENT PERIOD

Swami Vivekananda	Theory of yoga
Paramahansa Yogananda	Kriya yoga
Swami Sivananda (and his disciples)	Integral yoga
Sri B.K.S. Iyenger	Hatha yoga
Ramana Maharshi	Jnana yoga
Bhaktivedanta	
Swami Praphupad	Bhakti
Anandamayi Ma	Bhakti
Other Unnamed Yogis	Use yoga as personal sadhana
<i>Purpose:</i>	Uniting head, heart and hands. Discovering the creative self, attaining samadhi as an integral expression of the awakened self.

The wheel of Satyananda Yoga–Bihar Yoga

The classical systems in Bihar Yoga are hatha yoga, raja yoga and kriya yoga as identified and taught by our guru, Sri Swami Satyananda. The sub-yogas which complement the attainments of hatha yoga, raja yoga and kriya yoga, are karma yoga, jnana yoga and bhakti yoga. They are also supported by other yogas such as mantra yoga, nada yoga, laya yoga and kundalini yoga, along with yajnas, which regulate lifestyle and connect you with the cosmic forces that surround you.

CLASSICAL YOGA IN THE BSY TRADITION

Bahiranga yoga	Hatha yoga Raja yoga Kriya yoga
Antaranga yoga	Karma yoga Jnana yoga Bhakti yoga
Sub-yogas	Mantra yoga Nada yoga Kundalini yoga Laya yoga

These create the complete system of yoga.

When Sri Swamiji established the Bihar School of Yoga, he developed a system. This system is divided into *bahiranga yoga*, outer or external yoga, for self-perfection, and *antaranga yoga*, inner yoga, to express the spiritual attainment.

External yoga is that which you do to improve the quality of your body and mind, the expression of your senses and behaviour. It is the effort that you make. Internal yoga is the attitude that you cultivate, the change that you bring into your ideas and perceptions based on your experience, understanding and practice. In outer yoga, you are preparing yourself, reconditioning yourself, fine-tuning

yourself. The purpose of bahiranga yoga is to manage, guide and harmonize the conditions of the senses and the mind. The purpose and aspiration of bahiranga yoga, the outer yoga, is to endow you with sanyam.

After the outer has been managed – discipline is attained by the body and the mind through a series of sustained practices, the emotions are better harmonized through a series of sustained practices – then the mind takes on a different understanding. Subsequently, you begin to live a harmonious, peaceful, creative life. The moment you begin to live the peaceful, harmonious and creative life, your inner self becomes soft. Your inner self begins to experience the change of its radical behaviour in the realm of the senses and realize its pure nature in the realm of the spirit.

In outer yoga, which allows you to attain the discipline of the koshas and to move from physical to mental to spiritual, Sri Swamiji defined three: hatha yoga for the body and prana; raja yoga for the mind; and kriya yoga to go through the awakenings in consciousness and ultimately experience the luminosity of the self from consciousness to spirit. Hatha yoga is for annamaya kosha and pranamaya kosha; raja yoga is for manomaya kosha; and kriya yoga is for vijnanamaya and anandamaya kosha. These three yogas constitute the discipline to transform the human nature, personality and identity. Even if you live these three yogas without jnana yoga, karma yoga or bhakti yoga, even if you live these three yogas in your home, in your day-to-day life, it is enough. The appropriate, correct and sustained practice of hatha yoga, raja yoga and kriya yoga is enough to take you from point A to point E: A is annamaya, B is pranamaya, C is manomaya, D is vijnanamaya, and E is anandamaya.

Once sanyam has been attained in your life – which is external, physical, psychological and emotional – then the behaviours of the mind change and the natural attitude is different. It becomes purer and untainted, and that natural expression of your inner, enlightened behaviour, is known as bhakti yoga, jnana yoga and karma yoga.

You must identify the naturalness in yoga and in life. There is a story of Mullah Nasruddin, the Sufi saint. He looked out of his window one morning and saw a bird. He said, “This bird can be made beautiful.” He captured the bird, brought it in, took scissors, clipped its wings, trimmed its tail, polished its nails properly, put some red on the beak, some green eye shadow. He decorated the entire bird and said, “Now this is a beautiful bird.” So which is the beautiful bird, the decorated one or the natural one? In your life you do this all the time. You change the naturalness of things into your own projections and visualizations. The moment your projections and visualizations take over the natural understanding, you create your own conditionings. That has to stop. Therefore, understanding and adhering to the correct principles of yoga is the need now.



8

Spokes of the Yoga Wheel

SELF-PERFECTION THROUGH BAHIRANGA YOGA

If you look at the whole structure of yoga, there is a sequence of progression. The two components that it is made up of, *bahiranga* yoga and *antaranga* yoga, have a definite purpose.

In *bahiranga* yoga, the outer yoga which allows you to attain *sanyam*, there is *hatha* yoga, *raja* yoga and *kriya* yoga. *Sanyam* means you become an observer and master of your own actions, behaviours, thoughts and speech. *Hatha* yoga caters to the needs of *annamaya* and *pranamaya* kosha, the dimensions of matter and energy. *Raja* yoga caters to the dimension of the mind. *Kriya* yoga caters to the dimension of consciousness, to sensitize one to experience consciousness, going deep into the realization of what it is, and to realize the state of pure bliss in consciousness, which is the spirit. *Kriya* yoga takes you to the *vijnanamaya* and *anandamaya* kosha levels. These three yogas create the environment of *sanyam*: total awareness, dominance, control, harmony, balance and equilibrium.

In *hatha* yoga you are working with your body and the *pranas*, and that can be independent of *raja* yoga. When you come to *raja* yoga the major change that happens is you begin to observe yourself. In *raja* yoga you begin to cultivate the aspect of yourself that allows you to become the observer, the *drashta*. Until *hatha* yoga everything can be mechanical

and automatic. In raja yoga, however, the mechanical and automatic component of your behaviour and action changes, and it becomes endowed with the faculty of observation, the drashtaship: *Tada drastuh svarupe avasthanam* – “You become the seer or observer of your own self.”

That is the radical change that happens in raja yoga – from the normal style of living and attaining the health and wellbeing of the senses, body, body organs and pranas to developing an awareness of ‘I am’ and ‘I am in control of my own actions and behaviours, and I am directing them to become better and better.’ Thus the component of drashta, observer, develops in raja yoga.

Then in kriya yoga the component of psychic awareness emerges, in which you enter into your psychic dimension, *vijnanamaya kosha*. It is a confronting dimension, as everything that is unknown to you is lying there. Everything that is limitless within you is there. Everything that is luminous within you is there. Outside of it is your interaction with the world where everything is diluted and mixed. The purity lies in vijnanamaya kosha. The experience and the purity of realization that you gain with the practice of kriya yoga allows you to move into anandamaya kosha. Accessing vijnanamaya kosha, however, is a challenging situation and condition of life; it is a challenging dimension. Therefore until now kriya yoga has been a secret tradition, and it will continue to remain so. It will not become as popular as hatha yoga or raja yoga. It will remain in the zone of selected spiritual seekers who are willing to take that jump into the spiritual unknown.

For other seekers, up to raja yoga is enough. They deal with their mind and they live happily ever after. There is a difference. For a normal person in society who does not have spiritual aspirations, drive or motivation to even realize their nature, up to raja yoga is fine. De-stress yourself, relax yourself, enjoy yourself, and live in the best manner possible. If you come to kriya yoga it is an indication of your desire to discover your inner spiritual dimension. This inner spiritual dimension can only be realized when you have cultivated the

drashta state, the state of observer in your mind. Not only at the time of meditation, but twenty-four hours the awareness that ‘I am witnessing myself’, remains constant. It does happen. If you can maintain the drashta awareness that ‘I am aware of myself’ for twenty-four hours during the periods of activity and inactivity both, then the mind is elevated to another level and it is not gross any more. Here kriya yoga begins.

Thus these three yogas, which are part of this outer discipline leading to attainment of sanyam, are one component.

I. Hatha yoga (5 stages)

Classical hatha yoga has five aspects, branches or *angas*: shat-karma, asana, pranayama, mudra, and bandha. Just as raja yoga is known as the eight-limbed yoga, hatha yoga is known as the five-limbed yoga, or *panchanga yoga*. However, the only limb of hatha yoga that has become popular and gone viral is asana. The ironic part is that yoga teachers largely profess to teach in the name of Patanjali, but they give the teachings of Swatmarama. They confuse Patanjali’s teachings with hatha yoga asanas, which creates a false awareness or identity of yoga, since Patanjali has nothing to do with the asanas that have gone viral. Swatmarama taught hatha yoga, not Patanjali.



PERFECTING OUTER EXPERIENCE THROUGH BAHIRANGA YOGA



HATHA YOGA

1. Shatkarma
2. Asana*
3. Pranayama
4. Mudra
5. Bandha

RAJA YOGA

1. Yama
2. Niyama
3. Asana
4. Pranayama
5. Pratyahara
6. Dharana
7. Dhyana
8. Samadhi

KRIYA YOGA

1. Pratyahara
2. Dharana
3. Dhyana

*Viral

HATHA YOGA

Swami Sivadhyanam

Hatha yoga is usually the first yoga that most of us are exposed to when we join a yoga class or commence any yoga training, but in a sense this branch of yoga is one of the most misunderstood. On the one hand, there are people who take hatha yoga to mean just asanas, the physical exercises, and are obsessed with how the body looks and feels. On the other hand, we have another group of people who think of hatha yoga as being too trivial. Such people say, “Oh I prefer to meditate” or “I’m a jnana yogi” or “I’m into bhakti, why should I have anything to do with asanas and other physical practices?” Both these groups really miss the point of hatha yoga.

Here it may be pertinent to recall what paramguru Swami Sivananda used to say and practise in his own life. In one of his letters printed in a little book called *Sivananda Gita*, he says, “I am very regular in doing asanas and exercises. I even now do shirshasana, sarvangasana and other asanas. I do pranayama also regularly. These give me wonderful health and energy.” If our paramguru, a fully realized master, kept up with this sadhana till the end of his days, it is an indication to us that there is something more to asanas and pranayamas than meets the eye. What then is the real aspiration, intention and aim of hatha yoga?

Aim of classical hatha yoga

The aim of this yoga is enshrined in its very name. The word hatha is derived from two beeja mantras, *Ham* and *Tham*, which denote the pingala and the ida, the vital and the mental, the solar and the lunar energies in the human system. The goal of hatha yoga is to balance, harmonize and unite these two fundamental energies in our system.

Another name for the science of hatha yoga, that is used in *Gheranda Samhita* is ghatastha yoga. This name also gives

an indication of what this science is trying to achieve. *Chata* means pot and Sage Gheranda is equating the human body with a pot. When you look at a pot, all you see is the outside surface, the inside is hidden. If you want to investigate the contents of the pot or want to make the pot stronger or better, you have to start with the outer shell. This is how the science of hatha yoga begins. It begins with the physical body, the annamaya kosha, and uses that as a tool to go into the deeper and subtler layers of our being. Just because it starts with the body doesn't mean that it is only concerned with the body. This is one common misconception that we yoga sadhakas should avoid. The body is a tool and that is how it should be treated. Eventually the practice of hatha yoga should lead to change in one's attitude towards the body. It should take away attachment to one's body and give one the ability to see it as an instrument for a higher purpose.

