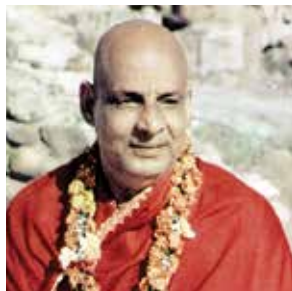
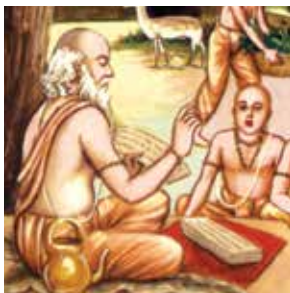
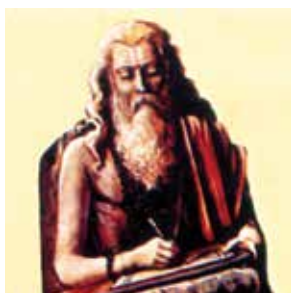


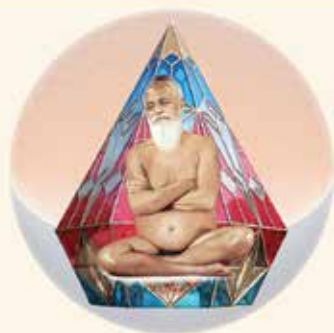
Yoga Chakra 10

Yoga Lifestyle

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Yoga Chakra 10



SWAMI SATYANANDA SARASWATI

1923~2023

CENTENARY CELEBRATIONS

Yoga Chakra 10

Yoga Lifestyle

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

*Discourses given by Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati
during the program of Yoga Chakra Series
held at Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth, Munger,
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Yoga Chakra 10: Yoga Lifestyle

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

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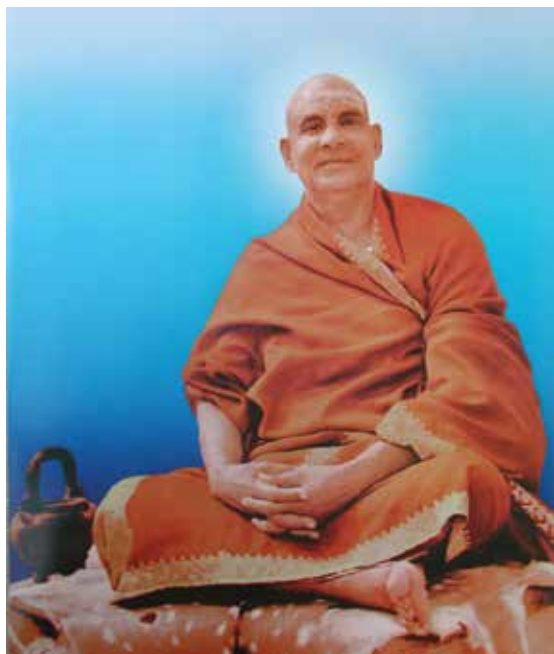
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Dedication

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



Dedication

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

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The 2nd Chapter of Yoga

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Life and Lifestyle

17 December 2019

Swami Sivanandaji, our grandfather guru, initiated Sri Swamiji, our guru, in yoga and gave him the yogic experience. When Sri Swamiji received the mandate from Swami Sivanandaji to go and spread yoga ‘from door to door and shore to shore’, he said to Swami Sivanandaji, “I have no understanding of yoga. I only know one little thing here, one little thing there, but there is no understanding of yoga.” Swami Sivanandaji then initiated Sri Swamiji in kriya yoga. It was not the technique of kriya yoga but the experience of kriya yoga, which only a capable guru can transmit to a capable disciple, and that is known as *shaktipat*, the experience of yoga.

When Sri Swamiji left Rishikesh and his guru’s ashram, he travelled for nine years. He did not establish any yoga institution and begin his yoga work straightaway. He did not contact anybody saying, ‘I have been given the mandate. This is what I am going to do; you have to help me.’ No. For nine years he simply travelled and during his travels he came across many types of people: healthy, sick, enlightened, unenlightened, good and bad. Apart from assessing the needs of people, he also immersed himself in the study of yoga.

Development of Satyananda Yoga

When Sri Swamiji established the Bihar School of Yoga in 1963, the yoga that he taught us was not the Satyananda Yoga which all of you learn or teach today. He taught us

something which was known as Yoga Chakra and it was his understanding of the way in which a progression had to be maintained in yoga. *Yoga Chakra*, the wheel of yoga, was his understanding of where these practices can lead an individual, the beginning and the end, and both are unique and wonderful. It was this Yoga Chakra that we were introduced to when we came to the ashram and the way in which he trained us was also unique.

Let us say that there are about one hundred and thirty people in the class tomorrow. If I ask you to practise one asana and not to move until I come and check you by going from one to another, how long would it take to correct everyone in the class? That was the time we spent in a single posture. As a result, we mastered each posture in the first attempt. It was painful, definitely. Imagine performing the peacock pose for the first time ever, elbows digging into the abdomen, and holding it until each one in the class was corrected.

Our introduction to yoga was through the Yoga Chakra. In 1968, one of the names given to Paramahamsaji was *Yoga Chakra Kalanidhi* – Creator of the art and science of Yoga Chakra, the Wheel of Yoga. The Yoga Chakra was a complete practice which was grouped into specific sections according to what Sri Swamiji perceived as the right way for people to cultivate their inner potential and the faculties of head, heart and hands, as per the guideline of Swami Sivananda. This Yoga Chakra or the Wheel of Yoga had six spokes. One set of three spokes represented his selection of yogas which one could practise to attain physical, psychological and spiritual upliftment and wellbeing. These three yogas represented hatha yoga, raja yoga and kriya yoga. Apart from the regular training in hatha yoga and raja yoga, Sri Swamiji also initiated a three-year postal correspondence course in kriya yoga in the 1970s. Kriya yoga is not something new, it is a part of the Yoga Chakra tradition.

When we went out into the world to teach yoga, we encountered people of all sizes and shapes, health and

wealth. Most of them could not do all the practices of Yoga Chakra. So the concept of Yoga Chakra was set aside and only those practices were selected which everyone in society could apply to attain health, relaxation and develop the ability to concentrate and, if destiny allowed it, embark on the path of meditation. Basic and simple practices were selected from the Yoga Chakra and were taught across the globe for fifty years which were later identified or referred to as Satyananda Yoga.

Satyananda Yoga is a miniscule part of the larger Yoga Chakra concept, as the practices selected represent the beginners group of asana, intermediate group of asana, standing and balancing group of asana, forward and backward bending asanas. There are not many advanced or inverted asanas. Teaching advanced asanas is out of the question because nobody, even in the Satyananda Yoga tradition, practises the peacock pose, the scorpion pose or the headstand. You do not teach these practices in class. So there are no advanced practices, only five or six basic groups of asanas.

From the entire group of pranayama practices, three or four have caught the fancy of people. Nadi shodhana, bhramari, ujjayi, maybe kapalbhati or bhastrika and beyond that nobody practises other forms of pranayamas. In raja yoga, the practice of pratyahara that most people like is yoga nidra. That is the only pratyahara practice of sensory internalization which is done, not with the intention of arriving at pratyahara, rather with the intention to relax and sleep. Maybe two or three meditation practices are selected like ajapa japa, antar mouna, chidakasha dharana and beyond that there is no other practice in Satyananda Yoga.

This is the range of Satyananda Yoga which people practised globally ever since we started to propagate yoga. This yoga propagation took place and thousands of people across the globe derived a lot of benefit from these simple practices. Even today they are still as valid as they were fifty years ago. They are not outdated. When we had started to

teach yoga, there were only ten or twenty yoga teachers of repute. From the 1960s to the 1980s, there were three or four brands of yoga like Satyananda Yoga, Iyengar Yoga, Sivananda Yoga and a few others. People who came to yoga did not only come for physical, health-related or fitness reasons.

There have been different waves in the propagation of yoga. In the 1960s, yoga was for health and beauty. In the 1970s, yoga was more for learning how to meditate. In the 1980s, it became more for stress management, psychic discoveries and meditation. In every decade there has been a different appreciation for and learning from yoga. However, many people became teachers and nobody wanted to remain a student. From one hundred teachers, soon there were millions of teachers in every city around the world.

Towards change

In 2013, after fifty years of yoga propagation, a conscious decision was taken not to propagate yoga anymore and to close the first chapter of Satyananda Yoga which was the main teaching of the Bihar Yoga tradition. It was decided to revive the Yoga Chakra which would allow serious practitioners of yoga to deepen their experience. That is how we started with the Yoga Chakra series.

This year's Yoga Chakra program represents the fifth Yoga Chakra training that we are embarking upon. Every Yoga Chakra program is different and there is no progression in it as everything is based on how yoga can be adopted as a lifestyle. I have a question for you – What is life? Your answers would probably be: life is inhaling and exhaling; life is what you feel right now; life is an opportunity; life is a learning experience. This is all beautiful, impressive, good philosophy and theory.

Life is what you live through your mind. If your mind is good, life is good. If your mind is bad, life is bad. If your mind is happy, life is happy. If your mind is sad, life is sad. This is the yogic understanding. Other answers are

theoretical and possibly politically correct and philosophical, however they are not real. The real answer is that every expression of life is what you live through your mind.

The entire approach of yoga is to harmonize all the different aspects of life starting from the body, to prana, mind, consciousness and spirit. Hatha yoga caters to annamaya and pranamaya koshas – the material and the energetic or pranic. Raja yoga caters to manomaya and partly vijñanamaya koshas; Kriya yoga tries to develop the experience of the anandamaya kosha. These three yogas go through the physical and the pranic, the mental and the consciousness, psychic and spiritual dimensions. This is what has to be perfected in life and they are the first three spokes of the Yoga Chakra: hatha yoga, raja yoga and kriya yoga.

This becomes the sadhana. What is sadhana? People say, 'I practise yoga'. It is a completely false statement. Nobody practises yoga. You say, 'I practise yoga three times a week when I go to my yoga class'. Which yoga are you referring to? The aerobic yoga? You are not referring to yoga. Every evening you meditate and in that fifteen minutes or half an hour of meditation, you want to experience the best in yourself. Can half an hour of meditation compensate for twenty-three and a half hours of the stress, anxiety, tension, frustration, anger, desire, sadness and happiness that one goes through? Meditation becomes an escape; it is not a sadhana; it is not a practice. It is an escape into a world of imagination, feeling, 'I am away from my stressors, frustrations, problems and difficulties. I can think of my mantra and I can think of this and that'. You practise pranayama in a class for about twenty minutes and expect high results from it, when during the day you do not even bother about how you are breathing. People think of classroom learning as their yoga practice and that is very much a western mind-set. That is not yoga.

