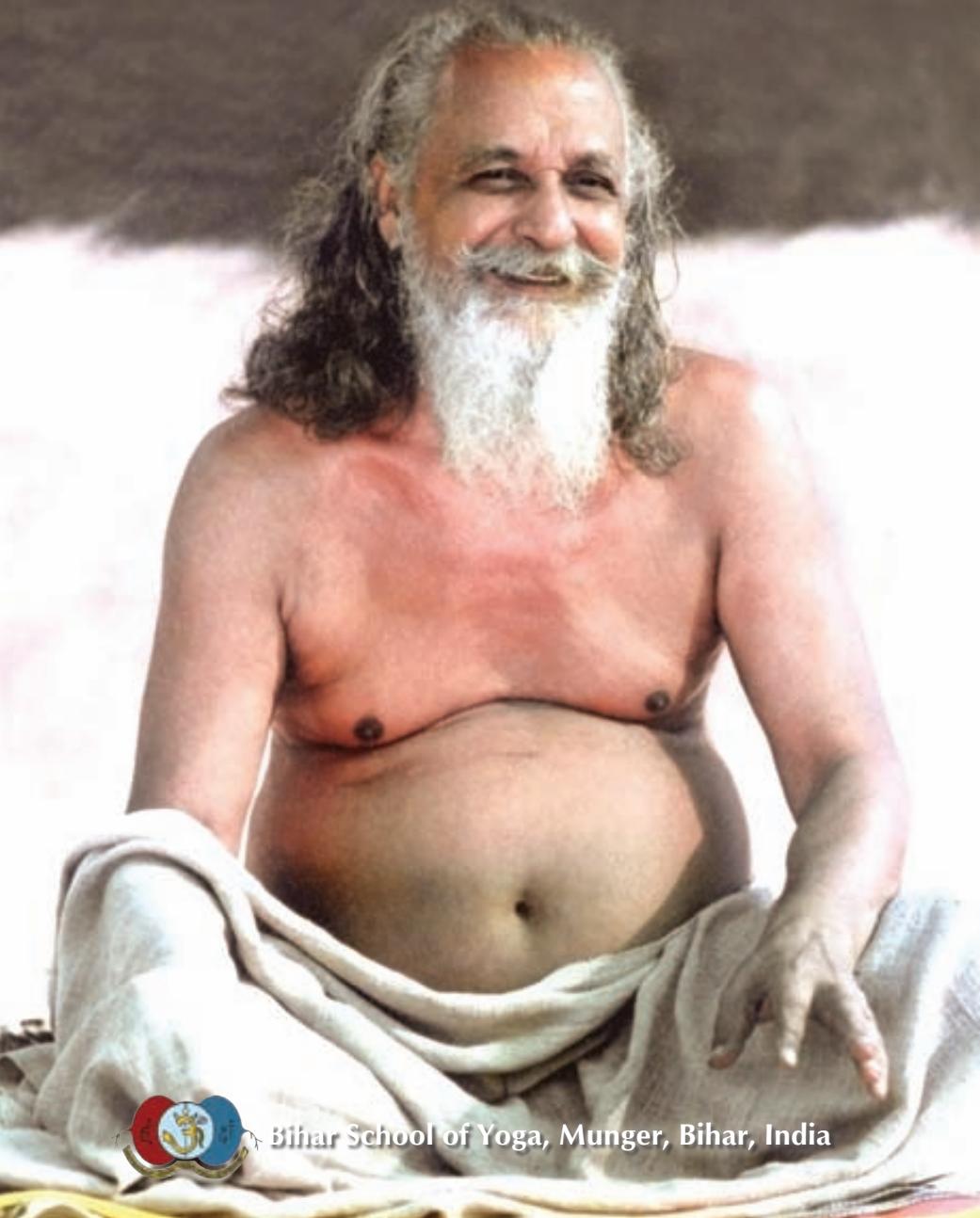


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Hari Om

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Editor: Swami Shaktimitrananda Saraswati

Assistant Editor: Swami Yogatirthananda Saraswati

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Front cover: Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati, Rikhiapeth, 1995

Plates: 1: Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati



GUIDELINES FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

To Use One's Talents

God has endowed each person with certain talents and marked the field of service for him. Wisdom lies in finding out those talents and using them in selfless service to humanity in accordance with His will. A person can do selfless service according to his ability and station in life.

An advocate can plead for poor people without accepting fees, a doctor can treat the poor free of charge, a teacher or professor can give free tuition to poor children and supply them with books. People can feed the hungry and cheer up a person who is in distress by loving words. Whatever service is rendered should be done regularly.

One can be a lamp to those who have lost their way, or a boat and bridge to those who want to reach the other shore of immortality. This is the highest yoga.

—Swami Sivananda

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The Yogi is superior to the ascetic. He is deemed superior even to those versed in sacred lore. The Yogi is superior even to those who perform action with some motive. Therefore, Arjuna, do you become a Yogi. (*Bhagavad Gita VI:46*)

तपस्विभ्योऽधिको योगी ज्ञानिभ्योऽपि मर्तोऽधिकः । कर्मिभ्यश्चाधिको योगी तस्माद्योगी भवार्जुन ॥

Letter to Swami Satyabrat

From Steps to Yoga by Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Blessed Self!

A home where there is mutual peace, where husband and wife do not quarrel, where bitter taunts and harsh words are totally prohibited, where husband and wife respect each other at every step of life, where every family member knows how to 'forgive and forget', where every affair is treated in a spiritual light, verily that home is really a heaven on earth, a lovely divine garden laden with beautiful flowers of eternal fragrance.

Bring peace in your home. Keep the garden of family ever green and fragrant. Reorganize the scattered patterns of your home. Rebuild your house on the strong foundation of love, peace, unity and strength. Let every one of you have a different flute, but let the tunes of all be the same. If everybody starts playing different tunes, there will be a mess. Both of you should have one aim in life and help each other for its

fulfilment. Try to understand each other. Never exchange harsh words. No bullet can really kill a man as the tongue does.

God is all-merciful. He forgives us any number of times. Even a thief can become a saint provided he makes a thorough changeover in his life. A public woman also can reach him provided she surrenders her entire being at his feet. Such instances are too many to be quoted here.

Never take into account the past history of a saint. See what he tells you. It is very difficult to understand them. We mortals have a bad habit of finding fault with others. We make the first mistake and ignore the important thing.

We can change our lives by changing the mode of our thinking. As you think, so you become. Whatever you are today is what you thought yesterday; and what you will be tomorrow is what you think today. Surely a man becomes great not by anything but by his karma and swabhava.

— 3 July 1956, Delhi, India



The Choice is Yours

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

There are many people who are entirely free to take independent and final decisions in matters of life. At the same time, they are deeply interested in spiritual life and know the glory of *tyaga*, renunciation. However, there is something which prevents them from renouncing what they call temporary, and embracing what they believe to be permanent.

They know very well that the ambitions of life, which they failed to fulfil in worldly life will be realized by taking to the path of renunciation, but still they do not renounce.

I am referring to those sadhakas who are free from lust of money, man and woman, the passions of name and fame, and power.

Why is it so? I have two answers:

First, these people are not certain whether renunciation will bless them with all they have been aspiring for. Second, some unseen fear is lurking within them, and this fear comes only after they give a second thought to their proposal of renunciation.

Many out of these aspirants ultimately lose the heat of renunciation on account of the unconscious forces of jealousy. Those left keep on imagining the glory of renunciation while lying in the abyss of fear and uncertainty.

Very few, very rare souls, come out of their hearth and home and take refuge in their guru, whose door is always open to them.

To such souls, my call is, "Come to your spiritual home. The choice is entirely yours."

— 23 May 1967, India,
printed in YOGA, Vol. 5, No. 4–5 (April/May 1967)

Ahimsa

From Early Teachings 1 by Swami Satyananda Saraswati

In the shastras it is said that the code of *ahimsa*, non-violence, is not applicable during war. The code of *ahimsa*, *satya*, truth, *brahmacharya*, awareness of the higher consciousness, or any ethical or moral law is meant for sannyasins and aspirants, it is not meant for a *kshatriya*, a military man, fighting in a war. These moral codes which you have studied in raja yoga are the *dharma*, or way of life, for highly evolved, or you may say, differently evolved, or psychically evolved people or aspirants. Ahimsa is not applicable for a *kshatriya*. The dharma of a *kshatriya* is to eat meat three times a day. In the *Bhagavad Gita* Sir Krishna tells Arjuna that the people he will kill will all be killed anyway, so he should not worry.



Definitions change

Therefore, we say that ahimsa is only applicable for those people who are very sensitive, who try to analyze every action. It is not meant for everyone. You see, in society there are different types of people. Primitive people, for example, are not so worried about ahimsa, they don't know whether killing and non-killing are two different things or not. They see a bird and they kill it. When they see another bird hurt on the ground, they pick it up and nurse it. Their concepts are not so evolved.

If you ask other people who are educated and cultured they will say, "Oh no, you should not kill anything." They are devotees of ahimsa. They don't even want to hurt anyone's feelings, but you will find that they eat meat three times a day. This is because they are not able to analyze, they are not highly evolved, but they are very sensitive souls. It is for these people that my definition of ahimsa also applies. It is a balancing of the extreme definition of ahimsa.

The definition of ahimsa changes according to the evolution of human conception. After a few hundred years it may change. There might come a time when human beings say, "No, don't kill even a single fly," or they may just say that ahimsa is a state of non-hatred, that's all, but I think the eternal viewpoint is that one should have a non-revengeful attitude and one should always protect the significant life. It doesn't mean you should kill the insignificant life unnecessarily, but if the more significant and highly evolved life is endangered, then you should do it.

If you are all sitting here and a tiger comes into your midst what are you going to do? Are you going to shoot it or are you going to open the pages of Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*? Even within the social laws so much freedom has been given in an emergency situation. If a thief comes into your home, you can shoot him directly in order to protect your life and property.

The challenge

The practice of absolute ahimsa is only possible for a person who has given up all his responsibilities and duties in life, who has completely retired and prepared himself for ultimate realization. For one who is living in society and who has many commitments in life the practice of absolute ahimsa, as it is understood by the people, is not at all practical, but the concept as pronounced by the Hindu shastras is very practical. You can always protect the poor and punish the tyrant. That is the first dharma and the concept of ahimsa has to be understood in this light.

There cannot be any simple definition of ahimsa. You can say, "Don't kill animals or people, that is ahimsa," but when the question of punishing the tyrant comes, then what are you going to do? This is the final question and this is the challenge of practical life in which the hard reality passes before the path of your ahimsa. It is a challenge.

In the first chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Arjuna did not want to fight. He said, "If I fight, all these people will be killed, their wives will be unprotected and their children will be unprotected. The enemies will take them away. Then those women will bear children and the children will be born with cross impressions. That will be a great loss to our heritage because they will become enemies of our culture."

Again, in the same chapter, Arjuna says, "Oh Lord, my hand is trembling, my skin is burning, my head is reeling. I can't stand to think that all these people should be killed. No, it is not possible. I will not fight. Even if I have to renounce the kingdom, even if I have to renounce pleasure, even if I have to renounce the wealth of the entire state, I am not going to fight. This is my final decision." Having said that, Arjuna threw down his bow and arrows and sat down behind the chariot. That was the first chapter of the *Gita*.

Immediately, Lord Krishna laughed and said, "Oh Arjuna, you are so brave, so great and so full of valour. Now what has happened to you? You have become so weak in mind that you are unable to decide on the issue according to your dharma. You are a kshatriya, you are not a merchant. You are in the military field. So many preparations have been made. Kings and many people have come from different parts of the country to take part in the war. Now both sides are lined up on the battlefield and you say, 'No killing - ahimsa'. How do you understand this sublime philosophy, that you should make a retreat in the name of ahimsa? No, it is cowardice. The armies will never understand it and, not only will they, even posterity will criticize your actions however glorious and justified they may be."



Then Krishna asked Arjuna, “If you die and if others die in the war, what harm is there? It has to be. Will anybody say, ‘Oh Arjuna, such a wise man he was. On the battlefield his consciousness developed, he saw everybody was being killed, so he made a spiritual retreat.’ Nobody will say it, because if a kshatriya speaks of ahimsa on the battlefield, it is nothing but cowardice, it is his fear complex that is talking.”

Absolute ahimsa

I think the practice of absolute ahimsa is only possible when you have given up karma, society and all relations, when you have given up everything, like the great sage Jadabharat, and can sit in meditation, even if a snake comes. That absolute state of ahimsa is not applicable to us. Swami Nityananda of Vajreshwari sat without any protection, always, all his life, and snakes, scorpions, lions, tigers and everything used to be around him.

For him there was no meditation; he was beyond meditation. There was no God; he was beyond God. He did not do conscious meditation because there was no consciousness of the body. He had no cloth. Anybody might bring food to him. He might eat it unconsciously or he might not eat. That state is beyond all. In that state all the shastras are useless, whether Hindu, Christian or Islam. It is a state beyond religion. Then if one practises ahimsa, or if one doesn't, it is all the same.

— 23 September 1967, Sivanandashram, Munger, India,
Satsang given during the first international nine-month
Yoga Teacher Training Course

Sannyasa, Yoga and the Yogi

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



The sixth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* is dedicated to the topic of sannyasa, yoga and the yogi. Sri Krishna says, "He who does not base his actions on expectations is a sannyasin and a yogi indeed; not the man who has renounced actions."

Sannyasa and yoga are the same. Unless one has renounced imagination, one cannot be a yogi. When the sadhaka is ascending the path of yoga, actions become the cause, but once he has reached the high plateau, peace of mind becomes the cause. For the sannyasin all objects are images, imaginations or fantasies. One who is not attached to the objects of the senses has gone far on the path of yoga.

The yogi's mind

It is through the mind that the mind has to be released, and therefore, the mind should not be hurt. The mind must be known to be a friend as well as an enemy for it is the best friend to those who have control over it and the worst enemy to those without control.

A yogi's mind remains balanced in every aspect of life. Having gained control of his self, he has attained serenity. His mind is submerged in consciousness and is balanced in heat and cold, pain and pleasure, insult and praise. He is content with knowledge and experience, makes the mind his friend and has transcended the emotions which are caused by jealousy. He maintains the same steadiness of mind with a saint as well as a sinner.

A yogi devotes himself to the awareness of consciousness by remaining within the mysterious realms of himself. He tries to concentrate his mind by controlling his consciousness and actions without expecting anything.



Meditation

In order to control and purify the mind, choose a clean place, neither too high nor too low, spread a deerskin with a piece of cotton cloth over it and sit down in your asana. The body, neck and head should be in a straight line. Maintain steadiness and do not move. Visualize the tip of the nose without looking in any other direction. Fear should depart and the mind become serene. When the mind is clear try to

establish yourself in your consciousness. Such a yogi attains *nirvana* or transcendental peace.

This yoga is not possible for those who eat too much or who do not eat at all, or who sleep too much or do not sleep at all. Yoga eliminates all pains and agonies of life for those who maintain a proper balance regarding movement, actions, sleep and waking. When the mind is established in the Self, we say that the aspirant has established himself in yoga. Just

as a solitary lamp does not flicker in a place where there is no wind, so the mind of the yogi becomes quiet in the absence of distractions.

Having attained this great accomplishment, the yogi should not consider anything else to be more valuable. Even the greatest of problems and difficulties cannot disturb a person who is established in yogic consciousness. Therefore, it is important for a yogi to annihilate imagination and fantasies, which represent the qualities of the mind, in toto. Gradually, steadily and with utmost patience one lifts the mind to higher consciousness without thinking of anything else. When the mind becomes restless and unsteady one has to try to bring it back under control.

Nothing is lost

Arjuna asked Sri Krishna, "Oh Lord, this yoga of which you have spoken is not possible due to the restless mind. Restlessness is powerful. It is as difficult to control the mind as it is to control the wind."

Sri Krishna replies, "No doubt it is difficult, but by incessant practice and by making the mind dispassionate it can be brought under control. If the aspirant has no control over himself, yoga is not possible for him. However, for the aspirant who has control over himself, yoga comes easily with a little practice."

Arjuna asks again, "If, while practising yoga, one leaves the body what happens? Do one's practices come to an end?"

Sri Krishna answers, "The efforts of yoga are never lost. When the sadhaka attains the next body, he unconsciously remembers the point where he had left in his previous life and he starts his practices from there."

Therefore, the yoga of meditation is greater than austerity, self-analysis and selfless service. The yoga of meditation is supreme.