Components of hatha yoga

Classical hatha yoga has five limbs. The first is shatkarma, the six purificatory or cleansing practices. These are neti, dhauti, basti, nauli, kapalbhati and trataka. The first three purify at the gross physical level, and the last three at subtler pranic and mental levels. One should bear in mind that although hatha yoga begins with the grossest kosha, annamaya, its practices, if done rightly, impact the subtler pranamaya, manomaya and vijnanamaya koshas as well.

I'm reminded of an experience that a student once had with kunjla kriya, one of the dhauti practices. She was doing the practice for the first time and was having difficulty drinking the saline water. She felt a suffocating sensation, as if she was drowning. Somehow she managed to pull through and was able to regurgitate the water. Later she confided, "When the sensation of suffocation reached its peak, suddenly it felt like a dam breaking loose. Along with the regurgitation reflex, an image of a foetus in the



womb flashed in my mind. It was having difficulty coming out of the mother's womb because it was in a legs-first position." "Does that image mean anything to you?" I asked. "Of course, that was me." "How can you be so sure?" "I just knew it. Besides I know from my mother that I had a difficult delivery. It was a breach-birth and all my life I've had this phobia around water. Now I feel as if a big weight has been lifted off me."

The simple-looking practice of kunjla brought up a birth samskara lodged deep in the subconscious and once it was relived, it ceased to have any distressing impact.

After shatkarma, the next limb of hatha yoga is asana. What is its aim and purpose? The *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* says (1:17:2):

Kuryaattadaasanamsthairyamaarayogyamcha anglaaghavam.

One must perform asanas to gain steadiness of body and mind, freedom from disease and lightness of limbs.

Next comes pranayama, which brings about purification of the nadis, experience of the pranic field, increase in the quantum of prana and eventually leads the mind into meditation. Mudras and bandhas also harmonize the pranas and the mind, and they complete the picture of hatha yoga.

Sadhana

When we talk about turning the practice of hatha yoga into sadhana, what does it mean in practical terms? It may be okay to say in theory that it is about the balancing of the

pranic and mental energies, but to be honest, our inner instrument has not become sensitized enough to actually experience and feel these energies. To sensitize ourselves to the pranic dimension, that should be the way to deepen our experience of hatha yoga, whether it is a simple asana like pawanmuktasana, or an advanced sequence like surya namaskara, or even relaxing in shavasana. It is not about how many practices you do or how many rounds you do, rather it's how deep you go into any practice, and when we talk about going deep, Swamiji has given us some practical hints in this direction.

Let us take the simplest practice of pawanmuktasana which most of us go through in our first few yoga classes. By tuning our awareness into the different aspects of the practice we can begin to sensitize our inner instrument. What is the movement that is happening at the muscular level, at the joint level? Are we able to synchronize the movement with the breath? We need to remember that the breath is the gross counterpart of the subtle pranic energy that we are trying to access. We can bring mantra into the practice as well. The mantra *So-Ham* can be integrated with the up-down movement. Mantra and prana are inseparable cousins. Wherever there is a movement of energy there is a manifestation of sound and vice-versa. By including mantra one is deepening one's experience of the practice. One can also visualize the practice mentally, and even integrate awareness of chakras.

There should be a conscious and wilful effort to deepen the experience, to move from gross to subtle experiences. This is what we mean when we say that yoga should become a sadhana, that we're trying to get deeper, that we're trying to get to the aim that yoga has set for us. That aim is subtle. When we talk about ida and pingala, the lunar and solar forces, it's a subtle concept, something that can only be experienced. To be able to see the unseen, to experience the inexperienced, that's what the sadhana is

about. A practice may be very easy to do physically, but when you add in the components of breath awareness, visualization, mantras and chakras, and pause every now and then to observe the effects of the practice, the whole experience changes. You begin to go from the physical to the pranic level and from the pranic to the mental and psychic levels. That is how we can gradually transition from being yoga practitioners to yoga sadhakas who are trying to manifest the goal that yoga has set.

Fire of yoga

The *Gheranda Samhita* says (1:8:2):

Yogaanaleṇa sandāhya ghaṭashuddim samaacharet.

This ghata needs to be strengthened and purified by baking it in the fire of yoga.

An unbaked pot will dissolve when placed in water but if you bake it in the kiln, it can hold anything. This is the attitude we have to adopt in our sadhana. Our sadhana should become fiery, because only then can we really begin to achieve the goals that yoga has set for us. Luke-warm attempts, half-hearted attempts, flirting with yoga, just scratching the surface is no longer enough. As Swamiji has mentioned time and again, that is what has been happening in the field of yoga for the last fifty years. All we have been doing is just playing on the shores of the ocean, running around the beach, building our sandcastles but not willing to take the plunge, to dive deep. Let us light the *yoga-anala*, the fire of yoga within us that it may propel us towards the true aims of this yoga.

II. Raja yoga (8 stages)

In the raja yoga system there are eight *angas* or limbs: yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana, and samadhi. This *ashtanga yoga*, eight-limbed yoga, begins with yama and niyama, which people call a code of conduct and discipline. However, if you analyze what these yamas and niyamas do, ultimately they have only one purpose: to make your mind positive. After all, what is satya and why should it be practised? It should be practised because the mind is not connected to satya. What is ahimsa? The mind is not connected to ahimsa but instead to *himsa*, violence in behaviour, nature, thought, action. The purity of the self, the personality and the mind has to be realized with the practice of yama and niyama.

The yamas and niyamas are not a code of conduct that can be lived without one's basic character and trait being affected. While a dog's tail is in a pipe, it will be straight, but the moment you remove the pipe the tail will curve again. It is the same with the human personality. As long as you think of the yamas and niyamas in terms of a code of conduct and discipline that you need to follow and adopt, they will always seem like a burden and problem as you will not be able to identify with them. How do you identify with understanding when somebody is fighting with you, standing a few feet away from you? How can you connect with your compassion and love while somebody is screaming at you and your blood pressure is shooting up? It is not easy. Therefore the yamas and niyamas have to be practised initially to create positivity within your mind. That is the purpose of the yamas and niyamas, in a nutshell.

Raja yoga begins with filling the mind with positive culture and removing the destructive, restrictive and dissipated. When the mind is filled with positive optimism, hope, happiness, contentment, and is expressing the best qualities, then you move into the higher stages of meditation. Please remember that the yamas and niyamas should not be seen as a code of conduct. Even yogis and

yoga practitioners do not bother about practising yama and niyama, thinking they are only the ethical, moral aspect, the code of conduct, the discipline and the philosophy of yoga. They focus instead on asana and pranayama. This is not correct. They are not the code of ethics or philosophy; they are practices to fill the mind with truth, with compassion, with awareness of what you really need in life so one is not just an accumulative animal. Each behaviour and expression of life is looked at in a detailed manner with yama and niyama.

The yamas and niyamas do take time to take root in the human personality, as the ground is not ready for planting the seeds of positivity. First, the ground has to be made ready and soft. Then the seed has to be planted, and then it has to be protected and cared for. Simply planting the seed and forgetting about it is not enough. A farmer does not plant seeds and then forget about them, but every day painstakingly looks after them. You have to do the same with your intention and understanding. Then you will see how raja yoga takes you into the experience of kriya yoga.

RAJA YOGA

Swami Nirmalratna

What is raja yoga?

Raja yoga is the science of mind management; it deals specifically with modifying mental behaviour and managing mental modifications, known as *chitta vrittis*. Raja yoga is the yogic science of mental discipline, concentration, meditation and the experience of connecting with the higher qualities of one's nature. It is the yoga of the total mind; it explores all layers of the mind: the conscious, subconscious, unconscious and the superconscious mind.

Raja yoga reveals the instinctive, intellectual, psychic and intuitive aspects of personality, and as such it is the yoga

which builds a bridge between the mental and intuitive aspects of our personality, and links manomaya and vijnanamaya koshas.

Who is it for?

Raja yoga is for those who are inspired to transform their entire personality and become better human beings. Raja yoga is the yoga for aspirants who wish to refine and channel the energies of their mind for successful living and for the evolution of consciousness. It is the yoga for aspirants who wish to raise and expand their awareness, who want to extend their horizons and rise above the petty, instinctive and limiting aspects of their personality.

Eight fundamental stages of raja yoga

There are eight fundamental stages or limbs of raja yoga which, taken as a whole, form a comprehensive and progressive system for mind management: for understanding, managing and awakening all the strengths and qualities of the mind. These eight limbs cover a wide range of techniques:

- Techniques to tackle the problems of the mind, the dissipations, distractions, depressions, etc.
- Techniques to progressively remove the restrictions and veils of the mind
- Techniques to explore and cultivate the inherent potential of the mind and gradually shape the mind into a perfect instrument able to cope with everything in life in a positive, peaceful, creative and uplifting manner.

The first five limbs are the preparatory stages or the external, exoteric or *bahiranga* practices of yoga, they are:

1. *Yama*: social code
2. *Niyama*: personal code
3. *Asana*: steady sitting posture
4. *Pranayama*: control and expansion of prana
5. *Pratyahara*: sense withdrawal.



These five limbs aim at gradually quietening the externalized tendency of the senses, the *pranas* and the mind. They progressively prepare the body-mind complex for the last three internal, esoteric or *antaranga* practices of yoga, which are:

1. *Dharana*: concentration
2. *Dhyana*: meditation
3. *Samadhi*: superconsciousness.

These last three limbs aim to eradicate the disturbing

thoughts and psychic manifestations and to eventually allow transcendence into the higher realms of consciousness.

Yama and niyama

According to Sage Patanjali, the five *yamas* are: *satya*, *ahimsa*, *asteya*, *aparigraha*, and *brahmacharya*. They can be briefly described as:

1. *Satya*: identifying with truth or divine intelligence
2. *Ahimsa*: absence of violence in thought, word and deed
3. *Asteya*: honesty, a pure non-devious mind
4. *Aparigraha*: non-possessiveness, absence of the craving to acquire and possess
5. *Brahmacharya*: higher conduct and higher awareness.

Each *yama* represents a positive strength and quality of a sublime personality and is designed to harmonize one's social interactions.

Sage Patanjali's five *niyamas* are: *shaucha*, *santosha*, *tapasya*, *swadhyaya*, and *Ishwara pranidhana*, and can be briefly described as:

1. *Shaucha*: cleanliness of body, purity of mind
2. *Santosha*: contentment, balance of mind
3. *Tapasya*: austerity or sustained effort

4. *Swadhyaya*: self-awareness, self-analysis and self-study
5. *Ishwara pranidhana*: cultivating faith in a higher cosmic reality, the undecaying, unchanging principle of existence.

The *niyamas* are designed to develop and reinforce the mental strength and determination to attain purity, peace and transcendence, freedom from pain and suffering; and are intended to harmonize one's inner feelings. They are the personal disciplines to cultivate and maintain a spiritual vision of life.

Although there are many other equally valuable *yamas* and *niyamas* in the yogic tradition, Sage Patanjali chose these five as he considered these to be the most relevant for serious spiritual aspirants. When you practise them, you will see how they encompass a wide range of human activity and thus provide a wide scope for integral personal development.

Practised together with self-study, observation and introspection, the *yamas* and *niyamas* help us to develop a profound awareness of the idiosyncrasies of our behaviour and personality. They guide our awareness into our most intimate relationships and interactions with life, and they provide us with a system to dive deep within ourselves and gain an expanded perspective of our entire existence.