What you learn in the classroom are points and hints for you to incorporate in your day-to-day routine and that is lifestyle. When you begin to live a positive condition in your

mind, your life becomes positive. It is not my whim that I need a hit of coffee so I have a cappuccino. I need a hit of yoga so I have a hit of yoga asanas. I need a hit of relaxation so I practise my relaxation. I need a hit of escape so I go into an imaginative world of meditation. No. Classroom learning only gives you the tools which you can apply in your life. When you begin to apply this learning, you begin to experience the results of yoga and not just for the twenty minutes in a class. In twenty minutes, you feel light anyway, so just imagine how you will feel when you are able to do that for twenty hours.

The focus of this Yoga Chakra program will be lifestyle. I want you to think about lifestyle. Just as I asked you the question – What is life? I am asking you the question – What is lifestyle? The answer to the first question was that life is what you live through your mind. The second answer is that lifestyle is the expression of the quality of your mind. If the practices allow you to connect with a positive and better quality of mind, then your responses to the usual situations that you face every day will be different to what they were yesterday. It is a creative expression and participation which helps you to derive the benefit of living a better and harmonious life, free from frustrations and tensions.

When I mentioned *Transforming Krodha*, the book about anger management, I saw almost ninety percent of the heads bob up and down. This means that everybody is thinking about and facing anger. However, nobody has lived their anger; everything is suppressed. What we experience is the irritation and frustration while we hold the anger down. Eventually when the anger explodes, it is uncontrolled, violent, aggressive and destructive. If the situation develops to this level, it indicates an absolute lack of wisdom.

There is a simple rule which nature follows and which you also follow: consumption, assimilation and elimination. You consume or you eat, you assimilate what you eat, and then you eliminate the waste product. If you continue to hold the waste product in your body, what will be the result?

Sickness and ill health will be the outcome. For the body to maintain its health, it has to eliminate the waste, the negative and poisonous every day. If it holds anything beyond a day, it is an indication of illness. Does the mind follow the same nature? You consume through your mind and you assimilate through your mind, yet you do not eliminate from the mind. As a result, every mind is a constipated mind. There is so much stuff there that it is constipated. Only mental shankhaprakshalana can help to overcome this mental constipation.

Although I am saying this in a light manner, it is a matter of concern because the waste product of the mind is never eliminated. When the waste product covers the purity of the soil, what do you see on the surface? A mountain of plastic and garbage. Each human being represents that mountain of garbage which we experience in our life through our frustrations, anxieties, desires, likes and dislikes, expectations, and the expressions of the six traits of the mind. It is that garbage that has to be removed. The colours of the six traits of the mind have to be removed with the practice of yoga. The process of removing these colours becomes part of your lifestyle, and is the aspiration and focus of the yogic lifestyle.

We shall be looking at this idea of lifestyle from the yogic perspective. In a simple sentence, we can say that lifestyle is an expression of positive and constructive action, behaviour and thought. When they become natural expressions in life, then that lifestyle is conducive to being active in the world and at the same time being peaceful in the mind. Once that is attained, the journey begins.

Towards a Better Quality of Mind

18 December 2019

The Yoga Chakra was presented by our master, Sri Swami Satyanandaji. To live the Yoga Chakra, our awareness has to change and become a moment-to-moment awareness without which we cannot practise or live the Yoga Chakra. This requires us to change our understanding of yoga so that it does not remain confined to classroom teaching, rather it becomes part of our normal routine as well.

For example, the practice of pranayama should not remain confined to twenty minutes in a class. When you are breathless, are you able to use your awareness to regain the balance of breath? When your heart beats faster while walking or running, are you able to utilize awareness and the knowledge of breath to regulate yourself? Are you able to inhale longer and deeper in the remaining twenty-three hours, forgetting the exertion of twenty minutes in a yoga class?

The idea of Yoga Chakra is to apply the principles of yoga and it has a definite purpose. Yesterday, I asked you a question – What is life? Though everyone gave fully acceptable answers, those answers represented an intellectual, theoretical or philosophical understanding of life. The reality is that we are living life through the mind. Life is what we live through the mind. The focus comes to the mind. Whatever you are feeling at present is what you are living and experiencing. The other aspect is lifestyle

which is the active expression of what we feel. What we know as lifestyle is the external expression of our mental nature, expressed through action, behaviour and thought. This is what life and lifestyle mean.

Yoga and the mind

What is yoga? Do not think of self-realization, samadhi or moksha as the culmination of yoga. The first practical achievement of yoga can be understood as the awakening of the dormant potentials of head, heart and hands. This is the first aspiration or goal of yoga. To awaken those dormant potentials, you have to know them, you have to understand and realize them. How do you know what is inside you? What are the abilities, strengths and qualities within you? Everybody has a different mind. Somebody might be gold, somebody might be coal. If I find gold in my mind, I do not expect the same from your mind as your mind may contain coal and not gold.

Everyone has a different mind-set, different samskaras and karmas. Everyone has a different starting point from where we discover our nature through the journey of yoga. In that process of discovery, we realize our abilities, qualities and strengths. We also realize the barriers and impediments which hold us back and do not allow us to move forward. We try to find a way to overcome or transcend the blocks and barriers. That is the sadhana. Once a barrier is removed the passage becomes easier. The first experience of yoga is to connect with ourselves and the qualities that are inherent in us – with the nature of sattwa. That is the first aspiration.

People come to yoga for different reasons. I remember in the early days of yoga propagation when we first went out in the 1970s, there were two types of yoga teachers in the world: sannyasins and non-sannyasins. The sannyasins were Paramahansa Yogananda, Baba Nityananda, Baba Muktananda, and others who were masters. The non-sannyasins or civilians were Richard Hittleman and other prominent yoga evangelists. The interesting difference

was that civilian yoga teachers who were well known and recognized focused on the training of hatha yoga – for body, health, beauty, and to develop a spiritual glow, a spiritual aura. Sannyasins were into higher practices like kundalini yoga, kriya yoga and shaktipat. This was the situation until the 1980s. Swami Satyananda's system was possibly the one which catered to the middle section, it was not about the physical aspect or about the higher mystical aspects only. Rather it allowed people to explore the middle range which was the mind and prana.

When we think of mind, we say it is a part of consciousness. At the same time, it is also part of energy. Mind is composed of consciousness and energy. It is cognition and vitality or *prana*. When energy combines with consciousness, how would you define the mind? You have seen a photograph that is printed on paper. It is two-dimensional. That is the imprint, the perception or cognition of consciousness. However, when you add prana, the two-dimensional image becomes three-dimensional and you can see it from all sides: it takes on a form and a shape, it exists in a particular dimension.

The mind should not only be seen as a cognitive faculty, but also as a pranic faculty and a pranic expression. This is what yoga has always emphasized. Raja yoga emphasizes the understanding of mind and prana, and the need to merge a lower state of experience into a higher state of experience by converting or transforming it. Thus, a feeling we may have which is superficial, gross and mundane can become a higher feeling if prana and consciousness within it are right. Classical raja yoga defines the progression of transforming the conditioning of the mind and connecting it to another source of expression.

There are two raja yogas. The original one is influenced by the vedic system and this is what we are talking about in which consciousness and prana are seen as one entity. At the gross physical level, when we are connected with our senses, consciousness and prana manifest through the

senses as cognition and vitality. In this dimension, they are conditioned, limited and contained. In the spiritual dimension, where nothing is contained by the senses or any other kind of mental mood and conditioning, energy and consciousness are seen as Shakti and Shiva.

While the original raja yoga indicated that a merger has to take place between energy and consciousness, Sage Patanjali presented the theory of raja yoga from the Samkhya perspective. Over time it became a popular treatise and this is what people recognize today. However, it is just one branch, one aspect, dissertation or thesis on the subject of raja yoga from the perspective of the Samkhya school of thought. Sage Patanjali introduced the idea of the mind being everything and it is the perfection of mind that has to be attained. From Patanjali's perspective, the perfection of mind is to be attained by changing the habits, behaviour, attitude and understanding with the practice of yamas and niyamas. Patanjali presumes that you know all the techniques, so there is no description of any technique; there are only short statements about different practices and the fruit or results that they yield.

Sage Patanjali defines various conditions of the mind as it evolves and becomes more and more subtle. In pratyahara, the starting point, and dharana, you can practise, observe, control, modify and manage the mind. This is followed by *dhyana*, meditation, which is a state, not a practice. Samadhi is also a state, not a practice. Patanjali has described eight types of samadhi: with and without seed, *sabeeja* and *nirbeeja*; with and without thought, *savichara* and *nirvichara*, with and without modification, *sabeeja* and *nirbeeja*. This implies that even thoughts remain in the state of samadhi, even modified behaviour continues in the state of samadhi, even dilution of a mental mood can be experienced in samadhi. The process goes through refinement of a mental experience. It is not the final spiritual enlightenment. At the end, you come to *asmita samadhi* which means samadhi without ego. Until now you

were always within the confines of ego. Only after that comes the *ananda samadhi*, the state of bliss, according to the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali.

He has described the full mental process but the pranic process has been put aside, though this pranic process is described in the original raja yoga. The statement is clear: cognition always creates a two-dimensional imprint, yet cognition with *shakti*, awareness with vitality, will turn that image into a three-dimensional image so that it becomes alive. This is what becomes an expression in life. The focus of this lifestyle program is to learn how to regulate our practices and our time to maintain a better quality of mind.

Know the intention

When you go to the office to work, what is there at the back of your mind? The day of the month when you get your pay check is always at the back of the mind. You always associate your profession with that salary which becomes the stimulant. When you practise yoga, what is the stimulant in your mind? When you go to the gym, the intent is clear: I am going for a workout. When you practise yoga, what is the intent? Nobody has thought about it. Be clear and open. You can make up anything, that is another matter, yet until now, nobody has thought about it. What is the intent?

Wellbeing of the self is the intent of yoga. The first step of yoga is awakening of your dormant faculties. The second stage is to spiritualize your lifestyle. The first level is creativity of faculties and the second level is spiritualizing the lifestyle. These two become the focus and the aim of yoga.

Even when you practise your asana and pranayama, do not just think of them only as helping you attain your physical health, flexibility, fitness, dynamism or wellness, but also that they are balancing the pranic flow in the body. With the balance of the pranic flow, the mind is also becoming more quiet, peaceful and tranquil. Go through the whole experience – see it, observe and know it. In this manner, give your practice a focus and a direction.

We start our practice with the three mantras in the morning. What is the purpose? To feed a positive sankalpa, a positive idea, a positive thought into our subconscious mind. In the state of drowsiness, when we wake up in the morning, before we even get out of bed, when we are fifty percent asleep and fifty percent awake, we take the sankalpas for health and wellbeing, for creativity and for removal of distress and difficulties in life. With each sankalpa, we chant the corresponding mantra: the Mahamrityunjaya mantra, the Gayatri mantra and the 32 names of Durga, which enforce the idea, the conditioning that triggers a particular vibration in the pranic system. Eventually, what today begins as a ripple, in the course of time becomes a wave and we experience the change and transformation. However, it is the start of connecting with positive things in life. Start by giving your life and routine a purpose. Your family and the economy is your social life. There has to be a focus for your entire life which has to be complete.

