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Commemorating the *World Yoga Convention 2013*



Hari Om

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GUIDELINES FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

Need for Renunciation

Science has now removed time and space. You can go to London within thirty-six hours. What a great marvel! This earth has become very small, but has science really contributed to human happiness? The answer is an emphatic no, no. It has multiplied human wants and luxuries, and as a luxury of today becomes a necessity of tomorrow, it has made you a beggar. It has increased the restlessness of the mind and not contributed to your peace. Therefore, renunciation is absolutely essential.

Without renunciation of material pleasures, egoism and selfishness, nothing great has ever been achieved. So, engage yourself, heart and soul, in the service of humanity. You have all the talents given to you as the rarest gift of the Almighty.

—Swami Sivananda

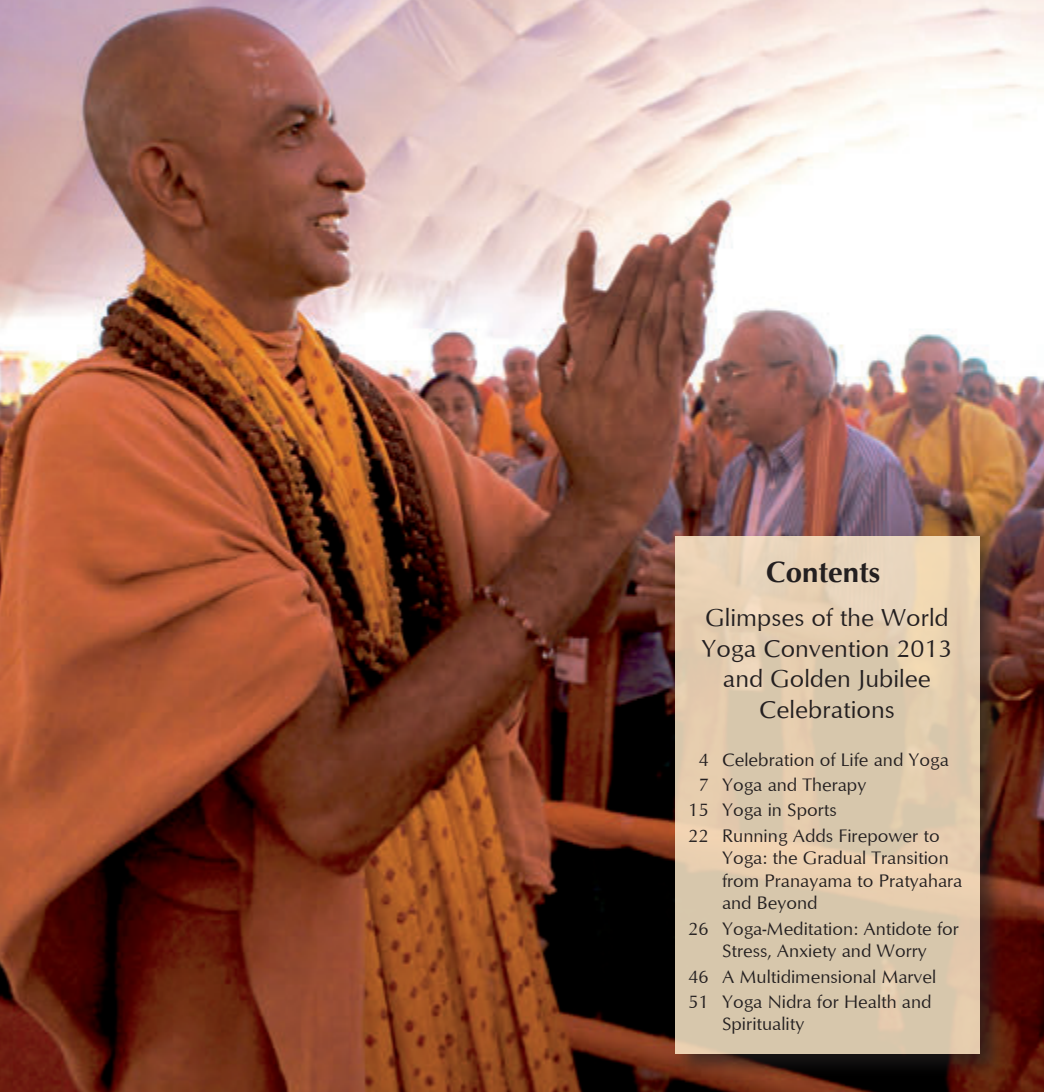
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Contents

Glimpses of the World
Yoga Convention 2013
and Golden Jubilee
Celebrations

- 4 Celebration of Life and Yoga
- 7 Yoga and Therapy
- 15 Yoga in Sports
- 22 Running Adds Firepower to
Yoga: the Gradual Transition
from Pranayama to Pratyahara
and Beyond
- 26 Yoga-Meditation: Antidote for
Stress, Anxiety and Worry
- 46 A Multidimensional Marvel
- 51 Yoga Nidra for Health and
Spirituality

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 मतोधिकः । कर्मिभ्यश्चाधिको योगी तस्माद्योगी भवार्जुन ॥

Celebration of Life and Yoga

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



We have to come to the third day of the World Yoga Convention, which is being celebrated and conducted on the occasion of the Golden Jubilee of the Bihar School of Yoga. Over the last two days we have been celebrating life and we have been celebrating yoga, in both its grossest and highest sense, at both the physical and spiritual levels. Therefore, this Convention is a celebration of life and yoga. We are participating in it, many special events are occurring, and many unseen hands are guiding the events of this Convention.

The data from last evening indicates that 5,000 people from 60 countries watched the live proceedings of the Convention on their iPads, mobiles and computers. That is 5,000 people

outside India, and if we add this data to our Convention participants, the number is even higher.