The *yamas* and *niyamas* give us methods to discipline and to refine our relationship with the events of life so that we can live this life in all its fullness and still maintain our spiritual vision. Through the practice of the *yamas* and *niyamas* we can cultivate more sensible attitudes towards ourselves and our involvement in life. *Yamas* and *niyamas* help us tackle the problems of mental disturbances: they help us to understand which aspects of life bind us to unnecessary attachments, unnecessary worries, attitudes and possessions. They help us see how we cling to worldly pleasures and how we blindly chase after sense gratification.

As you practise *yamas* and *niyamas* you will learn that these disciplines are not easy to apply but be assured,

even a limited application will lead you to greater peace of mind, greater self-awareness and an expanded and higher perspective of life.

Ahimsa

Let us consider a few points about ahimsa, one of the yamas. You may think that ahimsa means not injuring others. That's true but ahimsa goes far beyond this. The practice of ahimsa means removing from your thoughts, intellect and emotions the tendency to think ill of or feel enmity towards anyone or anything. Ahimsa is absence of aggressiveness and violence in thought, word and deed. Aggressive qualities disturb mental peace, they create mental imbalance and disturb our behaviour. As spiritual aspirants we are striving for inner peace, so that makes the practice of ahimsa of prime importance for us. Remember, it is not for moral or ethical reasons that ahimsa is adopted, but rather for acquiring peace of mind.

Try to live ahimsa for fifteen days, you may not be one hundred percent successful, but you will gain a glimpse of what ahimsa is about. If you are fortunate, your fifteen-day experience will reveal some of the hidden and suppressed aggressions of your personality, negative thoughts of dislike, hatred, anger, pride, jealousy, greed, etc. However, don't be scared by what you discover, we all still have aggressive traits to some degree, they are natural, instinctive expressions of our personality, but by practising yamas and niyamas we can take up the challenge not to fall under their sway and influence.

Power of pratipaksha bhavana

Due to old habits and negative tendencies, hatred, anger, jealousy and fears are certain to arise as one practices yamas and niyamas. However, suppressing them is not wise. The best thing is to ponder over the opposite tendencies through *pratipaksha bhavana*, opposite thinking. For example, when

aggression comes up, counteract it with compassion. When negative thoughts arise, take a moment to counteract them with positive thoughts. In this manner you do not resist or block your thoughts, the flow of thoughts continues, but with the help of awareness you allow positive thoughts to replace the negative. With the practice of pratipaksha bhavana you have a definite technique to overcome negative thoughts, words and deeds. You have a positive way to deal with all negative events of life, and can continue to move along the spiritual path with greater confidence.

Practise the yamas and niyamas, study yogic and spiritual literature, attend satsangs, and live in the ashram for some time. Select one niyama and yama and make them the focus of your effort for fifteen days, then change them. When you have completed the practice of all five yamas and niyamas in turn, begin again. Keep on rotating your awareness through yamas and niyamas and as you practise them with full commitment, seriousness and sincerity for some years, you will notice a tremendous transformation taking place in your perception, behaviour and attitude towards everything in life. You will cultivate *sanyam*, the ability to give a positive and creative direction to the entire range of your senses, emotions, feelings and thoughts. This will transform your life.

Conclusion

Generally, human beings live their life trapped and enmeshed in mind-body identification, in the gross layers of consciousness, in the flow of aggressive thoughts, feelings, passions, likes and dislikes, attachments, aversions and selfish, self-centred expressions. Unknowingly, most people remain in this gross expression of their nature, and they remain ignorant of their potential for peace and illumination. However, for those of you who take up raja yoga sadhana, there is an opportunity to transform every aspect of your personality and evolve into a beautiful human being, able to cope with all that comes your way in a positive, peaceful and creative manner.

RAJA YOGA

Swami Taponidhi



What is raja yoga and what is its purpose? To explain I will give an example. A father and son go to a beach. On the beach, while flying a kite, the son asks his father, "What is it that makes a kite fly high in the sky?" The father in return asks the son, "What do you think? What do you think makes the kite fly high in the sky?" The son replies, "It's the wind." The father says, "Is that really so?" The father then snaps the string, and what happens to the kite? The wind is still there but the kite is gone with the wind! It is directionless.

Our life is like the kite without any direction. Our life follows the whims of the mind. The thought that comes up at the level of the mind is the cause of our action and behaviour. A thought is the springboard of our action and behaviour, of our life.

Do we know the thoughts that come up and are we guiding the thoughts to ultimately guide our life, through our actions and behaviour? Or do we follow the thoughts and give in to the whims of the mind?

Purpose of raja yoga

The purpose of raja yoga is: 1. To be aware of the thoughts that come up at the mental level. To be aware of our thoughts is to know our thoughts. 2. Not to be involved with the thoughts – to cultivate the witness attitude. 3. To guide the thoughts towards appropriate action and behaviour. Appropriate means positive and creative. So we guide our actions and behaviour to lead a positive and creative life – we choose positivity in the face of difficulties.

This is where raja yoga begins. The first sutra in the *Yoga Sutras* is: *Atha yogah anushasanam* – “Yoga is inner discipline.” Inner is that which is subtle, a thought. To be able to guide a thought is discipline. It is not forced control but the ability to consciously direct.

Positivity and creativity

In his early years, Mahatma Gandhi was in South Africa, a barrister at law. He once bought a first class train ticket and boarded the train. However, he was told that he could not travel in that class because of the colour of his skin, and he was put out of the train, bag and baggage, at the next station. The entire night he was on the platform, seething with anger. This anger brought him back to India. And he started the freedom movement, the Quit India movement, and he started this movement with the practice of *ahimsa*, non-violence.

What I am trying to bring out with this example is that Mahatma Gandhi, a barrister at law, could have taken those who put him out of the train to court and sought justice. Instead, Gandhiji chose to use that anger in a different way, for a greater purpose. He directed that energy to gather strength and momentum to give freedom to this country.

This is the next stage of raja yoga – once you know your thoughts, you give them a positive direction.

Eight limbs

In the system of raja yoga, there are eight limbs: yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana, samadhi. If I was without a limb, you would call me handicapped. In the same manner, all the limbs of raja yoga have to be practised together. Samadhi is not the goal of raja yoga, let us be very clear about this, it is just one of the limbs. Raja yoga is a progressive, systematic practice in which all the limbs must be practised together to arrive at a state of balance, peace and harmony.

III. Kriya yoga (3 stages)

Kriya yoga is an especially interesting subject. In the kriya yoga lineages, Swami Satyananda's system is the open one. Openly he started the teaching of kriya yoga by a postal sadhana course lasting three years. The Satyananda Yoga system of kriya yoga is divided into three categories: pratyahara kriyas, dharana kriyas, and dhyana kriyas. You move through the various states of your own mind, from pratyahara to dharana to dhyana, and the end result of kriya yoga is unified awareness. Although the practices combine techniques of asana, pranayama, mudras, bandhas, visualization and awareness, their focus is on perfecting, developing and deepening the state of pratyahara, dharana and dhyana.

With the three yogas of hatha yoga, raja yoga and kriya yoga the circle of sanyam is completed. They constitute the external yoga which is practised to attain sanyam, that fine point of balance in our life. When that fine point of balance is attained then the inner transformation begins, the perceptions change, the attitudes change, the behaviours change, the expressions of life change and yoga becomes a culture, a natural expression of human life. With this, a different experience of the self emerges.



KRIYA YOGA

Swami Yogamaya

Kriya yoga is the last spoke of bahiranga yoga, the yoga that consists of specific, external practices to bring about harmony in the different dimensions of the personality. The sequence that Sri Swamiji gave us in bahiranga yoga is hatha yoga-raja yoga-kriya yoga. Therefore kriya yoga is the culmination of bahiranga yoga. However, there are very few people, even in the Satyananda tradition, who reach up to the level of kriya yoga. In fact, most people have hazy ideas about kriya yoga and believe it to be a secret sadhana or a higher sadhana.

It is true that it is a secret sadhana in certain traditions, but not so in the Satyananda Yoga tradition. Sri Swamiji opened up the science of kriya yoga and took it to many. As for being a higher sadhana, yes, it is a higher sadhana, in the sense that it can be and should be practised only after one has attained a certain degree of mastery in hatha yoga and raja yoga. Mastery means practising these yogas as sadhana, practising them for the mandate that has been given for them by the sages. Therefore, if one has sensitized oneself to pranic movements in the body, if one has attained balance between the solar and lunar energies, if one has been able to control the mind and become established in the drashta state, if not one hundred percent, at least fifty or sixty percent, then it is time to come to kriya yoga.

So, how did kriya yoga come to be a part of the Satyananda tradition? Many of you know the story. When Sri Swamiji was about to depart from his guru's ashram in Rishikesh, Swami Sivananda called him and told him to propagate yoga. Sri Swamiji replied, "But I don't know yoga." Swami Sivananda said, "Come, I will teach you." And, says Sri Swamiji, Swami Sivananda took him to his room and taught him kriya yoga in ten minutes. Now, what the form of that initiation was, we do not know. But what we do know is

that the principle of kriya yoga was used. And that indicates the significance of kriya yoga in the Satyananda tradition: it was the yoga that was ultimately given by our paramguru to Swami Satyananda.

There is another interesting story about how Sri Swamiji started teaching kriya yoga. He was not teaching kriya yoga at the beginning. Then, one day, in the old ashram, a lady came to him. She was from a very well-to-do family, had all creature comforts at her disposal, yet she was in a severe depressive state. She asked Sri Swamiji, "Is there a way to commit suicide in yoga?" Sri Swamiji did not give her an immediate answer but asked her to stay in the ashram. During her stay, every morning she would go to Sri Swamiji. At that time Sri Swamiji would be practising his kriyas, so she started practising along with him, just casually started doing the practices that he was doing. Within a month, her depression lifted. She was totally out of that state in which she wanted to find a way to commit suicide. This, Sri Swamiji says, indicated to him how important kriya yoga is and how far it can take a person. From then on he started teaching kriya yoga.

So, what is kriya yoga? It is a set of twenty practices. There are actually more than seventy-six kriyas in the scriptures, but Sri Swamiji culled twenty out of them and gave them to us in a sequential order. The practices combine asana, pranayama, mudra, bandha, mantra, chakra awareness, psychic passage awareness and inner visualization. They are divided into three categories: pratyahara kriyas, dharana kriyas, dhyana kriyas.

What do these practices, these kriyas do? They deepen the three meditative states of pratyahara, dharana and dhyana. The interesting thing is that when you begin the kriyas, for the first several practices, there is body movement, there is continuous movement of awareness from one point to another, and even the eyes are open; you are not sitting still or trying to make the mind one-pointed. You are not struggling with the body or the mind. Yet you spontaneously move into a meditative state. This, in fact, is the beauty of the

kriyas, resulting in the right balance between extroversion and introversion. But this happens only if your preparation is good, if you have done your hatha yoga and raja yoga as a sadhana for a long time.

Now, what is the purpose, the mandate of kriya yoga? The mandate is, first, to access the vijñanamaya kosha. And what is vijñanamaya kosha? It is the realm of consciousness in which there is *darshan*, inner vision, *nada*, inner sound, experience of astral smells, astral body, memory, not of what you ate yesterday but of archetypes, of *samskaras*. It is the higher mind, the intuitive mind; it is the base for connecting with the cosmic consciousness. With the practices of kriya yoga you are able to access this higher mind. However, do not think that vijñanamaya kosha contains only the good stuff; it contains the positive as well as the negative, the gods and also the demons.