Two things are clear: we have to integrate yoga into our life and once we begin to live it, it becomes a lifestyle. If you look at how you live your life at home, you will find out that what you live is what you are living through your mind, through your expectations and desires. This focus or direction does not bring you stability, instead there is more frustration and agitation. Can that be rectified and balanced? We are not all yogis. We are all working people. I also work. You also work. You have a profession. I also have a profession. You have a home. I also have a home. You have a family. I also have a family. We are all engaged and involved. However, in that engagement, can we become more aware? Yes, we can.

Where does our awareness begin? With an understanding of what we want from life. What do we want from life? To be happy is one component. To be less frustrated and to be able to manage the stress better is another component; to be more confident and optimistic, to have more stamina and clarity are other components. Everybody can make a choice or

selection. That choice or selection which we are attracted to and which engages our attention is the starting point. We use that starting point to create conditionings within ourselves.

Niranjan Challenge

Swami Sivanandaji gave the idea of pratipaksha bhavana, and I feel this is his main contribution or teaching on how to remain connected with positivity. Swami Satyanandaji gave us the understanding of Yoga Chakra which goes from personal transformation to creative expression. If we put these two together, then personal transformation happens through hatha yoga, raja yoga and kriya yoga while creative expression happens through karma yoga, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga. Connection to positivity happens with a moment-to-moment awareness of how long we can remain connected to our happiness and positivity. These are the two components that have to come together.

We start with the morning mantras. The first sankalpa, the first idea and impression to go into your mind in that drowsy semi-subconscious state is the desire to be healthy, free from illness and physical challenges, mentally creative, clear and bright and to overcome the distress and difficulties in life. Here desire has taken a positive shape, a positive dimension and it is connected to something positive that I need – health and wellbeing, calmness and creativity, harmony and happiness. Every morning this idea is being thrown in the subconscious mind. After one month, observe your mind and the behaviour of your mind and you will see the difference.

Of course, you also have to be practical and realistic, you cannot be carried away by the force of what you are experiencing. Look at how you can progress from there to the next level. If you can, it is food for thought, and if you want, you can sign up for a game. That game is an App which is coming out called the ‘Niranjan Challenge’. It has 22 challenges and you have to fulfil one challenge every month. Only if you pass through one challenge and succeed

in living it, will you be allowed to go onto the next challenge. The first challenge is simple, I will give you a hint – the 18 ITIES of Swami Sivananda, and serenity is the first one.

In the normal situations and conditions that you are subject to in your daily routine, can you maintain serenity for a longer time today than yesterday? Can you maintain your serenity today, in the noise, the cacophony of your children playing in the backyard? Today, I am trying to emphasize that classroom teaching is only for you to understand the practices, yet the teaching has to be lived in your normal life. So pick one item and live that, for one week and then for a month.

Happiness is also part of the Niranjana Challenge. Can you be happy for twenty-four hours, for one whole day in your life? You do not have to be happy every day, just one day in your life for twenty-four hours. That will be an achievement. If we are happy for one day in our life, we can and shall be happy every day. Can it be done or is it just a theory – good words spoken by Swamiji. No. This has to be taken up as a challenge, as challenges bring motivation, drive and force behind the action.

People are lazy when it comes to the practice of yoga. When you go to the gym, what do you do? If today you do ten push-ups, tomorrow you make the extra effort to do eleven. If you can do eleven push ups, you make an extra effort the next day to do the twelfth. Every day you are increasing one, however in the yoga class you are reducing one round every day, saying, ‘Ten is too much, I’ll try nine today. I think nine is also too much, let me try eight, I’ll be more comfortable with it. No, even with eight I still feel a bit uncomfortable, I’ll go to seven’. In this way, your effort during the practice is reduced and there is no advancement. By reducing the number of your practice, you are also limiting and reducing the benefits. It has to be the other way around. Every day you should make an effort to break your own record of the previous day. This is something you should be able to do easily and comfortably.

Yamas and niyamas

Therefore, to succeed at the Niranjana Challenge, the previous Yoga Chakra programs contained information and training in the lifestyle yamas and niyamas. I will give a brief introduction to the lifestyle yamas and niyamas. When people think about and study yoga, they go through the literature on yoga, primarily the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali in which they are introduced to the terms 'yama' and 'niyama'.

Commentators translate these terms to mean ethical and moral precepts of yoga. It is an understanding influenced by Christian and western thought which believes that living and behaving in a certain manner implies morality or ethics. Viewed from that perspective, yamas and niyamas are identified as the ethics and morality of yoga. However, that is not the real meaning or a correct translation. *Yama* means to sustain, to hold, to maintain for a long time. What do you hold for a long time? To develop a positive quality and hold it for a long time is the meaning of yama.

Every branch of yoga has a set of yamas and niyamas which are integrated in the practice. Hatha yoga has a full set of yamas and niyamas, twenty each, while in raja yoga Patanjali has only presented five of each. However, in classical raja yoga, there are more than five each because these are integrated in the practice itself to create a conditioning which is receptive to the harmony of prana and consciousness at the levels of annamaya, pranamaya, manomaya, vijñanamaya and anandamaya koshas.

Hatha yoga also defines seven *bhūmikas*, foundations, which have to be developed and they represent conditions of the mind. In hatha yoga there are twenty yamas, twenty niyamas and seven *bhūmikas*. They indicate the changes that you have to go through within yourself and attain the different experiences of your own better nature.

In classical raja yoga there are ten yamas and ten niyamas. They are conditions or moods that we live in life. Just as we experience fear and anxiety, anger and frustration as emotions, we can also experience them in the form of

waves in our mind. The connection we develop with the yamas and niyamas becomes an expression of our behaviour.

The important components in a lifestyle are the various parts that we have to bring together: yoga practices and a daily routine of different activities. How do you define your lifestyle? What is your lifestyle like? Some people may say it is a profession-oriented lifestyle, or a family-oriented lifestyle, depending on what they are living at present. Others may say that it is a sports-oriented lifestyle, tourist-oriented lifestyle, vagabond-lifestyle, a feral-lifestyle or a vegan-lifestyle and so on.

Is that the correct way to perceive a lifestyle? About eighty years ago, Swami Sivanandaji said, “Distractions will always be there. You cannot avoid them. Death will always be there. Destruction will always be there. Conflicts and anxieties will always be there. We have to survive with them, we have to live with them. What was outer and external until now will become individualistic and internal in future.” This is exactly what we are seeing. Previously problems used to come from outside, now they are coming from inside.

Comfort and struggle

For example, we speak of instincts – *ahara*, which means craving, consumption; *nidra*, sleep; *bhaya*, fear; *maithuna*, sensuality. These are identified as the four basic instincts. Do you live these instincts or not? One hundred percent? You don’t live those instincts. You live modified instincts. If sleep is an instinct, why do you take sleeping pills to sleep? You do not use that instinct of sleep anymore. In order to sleep you need the intervention of a sleeping pill. Where is your sleep instinct? It is not there.

It is the same with fear. Previously fear was natural and evoked by a tiger, a lion, a snake, the darkness, a ghost, demon or the skeleton under the bed trying to grab you at night. They were natural fears. Today your fear is that somebody did not like you on Facebook. There is no natural fear anymore.

As to ahara, craving or consumption, we used to consume food because it was necessary for life. Today people live to eat. Where is the instinct of consumption and craving? It is not there in its natural state. It is artificial now.

The basic things that we used to live, go through and experience earlier have changed. They have become the cause of frustration in life. This was what Swami Sivanandaji was referring to eighty years ago when he said, “In future, things will come from inside.” In relation to instinct, it is something that is coming from within. We cannot sleep. Where has the instinct gone? We consume too much, overload our stomach and become obese. Where has the instinct gone which was a craving for nourishment and not greed?

Our present lifestyle is definitely not how it used to be for a long period in our history. Just imagine the period from the day the first human being walked on Earth until today as a twenty-four-hour period. If this period is of twenty-four hours, for twenty-three hours and forty minutes, we lived a nomadic and agrarian lifestyle in which our body was constantly on the move. It was never static, walking twenty, thirty or fifty kilometres a day in search of safety and security, foraging and hunting.

In twenty-four hours, we have spent twenty-three hours and forty minutes living a nomadic life. It is only in the last ‘twenty minutes’ that the graph has gone up when we entered the Industrial or Modern Age. Imagine the conditioning which the senses, body and mind had for twenty-three hours and forty minutes, and look at what it has gone through in the last twenty minutes. There has been a complete change in mental perception, cognition, knowledge, experience, involvement. Everything that has happened to us in our life is radically different now.

This is a good indication that essentially, our body and life is meant for active participation, not for isolation or a static condition in life. Our mind is naturally agile, our body is also naturally agile and has to be maintained like that.

However, today people prefer comfort more than activity, and comfort causes distress. Comfort does not give pleasure, rather it causes distress and weakens the mind. When there was nothing in the ashram, people adjusted comfortably to the environment and nobody said, “There is no fan.” To make things easier fans were installed and people got used to them. Now whenever people walk into a room, their hand automatically goes to the switchboard for the fan. People have become so conditioned to these comforts; they cannot tolerate heat anymore. Air-conditioners were a luxury once upon a time and now every person demands it. It has become the basic right and the need of comfort.

As we go more and more into the comfort zone, our body and mind lose stamina and strength. The more comfortable we become, the more doors for problems open. Paramahamsaji used to say, “In life, there should be struggle.” It has to be a conscious struggle. If there is no struggle in life, create something to struggle for or to struggle with. Let that become a conscious struggle for that will keep you going all the time. If you look at the journey of yoga, you will discover that it is a journey of struggle. It is not a journey of peace. It is a journey of struggle leading to peace.

The struggle is with what we identify as our limitations and shortcomings and to go beyond them. When we identify something, we become aware of something that is not so nice – a block, barrier, restriction, past memory or experience. Once that is eliminated, the path opens up before. Going through a difficult situation is a struggle in yoga and that is what it has to become. One has to go through that struggle with confidence as stated in the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali (1:14):

Sa tu dirghakala nairantarya satkara sevito dridhabhumih.

You can succeed if you are able to persevere, sustain your effort, believe in what you want and respect what you do.

Connecting to Prana

19 December 2019

We have been speaking about Yoga Lifestyle and have looked at three main points. The first one is that life is what you live through your mind. This implies that life is an expression of your mind along with prana, as awareness and vitality, or mind and prana coexist.

The second point is about the purpose or intent of yoga, which has two stages as propagated by Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda. The first stage is to awaken creative faculties in life and the second is to cultivate spiritual awareness. The first stage, cultivation of creative faculties, represents the effort and sadhana that we go through to develop the positive, while the second stage represents the expression of these creative and positive faculties or the lifestyle we live, which is conducive to the attainment of spiritual awareness.

The third point we discussed was about the need to integrate yoga with life, to live a yogic life, which is what we are aiming for.