– 1968 World Tour

Life from the True Angle

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

To serve the less fortunate is the greatest form of worship of God. To repeat His name and constantly remember Him is the surest and quickest way to achieve success and attain eternal peace. To regulate one's life according to the injunctions of the shrutis is the greatest cure of any malady. To meditate daily for two hours is the only way to soothe the nervous mind.

To idly waste time in extra-curricular activities is the greatest of all earthly sins and the worst form of liability. To wreck one's faith in God is an untold mishap.

History

Life is a mysterious phenomenon, hence one needs to maintain a measure of great precaution to deal with it. The mysteries of life unfold to the person who regards it as the greatest of God's gifts. Life no longer remains a magical box if one takes to sadhana sincerely. To those who have implicit faith in God, life becomes a happy celebration of festivities.

Neither the temples, nor the mechanical repetition of stotras, nor the supernatural images and forms could help India. Where was the so-called miraculous deity of Somnath temple when Mohammad Gaznavi plundered and broke it eighteen times? Where was the supposed divinity of Kashi Vishwanath when it was the centre of aggressive wars? Where were the siddhas and yogis when the flames of war were burning the heart of India down to ashes? The priests, the credulous masses, the materialistically-minded people, the forerunners of our destiny did more harm to us than was done by Nadir Shah and Taimur Lang jointly.

If you wish to rise, stand and walk, take it from this sadhu, that your material efforts will not work out your long cherished plan. Neither gods and goddesses, nor priest and ascetic can

help the material prosperity of a nation. Due to our dilapidated spiritual attitude we have been suffering for so long, while the rest of the nations have gone far ahead in material advancement.

The living saints of every time and nation have served the cause efficiently. Buddha revived the conditions of our country in his time. Adi Shankaracharya changed the integral structure of India. Tulsi was marvellously successful in bringing about a thorough revolution in the aspirations and expressions of our countrymen. He undoubtedly eliminated the faces of ghosts, devils and evil forces from the masses and discouraged the malpractice of siddhis. Ramakrishna Paramahansa prepared India to fight for her real cause. Today it becomes our duty to pay our dues to these champions of the human cause.

Seva

Simplicity is the scientific way of life. Good speech is the most precious of all ornaments. Service is the salt of life, japa is the soap. Asanas purify the body and the name purifies the mind. Dhyana strengthens willpower, work strengthens the future and study makes one perfect.

Life without devotion has no meaning at all. Peace does not come in the absence of faith in God, but is granted to those who have a refined culture, a keen sense of duty and faith in the good and in God. Peace be to them who are pure at heart, intensively courageous in action, serviceable to the low and fallen, and meditative before they take up any work.

Most of our aspirations are woven around our little family, business and personal whims. We do not take notice of the aspirations of others, especially of those who need to be noticed and are lying unnoticed. When you take care of others, God and nature will take care of your welfare. This law is historically tested and found correct. God helps those who help others. If you are ablaze with a fiery determination for helping others, you are going to be endowed with capacities.

It does not, however, mean that you should stage a drama of your ideals, but you should at least have a great ambition

and burning aspiration to help others. It is not necessary that you should consider material and non-material help alone as a form of service. Sweet speech or sympathetic utterances are one of the aspects of service.

Help widows, the blind and leprosy-stricken fellowmen. Love the untouchables. Do not ill treat sweepers, this too is service. Do not misbehave with beggars who are your unfortunate brothers. I cannot help reiterating to you to analyze the plight of the beggar you are facing. It is not compulsory to give him a coin, but do not rebuke him and thus break his innocent and already broken heart.

Change

The religious feelings dictate that ten percent of the income should never be used for the family: twenty percent must be reserved for an emergency, such as sickness, marriage and accidental circumstances; ten percent at least should go to the education of poor children; ten percent is the margin; and fifty percent goes to household needs and other regular allowances. This distribution is according to religious sanctions. In practice, however, it may need some proper adjustment.

A businessman needs daring initiative and enterprise, but enterprise needs a great deal of self-confidence and sense of self-reliance. Who is qualified in self-confidence? What made Americans and Englishmen what they are?

By the end of the 17th century, the revolution had completely broken the backs and fronts of the priesthood, witchcraft and the tendency of the masses towards the supernatural. Astral entities were declared dangerous. Phenomena were confined to scientists. The masses had nothing to do with super-physical realities, whether they were real or not.

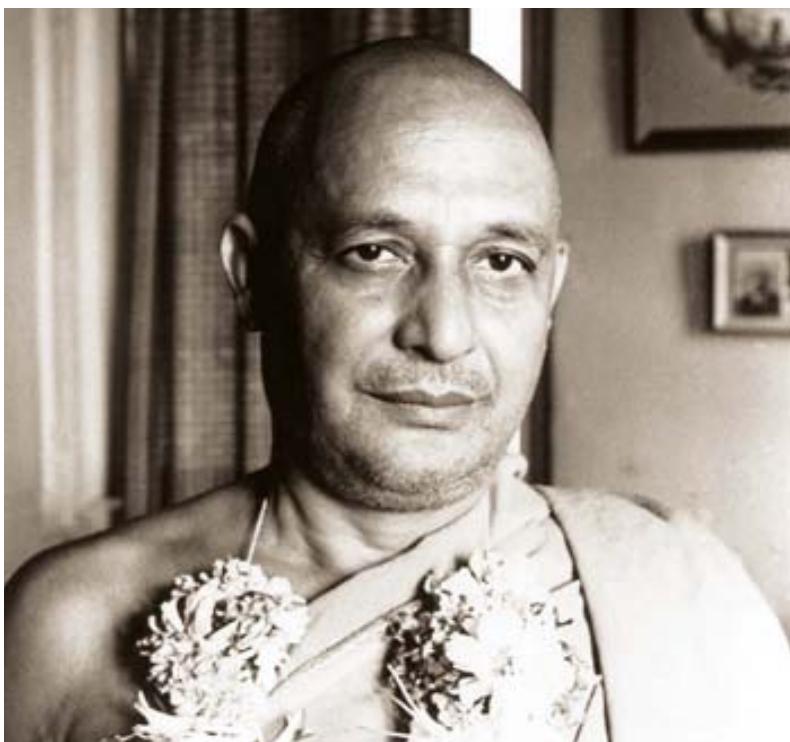
When I peep back into the pages of Russian history, I find the Russian condition of the pre-Lenin era just the same as it is in India today. When the old society underwent a red revolution, the old religion could no longer stay and sustain the blows. Russia has beaten most of the nations in power and

prowess, in duty and character, in art and religion. There are no churches which feed and maintain the life of a nation.

Let us not create confusion and perform irrelevant ceremonies. When the malady is material, it can be cured materially; when it is spiritual, it can be treated spiritually. However, when the afflictions are supernatural, no force whatsoever can avert them. This conclusion is in accordance with our scriptures.

Religion

Religion means a proper sense of duty, which helps an individual to regain his lost glory and decipher the lost path. Dharma means a stable platform, which retains our essential values of life, our character, aspirations and ambitions. Since it upholds or keeps us firmly established



in a settled position, it is called *dharma*. Since it calls us to a return, it is called re-ligion. Religion must have an integrated space and scope in our daily life. The religious code must excommunicate the parasites which are flourishing in the name of religion. Religion should be disentangled from so-called social ceremonies and buffoonery with impartial judgment. Under no condition should religion be taken to be the totality of templettarianism, churchianity, mosquesness. Religion should form the fundamental basis of our attitude to motives, actions and emotions in day-to-day life. Thus every one of our motives, actions and emotions can be spiritualized in the fraction of a second without the least tinge of tamasha, ostentation and clownish demonstrations.

Sadhana

Get up at 4 am. Practise yogasanas, meditation, japa, swadhyaya, mantra writing and prayer. Thus be ready for the day with a mind filled with tranquillity, a body with smartness, a soul with positive ideals, a day with a lot of hours. This is the best time to meditate and commune with yourself. It is the opportune moment when godly ideas occur and elevate your entire life and career. *Brahmamuhurti*, the time from 4 to 6 am, will silently and efficiently inaugurate the day's functions, for 'Well begun is well done.'

At night between 8 and 10 pm, one should try to review, analyze and criticize the accomplishments of the day. However, this practice should not be done too seriously, it is a simple recapitulation of the day's engagements and commitments. Gradually, the two-hour practice will do immense good, cast off prejudices and develop memory and the power of judgement. It will also bestow upon you a psychic personality through which you can help yourself and others.

Regulation

Too much brooding over the past and excessive planning weakens mental strength. Inertia follows, however dynamic

the person may appear, it is an extremely unhealthy condition of life. One must efficiently eliminate inertia with healthy occupations. The hour of leisure should be spiritualized. In the beginning, the easiest way to spiritualize idle hours is to repeat the ishta mantra until a religious-cum-philosophic temperament has not been developed. Of course, after a certain stage when you hold a proper sway over your mind, you may continue with religious thinking, *manana*. In the beginning, mere repetition of the name will do to render the mind peaceful, calm, sharp and strong. The name is not merely a blind ideology, no and never. It is a tried technology in religion.

Kirtan is the most important and potent of all methods of sadhana. When you do kirtan at night along with your family members, it will not only produce a positive atmosphere in the home, but train the psychology of the children. Children fear and shrink before a strict and grim-faced father, while the spiritually-minded father creates a sense of regard and initiates in their lives a process of evolution.

Pray when you get up, pray before you go to bed, pray before eating and pray when you have finished your meal. Prayer spiritualizes, energizes and revives the art of living.

Aim high and work hard. Recreation is a baseless excuse for neglecting sadhana. Indians do not need recreation, they have been recreating and sleeping for more than eight centuries. Now the time has come that Indians shall recreate their potentialities, revive their own culture and assert the sanctity of their soul.

Regulate yourself if you wish to regulate the family affairs. Regulation is the song of life and the law of life. Regulation regulates self-committed irregularity. It is real religion. It is a rare commodity today, but no amount of feverish effort will bring desirable results in the material and spiritual region, whereas a regulated life will enable you to succeed in all spheres of life.

— printed in YOGA, Vol.8, No.8, (August 1970)

Meditation

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

The Sanskrit word for spiritual practice is *sadhana*. *Sadhana* means spiritual effort, not physical or mental effort. Spiritual effort or endeavour seems to be an act of opening the door to enlightenment. Enlightenment is the prime purpose of yoga. Out of the many practices there is one method which has become popular throughout the world and is called the spontaneous awareness of consciousness.

Isolation of consciousness

Let anyone who is interested in developing higher awareness sit down in a calm and quiet posture with eyes closed. Let the mind be aware for some time of the physical body from top to toe. Let the awareness remain in the body. Usually when body consciousness comes to the mind, one tries to avoid it. The body consciousness is lost and then it comes again.

However, in this method one knows that one is thinking of the body, is aware of the body and conscious of the existence of bodily functions. At the same time, the concentration becomes so deep, that after a while the practitioner switches from the body to the mind and becomes aware of the thought process which is taking place somewhere in the conscious and subconscious fields.

When the body is gone, the mind remains. The mind is experienced in the form of thoughts, emotions and certain subtle processes. Every thought that emerges from the subconscious level and comes in the form of a symbol, vision, or idea must be seen as clearly as possible. There must be complete detachment and disidentification with the thought process. After a few days practice, one will be beyond the body and mind, for in spite of the awareness of body and mind, the idea of body and mind is lost.

Then the consciousness of 'I' comes in, devoid of the idea of body and mind; just 'I' without name, distinction of caste, creed or sex. This awareness becomes so extended and so supreme, that at a certain point the difference between I and you, they, he and everything is lost. This is the final point of spiritual realization.

In meditation, the aspirant should develop the awareness to the maximum degree and a little awareness must diffuse into the supreme awareness. Ultimately, nothing should remain except 'One'. When that supreme state is attained, it is called revelation, the giving up of knowledge. It is the point of liberation, freedom and the isolation of consciousness.

Overcoming obstacles

Yoga says that in deep meditation one becomes free of tension, worries and anxieties, the so-called subconscious trammel, and finds peace within oneself. This peace is different from happiness, it is a kind of positive, dynamic power. In regards to meditation a few points should be remembered.

First of all, the practitioners should make their asana perfect, in which they can comfortably sit for one hour without moving the body, without feeling any pain or hampering the blood circulation.

Second, after deep meditation, practitioners must see that they do not enter a state of depression, which happens to all spiritual aspirants due to lack of sufficient oxygen in the system. This causes depression, yawning and sleep, which has to be avoided by the regular practice of pranayama, a pure diet and other methods.

Third, one has to fix the faults in one's meditation. It seems to be so easy in the beginning, but when practitioners actually practise meditation they find it difficult. To sit down for meditation is easy, but after a certain stage the practitioners sleep. They forget everything and do not remember what they are doing. Self-awareness is lost which is not desirable in meditation.

Most aspirants who meditate want to forget everything. However, it should be remembered that everything should be forgotten except self-awareness. It is the central point to be remembered during meditation. If it is forgotten, the path is missed and one enters into *laya*, total suspension of consciousness. This is a spiritual loss.

The triad

When sitting down quietly for meditation, one should try to forget the body and mind through positive or negative methods, but maintain the consciousness throughout. The awareness of meditating should remain to a great extent.

At this point the awareness of the meditator, the object of meditation and the process of meditation, this triad, this threefold process exists. The knowledge 'I am meditating', the awareness 'I am meditating on this point', and the awareness of 'how the meditation is proceeding' should remain.

This triad helps in the beginning to maintain awareness throughout the meditation; otherwise the suspension of consciousness takes place. Finally, one must have patience, perseverance and the power of intuition, which will force the consciousness to detach itself from the material aspect of the personality.

Divine pilgrimage

I have given a little glimpse of meditation and yoga. I personally feel that in our lives everything is available, we can get everything quickly, but we do not get meditation. Few teachers and guides are able to give us guidance and let us know how to take this mind on the path of divine pilgrimage.

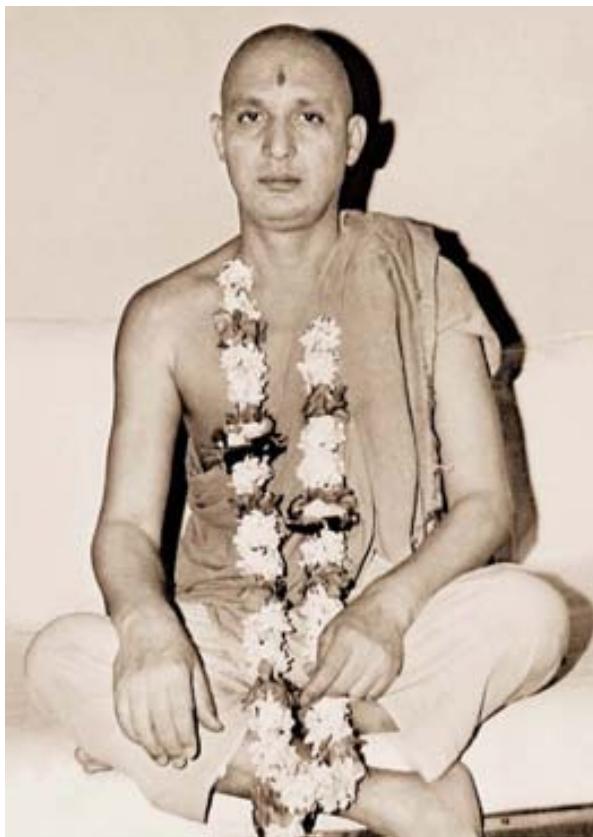
The mind has to be taken from outside, where it is wandering among the sense objects of the world, the temporary things, which are so nice in the beginning and so bad in the end. The mind has to be taken from there and directed inside, where the innermost part of our personality is full of illumination, knowledge, peace and bliss. Those who know how to go

there, at least for a few seconds every day, they know how to maintain peace, tranquillity, equanimity and strength in their lives. This is the panacea for our age.

My request to all is to try meditation every day, if possible in the morning hours, and if not, definitely at night before going to bed.

In the morning hours, the condition of the mind, body, glandular secretions, and so on, is conducive to meditation. Yogis throughout the world get up at 4 am and meditate until 6 am. Try to experience the divine moment of meditation, but let it not be forced, let it be spontaneous and come from within you.

— 1972, *Sivanandashram, Munger, India*



Yoga – A Universal Culture

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

I want to introduce a topic which has immediate relevance in our day-to-day life, but which has been utterly neglected by other civilizations for more than five centuries. As a result of that negligence, our society, culture and civilization has to pay a heavy cost. Today, we are a restless people and our society is suffering from psychosis and neurosis, which is reflecting in our family life, our community and national life.