As Swami Niranjana has said, it is the realm of the unknown. And you need strength to face this unknown. The strength is there if you have done your hatha yoga and raja yoga. If your preparation is not right, then a few things may happen. One, you will not reach vijñanamaya kosha at all, just as you can go on practising asana but not attain



pranic sensitivity. In that case, there is a big possibility that you will get bored with the practices; when you are asked to move your awareness through the chakras forty-nine times, you will say, "Not my cup of tea. I'd rather watch TV." Or, you will become imbalanced when the manifestations of vijnanamaya kosha come up. You may even fall sick. It must also be remembered that there is an immense surge of prana when you do kriya yoga, and if you don't know what to do with this extra energy, you may end up in a psychiatric hospital. Swamiji says do physical work, walk for a few miles if you are not in the ashram where you can clean and lift and climb the stairs ten times over!

You may now ask what the point of going into vijnanamaya kosha is. The point is that you learn to transcend the body, the senses, and the mind. What happens when you try to sit for japa or meditation now? You are aware of the discomfort in the legs, you are aware of the music playing outside, or you are caught up in the thoughts of who said what and what you'll do tomorrow. But when your practice of kriya yoga deepens, you bypass all these experiences. You sit down and zap! you've reached the realm of darshan. Imagine that state where you are not harassed by the mind. What a relief! It can happen, it does happen, the possibility exists. At first it may happen only occasionally but with regular practice for a long time, it is possible to become established in the experience of vijnanamaya kosha. That is one mandate of kriya yoga.

The second mandate of kriya yoga is to access anandamaya kosha. Anandamaya kosha is the realm of the spirit, the realm of sattwa and light. Again, to begin with, there may be rare glimpses, or non at all, of this realm, but with practice one goes there more and more often. And there may come a time when one becomes established in that state. That would be the state of a siddha. Those who access vijnanamaya kosha are sadhakas, aspirants, but those who become established in anandamaya kosha are siddhas, yogis.

Thus, with kriya yoga, it is possible to access and become steady in these higher levels of consciousness. It won't happen with a one-week course in kriya yoga just as you won't become established in the drashta state with a one-week course in antar mouna; it takes years of constant effort. You will not begin to live in la-la land just because you are practising the kriyas. You will have to continue to work with your samskaras and karmas. The dross of the mind and the consciousness doesn't drop away overnight with the practice of the kriyas; it continues to be there, yet you attain a different vision and a deeper understanding. Gradually, as the higher consciousness begins to unfold, your behaviour changes, your thinking changes, you develop a new perspective, and you function from a place of creativity, intuition and wisdom. With that, the purpose of kriya yoga is fulfilled.



9

Spokes of the Yoga Wheel

EXPRESSING THE ATTAINMENT THROUGH ANTARANGA YOGA

Expressing the attainment of the practices in your thought, behaviour and action is known as *antaranga yoga*, or the inner, expressive yoga. To create the complete system of yoga, this is the other half of the pie that not even the sannyasins and residents of the ashram know about, yet they live it every day.

The purpose of inner yoga is to manage traits that are inherent and genetically-embedded in your personality and nature. In the yogic tradition these personality traits are known as six associates who are born with you. These companions remain with you until your last breath. They give rise to your nature, mindset, personality, habits, traits, and character and they make you what you are right now.

Overcoming the six friends

Who are these six friends? *Kama*, desire and passion inherent in every life form – even a baby who is born has desire, nobody is free from it; *krodha*, the aggressive drive; *lobha*, greed, emphasizing the need; *moha*, delusion, infatuation; *mada*, arrogance, self-assertive identity; *matsarya*, envy, jealousy towards other people who are more successful or

better off than you, the comparative mindset. These are the six qualities of life that are born in the mind itself at the time of birth. You can see this in the behaviour of children too. You can identify which trait is highlighted at any particular moment: they may be volatile, aggressive, dynamic and unstoppable, expressing their *krodha*; they may be envious of every other child who has something in their hand, and go and snatch it away and slap them. These traits build human nature.

They are not traits that you can rectify through parental influence or through education in school or college. There is no induction of thoughts that can help you to balance the negative output and the projections of these traits. These traits form your personality, and they are related to *karma*, action, *jnana*, knowing, and *bhavana*, feeling. Karma, *jnana* and *bhavana* are where these six associates express their power, as it is in karma that you realize how much aggression, greed, drive, need, jealousy and envy you have. Karma highlights these subtle traits of your personality. Similarly, thinking highlights the subtle traits of your personality, not the senses, body, muscles, abdomen, lungs or heart. The intellect highlights these traits and the emotions express these traits.

Every action, thought and emotion in one way or the other expresses the intensity of the six traits at different times. Sometimes the intensity may be less, sometimes the intensity may be more. Thus, it is through inner yoga, through karma yoga, bhakti yoga and *jnana* yoga, you manage the effects of these six traits.

In outer yoga you develop and cultivate sanyam, control, and in inner yoga you manage the inner traits that make up your life, nature, personality, your aspirations and ambitions, your tamasic and sattwic nature. Since in these three yogas we are dealing with traits that are subtle and invisible in life yet we all respond and react to them, they constitute the inner yoga.

EXPRESSING THE ATTAINMENT THROUGH ANTARANGA YOGA

KARMA YOGA

1. Atmashuddhi
2. Akarta bhava
3. Naishkarma Siddhi

BHAKTI YOGA

1. Apra Bhakti
(Karma Kanda*/
Upasana Kanda)
2. Para Bhakti
(Jnana Kanda)

JNANA YOGA

1. Shubheksha
2. Vicharana
3. Tanumansa
4. Sattwapatti
5. Asamsakti
6. Padartha
Abhavana
7. Turyaga

*Karma kanda linked to
religious belief – Viral

I. Karma yoga (3 stages)

Antaranga yoga begins with karma yoga, as nobody can be without karma. Karma is the main foundation and stay of life. The classical definition of karma yoga is that it leads you to immunity to karmas. One can define karma yoga in many ways, however, the purpose is not something conjured up by your intellect. What is the purpose according to the yogis and the yoga scriptures?

The first purpose of karma yoga is *atmashuddhi*, self-purification: *Yoginah karma kurvanti sangam tyaktvatmashuddhaye* – “Yogis perform karma, with objectivity, for self-purification.” That is the first philosophy of karma yoga, to attain self-purification. Now, self-purification is a broad concept. It is not something that you can identify as, ‘If I do this I will be purified.’ One has to work on identifying all the different components within this broad canopy of *atmashuddhi*; relationships, associations, expectations all play important roles. You must identify all these things, including your needs, ambitions, strengths, weaknesses. To attain self-purification, every aspect of your nature has to be monitored and managed. It is not enough just to say that through karma yoga you attain *atmashuddhi*. You have to identify the areas of *atmashuddhi*: emotional *shuddhi*, intellectual *shuddhi*, sensorial *shuddhi*. All these are different types of *shuddhis*.

Atmashuddhi also relates to an important word: objectivity. You have to understand objectivity not from the perspective of attachment or detachment, but simply as knowing. When you know then you manage the responses of either attachment or detachment in a better manner. Whether you are attached or detached does not matter. Therefore awareness of objectivity, in relation to your actions, leads to self-awareness, harmony, inner balance, or purification.

Attainment of *atmashuddhi* leads to the second stage of karma yoga, *akarta bhava*, the feeling of ‘I am not the doer. I am an instrument which is being played by an invisible hand and I do the bidding,’ ‘Let Thy will be done.’ *Karta* is the idea of doership, ‘I am the doer’; while *akarta* is not having the idea

of doership, 'I am not the doer.' When the concept dawns in life that you are not the doer, you simply become the medium through which actions are performed. Akarta is when you are not the doer, enjoyer or experiencer of the karma and the karma is not a binding agent. When there is *karta bhava*, 'I am the doer', then karma binds you. When you are an instrument which is being played, then karma does not bind you and this leads to *naishkarmya siddhi*, freedom from the effects of karmas.

Naishkarmya siddhi is the third aspect of karma yoga. It is the attainment of karma yoga. You develop immunity to karmas, people, situations and the environment, and remain connected with your own peace and contentment. Every moment of your life becomes a new moment that you live with one hundred percent awareness. Nothing is a routine any more; even if you have to sweep the same street every day for twenty years, it does not become a routine. Every day what you do is done as if for the first and the last time in your life and you give your best. Every moment leads you to a new experience of participation and involvement in karma, yet it frees you from the suffering that comes when you identify with karma. When this stage awakens, at least thirty percent of the darkness of the six associates becomes less.

KARMA YOGA

Swami Yogatirtha

What is karma and what is karma yoga? *Karma* is action; action of thought, word and deed. The nature of these actions is restricting, limiting and binding. In karma yoga, actions, again of thought, word and deed, are performed but with an attitude which leads to expansion, creativity and freedom from bondage.

Swami Niranjan said that each branch of yoga has an aim, a goal which is defined in a particular scripture. The aims and goals of karma yoga are defined in the *Bhagavad Gita*. Sri Krishna defines three goals of karma yoga. The first

one is *atmashuddhi* or purification of the self. We have to understand purification as having no ego, not being selfish, having no expectations. Thus purity of the self is the first aim of karma yoga. Sri Krishna says (BG 5:11):

*Kaayena manasaa buddhyaa kevalair indriyair api;
Yoginah karma kurvanti sangam tyaktwaatmashuddhaye.*

Yogis, having abandoned attachment, perform actions only by the body, mind, intellect and also by the senses, for the purification of the self.

The second aim is *akarta bhava*, the feeling of not being the doer, the feeling of 'I am not the one who is acting'. However, it is not enough just saying 'I am not the doer, I am just an instrument'. *Akarta bhava* is the experience of nature being the actor, and the self just the silent witness. It is much more than just saying, 'I'm not the doer'. It is the experience, the realization and complete acceptance of 'Thy will be done'. This goal is stated in the thirteenth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* (13:29):

*Prakrityaiva cha karmaani kriyamaanaani sarvashah;
Yah pashyati tathaa'tmaanam akartaaram sa pashyati.*

He sees, who sees that all actions are performed by Nature alone and that the Self is actionless.

The third goal is *naishkarmya siddhi*. *Siddhi* means perfection. The perfection we are aiming at or the attainment of that perfection is being free of karma. It has to be clearly understood that karma is everything; every action, every thought, every word, every desire, is a karma, and *naishkarmya siddhi* is the perfection of or the freedom from that (BG 18:49):

*Asaktabuddhih sarvatra jitaatmaa vigatasprihah;
Naishkarmyasiddhim paramaam sannyaasenaadhigacchati.*



He whose intellect is unattached everywhere, who has subdued his self, from whom desire has fled — he by renunciation attains the supreme state of freedom from action.

The three goals have to be attained one after the other: from atmashuddhi to akarta bhava to naishkarmya siddhi. Sri Krishna describes and prescribes the sequence that has to be followed. Throughout the *Bhagavad Gita* he gives the practices and disciplines that help one reach these goals.

Satyananda Yoga has a system and methods that take us to these three goals. Like the eight angas of raja yoga and the five of hatha yoga, in karma yoga there are also angas according to the Satyananda Yoga system.

The first one is observing, understanding the relationship between internal and external karma yoga. Karma yoga is not just physical action but also the thought, the attitude, the behaviour that goes with it. Therefore, awareness of that relationship is one attitude or discipline, one anga of karma yoga.

The next discipline is to be fully involved in what we are doing, thinking or speaking. The third is to do everything as if we are doing it for the first and last time in our life. To have the attitude of doing something for the first or last time and not with the attitude of doing something in a routine manner is karma yoga. To have the attitude of being without expectations, no expectations for results or rewards is a practice of karma yoga. Another attitude or discipline to develop is creativity. It is trying to do the best every time

and not being stuck in a routine, but making the effort to discover new ways, better methods to do something.