What is modern life and what is the focus of individuals in modern life? What is the dominant nature of people in modern life? Can it be discovered, observed and analyzed? What is this modern life that we all live and what is the intent of that life? Are you able to fulfil the intent of the life that you live by living this modern life? What is lacking? These are the questions that have to be answered to develop clarity

regarding – Where am I, how am I living, and what is my intent for living? Why do I want to live? Is it only to find happiness in life? What type of happiness are you looking for? Is it social, family, individual, economic or egotistical? Happiness is a general term and can refer to many things like resources and finances, in relation to a profession, or to comfort and stability, in relation to one's own desire. So, what is the overall intent of life? That has to be discovered.

I will give you a hint. Most people say that what they lack in life is time and they complain that they do not have time. Time is something that is lacking in everybody's life. Instead of engaging oneself in a proper environment towards a proper pursuit, our efforts are fragmented. The biggest complaint is 'I don't find time'. 'Can I do something shorter? Do I have to do so many things? Can my expectation or journey be facilitated?' These are some of the most common statements that people make about time.

I generally suggest that to know where your intentions, habits and utilization of time lie, examine what it is that you do in your spare time. What you do in your spare time defines your nature. For instance, if you go to sleep, you are a lethargic person. Do you read a book or pick up your mobile and start chatting with your friends? All this shows how you use your free time and it defines your interests in life. When you engage in the type of activity that you enjoy, time has no meaning. Today time has become important. In the past, we simply lived, yet today we live according to time. It is here that you have to make time to integrate yoga into your life.

There are two aspects to integrating yoga into lifestyle. One is the classroom practice which is only to give you the training, the hints and skills to live a yogic life in your normal day-to-day environment. This leads to the continuous practice of yoga, a moment-to-moment awareness of how you are living, how you respond to a situation – is it proper, improper, right, wrong, what is the fallout as well as the usefulness of it. That integration has to happen with continued practice and moment-to-moment awareness.

Pratyayas

If the mind is the focus in yoga, and silencing and harmonizing the mind is the aim of yoga, then one also has to become aware of the pranic component along with the mind. It is more vital to be aware of prana than the mind itself. The difference between consciousness and energy is that consciousness is the cognition of a two-dimensional picture like in a photograph, yet when prana is added to awareness or consciousness, the impressions of the mind become three-dimensional and they come alive. These impressions of the mind are known as *pratyayas* which are often referred to as ‘impressions’ in English. Many other terms are also used like psychological or unconscious and subconscious impressions, archetypes, conditionings and so on. The word in Sanskrit is *pratyaya* and it means something that has come alive and become active in your mind.

What has become active in the mind? When you remember a pleasant memory, you see an image which is an aspect of the memory – ‘I went to this island and the island was beautiful. I could see the sunrise and the sunset’. You have this image and visual impression. The visual impression or visual recollection is consciousness and along with it, there is also a feeling – ‘It was so nice. The wind was crisp and clear. The water was so clear that I could see the sand and all the pebbles’. You also have the sensation of the coolness of air and water, how it felt to walk on the sand. These combinations are there in the form of a memory.

The experience is pranic and the vision is consciousness. When you visualize something, when a memory comes up, you say it is the mind and you try to deal with it from the mental perspective. Initially you can somehow manage to calm whatever is coming up. It is not transformed, transcended or changed. It maintains the same prana and the same form. The only thing that has happened is that you have acknowledged something that has come up from inside but you have not yet cleared it.

When we consume something, we absorb the nutrients from it and then we eliminate the waste product. That is the physical nature of *ahara*, consumption. If the waste product is not eliminated, the body will become sick with constipation and its related problems have to be faced. The same rule applies to the mind. Mind also consumes, assimilates, and it also has to eliminate, yet until today elimination has not taken place. Assimilation and consumption have taken place, so everything is packed into the mind. Every mind in this world is constipated. When we are subject to constipation of the mind, the mind keeps on revolving in the same areas.

We continue to revolve between the six basic conditions of life: *kama*, *krodha*, *lobha*, *moha*, *mada*, *matsarya* or desire, anger, greed, infatuation, arrogance, envy, and everything is coloured by them. Even our meditation is influenced by whatever trait is predominant in the mind at that time. Meditation is not free from the influence of the six friends and whatever is the most predominant will appear in meditation. Most people are not aware of this and so there is no progress in meditation except for some acknowledgement of what is in the mind, and finding some relief, 'I have acknowledged it, I know what is there'.

In classical raja yoga, there is more emphasis on the pranic component. It says that to clear the mind of pratyayas, it is not enough to observe the mind. It is necessary to identify and remove the pranic component. When you take a photo, initially the colours are sharp and vibrant. Then you put the photograph out in the sun for a few days and the sun will take away the colours and bleach the paper. After some time, you will only see only white paper, the colour has gone. A faded impression may be visible yet the vibrancy of colour is gone. The image is not alive anymore, it is dead. The same thing happens in raja yoga when you remove prana from a pratyaya.

Pratyaya is a memory; it can be a happy one or it can be a bad one, nevertheless something is there, alive and vibrant. We work with the observation of that pratyaya, that memory.

Intellectually you are able to analyze, accept and observe it. Then after that, what? Remove the prana, let the vibrancy of that memory dissipate, disappear. Let it become a black-and-white image from the original colour image, so that it will eventually fade. I am giving you this particular example in detail so that you see the relevance of prana in relation to mind. The mind perceives only a visual image, however the feeling and entire range of experience that you have when you look at an image, is a pranic experience.

If I ask you how you are feeling today, you may say, "Good." If I ask you how your pranas are feeling today, what will be your answer? I am giving you an example of the practice of antar mouna in which you are instructed to observe a thought. So you observe a thought, yet while observing that thought, also observe the prana in it, the energy, the force, the power, the intent and emotion in it. Initially you are only observing the thought. When you begin to see the other aspects of the thought, its power, intent, emotion, feeling and force, you will recognize that to be the main component which has been with you, not the visual. That is the actual memory, the visual is only a trigger. Therefore, the idea of prana has been emphasized in yoga, though few people understand how to use and apply it. Most often prana is understood as breath, a breathing practice. Prana is much more than that, it is the experience and vibrancy of life.

Three attitudes

In the classical system of raja yoga, there is a set of ten yamas and ten niyamas. In Patanjali's raja yoga of the Samkhya system there are five of each. In classical raja yoga, there is an actual description of asana practices, sixteen postures which are taught. In Patanjali's raja yoga it only says that asana is a posture in which you are steady and comfortable, there are no descriptions, no practices. Patanjali says that inhalation, exhalation and retention is pranayama whereas in the classical raja yoga, the subject of prana is as vast as raja

yoga itself, because it defines the progression of pranayama and it covers five topics. What are they?

The first is *prana-yama*, the regulation and control of the length of breath; the second is *prana-ayama*, the extension of the pranic field or pranic dimension after you have gone through the breath cycle; the third topic is *pranotthana*, awakening of pranas in the dormant centres, the major and minor chakras; the fourth is *prana pratyahara* in which a number of practices are described to experience withdrawal of the pranas; the fifth topic is *prana vidya*, complete knowledge on prana. Then, after pratyahara, come the dharana and dhyana levels, which are purely about prana, not about the mind.

In Patanjali's system, pratyahara is withdrawing the mind, whereas in the classical system, it is pratyahara of prana. This is a major shift. Pratyahara is followed by dharana, then dhyana, and finally samadhi. In classical raja yoga there is only one samadhi, not eight stages of samadhi as in the Samkhya system. Samadhi in classical raja yoga is *laya*, dissolution. You simply merge. You merge into your experience and you become that, it is possible to become that. We all become what we see in ourselves. At present, we are all narcissists and we are enamoured with our own selves: our pictures have to go up on Facebook in this manner, in this style, fashion, form, in this look, dress and colour . . . There is the tendency of narcissistic self-obsession.

Just imagine if the prana comes out of this narcissistic tendency, what kind of human beings would we become? Yogis have said narcissistic tendencies are self-oriented, and to be free from them is to be selfless and god-oriented. The journey is from being material-, matter- and sense-oriented to being god-oriented, divine-oriented, oriented towards the transcendental experience.

This will give you an indication about the importance of prana in raja yoga where the journey actually begins not with the mind, but with pranic awareness. For fifty-five years you were starting your journey with mental awareness, now

you are starting the journey with pranic awareness and going back to the original intent of raja yoga.

After knowing all this, the first attitude that has to be cultivated is of self-observation and the second attitude has to be of self-acceptance. The third attitude that has to be developed is of self-correction. These three attitudes become our starting point in yogic and spiritual life. Self-observation, self-correction and self-acceptance is the start of the yogic attitude for the moment you become aware, an aspect of yourself becomes the *drashta*, the witness. You begin to see, notice and observe.

After self-observation comes self-acceptance where I accept myself as I am. If I have this desire, if I have this craving, fine, I accept it. If I have this insecurity, I have this fear; fine, I accept it. That is what I am living and experiencing. There is no need to deny anything. Observing, realizing, knowing is one aspect. Accepting that it is a part of me, my nature and expression is another aspect. The third aspect is then going through the rigours of self-correction to transform, transcend and change.

These three have to become yogic attitudes if you want to progress in spiritual life. Otherwise, yoga simply remains an aerobic exercise that you enjoy doing for flexibility. It remains a way to do without sleeping pills and yet still be able to sleep with the practice of yoga nidra. Yoga loses its spiritual content, intent and spark and it becomes merely an intervention to improve something in your life. There is no vibrancy which allows you to move into the experience of spiritual life. If you want to move into the vibrancy of spiritual life, the first thing that you need to adopt and incorporate in your awareness, attitude and understanding, is observation, acceptance and correction. A flaw has to be corrected, after it has been accepted and observed. Kabir says:

*Bura jo dekhna mein chala, bura na milaya koi;
Jo dil khoja apana mujhese bura na koi.*

When I went around the world searching for the most crooked of all persons, I could not find anyone.
When I looked into my heart, I did not find anybody as devious as myself.

That is acceptance. While we want to have something good to enjoy, we negate the demeaning, destructive and dissipative nature within us. If you want to win over a wild animal, you had better get to know that animal. You cannot hide from the animal and not even know which animal it is. What you think is a lion may actually be a mouse, nothing more than that. You think it is a lion because you have never opened the door of the cage to see what is inside. This is negation – ‘No, I can’t be like that. I am not that. I want to be this’.

One day a lion woke up in the jungle and somehow that day he felt satisfied with himself. So he came out of his cave in a happy mood and started roaring to his heart’s content. All the animals ran away when they heard the roars and the lion asked them, “Why are you not happy? Look at me, how big, strong and sturdy I am. You should all be like me.” Eventually he came upon a mouse. He looked at the mouse, roared and said to the mouse, “You puny little creature. Look at me. It is such a beautiful day and I feel so strong and vibrant. Why are you not like me?” The mouse replied, “I have been sick. If I had not been sick, I would be as strong as you.”