Pre-Colombian art

Yoga is my subject wherever I go. From my study of history, religion and cultures, I have the experience that yoga is an international culture which humankind has imbibed from time to time. When I was in Latin American countries, I went to a famous museum near Bogota, Columbia. I am personally interested in investigating a universal system of life, the possibility of a universal culture, and with that intention, I have visited almost all museums in the world. From the paintings, designs and statues of what is called the pre-Colombian era, it is evident that there was a culture in the country. I have taken photographs and have concluded that the ancient culture was not only based on yoga, but it was a culture practising yoga.

In that pre-Colombian art, there are statues of hatha yoga mudras, nadi shodhana pranayama, vajrasana, uddiyana bandha and vipareeta karani mudra. These, and many other examples are found in the pre-Colombian and pre-Christian culture. Yoga has survived and will survive.

For achievement

The only drawback of this yogic culture is its disbelief in man's dependence on material things, and this is why other avenues of medical therapy like allopathy have become so popular

worldwide. Why has it been able to influence the entire culture like a storm or hurricane? The yogic culture could not go ahead as briskly as allopathy has, although the science of yoga has much to give to humankind. The future will reveal it.

Yoga science is now being understood, for the process of making it is completed. Nothing has to be invented, everything is done. Now yoga has to be understood. During the centuries of our forefathers, the science of yoga was mainly associated with asceticism, fakirs, renunciates. It was thought that yoga had more to do with renunciation and less to do with accomplishment and achievement. This was the misunderstanding. Today we are educating ourselves and becoming enlightened, the sensitive representatives of this modern culture have come to the conclusion that yoga has less to renounce and much to achieve.

If any of the saints and sages were able to achieve anything, they achieved it only because they practised yoga. Whether it was Buddha or Mahavir or others who followed them, it was merely due to the awakening that they had through the practices of yoga.

Science of yoga

Yoga is a science by which the individual becomes powerful enough to be able to put his ideas into practice. This is one of the important aspects of yoga. In the nations which are heavily and highly industrialized, yoga has become the only resort to peace and social integration. If, in the western countries, yoga is neglected or kicked out just because it is not Christian, but has something to do with Hinduism, the whole structure of that nation is on the brink of disaster. The West exists because for it has organized society, but the individual is not organized.

In order to discipline the mind, from a physical, mental, emotional and spiritual level, there ought to be a science. No politics, no military, no law can save a country unless the individual is disciplined. Individual discipline is a constant,

continued inheritance in society. Yoga puts great emphasis on individual discipline. From the therapeutic point of view, for the treatment of diseases, for mental wellbeing and rehabilitation, there cannot be anything that can be compared with yoga.

A lot of investigations are being conducted all over the world: what is the influence of breath and retention of breath on blood pressure and the pressure of the heart? What is the behaviour of cardiac muscles and of the lungs? What is the rate of respiration and what is the intake of oxygen? What is the influence on the endocrine glands and how do the brainwaves react? These tests and many others are being conducted and are drawing conclusions.

Need to know the mind

As modern psychology puts it, the present of man is based on his past. What is your past? What do you know about it? Have you analyzed your mind, and if you want to, how can you do it? Not everyone can go to a psychoanalyst, not even in Europe, what to speak of India? How can you go to a psychoanalyst? For 550 crore people, can you find 550 crore psychoanalysts? No, it is not possible. One has to become one's own analyst. One must be able to know how to withdraw oneself inward and be inside. It is important.

As much as one is able to perceive objects outside, sounds, forms, taste, touch and smell, in the same way one should be able to see the train of thought of the subconscious, conscious and unconscious. There are levels of feeling and dimensions of emotion which one never knows, unless one is able to go to the bottom of the mind. The mind is not a thinking apparatus or a bundle of habits as it was thought of. The mind is a homogenous existence of awareness. The mind is like an ocean and one cannot say what is ocean, for the top is ocean, the bottom is ocean, every end is ocean. One cannot point out a particular part as ocean.

Likewise, one cannot say that thinking is the mind; one cannot say that feeling is the mind and one cannot say that













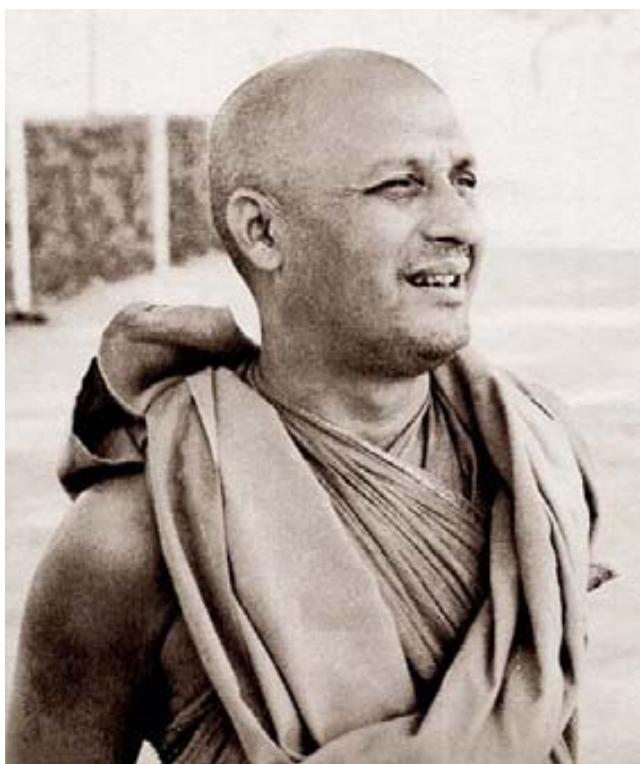




intellect is the mind. This homogenous fount of awareness, known as the mind in modern psychology, as *chitta* in yoga and Samkhya philosophy, and as *chaitanya* in Vedanta, is a secret and mystical stuff. It is not known, and a person who has known it has known life.

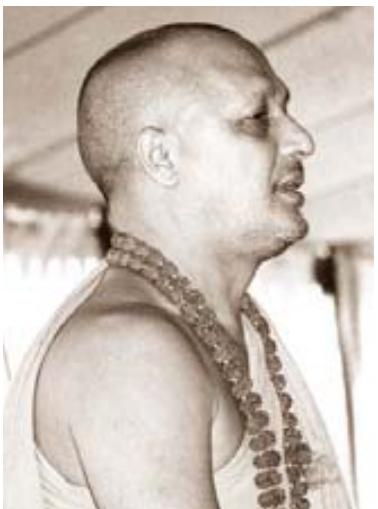
One of the reasons why we are miserable is that we are movable; I am unhappy, you are unhappy, most of us are unhappy not because there are reasons for unhappiness, but because we don't know ourselves. In total ignorance of what we are, we are suffering. Therefore, the science of yoga which leads to self-knowledge and realization is a blessing and a boon for humankind, for it ends the continuous circle of suffering and ignorance.

— January 1976, Kumardhubi, India



How to Progress in Yoga

From Teachings of Swami Satyananda Saraswati Volume IV



It is not necessary to do a lot of yoga, but the same practices have to be done for a long period of time. It seems to be a monotonous affair. The same *Om Namah Shivaya* is practised throughout the day and night for weeks, for months, for years, for life. Therefore, I sometimes have great difficulty in finding out what I should speak about on yoga. Should it be theory or practice?

The theory we have invented and the practice is simple. It starts with the mind, with the same mind which thinks, which worries, which is a riddle of life, which plays a lot of mental pranks. This mind has to be used for the practice of yoga, like a bad servant to be used for such a good cause. First of all, it is necessary for us to change the nature of the servant. If you have a business and your assistant, your helper, your subordinate, has the habit of stealing, you would not put him in charge of the cash department.

The mind is definitely full of latent impressions of karma, that have accumulated during the process of evolution from the animal incarnation. The habits of the mind are such that we have to deal with this object, this entity mind, first. How can we sit for concentration and meditation with a vagrant wandering mind? After all, there is an end to our patience. In order to deal with the problems of the mind, we have to classify them.

If you deal with the problems of children, first of all you have to define what the problems are. In the same way, the classification of mental problems is of the utmost importance. The great spiritual seers have come to the final decision that the mind has threefold problems or faults: impurities, dissipations and ignorance or unawareness. Everyone's mind has not evolved to the state of saintliness, and the mind which has not evolved to the state of sattwa is suffering from these threefold faults.

Purification of the mind

We have to deal with these threefold problems of the mind by a systematic approach to yoga sadhana. *Karma yoga*, the yoga of selfless action, is important for the purification of the mind. You cannot purify the mind unless it is rid of its toxic matter. The toxic matter of the body is released by naturopathy, by natural methods, by purging or fasting. The mental body has to be purified by the incessant practice of karma yoga.

Selfless action in itself is yoga. If you have understood yoga and spiritual life to be sitting in the lotus posture with eyes closed, you have misunderstood yoga and spiritual life. If you think that the actions and activities of life do not contribute to the growth of spiritual consciousness, you are making a great blunder! Man cannot evolve without action. He cannot overcome his faults without action.

Man's evolution and downfall are caused by karma. When karma is done with selflessness, not for yourself, but for others, it does not beget any seed or consequence. The results of selfless karma are sterile; they do not generate another karma because the personal ego and attachment are not involved in the action. Where will unhappiness come from? Where will pain be generated? This selfless action is an important form of yoga for the purification of the mind, because you are releasing karmic forces which otherwise would take you to the mental hospital, or would cause mental depression or other psychological problems.

There exists what is known as mental energy, and this mental energy is backed by the karmic forces. For example, what will happen if a person is constipated and still keeps on eating? He will need some outlet for it. It may be through vomiting, purging, diarrhoea or dysentery. Then he may take some medicine from the doctor to help cure the diarrhoea, and that gives him a headache. So he takes a little bit of aspirin. Then he has another pain here, so he takes some other kind of medicine. Then he gets a backache.

The toxin is travelling through the body. If you do shankhaprakshalana, the cleaning of the alimentary canal with saline water, there will be no vomiting, no diarrhoea, no headache, no pain in the chest, no acidity, no gastric, peptic or duodenal ulcer or any kind of disease. The toxic substances in the system need an outlet, either natural or unnatural. In the same way, the mental energy needs a natural outlet and that natural outlet is karma. When karma is done for a selfish purpose, it is an outlet. When it is done with selfless motives, it is also an outlet. Both karma with self-intent and karma with selflessness are outlets, but there is a difference.

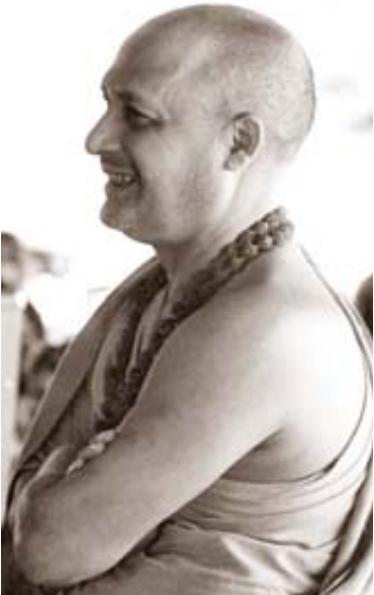
The karma with selfless motives does not generate further karma, while the karma with selfish motives keeps generating and regenerating further karma. New toxins come back to the individual. One of the problems of the mind is impurity, and this has to be eliminated by the practice of karma yoga before we take up the practices of kundalini yoga, laya yoga, dhyana yoga or any higher yoga. Otherwise, during meditation this energy causes hallucinations and illusions. This is a fact.

Dealing with dissipation

The second problem of the mind is dissipation. The mind is never steady. It is restless by nature, like a monkey. When a monkey is stung by a scorpion, it becomes all the more restless so that even a whole bottle of champagne won't quiet it - super-restlessness. This is the nature of the mind. It is always

moving, never static. It is not able to hold itself still or fix itself at one point.

Even if I were to give you concentration by touching your forehead for a moment, afterwards your mind would revolt again, because activity is the natural formation and structure of the mind. The mind is made up of three substances or elements: *sattwa*, *rajas* and *tamas*; these are the three qualities of nature: equilibrium, activity and immobility respectively. These are the three eternal qualities of which the mind is composed.



Therefore, in order to create a state of spontaneous concentration, bhakti yoga should be practised. According to the great gurus of the past, the mind spontaneously becomes one-pointed by the practice of bhakti yoga, in the form of kirtan, in the form of satsang, in the form of reading the lives of great saints. Without adding bhakti yoga as an element of your spiritual sadhana, dissipation of the mind cannot be stopped.

The veil of ignorance

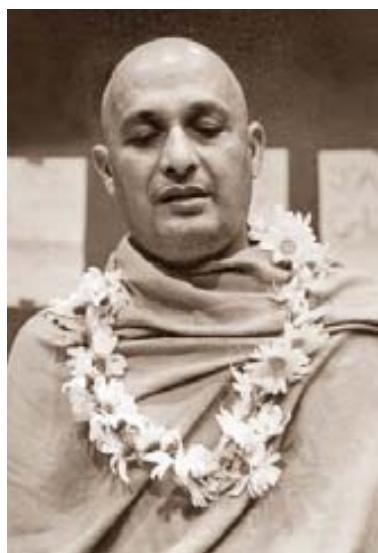
The third problem of the mind is ignorance or unawareness of the principles of consciousness, *chit*. There are true principles which we do not know because our parents did not teach them to us, and they did not teach us because they did not know themselves. Ignorance of the truth, the true principle of life, is called *avidya*. This veil of ignorance can be rent asunder by the practice of *jnana yoga*, the yoga of philosophical rationality.

Questions like, why am I doing all this? What for? What is this body? What is the mind? What is the spirit? How is all this related to time and space? What is time in relation to the mind? What happens when I go to sleep? Who is there? Who witnesses the sleep? What happens in dreams, and why do I dream? Who is the witness of the dream? Am I the same person who is waking, sleeping and dreaming? Or am I three different beings, three different personalities? If I am, then who dreams, who sleeps and who is awake now?

These and many other questions come into our minds and we have to come to a conclusion on the basis of the dictums of the great saints and philosophers. This is jnana yoga – I am a part of the cosmic nature. It is the first truth which we have to know, believe and keep in our minds. This body is not the ultimate substance. The awareness of time and space through this mind is a finite concept, not an infinite concept. Therefore, it is not absolute, and when it is not absolute, it cannot be truth. That which is truth must be absolute. This is jnana yoga.

In jnana yoga we come to the principle of truth, we know what it is, on the evidence of saints, revelations and the dictums

of the great philosophers who said, 'I am That.' That becomes the guideline, *Aham Brahmasmi*, I am the cosmic light. The saints have said, "Realize your real nature," which means that behind the shadow of the body and mind, behind passions and emotions, behind the ever changing experiences, there is an eternal consciousness within us which has homogeneity at its root and which is just cosmic, without beginning and without end.



The experience is an absolute experience which has no other dimension of experience.

Adding the basic ingredients

It is necessary for spiritual aspirants to equip themselves with karma yoga, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga, and along with these three, we must add raja yoga to our curriculum. Why does raja yoga not succeed? Why does it not bring the desired results? In spite of all our honest and sincere practices, we do not seem to have gone anywhere; we may even have gone backwards a little. We are where we were. Why? Is it because the system of raja yoga is incomplete, or is it because the principles of raja yoga are fraudulent? Is it because the practices of raja yoga are either oriental for Orientals, or occidental for Occidentals?

I think that what we have done is something like preparing a nice dinner and placing it on the table, but we have forgotten to add the necessary ingredients to make it tasty. In our ashram life we have added karma yoga as the most important ingredient. Many aspirants who come to our ashram are surprised and they say, "Hey, we came for meditation and all we do here is work!"

What can I say to people who are not wise enough to know the glory of karma yoga as the outlet of energy in man? Karma is not just physical mobility; it is mental and emotional mobility. The energy is moving whether you work in the garden, kitchen, office, building or carpentry section, or cleaning the toilet. Wherever you work, it is not just the physical body which is working.

In India, monasteries are called ashrams. The root of the word ashram is *shram*, which is a Sanskrit word meaning 'effort'. Ashram is a place where you make a twofold effort. First is the work in the ashram – the physical labour in the kitchen, in the construction, in the press, in the bank, in the post office, and so on. Second is the spiritual effort which you make.