The awareness or attitude of inner purification, which is the first goal, has to be kept in mind. As we live and act in the world we should not forget that the goal is purification. Another anga of karma yoga is monitoring responses and reactions. For instance, if we feel there is irritation or anger coming up, we have to learn to monitor and manage that feeling, and not act impulsively and without awareness. A last discipline of karma yoga is to make everything – one's actions, words and thoughts – an offering to God, one's guru or ishta. For people who are devotionally inclined and who surrender easily, everything can become an offering.

Another aspect in regard to karma yoga is the influences it has on the koshas. *Annamaya kosha*, the physical body, is of course involved in every action. However, even if we sit eight hours in front of a computer, the body is there and the awareness of the needs, limitations and strengths of the body must be developed and maintained. Day and night, that awareness of annamaya kosha has to be there.

We have to take the awareness to pranamaya kosha – to the quality and quantity of prana. How do we manage the quantity of our prana? How do we spend it? Do we waste it in talking or do we conserve it in mouna? That is management of prana. In regard to the quality of prana, it can be said that negative thoughts are a bad quality of prana and positive thoughts are good prana. Prana, its quantity and quality, can be managed and monitored by adopting the attitude of karma yoga.

The practices, methods, tools, attitudes and disciplines are all part of manomaya kosha. The emphasis is in making these disciplines positive, and therefore, *pratipaksha bhavana*, developing the opposite positive feeling, is the main tool to work with manomaya kosha.

In vijñanamaya kosha we go beyond the mind. Our involvement is so deep or focused that we come in to

what psychology calls 'the zone' or 'the flow'. When there is harmony between 'head, heart and hands', or harmony between annamaya, pranamaya and manomaya koshas, then we have the experience of flow or zone where we are beyond the mind. Here vijnanamaya kosha is being touched, creativity takes birth and expansion of awareness and consciousness emerges.

Through karma yoga we also reach anandamaya kosha. When we go even beyond the harmony of vijnanamaya kosha and come to the state of unity or oneness, we are in touch with anandamaya kosha. There we feel oneness within ourselves, which is a little step beyond the sense of harmony, and there we feel oneness with the environment and with the Divine.

Karma yoga can take us very far if it is practised according to this system: keeping the three goals in mind and applying the disciplines.

Here is an example on how one can practise karma yoga according to the ideas mentioned. When we sweep a path, we should be fully involved, not do it half-heartedly; we should do it to the best of our ability, as if we were doing it the first and the last time in our life; we should do it skilfully and creatively with full awareness of all the possibilities; we should know that we sweep for the purification of our self and we should be in control of our reactions. If the wind or a child plays with the pile of leaves neatly swept up, we should be aware of any sense of frustration or irritation and monitor it wisely. We should also have no self-centred expectation of reward, praise or recognition for our work, but may make it an offering to the Divine.

If some of these disciplines are integrated while sweeping a path, then it truly becomes karma yoga.

II. Bhakti yoga (9 stages)

The second aspect of antaranga yoga is bhakti yoga, which people only think of in relation to kirtans, bhajans, worships, rituals and images of gods and goddesses. There are nine stages of bhakti, and these nine stages are divided into two categories: para bhakti and apara bhakti, the transcendental and the gross, non-transcendental. The *para*, the transcendental, in the domain of yoga is the jnana kanda of bhakti. *Apara* is in the domain of regular people, the householders and the sadhakas who are living in the world, and relates to the karma kanda and upasana kanda aspect. The whole purpose of practising these stages is to create a connection, a bridge, between your lower self and higher self.

The apara or gross bhakti can be identified as devotion and with a religious culture, with a social custom or tradition. So apara bhakti is a social, religious bhakti, devotion. Yoga does not look at apara bhakti. Yoga is concerned with the transcendental or para. In apara you are involved with action, but without any experience; while in para you are involved not with action but with experience. Para bhakti becomes a tool of internal realization, and apara bhakti an external expression of your faith and devotion.

The nine stages of bhakti that have been defined in bhakti yoga indicate filling the mind with a positive idea, thought, sankalpa, vision, perception. The first of these stages is *shravana*, listening and understanding the principles of nature and the Divine. You listen to many things, however, hearing and understanding are two different processes; you hear but not understand. So hearing and understanding the positive, the uplifting and the right to elevate your life, and filling yourself with that understanding is the beginning of the first stage of bhakti. The second is the experience of joy through *kirtan*; third is *smarana*, remembrance, indicating a connection, like you remember people in your family. When you remember people in your family, it indicates that you are connected and that connection is of oneness.

In this manner, by going through the nine different stages of bhakti you fill yourself with positivity, and experience that in your behaviour, thinking, interactions and performance in life. This bhakti is of the self, association with the self, association with the best side of your self. You express the beautiful aspect of your nature, the positive and the uplifting aspect of yourself. In the outer terms bhakti can be equated with faith, devotion and belief, but in the inner sense, in the experiential one, it makes you fulfilled. When you believe, when you know and when you realize that this is correct and right, then you are comfortable. To become comfortable you have to believe. If you do not believe then you will never be comfortable. Thus, bhakti yoga involves filling life with positivity to reduce another thirty percent of the darkness of the six associates.

BHAKTI YOGA

Sannyasi Shraddhamati

There are certain practices that influence the mind and then they change the body. Bhakti yoga is one such practice. It influences the mind and the emotions and through that one can experience changes in the body and the pranas as well. According to yogic philosophy, our body is made up of five koshas: annamaya, pranamaya, manomaya, vijñanamaya and anandamaya. The practice of bhakti yoga influences manomaya kosha, and through this a difference is felt in pranamaya and annamaya koshas, and the aspirant is able to reach vijñanamaya and anandamaya koshas as well.

So, what is meant by the term 'bhakti yoga'? Bhakti yoga is made up of two words: bhakti and yoga. Yoga means to connect, and *bhakti* means to connect with love, where a person makes a connection and where there is love; to connect with love with your *ishta*, your chosen deity, with the divine principle, with other people. Therefore, *seva*, *prem* and *samarpan* – service, love and surrender – are bhakti.

Bhakti yoga is the yoga of love and surrender. According to Swami Niranjan, bhakti yoga is the yoga of love and service. And according to Swami Sivananda, "Bhakti is a force that will influence our civilization, culture and relationships in the new millennium. Bhakti is not just philosophy, but a science which can transform your thinking pattern and basic tendencies."

Vital importance of faith and trust

The most important aspect of bhakti is trust and faith. Without trust and faith you cannot advance on the path of bhakti. This is the first prerequisite. Take the example of an algebra class. In an algebra class the teacher gives a certain formula and the student has to have trust in that formula. If the teacher says $3(a + b) = 3a + 3b$ and the student begins to argue how come this is possible, then the student loses the thread of the whole idea. He has to trust what the teacher is saying. The same principle applies in bhakti. You have to have trust.

To reach the last stage of bhakti, to really experience the culmination of bhakti, one has to have trust and faith. One has to have trust in divine grace, in *Bhagavat kripa*. The problem is even if one has trust and faith, even if one believes in divine grace, there are times when one begins to doubt and life becomes imbalanced. This happens due to our ego. Our ego comes in between. We begin to think that things should go according to us. Life should go according to 'me'. Things should happen as 'I' want them. That's when the ego hampers our progress in bhakti, and we have doubts, our life becomes imbalanced.

Take the example of Ravana. Ravana was the demon king in Lanka and he was vanquished by Sri Rama. Ravana was a victim of his ego and that is why the whole drama of the *Ramayana* took place. Rishi Valmiki says that Ravana in fact cursed himself and said, "Why did I have to have an enemy like Rama who is a tapasvi? Who is an advanced, evolved,

spiritual being? I wish I had a demon for an enemy, then I would not have had to go through this. Nothing happened by waking up Meghnad. Nothing happened by waking up Kumbhakarna. It would have been better for them to have continued to sleep. Fie upon these ten arms of mine!” That was his fate and it was his ego that led to his downfall. So the ego needs to be reduced and trust and faith need to be increased to become a bhakta.

An ideal bhakta

Let us now look at a few examples of the ideal bhakta. An ideal bhakta has simplicity, humility, a sense of surrender. And such a bhakta was Goswami Tulsidas, the author of *Ramacharitamanas* and several other books. The story goes that once Sri Rama appeared before Tulsidas. Sri Rama was Tulsidas’ ishta, his personal deity, and Sri Rama asked Tulsidas, “You’ve written so many books on me. You’ve written the *Ramacharitamanas*, you’ve written the *Gitavali*, you’ve written the *Dohavali*, you’ve written the *Vinay Patrika*. Do you think that you have been able to explain and convey my glory to everyone?” Tulsidas replied, “No, Prabhu Rama, I haven’t been able to. In fact, by writing books about you I have reduced your glory because I can never capture your glory. It is infinite.” He did not think, ‘I have written the *Ramacharitamanas* and people will benefit from it.’

That should be the sentiment of a bhakta, ‘I’m nothing. My ishta is everything. He’s so huge that I’m just a small blade of grass before him.’ This sentiment was also seen in the life of Ammaji, Swami Dharmashakti, who was Swami Niranjan’s mother and Swami Satyananda’s first disciple. And today is also the day when she was given bhu samadhi in the Akhara here in Munger in 2013. So today we also celebrate her life. She always believed, “I’m nothing. My guru is everything. He is my aradhya. He is my ishta and he is everything.” The following verses express her sentiments:

What was I, nothing at all
Whatever I am, you made me.
My little happiness
Would bring such joy to you.
To bring spring into my life
You would endure winter.
When the gloom of failure
Would make the heart cry
Then it was you
Whose hand would rest upon
my head.
Wiping my tears
And hiding your own sorrow
You always made me laugh.
What was I, nothing at all
Whatever I am, you made me.



Swami Dharmashakti had done so much for the mission. She could ask for anything she wanted, but she would never do so. She would just give in a slip like any other ashram resident because she believed that 'Everything belongs to my guru. Nothing is mine.' This kind of bhava, this kind of sentiment, can come only due to samarpan, surrender. And surrender means one hundred percent surrender. One cannot pay lip service to surrender. One cannot say, "Oh, I have surrendered. I have come to the ashram so I have surrendered." One has to actually experience surrendering with love. It is when surrender is done with love that it is surrender.

So, how to grow in bhakti? Today there are many misconceptions about bhakti. It is advertised that you should 'read this text' or 'chant that stotra,' and after some time it is said, "No, this is wrong, now do it like this." One should avoid all these advertisements, and pick a few stotras which one should chant regularly and for a long time. One should follow the directions of just one path. There are various references of practices that one can do. There are practices

that have been given in the book *Taming the Kundalini*; one can chant stotras and stutis, one can pray, one can do japa, one can do bhajan and kirtan. These are the sadhanas of bhakti, and there is one practice in particular: likhit japa. Sri Swami Satyananda has said that a room that contains notebooks of likhit japa is a room that contains divine vibrations.

What happens with all these practices? What happens when one follows the path of bhakti? One experiences one's aradhyaya, one's ishta, within oneself. One experiences the divine principle within oneself. In this context I will recite a poem written by Ammaji:

Sublime Sentiments

When I remember you, a golden day dawns forth.
The rays of the sun that spread energize my mind and
make it soar.
O Gurudev, whether you remain before the funeral pyre
Or sit amongst the five purified fires
Absorbed in the image of your guru you may be,
But I always find you within me.