We are all like that. We are all sick people and when the lions in our jungle, the sages, ask us to become like them, we say we are sick, we have our problems, difficulties, our head-trips and heart-trips. Then the sages say: Know thyself, accept thyself and change thyself. These are the starting steps of your journey in spiritual life and after that, everything you do has meaning and purpose. Once you start self-observation, you confront those conditions in yourself like frustration, stress, anxiety, anger, hatred, jealousy or a pressure, a samskara. Observation allows you to realize the present block, the

barrier which stops you from reaching your potential. Anxiety will not help, acceptance will help. Negation, rejection and non-acceptance sets in when you see the block or barrier. At that point you have to go against the grain of mind and say, “No. I am not rejecting it; I am accepting this.”

If you have a boil on your hand, of course you reject it, you do not want it. However, you have to accept it – it is there and you have to manage and treat it. Other aspects also have to be seen in the same way. Just as you eventually accept a boil with an intention to treat it and become healthy again, you have to observe and accept a condition, a barrier or a block with the intention to remove it. That is the beginning of the journey which in traditional language is called *vishaad*, conflict, difficulty or problem, which initiates a new enquiry and journey in life.

When you are sick, your illness initiates a journey towards health. The doctor says, “You have been sitting too much. Now you have to start walking and jogging. Your disease is because you are too sedentary. You should do something more active.” Every day, because the doctor said so, you are up early and are walking two kilometres and the cause of sorrow became the reason for you to change something. That is known as *vishaad*. On the battlefield Arjuna, underwent *vishaad* and as a result of his despondency, we got the gift of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Parvati went into *vishaad* and said, ‘What is this? So much pain, so much suffering?’ Because of her despondency, we have yoga. Shiva said, “This is the way out.” People come to yoga not when they are healthy, but when they are physically and mentally sick. They come to the state of *vishaad* – conflict, confusion or ill-health, and then a change happens.

Pratipaksha bhavana

From that perspective, every block, impediment or barrier, whether it is psychological, unconscious, brought by destiny from other lives; whether you believe it or not; whatever is there or not there – it does not matter. It is there right

now and you have to deal with it. That transformation, that change has to happen and it happens with fine-tuning the mind and prana. For this reason, Swami Sivanandaji laid great emphasis on *pratipaksha bhavana*, the power of opposite thinking, for that will allow you to change your mental perception and pranic experience.

This change is made possible by following yamas and niyamas. They are not ethical or moral codes of conduct, rather they are conditions and moods of the mind. Today, you have been introduced to the first yama and the first niyama of yoga, manahprasad and japa. Yoga actually begins with this yama and niyama. *Manahprasad* is the state of happiness, a happy mood, and *japa* is a way to disconnect from the world.

Paramahamsaji used to say that if somebody came to him and said, “Swamiji, I have this problem and that problem. I have diabetes, or I have respiratory problem. What can I do?” he would say to them, “First of all, forget that you are a sick person. Begin to believe that you are healthy. The more you think, ‘I am sick, I am sick, I am sick’, the more sick you will become as you are feeding the illness with a negative fear, a negative thought that you are not well.”

Your autosuggestion to yourself is increasing your sickness manifold. It is giving nourishment to the roots of the sickness. The first rule Sri Swamiji had if anybody came for treatment and said, ‘I am sick’, was to tell them, ‘Forget that you are sick and behave like a healthy person. Go down for your meals. Come up for your glass of water. Go up and down three times like everyone else does and forget that you are sick’. That is pratipaksha bhavana which would change the mental perception and the pranic activity of the body.

Happiness is a condition which has to be developed in the mind and there is a clear difference between pleasure and happiness. Do not confuse pleasure with happiness. Happiness is intoxicating and it intoxicates everyone. Pleasure is intoxicating but it intoxicates only ‘me’. Pleasure is habit forming; happiness is taking everybody along with

you. Pleasure is introversion; happiness is extroversion: 'Come on, laugh and smile.' Pleasure secretes dopamine; happiness secretes serotonin. If you know the effect of dopamine and if you know the effect of serotonin, you know the difference between happiness and pleasure. There is a marked difference.

In yoga, happiness is the quality which has to be cultivated to overcome the feeling of the negative idea and thought, 'I am unwell or I have this problem'. That is the start of pratipaksha bhavana when you come to yoga: 'I am happy. I have to become happier. I have to increase the moments of happiness in my life'. Every evening, identify the number of times you were truly happy during the day. At night before sleeping, ask yourself, 'How many times was I happy during the day? 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. How long was I happy? Five minutes, ten minutes? Can I maintain the condition of happiness for a longer period next day?' Increase the time of happiness.

This is a great learning for people of this internet age. Last year for the first time, the colleges at Harvard and Cambridge ran month-long courses on happiness. They were the most attended courses, which means that today people forget how to be happy. Today we have to go to school to learn the theory of happiness. Happiness is the first victim of disharmony and imbalance in life. Therefore, it becomes the first yama. We have to hold onto happiness which is slipping from our fingers and we have to develop and strengthen it.

The first niyama is japa. Suppose a person comes to yoga for the first time and is suffering from stress, anxiety, depression, frustration and all the things that we experience. That person needs to disconnect from sensorial and material experiences. For twenty-four hours, anxiety, stress, tension is building up and there has to be a break. Therefore, mantra initiation becomes the most important and first initiation. When you do your japa with mantra and mala, for five to ten minutes, you are forcing your mind to cut off the connection with the senses and sense objects and just focus on the mantra chanting. The first time you do it, you feel good, because

for a split second or for a short burst of time, you are able to disconnect from the senses and sense experiences.

You feel happy, peaceful and content because of the break, not because of the mantra. It is because you were able to break your connection as the tentacles of the mind were withdrawn from sense objects. You were able to isolate yourself from the normal inputs of the senses and the world for those three or five minutes. Sustained repetition of japa develops the period of disconnection. One mala will take you two minutes; five malas will take you seven minutes. On the first day, you would practise one mala and see how you can manage with two minutes of disconnection. In the course of time, it becomes five malas, ten malas, the time period continues to expand and this is the process of disconnection.

Happiness and japa become the first yama and niyama of yoga to create the right conditions and the right environment to observe, accept and change yourself. These two things have to become part of your daily life.

Last year at the Munger Yoga Symposium, we had practised manahprasad. There were some British participants as well and one of them was so inspired by the Munger Yoga Symposium that he was walking the streets of London early in the morning, smiling at everybody and saying 'Good Morning' to everyone. A police complaint was filed: A stranger is walking around saying 'Good Morning', making the effort to talk to us and smiling at us'. The man was taken into custody, for smiling, laughing and for being a good guy. The police issued an advisory: 'If some stranger approaches you on the road, put on your ear plugs, turn up the volume of the music you are listening to, look down and walk faster'. Now there is a penalty for laughing and smiling. This is a true story; it is not a joke. What does that indicate? That now we need to connect more with the joy of life.

When we think of prana and mind, it needs to be clear to us that prana is emotion and intention, as that is the feeling. In this Yoga Chakra, we are going to work with prana. The selection of asana practices is also specific to deal with your

problem of 'I don't have time.' The training will be in the form of a capsule. Capsule training is effective, it is an invention and a gift of Bihar School of Yoga. What are the most important practices for any particular condition? Five asanas, two pranayamas, which have to be followed until the condition improves. We take the capsule every day, along with our coffee and continental breakfast, so that every single day the same minerals, the same proteins, the same vitamins go inside and affect the same organs and the same parts of the body continuously. This is why with capsule training you can obtain the maximum benefit.

Today I wanted to emphasize and bring to your attention the role played by prana. There are many more aspects: kundalini yoga, for example, we know about mooladhara, swadhisthana, manipura, anahata, vishuddhi, ajna – the chakras. These psychic centres are the centres of prana. Few people know that after ajna chakra, there are four more important centres which control the mind and the senses.

A new dimension, a new vista of yoga has opened up before us in the second chapter of the Bihar School of Yoga and yoga lifestyle is one of the key elements of this new chapter.



From Head to Heart

20 December 2019

Today we begin with a short practice.

Make yourself physically comfortable.

Become aware of the state of comfort in the body.

Now bring your awareness to chidakasha. Chidakasha is the dark space in front of the closed eyes. *Akasha* is space; *chitta*, the inner mind. *Chidakasha* means the space of the inner mind.

Observe chidakasha for some time. Observe that inner space. Observe whatever appears in that inner space: shapes, shadows, colours, forms, streaks of light, pinpoints of light, whatever appears, just observe it.

Now clear chidakasha of all impressions, visual and otherwise so that chidakasha is now just a black space.

Now in chidakasha evoke a memory of the best time that you have ever had in your life. See the place, see the location, see the scenery, see the people, see the situation and the time which you identify as your best memory. See that in the form of a photograph in chidakasha. See the memory in the form of a movie clip that you are witnessing.

Now let the image dissolve in chidakasha. As the image dissolves, see it flow down in a liquid form to your heart space. Experience that best moment again in your heart space as a feeling, an emotion, a sentiment and not as a

visual image. You see the memory of the best moment in your life as a movie clip, as an image in chidakasha. When you bring that awareness into the heart space, *hridayakasha*, you become aware of the feeling that you associate with the memory.

Now clear chidakasha of this memory and clear hridayakasha of all feelings.

Now bring a specific thought to the mind: 'I have goodwill towards all'. Remain with this thought for some time.

Now consciously bring that thought into the heart, into hridayakasha. Imagine this thought flowing down from chidakasha into hridayakasha like a stream. Experience the idea in hridayakasha: 'I have goodwill towards all'. Feel it in the heart, feel it filling up and illuminating the whole heart space. Feel the energy, the strength of goodwill towards all in your heart. Develop that awareness of the feeling, not of the word, not of the thought.

Now let this energy and luminosity of goodwill flow out of your heart into this hall, touching every person present in this hall. Let it flow from the hall into the whole ashram touching every person and every object. Let it flow out from the ashram into the whole world, touching everyone and everything, animate beings and inanimate objects. Let the ray of goodwill touch those who you think have hurt you and those who you think have loved you. Now let the rays flow out into space, from hridayakasha into the outer space.

Now gently bring these rays back into yourself, back into your heart, and let them turn into a single flame burning brightly and steadily in the heart. Maintain this awareness of *jyoti* in the heart space.

Breathe in deeply and chant the mantra *Om* three times with me, and with each chant experience the luminosity of the flame in your heart spread out in the form of waves through the whole physical body.

Breathe in, *Om, Om, Om*.

Repeat after me, *Om Shanti Shanti Shantihi.*

Hari Om.

Be aware of the feeling of happiness, expansiveness and upliftment that you are experiencing right now.

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

Hari Om Tat Sat.



This was a simple and preliminary practice to differentiate between bodha and bhavana. These two words are being introduced to you for the first time and this is what we have practised. *Bodha* means intellectual understanding, perception, knowledge; *bhavana* means experiential knowledge. I will talk about these two points after telling you what we did in the meditation practice.