Therefore, an *ashram* is a place where you make physical and spiritual effort. We have made it a compulsory rule that everyone who comes to the ashram to live, no matter how great a scholar, how rich or intellectual he may be, he has to participate in the activities of ashram life in order to evolve, in order to make himself competent for raja yoga.

For years, when I was living with my guru, Swami Sivananda Saraswati, in Rishikesh, I sometimes thought that if I had to work like I did, it would be better if I went back to my family and worked there, because I was not working like a man; I was working like a bull, like a donkey. Eventually I think that work became my passion, my second nature. Sometimes for weeks I had no time to think, I just worked.

Once I asked Swami Sivananda, "Why should we work so hard in the ashram when we have renounced everything?" He said, "Have you renounced karma? If you have renounced, then do not go to the toilet because that is karma. Do not eat because that is also karma. Do not talk because talking is karma. Do not desire because desiring is also karma." I said, "Hey, that is very difficult!"

If the renunciation of karma is such a difficult task, why try to renounce it? Adopt it. This is what is written in the *Bhagavad Gita*. It says, "There is not a moment in life when man can remain without action." As long as he remains alive, man must act. The nature of his mind will compel him, his desires will compel him to act. If his desires, passions and ambitions are not able to compel him to act, he will become slow, lethargic and dull. Desire, passion and ambition stimulate karma; they are the fuels for karma.

Karma yoga, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga should be practised simultaneously in our day-to-day life. Side by side, you should practise asanas, pranayama, mudra, bandha, kriya, and whatever else you practise. Then you will not be able to say, "I have been practising raja yoga for six years and nothing is happening. I am not progressing. I seem to be at the same point." You will be able to say, "My practice is going very

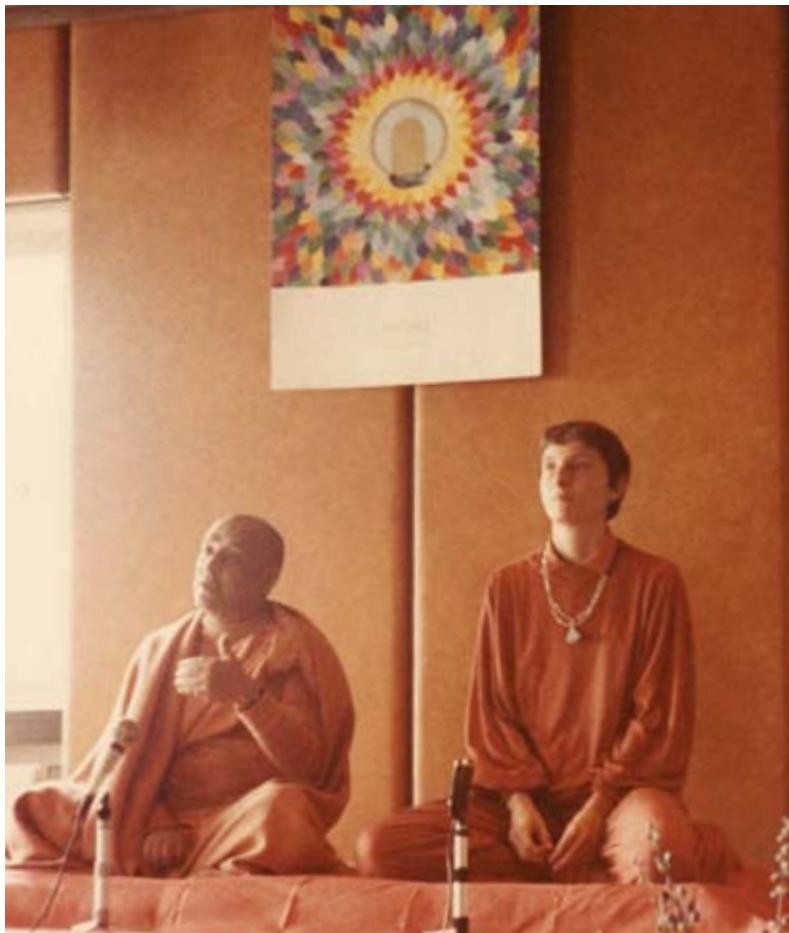
well. Every day I feel something; I have some new experience or insight about truth and about life." You will be satisfied. The three conditions of the mind, impurity, dissipation and ignorance, should be removed first, and then raja yoga will become constructive. Raja yoga will become a fulfilment and the truth in your life.

— 17 October 1978, Melbourne Ashram, Melbourne, Australia



Hidden Desires

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



In Samkhya and Vedanta, much has been spoken about the problem of desires. In order to express hidden desires, one has to become aware of the grief and pain of other people. Lord Buddha said, "Birth is painful, life is painful and death is painful." Everybody is suffering. Even the rich are suffering.

A scholar or a beautiful woman, an emperor or a commander, all are suffering. Once this pain is acknowledged, the hidden desires come up. Desires hide themselves due to suppression and because one does not realize the real nature of the world.

Vasanas are hidden desires, and in the human mind, there are various levels of desires. Hunger is one desire and similarly, there are other desires such as sleep, to have more money and property, to have a husband or wife, children, friends, to have love and affection. These are all desires.

There are desires that are on the upper mental plane, the ordinary and simple desires we are aware of. However, at the base there are hidden desires which sometimes project themselves directly, or more frequently, indirectly. When suppressed the hidden desires do not dare to come up.

Suppression of desires strengthens the hidden desires. They project themselves in dreams, in visions or during pratyahara, and they keep manifesting at different stages of meditation. Even just before the point of illumination, these hidden desires keep on projecting or exhausting themselves. Therefore, try to express your desires or channel them.

Desires must not be curbed. You should either fulfil them completely or else realize their uselessness.

God, and God alone

In Islam, Christianity and in Indian religions, there is a very important, common note: Live for God. Do not live for man, the king or enjoyment. Live for Him, think for Him, work for Him, and love for Him.

When love for God becomes eminent, when one pines for His companionship, the hidden desires are expressed. As much as a young boy has love for a young girl or a greedy person has for his money, in the same way one should have love for God. Either one develops an attitude that God is father, mother, friend, son or daughter, husband or wife. If one develops one of these attitudes according to their ability, the hidden desires will be expressed.

Vasana is the negative side and supreme love is the positive side. The composition of both types of love is the same, only the presentation is different. All hidden desires are consumed in absolute bhakti. In the three religions, there is a peculiar concept of bhakti. In one type of bhakti, there is lukewarm bhakti. One goes to the temple, the church or the mosque; one bows the head and does the required rituals. The second type of bhakti is mad bhakti, where one is completely immersed in it and one doesn't see anyone else but God. It is madness and in history a few people have become mad like this. They are known as God-intoxicated people whose stories are known to us. Studying their life history, it seems they were completely immersed in the thought of God, and nothing else mattered or existed.

Kissing the shadow

This bhakti is known as parabhakti, supreme love or divine love. In the Sufi philosophy, it is called *ishta hakiki*, loving the real person. When you love the objects of the world, you love the shadow. Why do you love the shadow? There is no use kissing the shadow. You should embrace the right person. When you love the real person, you love the shadow as well. That is why it is said say, "If you love God, you love his creation." If you lose yourself in God, you lose yourself in his creation, for the whole creation is God's shadow and his manifestation.

There is a Sufi story. A young girl was going to see her boyfriend. It was the evening, and she was constantly thinking about him. Along the way, there was a devout Muslim who had spread his mat and was practising namaz, the Muslim prayer and combined with asana. This girl was so immersed in thoughts of her boyfriend, she was not aware of anything, walked over his mat and kept walking. The man got angry. "Dirty woman! I am praying and she is walking on my mat." He shouted, "Hey! Stop!" But she did not hear him. He thought she was insulting him, so he got up from his prayer mat and ran after her. He stopped her and said, "Why did you walk on my

mat?" She came out of her dream and said, "What?" He said, "I was praying to God and you walked on my mat." She said, "Look here, I am going to meet my boyfriend. I was thinking so much about him that I did not know you were praying. What kind of love were you having and feeling towards God, if you knew that I was passing?"

God-consciousness

In the famous book *Ramayana*, the last stanza of prayer is: "Just as a passionate man is immersed in the thought of his woman, just as a greedy man is always neurotic about gold, in the same way, God should become dear to me. However I may be born as an insect, as a reptile, as an elephant, a dog or a donkey, in any life I may be born, I don't care and I have no choice, but I have one choice. I should become aware of God."

If that is the attitude, then nothing matters, money or not money, good family or bad family, success or failure. In the same stanza it says, "I do not want fulfilment of desires. I do not want to have liberation. I don't want to see you either. God, I don't want to come out of the cycle of birth and death. I don't want to become a good man either, but life after life, my mind must be conscious of your lotus feet." This is the last stanza which people throughout India pray every day.

The word for love in hatha yoga is *rati*. *Rati* means the relationship between a man and a woman. During love, during embrace, during kiss, during talk, that particular attitude which two lovers have for each other, is called *rati*, and that has to be the attitude for God. So close and so intimate. Then where is space for desires?

— September 1980, Zinal, Switzerland

River of Desires

To experience bhakti you must redirect your emotions from the inauspicious to the auspicious path. You must take the flow of the river of desires to an auspicious course. It has been said:

Shubhabhyam ashubhabhyam vahanti vasana sarita.

Between the auspicious and the inauspicious, flows the river of desires.

We call the river of desires 'emotion'. We do not see this river, but we feel it. Emotions flow within us like a river. We can control this river, change its course and turn it into a channel.

However, you cannot have half of your emotional self here and half there. You cannot experience anger and bhakti at the same time. The rule of fifty-fifty does not work. There needs to be one hundred percent sublimation of emotions, a complete change of course.

What will be achieved through this? Grace.

— 2004, Rikhiapeeth, Jharkhand



Let My Life Go On As It Is



Let my life go on as it is,
In the direction it yearns to follow.
Keep your knowledge, your philosophy, your spirituality,
Your science, your social conduct, your religion.
Let my life flow splendidly as a child's,
Let me fly like the birds,
Let me remain innocent and unknowing.

I don't need your knowledge.
I love to roam in the jungle.
Let me sing with the birds, don't stop me.
Let me laugh in the flaring garden of life.
Let me run amongst the rustling leaves.
Let me glimpse nature at sunrise,
Let forest leaves, spring water, clear air sustain me.

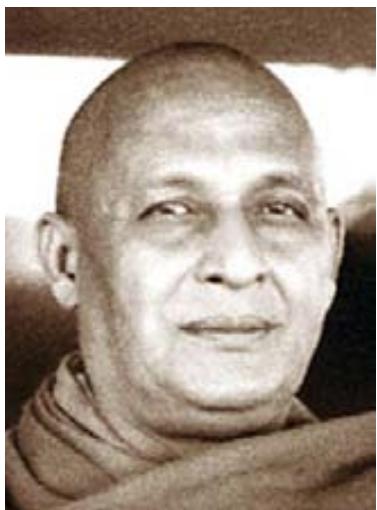
Keep your civilization, your pride, your reputation;
Let me go wherever I want to
Far, far away, beyond the horizon
Where earthly rays do not penetrate
Where worldly ways cannot reach.

Don't bind me by your social rules.
Don't influence me with your religions,
Don't drag me down with your conventions.
Leave me alone.
Let me be.

—*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*

Acting on Intuition

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



There comes a certain moment in the life of a businessman when an idea or a sequence of thoughts flashes through his mind. Often that idea becomes the basis for his later success and leadership within society and his business. The idea which flashes across the mind could be called intuition. If you are a businessman and I am a sannyasin, it is not just the hard work within our respective fields which

ultimately gives a success, but it is the intuitive idea that flashed across the mind and upon which you started your business and I my mission.

Flash of light

I knew Vedanta well and had a thorough knowledge of the systems of monism, which go back to the intuitive areas of the mind. I understand Sanskrit today much better than English. In Rishikesh, yoga had not captured my attention. I studied the vedantic texts of Adi Shankaracharya, Ramanuja and Madhawacharya. Volumes and volumes I swallowed, but I read only a few yoga texts. Suddenly an idea flashed across my mind; a spontaneous, yet emphatic and clear idea, like an inspiration. That flash was yoga, and from that day on I based all my activities on yoga.

For this flash of light or intuitive realization to occur, there should come a moment in life, when through

introspection, things become clear and definite in the mind without any conflict at all. This holds true for a businessman and a swami.

In moments of introspection, light flashes through the mind, the light of idea and revelation. The person makes decisions, knows how to work and acts rationally on the basis of intuition.

It is only an achievement, but I can say that what I wanted to do was worthwhile even though it has taken me all my life to achieve it. I have not yet achieved everything, but achieving it will prove the worthiness of my ambitions. If I do not achieve it, people will say that it was an empty dream and they knew from the beginning that it was not possible.

Destiny

Failure makes even the most worthwhile dream seem empty. If a thought and dream has been an intuition, if it came like a lightening idea, it is bound to come to fructification. No power can stop it for this flash of light comes only when destiny has made all arrangements.

I changed my profession and area of business. I am using the word business. I am not at all a yoga teacher and didn't know anything about yoga. I practised hatha yoga in 1956 and 1957, but I became a swami in 1943. Twelve years later I knew about yoga. I practised hatha yoga when I was in Munger. I had to change the language and even the spiritual goal in order to propagate yoga to people.

It was so difficult for me because the idea came with such gusto, such a flash of light. It became almost a mania. For a few months people who knew me said, "What has happened? What is he talking about? What yoga? Is he talking about witchcraft?" At that time people had peculiar ideas about yoga.

Destiny had made all arrangements. Destiny might be called the cosmic law which has been formed in the minds of people who began to change. Today people practise yoga

and are interested in yoga. That arrangement was made by a cosmic law.

An idea flashes through the mind when destiny has made all arrangements. It can happen to anyone, to a businessman, professor or research scholar. Albert Schweitzer had to change his profession. He was a musician, an organist in the church, but then he went to medical school and started working. His whole lifestyle changed.

One has to change in the world when an idea comes and the death of the mind occurs. It is so overwhelming, so impressive, so enlightening and it is the way of the mind. At other times, one has to use the rational systems of thought. Intuition and rational matters are not contradictory to each other. Intuition is the basis and the rational mind does the work on that basis.

Need for yoga

Intuition is a lightening flash which creates a potential instantaneously. One sees with the mind's eye that this is what can happen and what has to be done. The second part is building a solid foundation by rationalizing the ideal. The intuition and ideals are there, but then comes the problem of finding a way to realize it. The success is delayed for one does not possess the right skills.

The problem has to be tackled properly. The source must be found which can help one to overcome deficiencies and create conditions which give the skills necessary for success. Here everyone comes up against a stone wall. In situations like this the remedy is yoga.

The aspirants will see how yoga is able to create a potential, procedure and the means; all three are correlated factors. The aspirants must find people who have the same inclination, intention and aptitude. It is important to be not just a dry businessman, but one who practises yoga and is able to study the minds of his opponents.

— October 1980, India

Past, Present and Future

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

When one takes care of the present the future will take care of itself. Every point in the present is a point of the future. If one does not take care of the present and only anticipates the future, one will be missing some important link.

One does not have to be a fatalist, but at the same time it is not necessary for a person to be living in fantasies. One has to be immediately practical. If I am taking each step properly and naturally, I am going to reach the destination without any difficulty. One should not anticipate the future and ignore the present.

In fact, there are only past and future. Past and future are divided by a particular point called the present. It is not static, for what is present now becomes the past and what is the future is going to be the present. Time is always seen as two important aspects divided by one point. However, when one does not talk in terms of time but in terms of mind and consciousness, time is nothing but a concept of mind. Otherwise time does not exist at all. If there is no mind there is no time. Therefore, the division of time is a division in the mind.

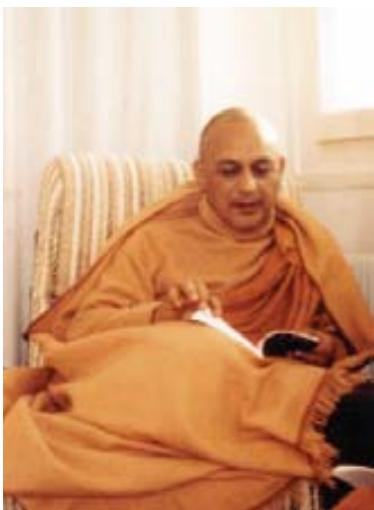
What is past? What is future and what is present? We are dealing with life. Some people deal with life by thinking of the past and some people deal with life by thinking about the future. However, there are some people who deal with life by thinking about the present, and history has proved that they have been successful in life. If the present is taken care of, the future will take care of itself.