She wrote this poem when Sri Swamiji had left Munger. Ammaji had been in continuous contact with him since 1952 and when he left Munger and went to Rikhia, there was no physical contact. Yet she never felt that he was not with her, she always felt that he was with her, within her. That is the experience of a bhakta.

Sri Swamiji also said that bhakti is a divine gift and through this gift one can overcome all struggles. All struggles, all pain, all suffering is seen as divine grace when one becomes a bhakta, when one remains in the spirit of a bhakta. In Sri Swamiji's words:

Bhakti is a divine gift which is attained through the grace of God. Satyam experiences His grace and mercy when

the storms try to disturb him. Satyam also thanks them, for they come to test his strength and to make him stronger.

Finally, I will tell you about a very effective practice of bhakti. When you go to bed at night, then clear your mind like you clear a whiteboard. Anything wrong that may have happened during the day, ask forgiveness for that. And if you've done anything good, then tell yourself to continue that. So that's the final practice of bhakti yoga so that your mental whiteboard is always clean and clear, and you always remain in the space of surrender, forgiveness, love, seva, samarpan.

III. Jnana yoga (7 stages)

Jnana yoga has seven aspects or seven stages of progress. Jnana yoga is not discovery of the self by questioning and answering yourself, 'Who am I? I am the Eternal Spirit', and then forgetting that you are the Eternal Spirit and instead becoming the eternal enjoyer in life. That is not jnana yoga. Jnana yoga does not, as written everywhere, begin with a question. It begins with *shubheksha*, the right intention for yourself, the right understanding arising out of the correct awareness, creating a right desire and intention within yourself to discover who you are. That is the first step and it leads to gradual 'subtlization' of the mind; the mind becomes more and more subtle in each stage as you progress into vicharana, tanumanasa, sattwapati, asamsakti, padartha abhavana and turyaga. In the turyaga state of jnana you simply identify with the bliss or *ananda* that comes out of understanding and knowing.

When ananda comes from knowing, then your actions, behaviour and everything in you are a reflection of the luminosity of your wisdom. You use your intellect in a better, wiser manner. First you use your intellect to still your mind, to remove the imbalances and distractions of the mind. Then

you use your intellect again to express the wisdom of life: that is jnana yoga. Jnana yoga is not just asking ‘Who am I?’ That is yoga for dummies. True jnana yoga is realizing how to apply the wisdom, how to use the understanding to create a better you and a better world in which there is harmony and union with the cosmic and the inner powers. With jnana yoga the remainder of the six associates, the shadow of the six associates, completely disappears.

JNANA YOGA

Swami Nirmalananda

The five koshas are worked upon through the three different yogas – hatha yoga, raja yoga and kriya yoga – to increase and manifest all of one’s potential which is dormant, to bring it into light. After developing the potential of one’s own self, how does one express it in the outside world? Through the head, heart and hands. The first are hands with karma yoga, the second is heart with bhakti yoga, and the third is head with jnana yoga.

Jnana yoga is translated as the yoga of knowledge, but it’s not simple knowledge. Just to know does not require *buddhi*, intelligence. It requires the mind to perceive things. Swami Niranjan has mentioned that the most important quality to have or to develop is understanding. So not just the knowing, but the understanding is the key in jnana yoga. How do you understand? By using your *viveka*, discrimination. *Viveka* is the first step that is required in jnana yoga.

What is the mind? The mind perceives things but the mind’s functions are two: ideation, *sankalpa*, which means having thoughts here and there, all the time; and *vikalpa*, which is imagination. The mind is constantly creating thoughts, imaginary objects, facts, and so on. That is what the mind is involved in all the time. All twenty-four hours of the day. That is how the mind binds us to this material

world. The attachment that we develop to the outside world is because of these functions of the lower mind.

What is the function of buddhi? Buddhi will decide whether what the mind is doing is right or not right, and it will try to control the mind provided we listen to buddhi, provided we try and practise jnana yoga. That is the role of buddhi, to keep the mind controlled and use it in the proper direction.

Raga is attachment and to develop viveka in jnana yoga, we have to get away from this attachment and develop *vairagya*. *Vai* means 'away from' and *raga* means attachment, *vai-ragya*. Thus viveka and *vairagya* are the two important things in jnana yoga, without which jnana yoga is not jnana yoga.

As mentioned, when one travels on the path of jnana yoga, the three important things required are head, heart and hands. For the head, we need buddhi; we need viveka and *vairagya* to practise jnana yoga and these come from buddhi. Now why is the heart needed in jnana yoga?

We need shraddha to practise jnana yoga. Yes. We have to have shraddha in the teacher and shraddha in the teachings that we are receiving from him. We receive teachings, but we don't take everything in. We take certain things and develop our own concept about that subject. So we have to have shraddha in the teachings and shraddha



in ourselves that 'I will practise jnana yoga.' In every step shraddha is required, so the heart is required.

However, just knowing and having faith is not enough. We have to also act, we have to implement things, we have to use our hands. We have to make the effort, so we need the hands. These are the three things required in the practice of jnana yoga.

Seven evolutionary states in jnana yoga

There are many different angas, limbs, in various yogas; five in hatha yoga, eight in raja yoga, nine in bhakti, but jnana yoga has no angas. Instead, jnana yoga has *bhumikas*, meaning levels, levels of development and evolution. There are seven evolutionary states on the path of jnana yoga. The seven bhumikas are:

1. *Shubheksha*: We say that Satyananda Yoga is integral yoga. Do you think we are practising jnana yoga components in the Satyananda Yoga tradition? Yes, we are. We practise a lot of jnana yoga without knowing that we are practising it. We are practising it at the first level, which is called shubheksha.

'Shubheksha' is a Sanskrit word made up of two words: shubha and iccha. *Shubha* is auspicious, good, and *iccha* is desire. So there has to be an auspicious desire to understand: 'I want to understand myself. I want to understand spirituality. I want to understand what good is for me and what is not good for me.' I think we do that. Shubheksha brings us to the spiritual environment here. It is because we have that desire to develop our spirituality that we are here, that we have a guru, that we are in the company of a saint, that we read good books, that we read his teachings and we listen to his teachings. We are practising this first level of jnana yoga.

Shubheksha comes through past good samskaras and association with good people who motivate us. A friend says, "I'm going to my yoga class, would you like to come?"

My guru is very good, very learned, and you will find him very strong spiritually. Would you like to meet him?" And here you are in the ashram. Like that, we are associated with goodness and that brings us to the first level of jnana yoga, shubheksha.

2. *Vicharana*: The second level is vicharana. *Vichara* is thought, to think, to think deeply on what the teacher has taught you, what your guru has taught you, the teachings of a saint whom you heard or whose book you have read; the scriptures that you read and what their teaching is. To think about it deeply from all angles and how it relates to your life and how much you can take in. Contemplation is the second stage. Many of us do that, if not all the time then at least sometimes.

There are practices in Satyananda Yoga: following yama and niyama, doing SWAN, following the 18 ITIES, writing a spiritual diary. These help you contemplate. So, many of us are practising the second level of jnana yoga.

3. *Tanumanasa*: The third level is tanumanasa. This word 'tanumanasa' comprises of two words: *tanu* means small, subtle; *manas* means the mind, therefore to make the mind subtle. At this level, the mind becomes subtle. How?

In this bhumika, we are trying to develop non-attachment. Through sanyam, santosha and the teachings of Swami Sivananda to adjust, accommodate, accept, bear insult, bear injury. Through these practices we are trying to develop non-attachment and bring the mind under control. Then the gross mind is converted into a subtle mind.

4. *Sattwapatti*: Up to the first three levels, your efforts are necessary. At the fourth level, effort is necessary but something else is also required and that is *anugraha*, grace. In sattwapatti, the non-attachment is complete and one becomes established in sattwa guna. The practices are: *samadhana samatvam*, that is, equipoise, meditation on self, and vairagya.

5. *Asamsakti*: The fifth level is asamsakti. Here vairagya becomes intense and there is intense meditation on the self.

It is the level of samadhi. From this level onwards there is no effort. There is only anugraha; the grace of guru and God are necessary.

6. *Padartha abhavana*: The sixth level is padartha abhavana. *Padartha* means object; *abhava* is lack of interest, lack of feeling for. Therefore, lack of interest in objects. This is the state of avatara-hood.

7. *Turyaga*: The last state is turyaga. Turiya, the dimension of transcendental consciousness.

These are the seven states on the path of jnana yoga. Where you are now, and what the next level is that you can attempt, each person has to contemplate.

JNANA YOGA

Swami Yogakanti

The topic is jnana yoga and in particular the seven bhumikas of jnana yoga. *Bhumika* means foundations, steps or stages. The first three of the seven bhumikas, are for the *mumuksha*, the person who is seeking liberation, a seeker. The last four bhumikas are for the *brahmavid*, the person who sees *Brahman*, sees Reality.

In the contexts of this series of talks on the different branches of yoga – hatha, raja, kriya, karma, bhakti and now jnana yoga – Swamiji has been explaining that in each yoga we need to move from being yoga practitioners to yoga sadhakas. That means that from practising that discipline to achieve our own ends as yoga practitioners, we move into practising sadhana to attain the goal that discipline sets for us. As regards jnana yoga, in the first three bhumikas we can say we are jnana yoga practitioners: we practise to achieve our own aim. We practise because we are seekers, seeking to improve ourselves.

Now, to become jnana yoga sadhakas we need to understand what the aim of jnana yoga itself is. What is that

aim? When we look at the bhumikas we get a clue, because the last four stages are for the brahmavid: 'brahma-vid'; it means to be able to see or understand Brahman or Atman, the eternal reality. So it means if we are working towards *atmabhava*, if we see more and more clearly that divine light in ourselves, in others and in the world itself, then we are yoga sadhakas. Understanding and living the understanding of *atmabhava* is the aim of jnana yoga.

The other point that we have been making in these discussions is that the *bahiranga yogas* – *hatha yoga*, *raja yoga* and *kriya yoga* – are to develop the different koshas so we don't just think of ourselves as the body, *annamaya kosha*. Jnana yoga is often thought of as knowing things through the intellect, as an intellectual thing concerning the mind, *manomaya kosha*, and the higher mind or intuition, *vijnanamaya kosha*, but this is not a good understanding of jnana yoga. Jnana yoga is for the whole being; we become aware of all the koshas.

So we find the first step, the first bhumika, is called *shubheksha*: *shubha-iccha*, meaning having auspicious desire or goodwill. We will to improve ourselves. Because we have expanded our awareness, we're not just aware of ourselves as body or mind, we are aware of ourselves as a whole and we want to improve ourselves. And we really want to improve. We've connected with other people and become aware of suffering in the world and we want to alleviate that also. This *shubheksha* has got to be strong, intense, *tivra*, like Patanjali says (1:21):



Teevra-samvegaanaam-aasannah

Those who have an intense urge attain (asamprajnata samadhi) very soon.

To attain samadhi, to make a breakthrough in understanding, you have to have a strong urge, otherwise you are not going to make it. So this first stage of jnana yoga, shubheksha is not intellectual, it's not a thought. It's something deep inside yourself, a strong urge to improve. Like a drowning man wants to breathe – this is shubheksha. It's a strong urge to improve, to do good, to be good, to be auspicious; all your energy and focus is on that.