First I asked you to just think of the best memory you have, it could be anything. You were to see that as an image first, a movie clip or a photograph, in your mind – that is bodha, intellectual understanding or awareness. Then you dissolved that intellectual understanding, whether it was a mountain, river, tree, sunrise, sunset, people, friends, company. The whole image became a stream and it flowed down to the heart space. There bodha stopped and bhavana was activated, the feeling was activated, so that what you experienced was actually the vibrancy of the memory, the prana of the memory.

In the second stage, you created a thought of goodwill towards all. In your chidakasha it was in the form of words and a sentence. Though you put your full intensity behind it – goodwill towards all, goodwill towards all, goodwill towards all – it is only bodha, an intellectual analysis. However, when that idea or thought comes to hridayakasha the feeling of goodwill towards all takes a different meaning, dimension and becomes a different experience. There you feel the thought as a stream of energy radiating towards everyone, touching everyone. By spreading your prana of goodness, everyone is being touched by it.

On a hot day when you are walking down the street, the doors of a mall open and you get a blast of cool air. How nice it feels! Suddenly the whole body relaxes – ‘Ah, coolness!’ There is just a momentary touch of coolness as you are passing by and while crossing the open door. You can feel and take delight in the coolness. In the same manner, if you radiate the positive prana, then other people will take delight from that prana, from that presence.

This short meditation is just an experiment to understand the difference between what goes on at the level of bodha, intellectual perception, and what goes on at the level of bhavana, the feeling, the activation of pranas. This is an indication that mind and prana are not separate, although people speak of them as separate. They are part of the same structure, energy and consciousness.

Chakras and their satellites

Now let us have a glimpse of kundalini yoga as a theory. You have heard of the chakras: mooladhara, swadhisthana, manipura, anahata, vishuddhi, ajna, sahasrara. There are seven chakras and though you know the names by heart, if I ask you what do these chakras represent, what would you say? At the most, people will say that they are centres of energy, that mooladhara is controlling smell, swadhisthana is controlling taste. Some will say fears, insecurities, aggressiveness are the traits of the chakras. Nevertheless, whatever you will say, it will only be a very general, kindergarten description of the chakras.

One aspect, however, is correct – these chakras represent manifestations of *shakti*, energy, primal power. Are these chakras only energy-related, shakti-related, shakti-oriented, or are they also mind-oriented, consciousness-oriented? From mooladhara to vishuddhi, the five chakras deal with shakti, energy. When we come to ajna, it is not a stand-alone chakra, rather it is a mandala. It is like Jupiter having its own satellites or Saturn having its own moons. Ajna chakra is also a mandala; it is not just a single chakra. There are different opinions about the number, some say nine chakras, others three or four chakras. Regardless of the number of chakras, their function in the ajna mandala is predominantly mental.

Beyond ajna chakra, there is another chakra known as the chitra chakra or manas chakra. There are different names in different texts. I prefer to call it chitra chakra as this chakra is associated with chitta. *Chitra* means impression, image. This chakra has a direct connection with chitta. It has

six petals, and each petal controls a sense organ and a sense function. The five senses are controlled by the five petals or by five nerves, and the sixth one regulates sleep. The five senses and sleep are controlled, governed and regulated by the chakra which is above ajna chakra. It is a satellite of ajna chakra, the chitra chakra, and it is here that physical experiences become mental impressions.

Suppose somebody takes a pin and pricks me. That physical sensation goes to my brain in the form of electrical impulses, from where that experience will go to the sense-mind. This sense-mind is the chitra chakra. When it goes to the sense-mind, impulses become vayu where matter is lost and prana is retained. That vayu, depending on its content, will go first into either mooladhara and then into chitta; or go into swadisthana and then into chitta, or into manipura and then into chitta. It will go through different chakras due to the content of the memory or the impressions. If pain is controlled by swadhisthana, then the pin-prick, as vayu, will go through swadhisthana into chitta where it will become a memory.

All physical, sensorial experiences of the body are converted into prana, into vayu. Material information is converted into subtle information which is stored in chitta. Therefore, chitta is known as the storehouse of impressions. Everything that has happened in our life is stored in chitta in the form of impressions, archetypes, memories, pratyayas, samskaras, karmas, undefinable concepts that we stored in the chitra chakra.

The second satellite of ajna chakra, indu chakra, is also important. *Indu chakra* is where you experience and express positive qualities. There are sixteen petals in indu chakra and they correspond with the sixteen qualities, moods or conditions, which you experience when you come to this chakra. Indu chakra is the place where yamas can be lived. Yamas are experienced and lived here as sixteen qualities. Each petal of the indu chakra reflects one yama, a condition which becomes natural. For instance, what is our

present condition? Raga and dwesha. Kama and krodha, lobha and moha, mada and matsarya are the six conditions between which we fluctuate from moment to moment. In the material dimension, we have six friends, and in the spiritual dimension, there are sixteen friends according to the indu chakra. This means you can move from one positive condition of mind to another and another as a natural expression.

Beyond the indu chakra is the *nirvana chakra*. This chakra is the seat of 'I-ness', ego, or the buddhi which recognizes 'me' and 'mine'. From here we move into the mandala of sahasrara. The guru chakra is found in the mandala of sahasrara. After ego is transcended and transformed, you connect with the guru chakra, luminosity, beyond which is sahasrara chakra, where Shiva and Shakti exist in eternal harmony and union.

Chakras are energy-oriented, however beyond ajna and below sahasrara, everything is mind-oriented. As kundalini travels from mooladhara to sahasrara, energy and mind again become the functions, and we see a beautiful merging of awakened energies and positive consciousness and its expressions. When the awakened energy of the pranas and positive expressions of consciousness come together, the individual identified as a yogi lives the yogic lifestyle. Looking at this process, we again see that there has to be a balance between what we perceive as mental activity and what we perceive as pranic activity and its expression.

Soft pranas and ruffled waters

By understanding prana, we understand our emotions and intentions which are the real drivers of our life. These two are the real chauffeurs of our car – emotion and intention – and it is by changing our prana that we can eventually change our lifestyle too. In his satsangs in Rikhia, Paramahamsaji said many times that pranas have to be softened, as they are very hard. Once they become soft, the rigidity of tamas leaves and the fluidity of sattwa comes in.

Rabindranath Tagore says: *Komal karo prana* – Soften your pranas.

Anandaloke, mangal aaloke

Barajo shruta sundaram

Mahima tobo udbhashita mahagagan maajhye . . .

In this beautiful song written by Sri Rabindranath Tagore he says that softening of prana is the aspiration of every human being. That is the idea of spiritual life – softening of the pranas.

We are trying to achieve this through our own practice. Manahprasad is the sadhana that we are incorporating in our lifestyle, the awareness of being happy. If you become happy, your pranas are soft, whereas if you identify with your pain and suffering, pranas become hard. Whether it is happiness or japa or the practice of asana, we have to soften the pranas. If we practise and perform with the awareness that the asana is not only physical but also pranic, if we try to experience the pranic awakening and expression, and if we harmonize ourselves with the prana, the result of yoga practice will be much faster and much deeper.

It will allow you to observe, accept yourself and correct yourself. These are three important and necessary ingredients to be aware of when we start our journey in spiritual life, not only in yoga, but also to become better in life. Self-observation and a connection with awareness will stimulate your buddhi. Awareness is directly connected to buddhi, higher intelligence. If you become aware of something, you realize that you begin to think about it, reflect on it and it becomes alive, vibrant in your mind.

A feeling or thought which you develop in your mind should be brought down to the heart level if it is a positive thought, and if it is a negative thought, it should be cleared. That is the idea of Swami Sivananda's pratipaksha bhavana. He uses the word pratipaksha 'bhavana' and we translate it as positive thinking. He does not say *pratipaksha vichara*, which is positive thinking. He says *pratipaksha bhavana*,

which is positive feeling. The mistake in interpretation is our shortcoming, however the idea given is clearly not in relation to thought but in relation to feeling. Therefore, it is pratipaksha bhavana and not pratipaksha vichara. *Vichara* means thinking and *bhavana* means feeling. Vichara is the bodha aspect and bhavana is the heart aspect. Pratipaksha bhavana is to cultivate the opposite, positive feeling, not thought.

For most people, it is difficult to differentiate between where a thought ends and where the emotion or prana begins. How do you isolate prana and work on it? How do you distinguish between thought and prana? The meditation practice we did earlier should help. You can experiment with any thought, even negative or bad ones like hatred, jealousy, anger, frustration. See it in the mind and then see it in the heart. You will notice the intensity of the thought. If it is frustration, the heart will be disturbed. Though the thought is in the mind, the feeling will alter the heartbeat. Your heart will begin to beat faster. Feelings will do that and this shows the effect or the hold which the prana of a thought has on you. If it is negative it has a hold, and if it is positive, it has a hold.

If you don't like somebody, don't just think, 'I don't like that person'. Try and feel what it is that you don't like about that person and you will discover it is something strong, powerful and deep. It disturbs you. It unsettles you. You go through a crisis in your own mind and life because of that distraction and disturbance. By observing and realizing the hold that the feeling and prana has, we now begin to work at the pranic level to release that hold, to release that negativity, and to experience luminosity, a positive side.

In the practice of kaya sthairyam you become still, but not only physically. You become still psychologically, mentally and pranically too. People think of kaya sthairyam as simply sitting still, however I am sure you are able to see that it is not only sitting still, it is also trying to make our senses and pranas still. Without stillness, harmony is not attained. The

ruffled and rippled water of the lake will not reflect anything while calm water will reflect everything that surrounds the lake and which is above the lake. The ruffled water has to become still and that is our sadhana. How to do that? What do I think of? How do I attain peace? How do I experience relief from this condition? It is nothing but trying to calm the ripples in the water.

A Christmas carol

Put your hand in the hands of the man
who walks on water.
Put your hand in the hands of the man
who calms the seas.

This is a Christmas song. It uses two important things: water and sea. The ability to walk on water and the ability to calm the troubled seas. The turbulent seas represent the mind – all the moods of the mind are the waves or *vruttis* of the mind. Everything that you experience in your mind is a wave, the mind always has ripples, it is never quiet. A person who can quieten that sea and still the waves is the one who is able to see the glory of heaven in the still waters. When the water has ripples ruffled, we cannot see the glory of heaven and the sky in it, only when it is still, can you also walk on water. When does water become absolutely still? When it becomes ice. Then there is no movement. When a river has become ice, you can walk on it. You don't have to swim across it. There is absolutely no motion, no movement and the perfect stillness allows you to cross the river, from the material to the spiritual and back again. The sadhana is to still the waves of the waters.

Scientists have discovered that there are neurons in the brain which transmit electrical impulses, carrying information back and forth. Everything in the brain is controlled by the neurons and their functions. Now scientists say that there are about forty thousand neurons even in the heart. The heart is the biggest organ where the largest

number of neurons exist. Therefore, the heart has a 'brain' of its own. The heart does not need a brain; it can function independently. It can function in coordination with the brain, yet it has its own brain. While the brain does not have a heart, the heart has a brain. Can you imagine that? It is known as the little brain.