– 2 April 1981, Milano, Italy



Suffering as Sadhana

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Physical pain strengthens the nervous system and mental agony strengthens the mind. Physical difficulties make the body strong. This is the principle, but most people have trouble accepting it, for nobody wants to suffer pain, mental agonies, physical afflictions or discomforts. Whenever one is amidst the pleasantries of life, the mind regresses into a tamasic state, for there is no conflict in it. The conflicts are

resolved or at least subdued as everything is pleasant. When one gains pleasure and solace from friendships and establishes oneself in comfortable situations, it puts an end to the physical, mental and emotional evolution. The key to evolution is conflict.

The role of conflict

The mind evolves from the tamasic to the rajasic state and from the rajasic to the sattvic state. Its growth is divided into five stages: dull, dissipated, oscillating, one-pointed and controlled. These five stages of the mind range over three levels. The level of tama is either predominantly or totally dull. It is dull for it has no conflict, desires, frustrations or agony. If it obtains things it is alright and if it doesn't it is also alright. This mind constantly compromises so that it can avoid having to take action, either to attain something or to cope with disappointment. That is precisely the reason why yoga begins with disappointment, mental depression and frustration.

Everybody has expectations, whether they are married or single, a businessman or a swami, a family man with a steady job or a homeless vagabond. People are expecting something from life. With these expectations they are evolving in a particular direction. If the expectation is fulfilled, the direction does not meet with a challenge. When people obtain what they want, whether it is money, love, friendship, power, peace or cooperation, they enjoy it, but it doesn't help them to develop another realm of awareness.

Supposing one has been working towards some goal for many years and finally one finds that it can't be attained. What happens? An extra awareness develops within the mind and takes the form of frustration, mental agony, worry, anxiety or conflict. This means one has started fighting.

If there is frustration or depression in the mind, but no conflict, one loses the battle. However, if there is frustration and conflict, the challenge is accepted. Once one accepts the challenge, the conflict is followed by struggle.

Struggle is never without conflict, but conflict can be without struggle. From time to time, the ideas and evaluations of life undergo changes for the person who is undecided about what has to be done. The mind is made to confront two ideas, which gives momentum to the development of awareness and the mind.

The purpose of suffering

When the mind is torn between two ideas, there is definitely physical and mental suffering. This is a positive experience. Not only is the individual trying to bring an end to the suffering, but he is trying to understand the meaning behind it or transcend the experience of suffering. Therefore, if the people who are suffering mentally can accept it, they will have deeper, greater, and enduring spiritual experiences.

However, most people have weak minds and suffer from infirmity of will. They want their lives to pass pleasantly and smoothly. They wish to have amiable friends, obedient

children, loving parents, a friendly society, a luxurious, centrally heated house and a lot of money. They do not want to subject their mind to worries. This is called tamoguna or a dull state of mind.

When the mind becomes sattwic, almost one-pointed or completely controlled, it doesn't matter whether the circumstances in life are pleasant or unpleasant. It makes no difference as far as the evolution of the mind is concerned. The people who are prepared to suffer, survive through emotional accidents, sensual accidents, political accidents and the catastrophes of nature. They have enabled humankind to survive for millions of years.

For the purpose of strengthening endurance, yoga and similar sciences advise people to expose themselves to a little suffering. In fact, for people who have the conveniences and luxuries of life, voluntary suffering, or what we call *tapasya*, penance or austerity, is an essential practice for progress in spiritual life.

For some time they renounce the comforts, such as tasty food, nice clothes, a beautiful home, and live a simple life. This is not the permanent structure of their lives; but they do undergo a training period. At this time, reorientation of the mind takes place. The bad habits, false values of life and dependent tendencies of the mind are completely eradicated, and they develop confidence. If a person can tolerate every form of suffering, so much confidence will be developed.

History talks about people who have undergone suffering. They have enacted deeds of confidence which have gone down in history and are remembered to this day. Sadhakas, yogis, swamis and householders should remember that a period of life must be devoted to self-imposed suffering. It is one of the most important parts of yoga.

Eliminating karma

When one lives in a pleasant environment, with loving parents and friends, a darling wife or husband, and when one is cosy, one's karma is not being exhausted. The karma is

being protected, however, and at some stage it will have to be confronted. One may not wish to face the tiger either now or later, but face it one must. One cannot bypass karma.

In order to exhaust karma, one must design suffering according to one's physical capacities. This can help to exhaust the karmas, so they do not come into the mind anymore. When one practises antar mouna, one goes through the experiences of the past, the subconscious, unconscious, sounds, meetings, love, hatred, neurosis, psychosis or schizophrenia. One relives these experiences and it eases the situation, but to completely eliminate the seeds of karma, one must practise tapasya. Then, although one might remember past experiences in detail, they have no bearing on the processes of the mind. They will not affect the personality, behaviour or the course of events in one's life.

The path of suffering

There are many ways to practise tapasya. Sannyasa life in the beginning is a mild form of austerity. Fasting and observance



of vigil is austerity. Vigil means to go without sleep for one night and maintain constant awareness. It is easy to go to the pub and drink the whole night or party, but that is not a vigil. Vigil means to maintain non-dual awareness for a prolonged period. That is not something one does every month, but it can be practised once or twice a year. However, one should not sleep the whole day so one won't feel sleepy at night. Sleepiness should be experienced during vigil, for by controlling sleep, one comes nearer to an experience.

Mouna, silence, is also a form of tapasya. It can be practised quite a few times every year. From dawn one day till dawn the next day, there is no talking to anyone. Writing messages on paper or using signals should also be avoided. One remains alone and feels that nobody else is existing. This will help not only to intensify the awareness, but also to make one more aware of the awareness. One begins to know more about oneself, as the awareness of the sensual impulses, the movements of the mind and the motion of the inner experiences increases.

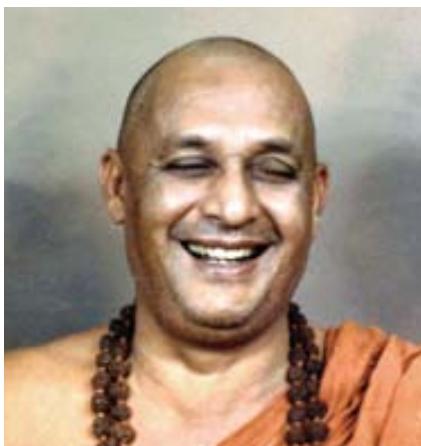
Behind the external consciousness, behind the thoughts that one observes in antar mouna, behind the sensations and feelings that one has, there is something else. It is called awareness. Although it has no form and cannot be classified, sometimes one can feel it like lightning. It is just there. If that awareness can be made constant, it is called an experience, and it comes to most people. That awareness is the basis of the mind. By choosing, accepting and following the path of suffering, one can definitely come closer to the inner self.

However, there are rules and regulations that must be observed when one chooses the path of suffering. Through a training period, reorientation of the mind takes place. However, one must be sensible and cautious and go according to one's capacity, step by step.

— 26 April 1982, Denmark,
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Upanishads – Dialogues of Wisdom

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



The meaning of *upanishad* is ‘to sit close by’. *Upa* means close, and *nishad* means to sit. When two people sit close to each other and discuss a topic, it is called upanishad. The Upanishads are dialogues between guru and *chela* or disciple. It is not a public lecture given to dozens or hundreds of people but an intimate dialogue between guru and disciple. The disciple is asking about the nature of reality and the guru gives an answer.

In each Upanishad the question is the same, only the answers are slightly different. The main theme of the upanishadic philosophy is that the ultimate reality is one, homogeneous, interpenetrating and present in everything. The experience can be gained by controlling the senses and the mind, and diving deep into the nature of reality.

There are 108 Upanishads, ten are considered to be the major and most ancient Upanishads, and thirty are considered minor. The rest were composed at a much later date.

Upanishads

In India, the ancient literature is called Veda, which means higher knowledge. There are four Vedas: *Rigveda*, the most ancient; *Yajurveda*, *Samaveda* and *Atharvaveda*.

These Vedas have four sections. Every Veda has a book called mantra which are used for ceremonies, such as the birth ceremony, name giving, marriage or death ceremonies.

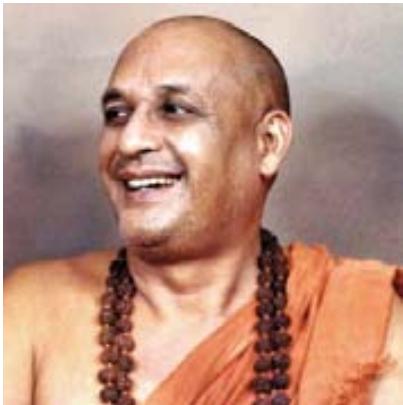
The second section of the Vedas is known as Brahmana, which discusses social responsibilities, customs, marriages, social laws, disposing of a dead body and the functions of a householder. There is a system of marriage, but if a girl is kidnapped, what will be the social position of her marriage to the man who kidnapped her? If a woman has become a widow and wants to remarry, what will be the position of that marriage? Society has to decide the different positions called Brahmanas.

The third section of the Vedas is called Aranyaka. It is considered important for the people who have completed their household responsibilities and are stepping into spiritual life. They should be taught how to practise detachment and make themselves free from the involvements they had for twenty years or more. The husband and wife are taught to live like recluses, like karma sannyasins. This section talks about how to live with wife or husband, but remain detached and aloof from previous involvements.

The fourth section is the Upanishads. They only discuss one thing: what is reality? The seekers of truth, sat together and discussed the following topics: How did the individual come into this life? Why did he come? What is going to happen after he dies? What is the basis of existence? What is the source of life? What is the individual's relationship with the whole cosmos? Is he a non-entity? Is he an integral part of the entire reality of the cosmos? These spiritual topics are discussed in the Upanishads.

Two Upanishads

The most ancient Upanishad is known as *Ishavasya Upanishad*, the last chapter of the *Yajurveda*. *Isha* means God, and *avasya*



means dwelling. The theme is that whatever is seen as manifest and whatever exists as unmanifest has an indwelling presence. It appears to be matter, but it is not. Whether it is sentient or insentient, moving or immobile, visible or invisible, manifest or unmanifest, everything has beyond its external appearance, an indwelling entity which is called God, *Ishwara atma*.

The second Upanishad is the *Kenopanishad*, answering the question: Is it possible to have the experience of the supreme spirit with lower and limited vehicles like speech, ears, nose or mouth? Or does one have to go beyond the senses and the mind in order to have the experience of a higher entity?

Kathopanishad

The third important Upanishad is known as *Kathopanishad*. The story goes like this: A great *rishi*, a sage, was performing sacrifices and giving away all his belongings in charity to the needy. His son was looking at his father and saw that he was giving the cows, goats and sheep to the people. He was thinking, 'Whom is he going to give me to? For, after all, a son is also a possession of the father. If he is giving his possessions in charity, he should also give me.'

So he asked, "Father, to whom will you give me?" The father did not reply. For a second time the boy asked, "Father,



to whom will you give me?" The father was quiet for he did not intend to give him in charity to anyone. For a third time the boy asked, "To whom will you give me?" The father became angry and said, "Damn it, I will give you to death."

The name of the boy was Nachiketa. In spiritual terminology, Nachiketa represents the highest quality of dispassion, *vairagya*. If anybody has this highest dispassion, it will be said, "He is a Nachiketa." Swami Sivananda wrote about me, saying that I had the qualities of Nachiketa.

Nachiketa, by virtue of his father's curse, transcended the mortal plane of consciousness and ascended into *yamaloka*, the plane of Yama, the Lord of the Death, who is the registrar of the dead. When Nachiketa went there, Yama was not present. He had gone on his weekly inspection tour. So this boy was waiting at the door for three days and nights. After three nights, Yama returned and asked the boy, "Who are you?" Nachiketa said, "My father has sent me to you, and I have been waiting for three nights." Yama said, "Oh my boy! You have been suffering here for three nights in this freezing cold. I give you three boons. Ask me."

The boy asked for the first boon, "My father has denounced me and sent me to death. When I go back to him, let him recognize and accept me. That is my first request." It is difficult to recognize one's nearest and dearest, kith and kin, if one dies

and comes back in another form, one may not be recognized. Yama said, "Okay, that will happen."

Nachiketa asked for the second boon, "What is dispassion? How to develop vairagya, where the whole world with its wealth and pleasures does not affect me at all and where the agonies of the past and the ambitions of the future do not touch my personality?" Yama answered that question too.

The third question was a very naughty question. Nachiketa said, "You are the Lord of Death and you have been moving in both the countries of death and after-death whenever you like. Tell me, is there survival, and if there is survival, what survives? Does the body or the mind survive? Does the soul survive, and if the soul survives, what is the soul? Nobody has seen it. Is it just a philosophical and abstract item?"

The third boon

Yama was astounded and said, "I will give you many things, but don't ask this question. I will give you elephants, horses, cows, damsels, palaces to live in, long life, eternal kingdoms. Take everything, but don't ask this question which ordinary people cannot ask. Even *devas*, divine beings, rishis and spiritual masters do not know the ultimate reply to this question. They search for an answer, but they can't find it. I am not going to tell you."

Nachiketa said, "Lord, you are giving me all this wealth, but for how long will it last, maybe one thousand or two thousand years? It will not be with me until eternity. A man eats food, digests everything and turns it into faeces. In the same way, the pleasures are turned into pain. That is the process." There was a lot of struggle between Yama and Nachiketa. Finally, Yama considered saying, "Look here, I have never come across a boy like you. So sit down and listen."

From here the whole Upanishad proceeds about the nature of the soul, the body and concentration. Yama talks about yoga, he explains that as an archer points his arrow at a target and finally merges the arrow in that point, in the same way, the mind

is the bow and *Om* is the arrow and the supreme reality is the target. Through yoga one merges the arrow with the target.

Yama continues, "You go by horse cart. The driver is drunk, the horses are untrained and on both sides of the road is green grass. It is obvious what is going to happen. However, if the horses are trained and the driver is alert, it does not matter if the grass is growing on both sides of the road. Such a horse-cart can reach the destination."

Fire is hot and water is liquid. Similarly, the quality of the senses is to always draw one to the external objects and never to the internal objects. Therefore, a patient seeker will have to work again and again, for even if the senses are brought under control, they go out again. Every time one has to work with greater patience and not lose courage. The mind is the medium between unreality and reality. This is the theme of the Kathopanishad.

Razor's edge

Somerset Maugham composed his novel *The Razor's Edge* on this Upanishad which has the following mantra (1:3:14):

*Uttishthatajaagrata praapya varaan nibodhata;
Nishitaa duratyayaa durgam pathastat kavayo vadanti.*

Awake, arise! Learn this wisdom from the great ones.
As narrow as the razor's edge is that path, difficult to
traverse and hard to tread, say the wise.

This is the razor's edge on which yogis are walking, who are trying to tread the path to the ultimate reality. It is not the path of flowers but the razor's edge. It is a tiny, narrow passage. If you are a little bit careless either you fall to the right or to the left.

The great masters say that this path is difficult and hazardous. So what is to be done? They say, "The only way is to remain awake and keep moving all the time until one attains the final gift and boon of self knowledge."

Neti, neti

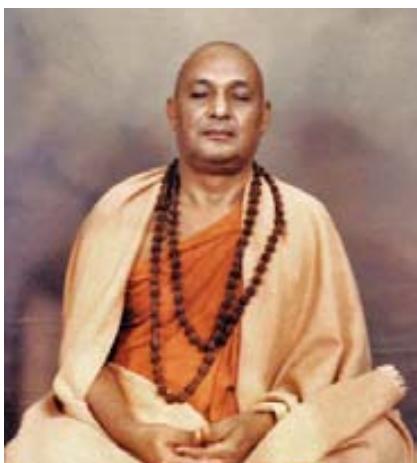
The *Prashnopanishad* is another Upanishad. *Prashna* means questions. In this Upanishad the main topic is the life-force and the mental force which are like two birds.

The largest Upanishad is the *Chhandogya* Upanishad, in which there are many topics including the science of *Om*. How to chant *Om*, what is *Om*, how was it produced, is it the name of a god or a sound, or is it related to the cosmos?

The *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* talks about little-known meditations. The word meditation was known as *vidya*, while now it is called *dhyana*. There are various meditations such as prana *vidya*, meditation on prana; panchagni *vidya*, meditation on five fires; madhu *vidya*, meditation on honey and many more.