The second stage is *suvichara*, also called vicharana. *Su*, good; *vichara*, thought. Often we think jnana yoga is just *vichara* or enquiry, "Who am I?" We think of it as looking into the mind, becoming knowledgeable. But *suvichara* is just one *bhumika* of jnana yoga, and it's the stage where a lot of us are. If we're wanting to find out where we are in jnana yoga, this is it. We can say we have started jnana yoga because we do have *shubheksha*, that urge, otherwise we wouldn't be here in this gathering, and we wouldn't have been practising so many years. And what are the jnana practices we've been doing as *suvichara*? Swamiji says, "The first practice is SWAN." Being aware of your own strengths, weaknesses, ambitions and needs; beginning to know yourself from the inside and on a practical level, and using that insight to improve yourself. And really wanting to improve.

Now for this you have to have humility, *namrata*. This is a quality you see in saints like Ammaji, Swami Dharmashakti: real humility. But for us who are not saints, this humbleness, I think, begins to be expressed when we get some insight into ourselves. We see past the external aspect of our koshas. We begin to be aware of something besides the *shubheksha*; we begin to be more and more aware of our limitations and conditionings, our lust, arrogance, anger, delusion, greediness, lots and lots of things that we could never admit to before.

And, we have to humbly think, ‘Yeah. It’s me. It’s not these other people who need to improve; it’s me that has to improve. It’s me that has to do the practices to improve.’

We have to do *suvichara*, contemplate on our insights with faith, with faith in the teachings and faith in the path. So we become very interested in SWAN, in *pratipaksha bhavana*, in practising the *yamas* and the *niyamas*, in doing *karma yoga* and finding out how we react inside in different circumstances. If we have been doing that, that is *suvichara*.

For example, one very interesting practice in that process is *antar mouna*, because if we can’t see our thoughts, if we are not aware of our thoughts, feelings, reactions, how can we improve? If we are not aware of how we have been programmed, how can we clean it up? And you will have noticed, if you have been practising *antar mouna* or the *kriyas* (which do the same thing in *vijnanamaya kosha*), to begin with a lot of dirty stuff comes up. Lots of thoughts, lots of passions, lots of psychic experiences come up. And we have to develop the *drashta*, just be the witness. See them in yourself. Be detached. See them. Let them go.

If we do that sincerely for a long time, after a while we get a certain degree of clarity and move into the third *bhumika*, *tanumanasa*, thinning the mind and making it clearer and more subtle. Like muddy water in a glass: when the dirty stuff goes to the bottom you can filter it out and get clear water. In the same way, you move into the next step, which is called *tanu-manasa*. On a deeper level you’re thinning the *kleshas* and the animal instincts away. As Patanjali says (2:11):

Dhyaana-heyah-tadvrittayah

The modifications (of the *kleshas*) are reducible through meditation.

The mind becomes clear, like clear water, and you can see through the *vrittis*, through the instincts, through your reactions and you begin to see an inner light. This is the process of *tanumanasa*. You’ve experienced it in *antar*

mouna perhaps. The thoughts slow down and clear up, you experience more peace. Vairagya becomes a force in the personality so we are not so attached to our own thoughts and personality, and real seva begins because we begin to adapt, adjust and accommodate.

So the first three bhumikas are for the mumuksha, for the seeker, where we are practising to improve ourselves and to find some answers to the puzzles of life. The next four bhumikas describe a deepening ability to see reality and this understanding naturally expresses itself in life.

If you persist, you get more silence, more inner light. The thoughts drop away. Then the grace starts coming in. You have clear light dawning. You begin to understand. The fourth bhumika is called *sattwapati*, becoming established in sattwa. You become *santoshi*, content. You are quite happy either to work on generator duty or to demonstrate your special skills leading a program. You become balanced. You begin to understand other people and yourself, and to experience atmabhava. The clear light dawns.

The fifth bhumika is called *asamsakti*. You start being uninterested in samsara. To begin with, most of our awareness was in the body and mind. Eighty percent awareness was with the body-mind, twenty percent in all the rest of the koshas. But by this stage one is not very interested in the external world and its objects. The other koshas engage our attention. We used to think waking life was real and the short dreams emerging from sleep were just illusions of the mind. Now it seems the waking life of the senses is just an illusion and the life with God as its focus is much more real.

We've been trying to be good, trying to adjust, adapt, accommodate – putting in the effort – but now there is a spontaneous experience of grace. Now one begins to see past the external and into the internal. One begins to see into the source. Like in the *Matrix*, one takes the plug out of samsara where attention was being directed, and one plugs into another dimension of life. And this I think is why Swami

Sivananda says, “Kill this little I. Die to live. Live the Divine Life.” He is trying to communicate this understanding that we must let go of this entire phenomenal world, all of this external make-believe constructed by the ‘objects’, the senses and the brain. Let go of it, and just focus on the inner light. Any action done in that light is benevolent, good, pure, selfless, divine.

And you move to the next step, which is called *padartha abhavana*: *padartha* means object and *abhavana* means lack of feeling. You lose interest in objects and focus on the essence. And a person in this stage is called an *avadhoota*. Our experience of this stage is knowing Sri Swamiji. He was not interested in the objects. He was interested in the essence. And he walked away from wealth, fame and power, from this beautiful tirtha of Ganga Darshan, from gurudom, from travelling around the world, from all of that, to live and sit naked in amongst five fires. He was established in that state for years and transformed the world around him, and our consciousness too. That is the sixth stage of jnana yoga. It’s nothing much to do with the intellect, it’s beyond the higher mind. It’s on a different level.

The last *bhumika* is being in the state of *turiya*, where the individual consciousness completely fuses in the divine. Such a person is called a *jivanmukta*, one who is liberated while alive. A *jivanmukta* is free from the cycle of birth and death. There is no reason for them to stay, though they may return out of compassion if they have a mission here.

SUMMARY

The three yogas – karma yoga, bhakti yoga, jnana yoga – are identified as internal, *antaranga*, since they help to manage the behaviour patterns and traits of your personality by managing the subtle influences that make up what you are. The outer yoga helps you to manage your senses and the interactive mind. Bringing both of them together forms the

complete vision of yoga as seen by Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda. When you put the two halves of the chakra together, then the understanding of the yoga that we practise in the Satyananda Yoga-Bihar Yoga tradition becomes complete. That is the wheel of yoga. This gives a glimpse of that understanding, that vision, so that you may reflect and consider how much you know of this yogic tradition.

SATYANANDA YOGA-BIHAR YOGA CHAKRA



Growing Spiritual Vision of Yoga

Why are these talks on yoga being given? You may be aware that since the World Yoga Convention, the need was felt to go deeper into the yoga experience and I also realized the depth of yoga.

Sri Swamiji's mandate

As you know, in 2008 I retired from the presidency and the responsibilities of the Bihar School of Yoga. After my retirement in February 2008, I had been thinking as to what should be my next chapter in life. When Sri Swamiji had completed his chapter at BSY, Munger, he renounced it and left to wander again around the tirthas of India as a mendicant before he came to settle in Deoghar to do his tapasya in Rikhiapeeth. He had set the trend that when one is done, one leaves for the new pride of lions to take over and the old ones go away. So I asked Sri Swamiji, my guru, what should be my next call in life and if I can leave Munger and follow in his footsteps.

Sri Swamiji said, “You have given up the obligations and the administrative and official responsibilities of BSY. BSY is an institution, it is an organization, but you have to continue to work for the propagation of yoga. You have to continue to develop yoga and bring the new aspects and components of yoga to light. You can leave Ganga Darshan, you can leave the Bihar School of Yoga, but you cannot leave Munger. You



Sannyasa Peeth, Paduka Darshan, Munger

can live in another house in Munger and have nothing to do with BSY. Totally disassociate and disconnect, and BSY for you does not exist. Independently, your dharma is to continue on the path of yoga and to live the inheritance you have received from me. That inheritance is of sannyasa.” Saying this, he gave the seed for establishing Sannyasa Peeth. This happened in July 2009. In December he attained mahasamadhi.

For one year we undertook all the necessary rituals that are mandated subsequent to the mahasamadhi of a sannyasin of Sri Swamiji’s calibre. Then on 5th December 2010, the first anniversary day of his mahasamadhi, Sannyasa Peeth came into existence and it was dedicated to him. Since then, the facilities are being developed for people to come and participate in the spiritual disciplines and training separate from the practice of yoga, for yoga is separate from sannyasa.

The practice of yoga is a subject and a science, and sannyasa is a non-attached lifestyle. Right now in a small plot near the Ganges, Sannyasa Peeth is gradually taking shape and by 2015 we hope to start its activities. Since Sri Swamiji gave the mandate to continue to propagate yoga and to stay in Munger, my involvement, unofficial involvement with BSY was until last year. Official involvement ended in 2008 and my unofficial involvement ended in 2013 with the celebration of the Golden Jubilee and the World Yoga Convention. That was my last effort for the Bihar School of Yoga. Following that I am free and fully, one hundred percent retired.

Growing revelations in sadhana

During the five-year period spanning 2010 to 2014, I did not move out of Munger except to go to Rikhia or places of pilgrimage to do sadhana, and I thought about what I had learnt from my guru, Sri Swamiji, in relation to yoga. When he said, “You have to deepen your own experience of yoga and sannyasa,” it came to me at a most appropriate time. Up until 2008, as long as I was directly involved in the propagation and administration of yoga here, I was involved in teaching and organizing the yogic lessons as per the need of the individual who would come to class, just like any other yoga teacher would.

Then when I stopped travelling and involved myself in my own practices to deepen my perceptions, knowledge and understanding of yoga, which I did in a serious manner, certain experiences came, revelations came; a deepening understanding and a deepening experience. I began to experience different states of meditation. Different states of higher contemplation and states similar to or of samadhi. They were revelations; each experience was a revelation.

I always consider myself to be a practitioner, to see what my strengths and limitations are. How I can manage my limitations and how I can use my strengths in the most appropriate, correct and positive manner. From that perspective, I started observing my own growth, my own progress in a dispassionate and objective manner. Then the thought came that whatever I had spoken to people until now and whatever I had learnt and heard from my guru were not only ideas, they actually worked. For a long time I was following an idea, the light in the distance, then suddenly I found myself in front of it and said, “Yes, it really exists.” That was the revelation in deepening my own sadhanas during this five-year period.

Panchagni sadhana

The revelations came not only through yoga sadhana, but also through the panchagni sadhana, for which the path

was shown by Sri Swamiji who performed it for nine years. I started the sadhana in 2013 and every year its duration is to increase by one month. The panchagni sadhana is not a simple one. In the middle of winter, while everybody is wearing thick thermals, jumpers, hats, mittens and socks, and has a blanket wrapped around them when they come to morning chanting, where I am sitting the temperature is around fifty-two degrees Celsius. That is in the middle of winter. I am sweating profusely and others are shivering and putting on layers and layers of cloth. As the season changes and the weather gets warmer, the temperature in the panchagni vedi also goes higher. In winter, the panchagni commences at forty-five degrees and in full form goes up to sixty plus.



Panchagni sadhana

The body takes a good thrashing too. The sparks fly at you, the heat and flames sear the body. It is an intense sadhana. To maintain the focus and the tranquillity of the self in that state is important. That is known as *tapasya*, austerity. The panchagni sadhana is happening along with yoga sadhana, and the other sadhanas described in the upanishadic and the vedic tradition for sannyasins who want to progress in spiritual awareness.