This was discovered in 1991 by a French person, who was called Amour. The word amour in French means love, heart. The forty thousand neurons in the heart are known as sensory neurites. The heart can feel, it can analyze, it can sense. It is not only related to emotions. Everything that happens in the brain also happens in the heart. You might have come across some instances where people who have had a heart transplant express the emotions of the person whose heart was transplanted. This shows that memory is active in the brain of the heart. Whatever was experienced by the previous body, the donor's body, is also experienced in the new body where the heart has been transplanted.

The main point is the functionality and rationality of the heart, along with feeling and prana. The heart is the strongest organ in the body, it keeps on ticking with every abuse and misuse of the body. The day your heart fails, life is finished. The kidneys, liver or other organs can fail and one can continue to live. When the heart fails, life stops. Therefore, the heart carries out one of the primary needs of our society, both physical and spiritual. Physically, today people are prone to heart attacks and heart problems because of a sedentary lifestyle. Spiritually too people are having heart problems, as they are unable to express positive emotions and they also suppress negative emotions within. When the blow-up happens, it is very dramatic. There is no naturalness in life. In India, adults and children are allowed to cry. In the West, children are told 'Don't cry. Be a man. Don't express your suffering. Be a man,' and they have to bottle up everything inside.

When we accept our emotions, the mind comes into alignment, and life is lived properly. However, when we do

not deal with our emotions and depend only on our mind, someday we face a psychological crisis. The ancient spiritual traditions have provided methods built into the practice, through which we can eliminate accumulated stuff from the mind and prana to experience harmony and balance, along with the upliftment of life and a connection with the positive and joyous.



Apply Your Wisdom and Understanding

21 December 2019

After yesterday's satsang, some questions were submitted which I would like to answer today.

Bodha and bhava

Bodha means intellectualization, and *bhava* means emotionalization. They are two distinct activities which have to be identified to understand the experiences of life, transform them and move beyond the present condition and situation. *Bodha* and *bhava* are perceptions of head and perceptions of heart.

Many people have come to participate in this Yoga Chakra program for the first time without much background in yoga and may not have understood what I was saying about the chakras. Next time, your understanding will be better for by then you will have done some reading and had some experience which will help you understand the topic. Even for those who are familiar with the concept of chakras, this is a new subject because until now chakras were identified as energy centres or centres of prana shakti. When you look at the chakra system, the five chakras from mooladhara to vishuddhi control the elements – earth, water, fire, air and space. In these chakras we experience the qualities and nature of the five elements. However, the moment we go beyond vishuddhi and come to ajna, we leave the dimension of prana and energy and enter the dimension

of consciousness. Ajna chakra is the doorway from the sense-mind to the transcendental or inner mind. Though the sense-mind is active in the lower chakras, the higher mind becomes active when you reach ajna chakra and go beyond.

The understanding of the ajna mandala was new even for the older practitioners of yoga. This subject has been touched upon for the first time during the Yoga Chakra, though I have spoken about it on other occasions. From ajna to chitra to indu to nirvana chakras, we are covering all the aspects of the mental and conscious perceptions. Energy is related with the chakras from mooladhara up to vishuddhi and consciousness is dealt with as we go beyond ajna chakra. We have bodha on top in ajna and sahasrara chakras, while shakti and bhava are active from vishuddhi downwards: both ideas are clearly presented in Sri Swami Satyananda's book *Kundalini Yoga*.

Heart and head

The other point was that the heart has a little brain. There is a story of a lady in her mid-fifties who was a calm, quiet and introverted person by nature. After some time, she had a heart transplant surgery and received the heart of a boxer. After the operation, whenever there was any match, a football match or other boxing matches, she would be there with a beer in her hand and cheering away. This behaviour was totally opposite to her earlier self.

This incident got people thinking about what really happens after a heart transplant as it totally changed the behaviour of this woman. That was when the presence of the little brain was discovered and it indicates something beautiful: the heart has a brain though the brain has no heart. The brain has no heart, but the heart has a tiny brain. The heart is more important than the heartless brain.

Pratipaksha bhavana

The next point was that we have to correct our understanding of pratipaksha bhavana for the moment we identify

with a positive feeling, thoughts will automatically follow. *Vichara*, thinking, will come up if you identify with *bhavana*, feeling. If you do the opposite or if you think a particular thought, you will not come to the corresponding feeling. However, if you go to a specific feeling, the corresponding thought will emerge by itself. This is the reason that yogis have always focused on the aspect of feeling, whereas modern society has focused on the aspect of thought. If we are coming to yoga, we need to realize this and to connect with it. The method we used in the meditation was to experience the feeling, the energy of a memory or thought in the heart. This can be applied with anything and everything.

Whenever we think a thought, the feeling accompanies it instantly. How does the feeling exist separately in the heart?

Tough question, simple answer. What is water? H_2O . When you drink water you are not aware that you are drinking H_2O , you know that you are drinking water. When you go to the laboratory, you separate the molecules that make up water and you discover that this percentage is oxygen and this much is hydrogen. The separation and knowledge comes through the process of discovering something new. If there is no zeal to discover anything new, then water is just water and one does not have to know the composition of water.

This is something similar. Most people think of thought as a primary function because it is more prominent and visible. Feelings and emotions become secondary functions for nobody sees them and they are more subtle. People identify more with the thinking process and consider thinking or intellect as the final platform. However, intellect is not the final platform, rather it is a stepping-stone which can lead you to an immersion in experience. Until you immerse in experience, you use your intellect. Once you are immersed in the experience, intellect ceases and you connect with the feeling. This is happening for you are making the

effort to know something. If you are not making that effort, then for you water is water. If you know the properties and qualities of the chemicals and the molecules that are in water, your perception changes. Paramahamsaji always said that in yoga practice, you can flirt with yoga but as a yoga sadhaka or a yoga aspirant, your body becomes the laboratory and your mind becomes the laboratory. You become the scientist to discover who you are.

You had said to look at the picture of a memory in chidakasha and then to bring only its feeling into the heart. But I found that some kind of picture also came into the heart, though it had a different quality from that which came up in chidakasha. It was also easier to wipe out the image from chidakasha but much harder to remove it from the heart. Why?

You have to remember that what is always prominent in the heart is the prana and emotion of the image or experience. It is a subtle imprint; it is not a visual imprint. If you put a cut-out of a figure on the wall, it stays there for some time. After some time when you remove the figure, you will see that the colour of the wall behind the cut-out and around it are different. An imprint is left behind. Though the picture is gone, the imprint is left behind. So, chidakasha is clear, but the shape and shadow of the feeling and the emotion are left behind in the heart.

It is not an image that you see, rather it is the shadow of the image that you see in hridayakasha. If you see a crystal-clear full image that means your chidakasha is confused about whether it is hridayakasha, or hridayakasha is confused whether it is chidakasha. The head does not know if it is the heart and heart does not know if it is the head. So, try to develop this awareness for it is the prana which gives that experience a 3D image. The imprint is always in the mind as the main print is there, its shadow imprint is in the heart.

The practice to send out the rays of goodwill to everyone was powerful, but it also made me think that we probably send out rays of ill-will when we feel negativity.

I am happy it made you think that. All your thoughts are emitted outwards. Whatever you think is being transmitted and whatever you are thinking is coloured by one of the six friends. What you are transmitting is the quality of your six friends, not positivity. Even though the thought may be good, the intent is always coloured by one of the six. That is why there is confusion in the head and in the environment, there is confusion in the family, in society and the world. The entire effort of the spiritual tradition is to transmit positivity. You have heard this before, yet it did not register until you did the meditation practice and something clicked. You asked yourself, 'Oh! I wonder if the negative also affects the environment?' The effort is always to connect with the positive, uplifting and harmonious.

Human beings believe that they are the most evolved species on the planet because they have developed *buddhi*, intelligence. However, if an alien from an evolved race came to earth and compared all living creatures or species, they would disqualify human beings completely and not call them better or superior to other life forms. You may have a home and car, but you are disconnected from the heart. Animals live through their heart; humans live through their mind. The more I get to know people, the more I love my own dogs. Why do I love my dogs? Because of the heart. Why do human beings push somebody away? Because of the head.

If somebody from an evolved race came from outer space and examined which was the better species on this planet, it is quite possible that they would choose an animal over human beings. Animals live a life where their heart is projecting natural qualities and as humans we project an artificial quality, artificial behaviour by putting on a mask every time we are in a group of people or with somebody.

Develop purity of intention

Spiritual traditions have always said that you have to increase heart-intelligence. It has been given one word, a four-letter word which begins with L and ends with E. That is the heart intelligence and in between L and E comes O and V. Yogis say that the completeness of a human being is seen when they are able to awaken the faculties of *buddhi*, *bodha* or intelligence, *bhava* or emotion, and the third is *kriya* or action. As long as you are working with your buddhi and bhava, you are a yoga practitioner; the moment when buddhi and bhava become part of your kriya, you become a yogi who lives that yoga.

Someone who lives yoga with pureness of emotion, sentiment and intention, is seen by others as being a person with a pure heart. When you say that a person has a pure heart, what does it mean? It means that there is something in that person, a quality, some goodness, strength and power which attract you. People are attracted to qualities, not to individuals. If you see a quality in a stranger, you will be inquisitive – ‘Who was that person?’ If you see a vice even in a friend, you will try to stay away so that the colour of the vice does not touch you.

This used to happen once upon a time. There was a clear differentiation in people’s understanding of somebody who was good, who had a good heart, and somebody who was normal with a normal, ordinary heart. Good-hearted people across the world throughout the ages have always spread positivity. They spread wisdom not because they are intellectuals, rather the way they live and think becomes an example for other people to emulate.

A long time ago a saint was asked, ‘How can we know you?’ The saint said, ‘Don’t look at how I dress or what I eat, but what I live for. If you can see what I live for, you will know me. Instead, if you want to see how I live, what I eat, how I sleep, how my room and my routine are maintained, you are going to miss the point completely. You are only going to focus on the external acts which can change on a daily basis,

yet what I do indicates what I am aiming and aspiring for in life. So, look at what I live for.' It is an appropriate answer, yet how many of us are able to do that when our minds are influenced by position and power. Then even in a spiritual environment, that is all that we can see.

When we had the Munger Yoga Symposium last year, it was a beautiful event and everybody was highly inspired. We had a beautiful presentation on the theme of Ganga and after seeing it someone said, "Oh, we can franchise this, show it around the world and make a lot of money." That threw me off balance completely for I never thought that people who come here for spiritual upliftment would think of making this into a commercial venture. There are many people who do that for their own gratification and satisfaction, which shows that the intent is not spiritual. There are people like that everywhere. Just because everybody shakes their head in front of me, does not mean that they understand what I am saying. We all have selective hearing. We want to hear what we can utilize and ignore the rest which does not concern us. That is the dissipated nature of the mind.