Ultimately, the Upanishads are trying to discover the total reality of the universe. However, the final reply is: *Neti, neti* – not this, not this. The Upanishads have not come to a conclusion, though they have tried their level best. No thought and no philosophy in this world has worked so much in trying to discover the total reality of the seen and unseen universes, but they have not made any claim that they have known it. They say, “We have come this far, but this is not the final conclusion.”

– 6 February 1983, Manchester, UK



To be a Medium

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

To the question, 'How to become a medium?' the reply is simple - empty yourself. The bamboo must be made hollow, only then each note can be produced. I think it is the best of musical instruments, the simplest. Every musical instrument has two parts, but the flute has no parts. Nothing has to be added to it.

In the life of a disciple the most important thing is to empty oneself. Everyone has their own desires, choices, difficulties and problems. Therefore, no one is empty. When a person has problems they are his problems, and when I have problems, they are my problems. I am one and you are two. Where there is duality there is no medium.

A disciple need not be an idiot. He can be an intelligent person. He can be a funny person, but before the guru he is nothing, like an Alsatian dog who has one master only. To become a good medium the disciple has to become a good conductor, otherwise the electricity cannot be conducted. Electricity cannot be conducted through string. It can only be conducted through a good conductor like copper. In the same way the guru can only flow through a disciple if the disciple is a good conductor.

Laying down one's arms

There are many stories of disciples who have attempted to be mediums but have failed. My guru was Swami Sivananda. He had many disciples who were outstanding and good people. I am not that good. I have my own way of thinking and living. These disciples became mediums and I became a medium for I had completely surrendered to guru. There came a point in my spiritual life when I was completely exhausted, tired and fed up with myself.

When one tries to control the mind for years and months and is not able to control it, when one tries to control passions and is not able, when all personal efforts have failed, one is fed up with oneself. At that time, one completely lays down the arms and says, "Oh, do what you like. I am bad and am going to be bad. I have tried my best and lost. I can't do anything without you." At this point, there is an awakening which only comes when one has totally laid down one's arms.

Making oneself empty

Many people say, "I am a good man." That is ego. They say, "I am a pure man, a brave man. I speak the truth at all times. I eat only once a day." It is only ego. All this is a product of the ego. A disciple's goodness can be a product of his ego. When people say, "Oh, I don't speak lies," they say it with pride which is a result of their ego.

A disciple has to be humble and say, "I can't do anything. I can't renounce. I can't control the mind. I am hopeless. My mind is full of terrible thoughts and I have got bad habits." This is the humility where the disciple accepts himself.

Many disciples and many people have certain ideas about themselves. This is not good. A disciple of a guru or a devotee of God has to be as humble as a blade of grass and should not boast of their qualities. They must devote at least two hours a day to meditation. Ten minutes of meditation is just a beginning, for in ten minutes nothing happens. It takes at least fifteen minutes for the disturbances of the body to settle. It takes almost half an hour for the brain to settle. For another half an hour the practitioner has to fight with the mind. Then, after one and a half hours, that mind will be sleeping. I am not making a joke.

If water is put in the fridge, it takes time before it becomes ice. In the same way, if the mind is to be transformed into a peaceful mind, it has to do it step by step. When one meditates for two hours one becomes empty. Empty means empty of thoughts and empty of duality. The practitioner is meditating

on an object. This is duality. He is meditating on an object and is aware that he is meditating. This is duality. When the idea of meditator and the object of meditation is forgotten, it is called *dhyana*, meditation.

In meditation there is a threefold process: the meditator, the object of meditation and the process of meditation. During meditation one is aware of these three things. This must drop in order to become empty. One should not be afraid of becoming empty for in all religions it is the exercise — ‘Empty yourself, be like a flute, like a drum.’ Only when the disciple becomes empty, energy flows through him.

Flow of energy

The energy can flow through the mind, through intuition, through speech, through the palms and through the eyes. One doesn't know what is going on. There are some people who can look at others and everything is finished. When Mahatma Gandhi used to look at the eyes of a person, he was under his control.

There are people who bless or touch someone's forehead and they start jumping. Therefore, the energy flows through the fingers and in some people the energy flows through speech. When they speak everybody is hypnotized. Another person's energy flows through intuition and he has perfect accurate judgement.

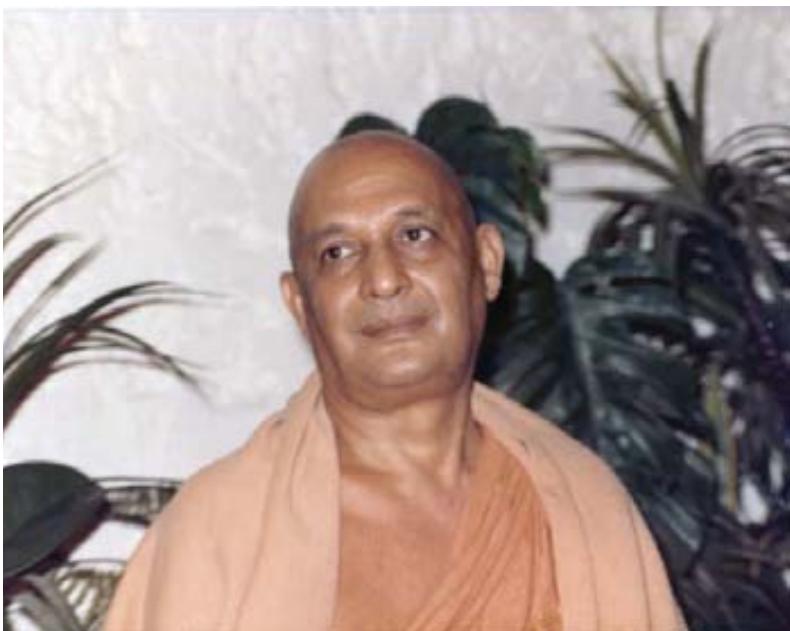
When the disciple becomes the medium of the guru it is not his choice what he wants to become. The guru's wish will be done through the disciple. To begin with, the disciple has to drop his choices, saying, “I want this. I want this and I want that.” It is the beginning of discipleship.

This relationship is only with the guru, not with anybody else. With other people the disciple should behave just like a normal person. Before God you are nothing! Before guru you are nothing!

— 1983, Spain

Stress and the Modern Man

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Today stress is considered as being one of the prime causes of disease. A great deal of research has been done on this subject by scientists throughout the world and they have concluded that tension, anxiety and disturbed mental conditions can cause serious physical ailments.

There is a long list of diseases, such as high blood pressure, cardiovascular diseases and asthma, which are known as stress-born diseases. Today 89% of all the ailments are stress-born. Science is beginning to relate psychological behaviour to these stress conditions, and therefore, it is necessary to study what stress is, and how it can affect the various aspects of human life. In order to do this one has to understand the nature and origin of stress.

One of the most important factors that can be concluded from our studies, of ancient yogic literature and modern scientific texts, is that there is not one but hundreds of causes of stress. There are doomsday prophecies and these prophecies are pessimistic. Does that not cause stress? It may not consciously cause stress, but it does cause stress in the unconscious mind.

Psychology maintains that when one suppresses the experiences, they recede into the unconscious and emerge in the form of nightmares. Whatever stress one experiences in the family, society or life, can be accumulated in any part of the mind. Sometimes the stress is conscious, sometimes it is subconscious and many times it is unconscious.

Stress which affects the conscious mind is not dangerous. Stress that is stored in the subconscious mind comes out in the form of dreams. However, the stress which is unknown, which one does not understand, goes into the unconscious mind and can create havoc in the body, mind, emotions and personality.

Stress, however, is not a surprise condition of the mind; it comes through a particular mechanism. Stress arises out of tension which is a condition of the nervous system. This tension created in the nervous system finally travels to every atom and particle of the body.

Three kinds of tension

According to yogic philosophy and modern psychology, there are three kinds of tension. These three typical tensions can be classified as muscular, mental and emotional. The threefold tension originates in the physical and mental structure and affects all other systems of the body. People have experienced that whenever they are under tension they make a lot of mistakes. This happens due to an imbalance in the nervous system which causes erratic behaviour.

As tension ultimately culminates in stress, it is important to understand these three kinds of tensions. Muscular tension is

caused by overly critical actions. The physical body has limited resources of energy and when people work exceedingly hard, this energy is diminished. They are then compelled to balance this decrease in energy by an extra intake of food or medicine to accelerate or accentuate the energy for overworking. For example, sportsmen require a great deal of energy to combat the strain of overusing their bodies. They are given hormones and drugs in order to maintain a regular flow of energy in the body. These physical or muscular tensions are not serious or difficult to eliminate. With adequate rest and proper diet they can eventually be worked out.

The next form of tension is called mental tension, and most people in the world are suffering from it. They do not allow the mind to rest. The mind is always engaged in thoughts, and this over-thinking causes mental tension. Excessive thinking leads to confusion in the mind, which results in further tension. As a result there is loss of memory and if mental tensions become acute, one cannot make accurate judgements, thus causing many disasters in life.

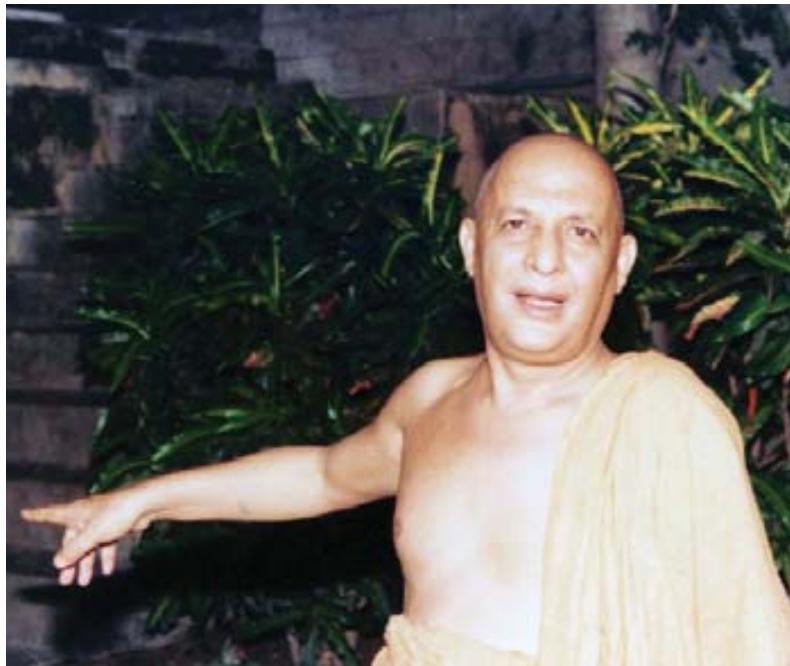
It is a well-known fact that the senses, mind, brain and nervous system are interconnected. The five senses are intimately connected to the brain and mind, as well as the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. Therefore, any perception and cognition that takes place in the mind involves the nervous system, the five senses and the brain.

Every process of thinking is responsible for producing some type of secretion or hormone in the body from the endocrinal system. When one thinks of fear, anger or any strong emotion, the adrenal glands begin to secret potent hormones, such as adrenalin. Thoughts should not be considered as mere psychological action. Every thought is psychological, but it also produces a physiological effect on the body. It can accelerate and excite the adrenal glands; it can create hyperactivity; it can cause an increase in the respiratory rate of the body; it can excite the kidneys and bladder. This is

what scientists are saying and one may testify it from personal experience.

The third type of tension is emotional tension. Man is perhaps the only living creature that has emotional tensions, and these arise from the relationship with people, objects and events. When people have a certain philosophy, and most human beings are philosophical, they begin to relate themselves to people, objects and events in life. These relationships develop on the basis of *raga* and *dwesha*, likes and dislikes. For example, one relates to a person because one either likes or dislikes him. Similarly, one relates oneself with events or objects on the basis of personal likes, dislikes and attachments.

As a human being, one is emotionally interacting with each and every thing around, but everything is not according to one's wish. When something happens according to one's wish, there is positive emotional tension and when something



happens against one's wish, it creates a negative emotional tension.

These emotional tensions can eventually cause peptic ulcer, asthma, heart attack, or even mental insanity. They can make one a sinner or a saint. They can make one violent or they can simply transform a person into a selfless servant of humanity. Emotional tension is a powerful factor in human life and one must not underestimate it. These threefold tensions cause stress which eventually spreads throughout the body and mind, passing through physical, pranic and mental channels.

Fields of energy in the body

According to hatha yoga, there are two forces in this physical body known as ida and pingala. They represent the sun and moon, Shiva and Shakti or consciousness and life. These two channels flow throughout the body and in modern scientific terms, they are known as the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. Ida carries the force responsible for thinking and mental activities; pingala carries the force representing prana or vital action. These two forces are spread throughout the body, but the main channel flows within the spine intersecting at four main junctions or chakras.

These *chakras* are vortexes of energy or prana and the first of these four junctions is the swadhisthana chakra which corresponds with the sacral plexus. The second is the manipura chakra or solar plexus, the third is the anahata chakra or cardiac plexus and the fourth is vishuddhi chakra or cervical plexus. From these four junctions thousands of channels carry prana and consciousness throughout each and every part of the body. In hatha yoga it is said that 72,000 channels carry pranic and mental force in the body. Modern science speaks almost the same language.

Besides these four junctions, there is a point where these two forces of prana and consciousness originate and another where they terminate. In hatha yoga the point of origin of these

two forces is known as mooladhara chakra or the coccygeal plexus, and the terminating point is known as ajna chakra or the medulla oblongata in the brain. These two points where the two forces originate and terminate are most important for the awakening and sublimation of this energy.

Hatha yoga claims that in order to create harmony and eliminate stress, these two forces are to be harmonized. It is when there is no harmony between these two forces that the problems begin. The balance can be created through the hatha yoga kriyas such as asana, pranayama and trataka. In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, an authoritative text on hatha yoga, it is said that the forces of the mind and prana, or ida and pingala, are so intimately connected with each other that control of one spontaneously leads to the control of the other. As the prana can be controlled through the breath, hatha yogis use the practice of pranayama to induce a tranquil state of mind.

Kleshas: a source of stress

Whereas hatha yoga talks of control of prana, the system of raja yoga, which is a more advanced yoga, advocates direct control of the forces of the mind. In the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali it is mentioned that the mind is governed by five kinds of *kleshas* or afflictions: ignorance, ego, attraction, aversion and attachment to life, which are responsible for all anxieties. The purpose or aim of raja yoga is to control the mind so that these kleshas are controlled.

The entire system of yoga and tantra deals with the elimination of stress, either as a by-product of yogic practices, or as a preliminary requisite for more advanced practices.

Raja yoga says “control the mind” and thereby the pranas are controlled. This creates a balance between the two forces of ida and pingala. Hatha yoga says “control the prana” and thereby the mind is stilled.

However, in tantra there is a different approach altogether. Tantra says “Do not try to control the negative forces of the mind.” Instead it prescribes such practices as kriya yoga, ajapa

japa and yoga nidra, which induce a state of tranquillity in the practitioner without directly confronting the mind. Out of these, the practice of yoga nidra stands out as a powerful method for eliminating stress and tension in the individual.

Research on yoga nidra

A lot of research has been done in America and India on the effects of yoga nidra in conditions of stress and tension. It has been found that during stress periods the body secretes various types of hormones. These secretions belong to intricate systems of the endocrine glands. As a result of this endocrine secretion, various changes take place in the body, resulting in stress, which in turn alters the characteristic patterns of the brainwaves. The brain has a definite pattern of energy frequencies which are known as alpha, delta, beta and theta waves.

Each and every brainwave has a direct effect on the body and particularly on the heart. It has been found that the endocrinal secretions, respiratory rate, cardiac activity and other functions of the body alter, and have a different behaviour under each of these four brainwaves. For example, when delta waves are predominant in the brain, the rate of respiration decreases and the cardiovascular reactions, such as heart rate and blood pressure, slow down. At that time the body is found to consume less oxygen.

Alternatively when theta or beta waves are predominant in the brain, the body consumes a lot of oxygen. At that time the heart and cardiovascular system are under excitement and agitation. When alpha waves are predominant, there is a state of balance in the oxygen consumption by the body tissues. It is a state of physiological relaxation. Not only the consumption of oxygen but the metabolic and respiratory rates are also stabilized. As a result of this the pressure on the heart and the workload upon the heart is diminished. Therefore, it has been found that in order to decrease the cardiovascular tension, it is important that the patient should develop alpha waves in the brain.