Reflections on the development of yoga

After the Convention in October 2013, the ashram was closed for some time, to again review, revise and look at the system of yoga, at the intent with which Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda started the propagation of yoga and to see whether yoga is reaching in that direction or not. In this gathering there are many teachers who have been trained in Satyananda Yoga, but they are not the first generation teachers. Many, many generation of teachers have come up. I taught somebody, he taught somebody else, he taught somebody, and so on. Globally, about ten or fifteen generations have gone by who have been through the Chinese whispers of yoga. By the time the tenth teacher is available and disseminating today's teachings, the ideas, practices, approach and understanding have changed from what they originally were due to the Chinese whispers effect. Many impositions have been placed on yoga by people who have had only a peripheral knowledge of the guru-disciple relationship, ashram, spiritual life, mantra, sadhana, and the theories of yoga in general.

After revising and relooking at all the systems of yoga that are being propagated now, this year I have also started personally conducting the Yoga Instructor Courses to bring back the original components of yoga, as Sri Swamiji had taught us to teach and practice. Plus a lot of thinking is also being done to discover the various links in yoga. What has been presented to you during this seminar series is a reflection of what is happening at Ganga Darshan right now.



These links form what we call the 'yoga chakra', the wheel of yoga in the Satyananda Yoga-Bihar Yoga tradition. As you see in this book the wheel has six spokes. Three spokes represent bahiranga yoga, which comprises of the five aspects of hatha yoga, the eight aspects of raja yoga, and the three aspects of kriya yoga. Then antaranga yoga has the three aspects of karma yoga, the two aspects of bhakti yoga, and the seven aspects of jnana yoga. Hatha, raja and kriya,

represent bahiranga yoga, the outer yoga which includes external practices done to harmonize the body, prana, mind, consciousness and attain the experience of the spirit. The inner yoga, which includes karma, bhakti and jnana, is the transformation experienced in the thoughts, emotions and perceptions, reflecting in one's actions, behaviour and interactions. Looking at both these aspects, the external practice combined with the inner experience constitutes the full wheel of yoga.

Gauging spiritual growth

There is another thought in conclusion. How does one gauge the progress or the growth of a spiritual aspirant? Many people ask that question. How does one know that one is progressing in yoga and in spiritual life? The answer that is generally given is that you know you are progressing when your desires and passions reduce, when the cravings and needs of the mind are not aggressive and are pacified and contained. You decide whether that desire, need or aspiration is your actual need or it is only an ambition for

self-gratification, then you can consider in your sadhana whether your desires have lessened or increased. That is an indication of spiritual progress according to many people who have gone through that. It is the general answer, lessening of desires. Buddha has said it. Swami Sivananda has said it. Swami Satyananda has said it.

It does indicate a stage of the personality when the cravings, attachments and attractions to the outside world via the senses and the mind reduce, and you become more internally aware of yourself. On the other hand, how do you see for yourself whether you are growing or not? In my understanding, the best way to observe yourself is to see the whole of life divided into three parts. From birth to death, the whole lifeline is to be divided in three compartments. Do not think I am talking in relation to age from birth to death; it is the classification of the entire life experience in three groups.

First part of life: mastery over the senses and mind

The first one-third of life deals with the experiences that you gain through your senses and the interactive mind. All your practices, efforts, desires and aspirations are to fulfil the needs of the senses and the mind; manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara, all the four aspects.

Whatever you think or do is only oriented towards yourself as that is the gratification, fulfilment, experience that you are searching for. Whether you go to a yoga lesson, a spiritual retreat or a religious gathering, or you do your own personal practices, in the first stage of life you use everything for your own betterment. You use everything for your own upliftment, happiness and satisfaction, to achieve your aspirations, fulfil your desires and attain success.

At this stage, when you think of spiritual life and success in spiritual life, how your senses and mind relate to spiritual life is not valid. They are only one aspect, which has to be restrained and brought under the canopy of sanyam. The purpose of the routine and the sadhana that you do, the

disciplines that you follow, the asana, pranayama, pratyahara and dharana that you practise, the yamas and niyamas that you follow, should be to give you mastery over your senses and the interactive mind.

Until this happens you should not even think of moving beyond into the realm of the deeper mind or the spiritual mind, as you will always be pulled back to the gross nature. In meditation you are trying to find your harmony and suddenly an emotion of anger, frustration, envy, jealousy or hatred will come up and that thought will obsess your mind. Then meditation will become focused on a critical topic and thought rather than on a peaceful topic and thought. Instead of letting go in meditation you will begin to scheme in meditation. This indicates that no matter what you do, until and unless you try to attain sanyam and transcend this first level of the sensorial and mental experience, it is difficult to have spiritual awareness. Thus the first effort of sadhana and of spiritual attempt should be to gain mastery over the senses and the mind. In the first part of life, the first half of the wheel, *bahiranga yoga*, is applied.

Second compartment of life: personality change and transformation

The second level relates to the inner mind and sentiments. What is the inner mind and sentiment? Sentiments are *bhavas*, expressions of emotion. Emotion is energy in motion, and that is bhava. This energy in motion can tag itself with anything, outer or internal, and once that energy becomes attached to something it gives birth to a particular sentiment. In the deeper mind also, apart from bhava is the dimension of *samskaras*, the building blocks of life.

You don't know what your *samskaras* are, you don't know what your traits are. You don't know what your habits are. You only realize habits as something external and physical. Habits are restrictive conditions that exist in the mind already, which you are not aware of. *Samskaras* are pre-existing conditions deep inside you already. You are not

aware of them. Only when they express or manifest in the realm of the senses and the mind do you become aware of them.

To deal with your bhavas and samskaras in the second compartment of life, you have to move into the antaranga yoga component. Once you move into the antaranga yoga component the personality changes, the behaviour changes and you become more spiritual and more practical, both.

If you become spiritual and less practical there is something wrong, since spirituality does not accept 'loony-ism'. I do not know why loony behaviour is equated with spiritual behaviour; Lunaticism is not spiritualism. Being emotional and sentimental is not spiritualism. Being too rigid and aloof is also not spiritualism. Spiritualism is practical resilience in life and that is how you have to look at it. The ability to adopt any shape just as water can take the shape of a container without opposing the container in any manner. It is not like fitting a square peg in a round hole. Spirituality is like water, wherever you pour, it will take the shape and form of the container into which it is being poured. Therefore, do not equate or link spirituality with loopy behaviour.

One has to be realistic and pragmatic in life. This is possible when you focus your intentions and your efforts in the right management of your inner personality in the second part of your life. In the second compartment of your life you deal with emotions and samskaras through antaranga yoga.

Third compartment: merger with the effulgence of the yoga chakra

In the third part of life, one lives in the experience of union, and that is the merger of the yoga chakra. The effulgence is where you are endowed with peace, clarity, tranquillity and atmabhava. *Atmabhava* means being able to see yourself in others, indicating that duality, *maya*, delusion drops away. To understand atmabhava, you have to connect with the words

of Sri Swamiji when he says, “If you can recognize the inner spirit which you know to be within yourself exists in others as well, and respect and honour that, then that is the state of atmabhava.” These are not only spiritual precepts or ideas, they indicate progression. They indicate progression. It is this progression that Yogapeeth will look into in the coming years. It is the progression and development of this yoga chakra and the teaching of this yoga chakra that Yogapeeth will look into in the coming years before bringing a new package of learning to society.

Spirit of love and giving in yoga and sannyasa life

That is the attempt taking place in Ganga Darshan since this year and everybody has pitched in, as everyone who is here feels the need to deepen their experience of yoga and spiritual life. After all, it is for that experience that we have come here. It is not easy, though. When people come here for courses, programs and events for one week, two weeks, three weeks, they are a student and they enjoy everything. They like the satsangs, the ashram is nice, people are colourful. When people come here they see the ashram from a different perspective so they enjoy it. After enjoying their stay here, they go.

Then, there is a group of people who have sacrificed their enjoyment and work hard so that you can enjoy. Many times while we are having satsang, dance and kirtan programs here, the people who are working to ensure that things go flawlessly are not even present. They are in different areas and departments doing their work, not even visible. So do not think that people who live here, live in a sea of tranquillity, yoga and bliss twenty-four hours of the day. Do not think that Swami Niranjana lives a spiritual lifestyle. I am surrounded by the flood of expectations and the problems of everybody. Each one demands a moment of my time to talk to about their problems like I am everyone’s rubbish bin. Still, I do not mind it since I know I have the ability to burn it, which you cannot.

This is the real situation; it is not that everyone lives the idealistic spiritual life here: the practitioners live a better life than the residents, and residents live a slightly better life than the main teacher. The life of the main teacher is difficult. The moment I leave the gates of the Akhara and start walking around the ashram, hundreds of eyes follow to see where I am going, what I am doing, to whom I am talking; whether I am smiling, angry, laughing, joking. Each and every action is being analyzed, so it is not a peaceful life for me. Please remember that. It is not a peaceful life when you are under the glare of so many eyes and searchlights.

Sacrifice is a quality of sannyasa for the reason that the more you go up, the more of your self you have to sacrifice. That is the highest sadhana for those of us who are in the ashram. There are people here who used to meditate for eight hours before they came to the ashram, now they hardly get eight minutes to sit down peacefully. Now they are continuously applying themselves practically even while maintaining the inner awareness. So, hats off to those people who maintain the practical as well as the focus of the spiritual. They may not practise asana, pranayama and meditation, but they practise antaranga yoga, and they have to face so much from outside too. Yet they continue and that is the sacrifice I am talking about.

When the personal needs and demands are not the priority, and they have been transcended to ensure that other people connect with the spiritual vision of the guru that is love and sacrifice. That is the love and sacrifice of the residents and others who are devoted to ensure that these teachings come to you in the right spirit. I acknowledge with gratitude all the hard work and effort that these residents and sannyasins put in to bring this vision together.

Stepping into the future of yoga

It is going to be a journey for each one of us to explore the uncharted areas of yoga, to realize the sequence and the development of yoga, and to realize our own potential.

This will be our humble contribution to the tradition and to humanity at large. If we can work to realize yoga, live yoga and move from our own individually-oriented needs and desires to practising yoga so that we can experience the objectives and aims defined by yoga, we can then say, “Yes, I am a yoga sadhaka.”

If you do not do this then you are your own therapist, and nothing more, trying to find a way to manage your physical, psychological and emotional disturbances and imbalances. Instead of just using yoga as therapy to help yourself use yoga as a sadhana to evolve yourself. Now is the time to think about how you can use yoga to become better in life, to become more positive in life, to become more open in life, and to live the yogic path.

We have come full circle in the first chapter and we start our journey of the second chapter now.



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.



During the World Yoga Convention and Golden Jubilee celebrations of the Bihar School of Yoga, held in Munger, Bihar, in October 2013, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati announced a new direction for yoga. After fifty years of propagating yoga worldwide, the Bihar School of Yoga enters the next fifty years with a new understanding and approach.

This approach became apparent in the first month-long Yoga Instructor Course conducted in August 2014 at Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth under the direct guidance and inspiration of Swami Niranjan. Over a series of talks to residents and students of the ashram he outlined the future direction of Satyananda Yoga–Bihar Yoga. He expounded the origin of yoga and its three distinct periods of development in history. He described the role and contribution of exponents of the various branches of yoga, contextualizing the contemporary understanding of yoga. This theme was further expanded during the ‘Ashram Life Yoga Satsang’ program held in December 2014.

Yoga Chakra presents this innovative and groundbreaking vision of yoga for the coming age. The reader is invited to embark on a journey of discovery into a new dimension of yoga through these lectures.



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