As a sadhaka one has to be fixed and firm in determination and in sankalpa saying, 'This is what I am going to aim for'. There has to be a focus. I had asked a question on the first day, 'What is your focus when you do yoga?' The awareness of an individual is always self-oriented. Most of the people think 'me' and 'mine'; even sadhakas think like that – 'my fault', 'my siddhi', 'my shortcoming', 'my strength'. Everything is 'me', 'me', 'me'. How many times does one think, 'May something good happen to the other person'? Most of the time we think that good should only happen to us. Have we ever prayed that good should also happen to the other person? That feeling or that connection is not there. Then how can there be progress?

Therefore, meditation alone is not the solution to anything. It is necessary to know how we can deal with different situations created by the mind which limit our expression, creativity, harmony and joy. That is the sadhana!

A sadhaka's yoga

I want to make one point clear – yoga is not a universally applicable science for everyone. What you practise as yoga is for householders, and what we do as yoga is for sannyasins. Your practice of hatha yoga and raja yoga is not the practice of hatha and raja yoga which I do, or sannyasins of our tradition do. You live a life in society. You have a family, obligations, commitments. You have to pay your bills and earn for your next meal. How much time can you give to yoga? One hour, two hours at the most. Something that is beneficial to you in your environment and situation is appropriate for you. Which yoga is appropriate for me? Something that suits my environment and situation. I spend eight hours with yoga, while you spend one and half hours with yoga. There is a difference in practice. I won't be practising the same pawanmuktasana as you because you are practising in your class – once a week, twice a week, thrice a week. Outside the class, you do not do your yoga.

To give you an example of breathing. The average lung capacity is four to six litres of air. We can breathe in four litres of air. Do you know how much we breathe? Only 500 millilitres or one eighth of the lung capacity. Right now you are breathing only 500 millilitres of air, not four litres. When you sing, and you take a deep breath in and you continue the song, that is four litres. Out of this 500 millilitres that go in, 130 millilitres are in the dead space – the oesophagus and other areas which do not react to air. If you take away 130 millilitres from 500 minus, how much is left? That is the little amount of air that you breathe for 24 hours. When you practise pranayama, you are told to take longer, deeper breaths. For the first time in 24 hours, you are filling the lungs to full capacity. However, you only do it for twenty minutes. In class you are told that if you regulate your breath, you can control your agitation, frustration, emotions, tiredness, heart rate and your blood pressure. You make notes on the benefits of the practice.

During the day when you are doing your regular activities like walking, sitting in a chair, or driving, do you apply the awareness of that practice or that training? Writing pages of notes is absolutely useless if you are not willing to apply this information. There is so much that we do not do, but if we can do it, imagine the benefits that we can reap. With twenty minutes of pranayama practice, you expect a world of benefits and change, yet you are not willing to change your breathing pattern. With half an hour of relaxation, you are expecting a world of relaxation, yet you are not willing to be conscious of the stressors which are affecting your life. You are hoping for a solution in yoga nidra, yet you have no awareness of the stressors which are affecting your life.

Where is the sincerity of practice? Where is the focus of your practice? It is not there. It is important that you give your practice a purpose, do not only give yourself or your life a purpose. That is unattainable just like the New Year resolutions that are made by people every year. They write their resolutions on the 1st of January and burn them on the 2nd, it is never followed through. It is something that is written and then forgotten.

Live a yogic lifestyle

There has to be implementation of yoga and this is where lifestyle comes in. This lifestyle sadhana program begins with the three mantras chanted early in the morning which gives positive inputs or sankalpas to the subconscious mind. The three mantras with three affirmations: first, the sankalpa for wellbeing and health and the chanting of the Mahamritunjaya mantra; second, the sankalpa for attaining creativity and peace and the chanting of the Gayatri mantra; third, the sankalpa for overcoming distress, distractions and difficulties and the chanting of the 32 names of Durga. These three sankalpas taken early in the morning will change the nature of the mind over a period of time and begin to control life from a subtle dimension, leading you on the path of wellbeing, health, creativity and peace, and

overcoming the distresses of life. Our routine begins with planting the first three positive sankalpas in our mind every morning and that has to continue.

Before breakfast, we practise a limited selection of asanas. This is the minimum program, not the maximum. Five to six asanas, no more. You can complete the asanas in twenty minutes and then practise pranayama for ten to fifteen minutes. For asana and pranayama you need about half an hour which can easily be done in the home environment. In the afternoon or evening when you come back home, the first thing you do is de-stress yourself. Clean out everything that you have brought home with you through the practice of yoga nidra.

Then at night before you sleep, do the Review of the Day. See what you have lived from morning until night, what strengths, what weaknesses, what ambitions and needs you have lived. See your expression, behaviour, thoughts, positive or negative, then focus on and connect with the good that happened during the day. Use that as the start of pratipaksha bhavana, the good feeling. This can be done in bed for ten or fifteen minutes.

You should also maintain a diary, which Swami Siv-anandaji used to call the spiritual diary. On a daily basis, rate your happiness on a scale from 1 to 10 in your diary. Review it at the end of the month and that will give you an indication of how happy you are. If you are able to look at your own happiness on a scale, it will give an indication of the state of your mind. Then try to increase that graph of happiness. In the spiritual diary you should also record how many times you made the effort to change a negative mood or thought into a positive mood and thought. For example, if you are depressed can you make the effort to at least smile? If you cannot be happy, at least smile at people. It is challenging, no doubt, however, this effort will change the depressed mood into a lighter one. On weekends, do a session of SWAN analysis and you will see the difference from one week to the next. See what happens from one week to the next.

The entire practice of yoga which you are learning in this program has been divided into different times: one yoga capsule you can do when you wake up in the morning before you get out of bed; then half an hour of practice that you can do before breakfast; one yoga capsule that you can do when you return home after a long day at work; another one that you can do before going to bed to clear out the anxiety and stress; one yoga capsule that connects you with the right intention and positivity, so that even in the most extreme and challenging situations you are able to maintain your equipoise, balance and clarity; and one yoga capsule that you can do on weekends or on a monthly basis.

Everything is given here as a guideline. You do not have to practise everything all at once, rather start gradually by incorporating one item, one yoga capsule per month in your lifestyle. For example, this month you can say, 'I will only try to wake up early and do my three mantras. Or, whenever I wake up I will do the three mantras'. Let that become a habit. Then when you are at ease with that, say, 'Now I will start with some asanas'. When you are comfortable with that then say, 'Now I will try this practice in the afternoon'. In this manner gradually include everything. Go at the pace of the tortoise if you want to win the race, for if you run like a hare, you will fall flat before you reach the finishing line. That is the reality.

I will conclude with a real story that happened to me, so that I can give you an example of how I was able to change myself. When I came to the ashram in the early days, I had a big problem. It was a sleeping problem. I used to sleep deeply for hours and hours. Totally un-yogic of course, yet I was very young. My sleep was deep, that to play tricks on me the other sannyasins used to pick up the whole bed with me lying in it and put it out on the road. I used to wake up with the sun shining in full glory on my face, with cows looking through the mosquito net to see who this strange animal was, with rickshaw-wallas and cars honking their horns – 'Get this bed off the road,' and with dogs sniffing my feet.

I used to get irritated yet I could not help my nature or habit. What to do? This was in 1967 or 1968, and in those days we did not have alarm clocks. They were rare and they were those big old alarm clocks with a hammer and bell. One day I got an alarm clock, so I said, "All right, I will use it." Every day I used to set the alarm for 4 o'clock and every morning it would ring at 4 o'clock. However, I always used to wake up at 8 o'clock, as at 4 o'clock the clock used to automatically turn it off after ringing. So I thought, 'No, this is not going to work. What can I do to change my habit? My natural pattern is that I wake up at 7 am.' So I set the alarm at 5 minutes to 7 and for one week it rang at that time. Then the next week I set it at 10 minutes to 7. In the third week, I set it at 15 minutes to 7. In the fourth week, it was 20 minutes to 7. I started reducing the time of sleep five minutes every week and in a period of four-months, I had absolute mastery over sleep.

I am telling you this for a specific reason. If you try to struggle with yourself, you will succeed for a few days, then the habit and weakness will be victorious again. You may win a battle, but you will lose the war. Instead, if you go slowly, there is no reaction, the mind becomes attuned and adjusts to small changes. There is no big change to confront. With small changes, you can change yourself with absolute ease. If you say, 'From tomorrow I am going to be like this', then be ready for total failure, you will be totally unsuccessful. Therefore, yoga capsules, or yoga practice is to be done in little measures and sustained.

The yoga lifestyle program is specific. You can practise other things too according to the need of your body. To achieve the benefit that we are hoping to see in you, stick to this one as the primary practice. You will notice the change, joy and happiness that comes with little changes which happen on a regular basis, not with a dramatic shift.

The complete program of this Yoga Chakra and the topics covered gives a better picture of how we can improve ourselves, for our journey begins with the right application of wisdom and understanding.

Lifestyle Home Sadhana

Daily on waking

- Three mantra sadhana

In the morning before breakfast

Asana Capsule (with focus on annamaya, pranamaya and manomaya koshas):

- Tadasana
- Tiryak tadasana
- Kati chakrasana
- Surya namaskara
- Vipareeta karani asana
- Eka pada pranamasana

Other asanas can be included as per individual need and availability of time.

Pranayama Capsule

- Nadi shodhana
- Bhramari

Other pranayamas such as kapalbhati can be included as per individual need, availability of time and climate.

In the afternoon/evening

- Yoga nidra

Before sleep

- Review of the Day with SWAN and pratipaksha bhavana
- Spiritual Diary:
Rate your happiness from 1 to 10.

How many times did you make the effort to change a negative mood or thought into a positive one?

- Bhramari x 11
- Ajapa japa for 10 to 15 minutes

Daily at any time

- Breath awareness, lengthening the breath and retention
- Chanting or repetition of *Om*

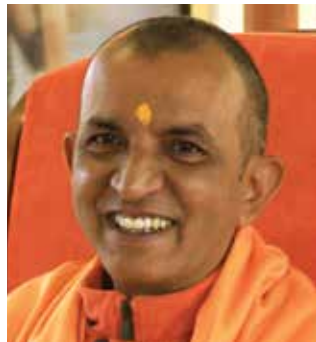
On weekends

- SWAN meditation
- Full yoga nidra

Once a month

- Review of Spiritual Diary

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.



From 17th to 21st December 2019, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati conducted the fifth Yoga Chakra program at Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth. During these five days, Swamiji explained the need for all sincere aspirants to take yoga from a classroom practice to a yogic lifestyle. Swamiji gave two definitions for all to reflect upon and remember: Life is what you live through your mind and lifestyle is the expression of the quality of your mind.

Improving the quality of mind is the first step with positive samskaras and better understanding. Then we have to move from living through the head to a connection with the heart. This is achieved when the pranas are softened again by living with joy and in harmony with oneself and others.



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