The science of yoga nidra is systematic; there is no hypnosis and no sleeping. During the practice one has to maintain consciousness or inner awareness throughout. In that state of heightened inner awareness the brainwaves develop alpha patterns.

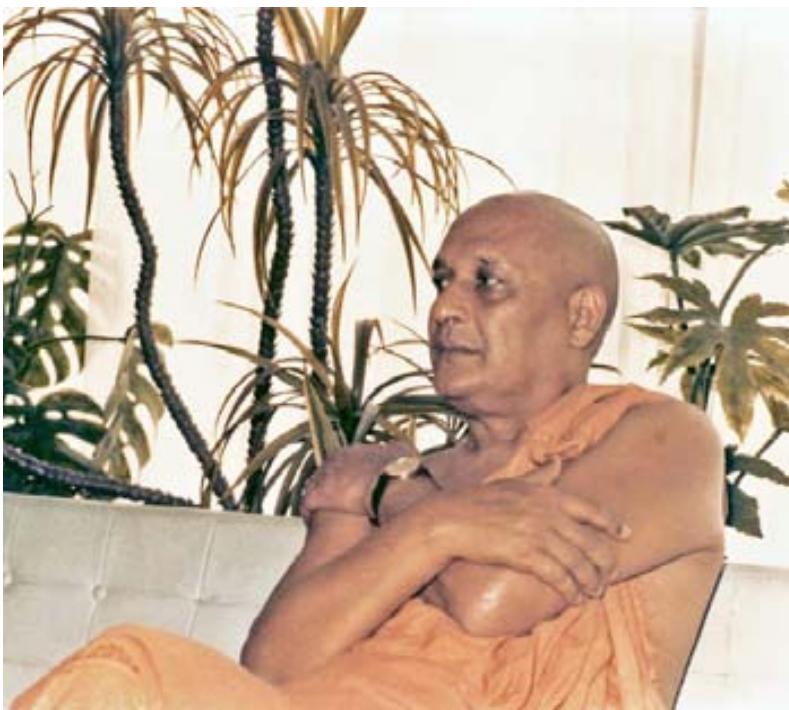
Elimination of samskaras

Elimination of tension is not such a simple matter. There is yet another problem which has not been solved. Hidden deep within the recesses of the mind are the *samskaras* or archetypes which influence the emotions, personality and life of each and every individual. Problems arise from this inner store of experiences. Happiness and unhappiness lie deep within and these experiences are stored in the form of *samskaras*. They are accumulated in the form of particles. From particles they become waves of energy and these waves develop into a force which later emerges as an experience. The experience of happiness or unhappiness arises in the form of a wave that is born of one particle. That particle is known as a *samskara* or archetype.

There is another name for it and that is *karma*. These archetypes collectively form the karma of an individual. It is on account of them that the mind, emotions and personality are formed. If one suffers in life, it is on account of the deep-rooted karma; or if one happens to enjoy life, it is also on account of karma. Now how is one going to deal with karma?

Karma cannot be dealt with by a rational process such as psychoanalysis or psychiatric treatment, rather it has to be understood as a subtle force underlying each and every action or event that one encounters. It has been found that the practice of concentration on a symbol is effective in purging out these archetypes from the unconscious mind. In yoga the practice of concentration is known as *trataka*, and should be done prior to the practice of yoga nidra.

When one practises *trataka* on a symbol, these particles or *samskaras* in the brain are stimulated. There are hundreds



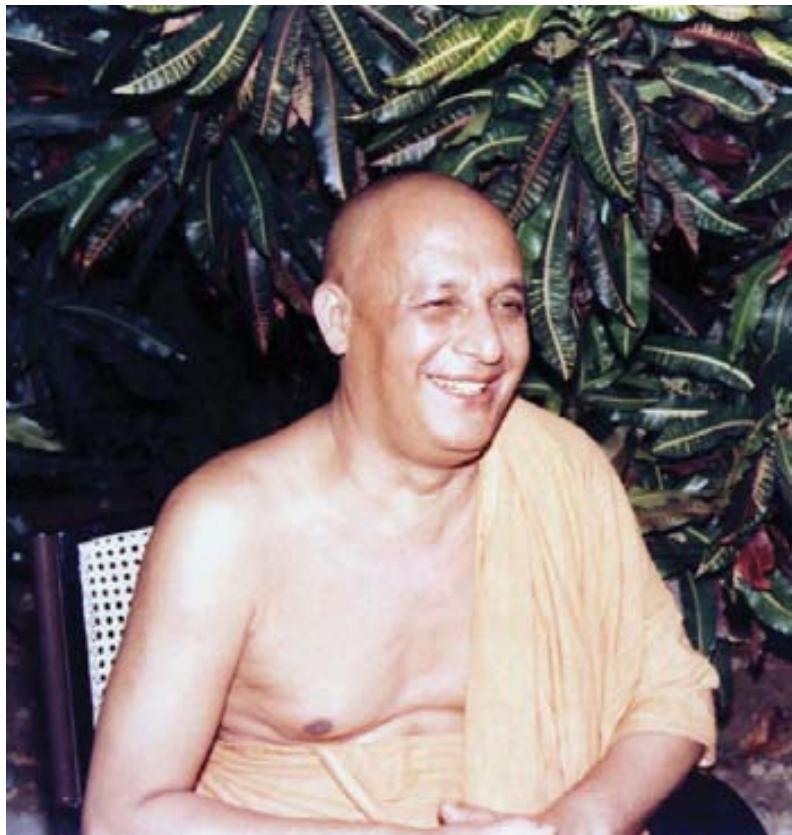
of symbols prescribed in yoga and tantra, out of which some are considered more powerful than others. For example, concentration on a *yantra* or *mandala* is powerful depending on the quality of the yantra or mandala. Trataka done on the kali yantra or mandala will bring out repressions more quickly, often in the form of nightmarish experiences. Concentration on different yantras and mandalas brings out a different quantity and quality of repressions. These repressions can be experienced in dreams, or in the state of meditation, and it means that everything is being flushed out. Therefore, side by side with yoga nidra, concentration should be taught, according to the quality and resistance of the aspirant.

The people of ancient Greece and Egypt had several different mandalas, but they have long been forgotten, for the West has turned its back on them. They were wrongly misinterpreted as forms of gods and goddesses, instead of being related to human

consciousness and psychology. If the conditions of stress and tension are to be eliminated systematically and scientifically, these ancient mandalas will have to be revived and used as a treatment for the deep-rooted ailments of the human mind.

In the final analysis, it has to be understood that the cause of stress can be related to several factors, some external, others purely internal. Whatever the cause may be, yoga has given us an answer by showing us an effective way to eliminate stress, not through drugs or psychoanalysis, but through a profound and accurate understanding of the human body and mind.

—24 May 1984, I1 Ciocco, Italy,
printed in YOGA, Year 2, No. 5 (September 1991)



Individual and Universal Mind

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

There is no such thing as the human mind. It should be understood as the individual mind and universal mind. The mind is present in every speck of creation. Animals, vegetables, even minerals have a mind. The individual mind is limited by *mara, avidya, samskara*, death, ignorance and impressions, and by a framework of personality which is created by nature: the type of one's birth and surroundings.

Life after life, man has individualized his mind due to karma and desire. When the ego is removed and the mind goes beyond the barriers of ego and personality, the individual mind and the universal mind are both the same, just as electrical energy and the bulb are the same. The individual mind and the universal mind are not different. The individual mind is only an individual circuit.

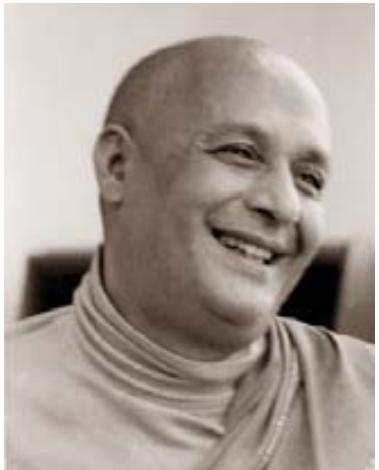
Matter

Everything in this universe is subject to evolution. Everything is not created, was not created and cannot be created at the same time. In the process of evolution, when matter is created, it takes its own time. Matter is a general word which can be used for anything – for the living and dead, for the invisible and the visible, for the known and unknown.

In the process of evolution, matter has expanded into many forms and shapes. These various forms, objects and shapes of creation, planets, stars, the earth, human beings, animals, the vegetable kingdom and minerals have all come to be individualized.

Jnanam

When a human being is born, he develops a special consciousness, called *jnanam*. *Jnanam* means awareness of the entire



process of existence in relation to time and space. 'I am existing, I know I am existing. I know that I know that I am'. This is knowledge in relation to time and space. Jnanam is an awareness of the awareness of knowledge. It is that particular knowledge when one becomes the witness, the observer, the seer. It is a special faculty of the human being. When jnanam takes place, matter is broken,

matter is split. The birth of higher knowledge takes place and the individual mind becomes the universal mind. The individual mind and the universal mind are two important topics in Indian philosophy, especially in yoga and tantra. They say that the individual mind is present in waking, sleeping and dreaming. These three states represent the egotistical state of the mind.

Turiya

When one is able to develop a state which is neither waking, sleeping nor dreaming, that is *dhyana*, meditation, which is none of the three. It is the fourth state, *turiya*, a state of total awakening. Waking, sleeping and dreaming are not states of total awakening, but only partial stages. They are not homogeneous. Therefore, the ego is individualized by circumstances of the mind, body and senses.

When one is able to develop a constant state of awareness, when one is aware, not only of the external life, but at the same time of the inner universe, when one is not only able to see the river but the whole ocean the river is meeting, it is at that time that the universal consciousness embraces the individual consciousness.

— 8 March 1985, London, UK

Raja Yoga

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

Raja yoga has to do with discipline. If there is no discipline, problems in the family and in society arise. Therefore, raja yoga is necessary in order to evolve mentally in a disciplined way. All the elements of raja yoga concern discipline at different levels of the human body and mind, whether it is abstinence from untruth, violence or anarchical sexual relationships.

The laws of nature

When you have a cough, cold, fever or pain there is an element in the body called defence. It is another system in the body which helps one to become better. The people who have a weak defence system take time to recover; those who have a strong defence system become well quickly, even without medication. In fact, medicine is only required when the immune system is run down.

Scientists are talking about the laws of nature. In chemistry, physics, electronics and other branches modern science talks about the laws of nature. However, these laws do not merely belong to matter. They also belong to the field of energy, the field of intelligence and the field of consciousness. If the mind, the physical body and the emotions come under the laws of human nature, there should be some discipline. That discipline is known as raja yoga.

Raja yoga has an important place in society. For instance, in Bombay, people go to bed at 2 am and wake up at 9 am. This is definitely not good for one's health. The laws of nature are fixed and definite and it is on the basis of these laws that science has formed its natural laws. They have become the foundation with which scientists have been able to work great miracles.

The laws of nature are not only valid for matter. Certain laws are also binding or controlling the mind. They govern



the mind, *prana*, the vital force, actions, thoughts, and so on. Speaking a lie or the truth, hatred, passion, greed and compassion are different features of the laws of nature.

Reactions

It is said in the *Bhagavad Gita* that nature is both within and beyond. Everything in the world is guided by a cosmic law of nature through permutation or combination. When two chemicals are combined there is a reaction and a third element is born. Similarly, if the mind is mixed with hatred, something will take place.

According to raja yoga, a reaction takes place when an emotion mixes with the mind. It doesn't matter whether that emotion is violence or non-violence, truth or lie, celibacy or passion, renunciation or self-control. One cannot say that if

truth is spoken nothing happens, and this is not something metaphysical or psychological, but the law of nature. When a part of violence and a part of the mind meet there has to be a reaction. However, until now this aspect has not been assessed.

Today most of the scientific experiments are being carried out on matter and not on the mind, except for psychology. Experiments are carried out under the heading of 'research program': alpha, beta, theta and delta waves are the reactions of matter and the brain. Psychologists have not yet come to the reactions of the mind, emotions, passions, ambition or depression.

Mind and emotion

A reaction takes place when one speaks bitterly and another when one speaks sweetly. If one speaks politely a third reaction takes place and if the truth is spoken with a pure heart yet another reaction takes place. When a boy is attracted to a girl a reaction takes place. This is the working of the mind and its association with various emotions.

It is a sort of fusion of emotions with the body and mind. The emotions may be passion, frustration, depression, ambition, fear, anxiety or many more. If these emotions come and interact with the mind, a reaction has to take place which cannot be understood by exposing a human being to machines. However, the play of these reactions can be seen in one's family life every day and it is the subject matter of raja yoga.

Raja yoga says that the mind must be brought under proper control so that it does not clash with the emotions. When one has fine emotions like compassion, charity, mercy, love, forgiveness and humility, the mind has no problem, as the reactions are mild. However, if one has tamasic emotions, anxiety, worry and neuroses, one must make the mind so strong that it is not the emotion which creates a reaction. It must be the mind which creates the reaction.

– 10 October 1985, Ganga Darshan, Munger, India

Expectations

From Bhakti Yoga Sagar, Volume 1 by Swami Satyananda Saraswati

Each person should regard his job as his duty. I have always done my work in the world as a duty, because it was my guru's order. I worked in his ashram for twelve years, but I never considered it to be my ashram; it was my guru's ashram. I never felt that my guru was using me or that I was being harassed by him, day and night. I suffered from typhoid, jaundice and many types of diseases, but I never despaired, for devotion to guru or God is like that of a wife towards her husband.

The relationship between guru and disciple is one of order, love and protection, just like the relationship between father and son. Selflessness is important in this relationship.

*There is no one to be called one's 'own' like guru,
There is no giver like a learned man,
There is no well-wisher other than the Lord,
There is no caste like that of devotees.*

I never asked my guru about my sadhana during the twelve years that I stayed with him in Rishikesh. Rather, it was he who would call me and ask something from time to time. Swami Sivananda was good at Sanskrit as he belonged to a Brahmin family, but he was not a Sanskrit scholar. He was a doctor and used to ask me the meaning of Sanskrit words mentioned in the ayurvedic texts.

In Rishikesh, I built a large ashram, which was like a small Deoghar. At that time, the price of cement was three rupees per bag, and the labour charge was only four annas per day. This was in the 1940s. I started a large and modern printing press there. Political leaders, military commanders and all types of people used to come and live in the ashram. However, there was never any expectation on my part.

I found this experience useful in Munger, and I am applying it in Rikhia as well. If I had expected anything in life, I would have surely been disappointed. If you expect something and the expectation is not fulfilled, you will be disappointed. When you are disappointed, you feel miserable and are unable to achieve anything. Expectation is your downfall. All of your expectations can never be fulfilled. You can only fulfil some of them, and they bring you happiness. However, those that remain unfulfilled shatter your hopes. This leads to disappointment and depression, which ultimately causes a nervous breakdown.

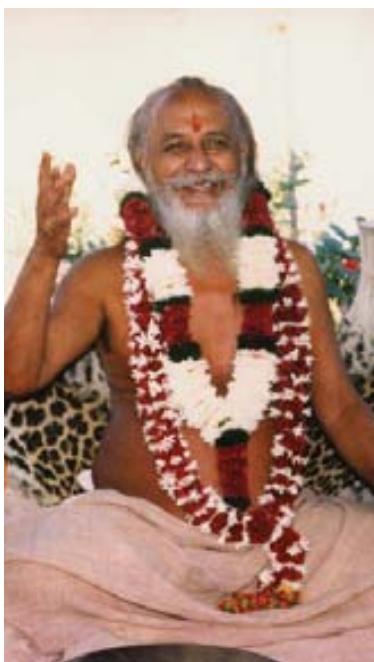
One should not live life with expectation. This is what Sri Krishna said clearly in the *Bhagavad Gita* (2:47–48):

Karma or duty is your right. Do not expect any fruits or results of your actions. It is your duty to act, but you have no right to the result.

What Sri Krishna said was correct. He persuaded Arjuna to fight and not to escape from the battle of Kurukshetra. He simply told him, “Do your duty, but do not expect any result.”

When you perform your duties, you will certainly obtain results. If you prepare the soil and sow the seeds, you will certainly harvest some fruits. If you open a shop, you will definitely have some income.

— 21 November 1994, Rikhiapeeth, India



Fear neither War nor Death

From Bhakti Yoga Sagar, Volume 5 by Swami Satyananda Saraswati



No culture, no civilization should be afraid of war or fear death. Only cowards and slaves talk about non-violence. Death is unavoidable. If you die on the battlefield, it brings you glory. You can also die of diabetes, blood pressure or heart disease on a hospital bed, ignobly. The Lord told Arjuna, "You must fight. If you are killed, you will go to heaven. If you are victorious,

you will rule over the empire. But fight you must!" Don't talk about war, but don't fear war or death either. There is no point in criticizing war. Even if you condemn and criticize war, it will definitely take place. Don't close your eyes to the inevitable; the turning point of history is war. War changes cultures, war changes civilizations; the entire polarity changes. Don't be afraid of wars because you cannot stop them. Saints cannot stop them, for nature wants wars to happen. It is only after war that many civilizations, religions, cultures and political systems are consigned to the waste paper basket.

War is not a step backward; war is a step forward. Hundreds and thousands of people die, but death is no loss to humanity. Every death pays its own dividends in time. Death is inevitable, so why die in a hospital? Die on a battlefield. If you are victorious, you will enjoy a new society. If you are defeated, you are killed and God will take care of you.

I cannot accept this impotent idea. This is the language of impotent people. The Mahabharata war, the war between Rama and Ravana, and the First and Second World Wars took place because they had to take place. What is so great about death? In fact, what is great about birth? Insects, mosquitoes, dogs, cats and donkeys breed, and so do humans. Why do you try to avoid death which is unavoidable? Why do you lament over death? Even great thinkers and philosophers wail over death. Death should not cause grief. Death is the romance of life. One has to take death in one's stride.

I am especially addressing the Indians, who tend to make a big fuss over death. When a leper dies, it is reported in the newspapers, but what is so special about such a death? If a great spiritual guru dies, then the news deserves to appear in the papers. You must take care of your culture. Make your children valiant like Hanuman. Reciting *Hanuman Chalisa* will help. The irony is that children chant the name of Hanuman and are full of fight. Hanuman means fearlessness, strength in body, mind, intellect and many other ways. In *Hanuman Chalisa* it says:

*Vidyaavaana gunee aati chaatura.
Raama kaaja karibe ko aatura.*

Hanuman is erudite, talented, highly qualified and accomplished. He is ever eager to serve Sri Rama.

Do you know about Hanuman? He was a scholar, an erudite person. *Gunee* means qualified, like a chemical or electrical engineer. He was extraordinarily smart and clever. He would understand even before one tried to communicate. Therefore, Sri Rama made Hanuman his personal secretary, as Sri Rama himself was an extraordinary boss. Sri Rama calls Hanuman *chatura shiromani* – the crown jewel of astuteness. Why then has a culture which worships a brave, talented hero like Hanuman become so weak and powerless? A cripple dies in a family and all the members wail in grief. I would think, “Good, he has died and become free. In his next birth he will be born whole and into a better family. The house he lived in was infested with rats and insects; it was leaky and crumbling. In his next birth he will find himself a strong house, built of concrete. He has left this place for a better one.” Death is like a change of body.

– 1 December 1997, Rikhiapeeth, India



Purity of Mind

From Rikhiapeeth Satsangs 1 by Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Different saints and sages have described their experience of the *atman*, spirit, in different ways. Sri Aurobindo wrote of his experience in the Alipore Jail. Ramakrishna Paramahamsa experienced Mother Kali. All these sages had reached a very high state. Their mind had become pure

Ramakrishna Paramahamsa's mind had become so pure that he saw the Mother in his own wife. It is hard to see the mother principle in your wife. Ramakrishna Paramahamsa reached this state because his mental state had become pure, it was without modifications. In this state he had the vision of Kali; he saw Kali just as you would see another person. It was no illusion for him, it was no experience; it was darshan.

If you come to my house or I go to your house, will you call it an internal experience or an actual meeting? He actually met her. Many similar incidents are related from the lives of Adi Shankaracharya, Surdas and Mirabai.

What an innocent life Mirabai had! She was not a mad woman. How did a girl of six or fourteen accept a statue of Krishna as her husband? Do you ever think about this? I think about it. A girl of six is very innocent and if you tell her, "This is your husband," she will accept it, but when she grows up and it is time for her to get married, will she still accept that a statue is her husband? Mira did. There can be only two meanings of this: either she was mad or she had reached such a high spiritual state that she could realize the vision, the reality and the depth of Krishna within that statue.

If you give a piece of gold to an ordinary person, he will think it is brass, but if you give it to a goldsmith, he will say that it is gold for he has realized the gold in it. In the same way, Mirabai realized that it was not a wooden statue, but Krishna, Giridhara, Kanhaiya himself. She experienced this. When her heart became so pure she experienced God, she had darshan of God. Mirabai did not die; she became one with light. Light became one with light; she did not leave her body behind anywhere. In the same way, Kabir did not leave behind a body when he died. When they lifted his shroud, they only found flowers. He too dissolved his body into light. All these things point to a high state and purity of mind.

There is a state where the mind is not pure and there is a state where the mind is pure. Pure and impure minds are two states of existence. We all know which of the two states we are in. If our mind is restless, we will perceive everything as broken, misshapen, untidy and dilapidated. If our mind is pure, we will perceive everything as whole. So to experience God within yourself, the first requirement is to make your mind pure.

– 2001, Rikhiapeeth, India

Shape of an Idea

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



When a mango tree is reborn, it is always reborn as a mango tree. When an olive tree is reborn, it is always reborn as an olive tree, not as an apricot, mango or lemon. Olive will become olive. One can only improve the olives by giving them the right food, fertilizer, protection and pruning. That's all.

Food of ideas

Your child is what it is. You cannot change its destiny, for destiny cannot be changed. A mango becomes a mango, a rascal becomes a rascal, a saint becomes a saint, and guava becomes a guava. However, the quality of the guava or olive can be improved.

To improve the quality, the right food has to be given. For a child the right food is not food, but thoughts and ideas. Human beings eat ideas. The cow eats grass, the tiger meat and

birds eat insects, but man does not live by bread alone, as it is written in the Bible. Man lives by idea. An idea is a thought that comes to the mind.

If you have no idea, you are not a man. And if you cannot give your idea to your child, you are not a good parent. If your child believes that it can live by bread alone, it is an animal.

Idea with a shape

The people of India give a shape to an idea. In the West, people reject it. They say, an idea or God has no shape. Islam and Zoroastrianism say, God has no shape, but the Vedas say, God is an idea and we should have a shape for it. Intelligence is an idea and everybody has intelligence. What is its shape? Lord Ganesha is the shape of intelligence, he is an idea put into a shape.

Shiva is an idea. It is in you, but what is its shape? Shiva with matted locks, with Ganga, with snakes, with a tiger skin, naked and with a beautiful woman by his side, lives like a sannyasi, lives like a yogi, lives like a madman, lives like God; that is



the shape of Shiva. Similarly we have shape for intelligence, for talent. The Gods and Goddesses in Vedas are the symbols of idea.

Ganesha is the Lord of intelligence. Whatever work one does, be it cooking, killing, shooting, loving, destroying or creating something, the first thing is intelligence without which one cannot begin anything. Even if one wants to do wrong things one should have intelligence first. In India whatever people do, they first say *Sri Ganeshaya Namah*. Ganesha is the first God in India who is worshipped, not Sri Rama, Sri Krishna, Shiva, Brahma, Vishnu, or Saraswati, not even Guru. First comes Ganesha, for intelligence is the beginning of an action. If someone is not intelligent, he cannot begin.

Creation

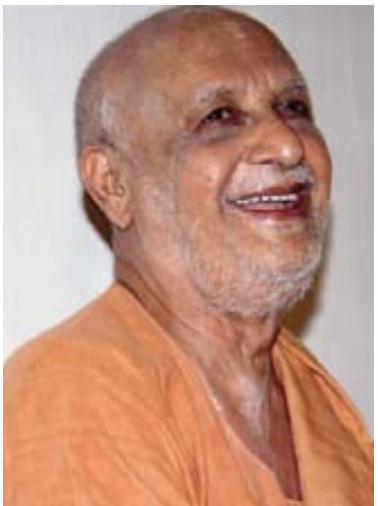
I have not made the world, I am not the creator. If it is a nice world, He wants it. If the people are materialistic today, He wants it. If people are spiritual today, He wants it. You and I are not the creator. The Secretary of the United Nations is not the creator, nor the President of America, China, India or any country. Man is not the creator, he is the creation. If the creator wants that I should be a stupid fellow, I will be a stupid fellow. If the creator wants this stupid fellow to be a great sannyasin, I will be a great sannyasin. All that we see is not the creator, it is creation. The sun, moon, stars and the galaxies which are objects so far in time and space are creation.

Many times people tell me that the world is becoming violent and materialistic, everybody is becoming bad in such a bad world. We should not have anything to do with this idea of bad and good. We should only be a *sakshi*, witness, to what is happening, no matter if it is right or wrong. The house is burning, I see it. The flood is coming and millions are dying, I see it. Love, compassion, grace is not my business. I am only a witness to the glory of God.

– 8 July 2009, Rikhiapeeth, India

Self-effort and Destiny

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



The human being is a small creature, compared to this vast universe in which there are thousands of solar systems, lakhs of suns and such great distances: one solar system, second solar system, third solar system, then one sun, a bigger sun and an even bigger one. If one starts to contemplate, one will neither find the end of time nor the limit of space. In such a big universe, where can human existence be?

One has to accept that everything is predetermined in such a big universe. There is nothing to be afraid of, and if there is fear, that is also destined. Anxiety is destined, renunciation is destined and liberation is destined. The time of everything is fixed. The software of the computer of this universe is love. This world moves on determined roles of love.

One cannot say that something has happened due to one's effort, *purushartha*, for self-effort is also part of destiny, *prarabdha*. Without dissuading from self-effort or action, one must accept that everything is pre-determined from machine to the mind, from mind to the solar system and from solar system to the entire universe. It is not known to me who has determined it all.

Yajnavalkya

If nothing is pre-planned, there will be chaos in the universe. Moon and sun will rise at their will and the Ganga will flow

from Kolkata to the Himalayas. The law of gravitation is fixed and no one can break it. The moon and sun rise at their own time. No river can break its own rule, but will flow in its own course. This is love determined. If the laws of nature are pre-planned, the laws for human beings and karma are also pre-planned. If a person does hard work, it is his destiny. Destiny means something that is fixed. One plus one cannot be three. Nothing can move without rule, neither the sun nor the moon nor the constellations, nor water, nor you or me.

A child is kept in the mother's womb for nine months. It is drowned in water, mouth, eyes, ears closed, everything is closed like a baby fish. It remains alive for nine months without breath. The mother is breathing and the child is alive according to a law. Out of food, bones, blood, hormones, semen, hair, nails, excreta and urine are made. Everywhere the law is followed, without alternative or obstacle. Therefore, one should accept that there is one law according to which everything exists.

No free will

Free will and self-effort is nothing; destiny alone is everything. We are small human beings for what is our status in this vast creation? We are like tiny vermin in this eternal universe. Even in relation to the whole of India we are nowhere. If we consider ourselves in comparison with the population of Bihar, we are nowhere, just like an atom.

I have understood that free will or self-effort is nothing. If they exist, they are within destiny. You are doing self-effort for it is in your destiny. Many years ago, I used to speak in favour of self-effort, but not now. The experiences of seventy-eighty years are in front of me and it appears that I have done nothing. Whatever happened, happened by itself.

When I was a young man of twenty-four years I was thinking like this about self-effort, but now it appears that this thinking was also pre-determined. Karma comes under destiny, so do free will, self-effort, ego and patience. Everything

comes under destiny but according to rules. Rules mean laws according to which one has to move and according to which karma happens.

Ravana, Rama, Kamsa and Krishna, desires and dramas are God's. Whatever one becomes, finds, gives and acquires in life is fixed. Happiness and pain, achievement and failures are destined. Everything moves according to rules.

No one is denying willpower or free will. However, it is also within rules. A person is free to go to his office, but from the day he retires he cannot go anymore. The fruit of karmas is fixed. It is fixed that a mango will come from a mango tree, and the one who has planted the mango tree is also fixed.

Just a dream?

The thought that we are free and can do anything is not true. God, the creator of the universe, is also bound by rules. The Vedas say *ritam cha satyam cha*. The entire eternal universe is dependent on these two rules.

Ritam means the laws and rules of nature. *Satyam* means truth, reality. If an incident happens, *satyam* happened and *ritam* was the rule according to which it happened. These two are the basis of everything called Brahman. Destiny is the same as Brahman who makes and upholds the laws and creates the infrastructure of the whole universe.

When I was a child, I read a book *Infinite Cosmos* and I started thinking about planets, stars, solar systems and light years. I was perplexed and shut the book, for all this is beyond the scope of the mind. It is all a great show and we are a very small fragment of the show. Time, space and matter are not comprehensible by the mind. I often wonder if all these things really exist or not. Is the word infinite which is used in science just a concept or a reality? Is infinity really possible or is it just someone's dream? Are we all hypnotized in that unique dream?

— 12 April 2009, Rikhiapeeth, India

Festival of Life

Oh Penance, where have you descended from
With your rhythms, offerings and garlands
To celebrate your festival of life
In this austere sannyasin's hut?
Which grief of the past have you come to exhaust here?
Where only countless freezing nights
And scorching days pass to mark the seasons.
At the fireplace in front, the flames so often kindled
Dance and sing, fanned high by the wind
Only to be extinguished by passing storms,
Then rekindled again.
Countless fire ceremonies took place like this.

Many crows and monkeys also took refuge here
And innumerable grief stricken people found relief.
This torn geru cloth witnessed the coming and going
Of a multitude who bowed their heads to it.
While I remained naked, drenched by rains,
Roasted by fire and sun
On heaps of burning sand, ever absorbed in you.

I developed logic by reading all the scriptures
My knowledge awakened and meditation occurred.
With mantra siddhi and control over spirits
I am replete.
Having renounced enjoyment,
I became pure and liberated.
The sky, sea, so many mountains and Shiva temples
I am king of all.
Renouncing everything, free from all doubts
Today I walk the divine path,
An image of illumination
On land and in the sky.

And now you come with your brilliant lamp
To brighten my hut,
With your flowing stream of compassion



To lighten and soften the austere life of this sannyasin.
Now my life will be joyful, with many festivals.

In the womb of penance,
Knowledge awakes.
With scores of cherished dreams
Today my bed is decorated.
Penance has come this time
To awaken me
And make me laugh.
Today I am content;
Come, let us celebrate
This festival of life
By working for mankind.

—*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*

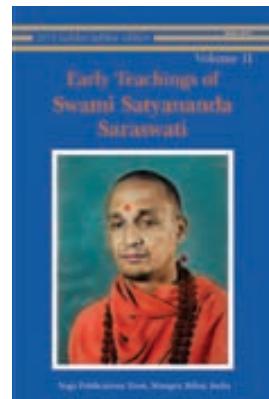


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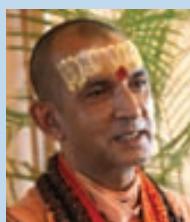
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Ganga Darshan Events & Courses 2014

Jan 1	Hanuman Chalisa
Feb 1-4	Sri Yantra Aradhana
Feb 1-May 25	4-month Yogic Studies Course (Hindi)
Feb 4	Basant Panchami Celebration
Feb 14	Bihar School of Yoga Foundation Day
Mar 1-21	Bal Yoga Diwas
Mar 3-20	Teachers Training Course (Hindi)
Apr 3-20	Yoga HMC*: Asthma (Hindi)
Jun 1-Jul 25	Yoga HMC*: Diabetes (Hindi)
July 12	2-month Orientation in Yogic Science & Lifestyle (Hindi)
Aug 2014-May 2015	Guru Paduka Poojan
Aug 1-21	Diploma in Yogic Studies (English)
Aug 3-20	Teachers Training Course (English)
Sep 3-20	Yoga HMC*: Arthritis & Spinal Ailments (Hindi)
Sep 8	Yoga HMC*: General (Hindi)
Sep 12	Swami Sivananda Janmotsava
Oct 1-Jan 25	Swami Satyananda Sannyasa Diwas
Dec 25	4-month Yogic Studies Course (English)

Every Saturday	Swami Satyananda's Birthday
Every Ekadashi	Mahamrityunjaya Havan
Every Poornima	Bhagavad Gita Path
Every 5th & 6th	Sundarkand Path
Every 12th	Commemoration of Sri Swami Satyananda's Mahasamadhi
	Akhanda Path of Ramacharitamanas

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For more information on the above events contact:

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