Even *prakriti*, nature, has been very benevolent and kind. Narayana has also been very benevolent and kind. Yesterday, after Swami Satsangi left the havan, she came out of her room to the balcony and found that she was surrounded by over fifty eagles, all hovering only five or ten feet above the sixth floor in Ganga Darshan. It is as if Narayana is watching over everything, protecting everything. This flock of eagles moves from point to point throughout the ashram where programs are being held. They hover over an area, doing their parikrama, and then they move to the next point. They have been doing continuous parikrama, especially of the havan area, where rare and special havans are taking place. These havans were started by Sri Swamiji in 1973 and they are the havans of the World Yoga Convention; they continued in 1993, and the same special havans continue during this Convention.

The birds indicate that even nature is joyous. Nature's joy can be seen all around the ashram. Last night, as Swami Satsangi and I were walking after the evening performance, we noticed that the Kamini trees were laden with beautiful white flowers, yet the day before they did not exist. The day before yesterday, all the trees were filled with green leaves only and not a single flower, but yesterday they were covered with white flowers. Also, the mango trees in the ashram have grown mangoes out of season. All the mango trees in the Akhara where the havan is being conducted are bearing fruit. When you go there, take a look. Where the vibrations are auspicious, nature also becomes auspicious. That is the grace of unity, and unity represents connection with the guru tattwa and the *Paramatma* tattwa, the highest tattwa.



During this Convention, Munger has created history. In this small Indian town, something is happening that no one in the country or even in the world has ever witnessed: children, professionals, sannyasins, intellectuals, everyone is gathering to sing kirtan. People from Kazakhstan, people from Argentina, people from Australia, India, England, China, Japan, Korea are all together and singing kirtan. Tell me, where do you see this unity? It has never happened anywhere before, neither in India, nor in the world.

The presentation of the dance-drama, 'Yoga Chaitanya', by the artists from Chennai that you witnessed yesterday was also a blend of art, dance and music to depict the life of Sri Swamiji. Today, there will be another presentation dedicated to our paramguru, Sri Swami Sivananda, created by the students of the sanyasa training course which I am sure you will find very inspirational.



The Yoga App is now being downloaded by many people who have received the address. When they download it, they come and show me, telling me, "Swamiji, look, we have downloaded the App and we love it." It makes me happy that the efforts of the sannyasins, karma sannyasins and sanyasa trainees have borne fruit, and that you have accepted their offerings gratefully and gracefully, so I thank you.

The highlight of this Convention is the full-length feature film on the life of Sri Swamiji, which was prepared in record time. Some of you have seen it yesterday, and when I asked, "How was it?" you simply floated away from my sight without answering anything. Everyone leaving the theatre was so blissed out that the radiance of their bodies spoke everything that they felt.

– Welcome Address, 25 October 2013, Polo Ground, Munger

Yoga and Therapy

Sri Subodh Tiwari, Joint Director-Administration, Kaivalyadhama Yoga Institute, Lonavla, Pune

I pay reverence and respect to Swamiji, to all the speakers on the dais and to all yoga lovers, yoga sadhakas and yoga practitioners who are in front of me. I thank Swamiji and the family of the Bihar School of Yoga who have extended a warm invitation for us to participate in this, as he referred in the morning session, kumbha of yoga, which is being held here at the Bihar School of Yoga in Munger.



I will start with a small story. Two friends went to a music teacher wanting to learn to play some instrument. When they reached the teacher, they enquired as to how much the fees would be. The teacher asked the first student, "So what do you know about this instrument?" The student said, "Well, I have five years of experience and I know this and I know that, but I want to learn more." The teacher said, "All right." Then he asked the second student, "How much do you know about this instrument?" The second student said, "I know nothing." Then the two students again enquired about the fees. To the one who knew something of the instrument, the teacher said, "You will have to pay 5,000 rupees." To the second, who did not know anything, the teacher said, "You will have to pay 2,000 rupees." They asked, "How come someone who knows nothing has to pay less than one who knows much more?" The teacher explained, "It is more difficult to teach someone who is half-learned and much easier to teach someone whose slate is completely clean."

When I was coming for this conference, I had to wipe my slate completely clean, because I knew the kind of wisdom and knowledge I would get here would be far more than what I already possessed, and I am truly humbled and inspired to be here.

I come from the institute called Kaivalyadhama, which is located in Lonavla, a place close to Mumbai. It was established in 1924 by revered Swami Kuvalyanandaji. We refer to him as a yogi and a scientist. Swamiji's vision was to scientifically investigate the field of yoga, and it was in the year 1924 that the first research journal of yoga was published at Kaivalyadhama.

As Swamiji was a Sanskrit scholar, he had an affinity with the philosophical aspect of yoga, therefore study of the philosophical aspects of yoga was a very important component of Kaivalyadhama.

The scientific research started immediately in 1924. The College of Yoga started in 1951 and the Yoga Therapy Centre started in 1961 with a 100-bed hospital. This is to say that we have a sequence of how things developed; it was the philosophical and literary research that laid the basis for the scientific research.



The results of the scientific research were applied both as yoga therapy and also to train the students of yoga.

In the time I have been allotted I will take you through the principles of yoga therapy that we have been following at the institute, which have emerged after much research in various aspects of yoga.

Swami Kuvalyanandaji did some very interesting research in the 1930s. He attempted to compare the effect of mind over body, to evaluate the difference between a state of samadhi and the state of hypnosis, and performed extensive research into whether the effect of pranayama was due to the oxygenation in the blood or whether it was due to the retention of carbon dioxide. His work went much further, and these are only a few examples.

Three aspects of yoga therapy

When we speak of yoga therapy, essentially we speak of three aspects: alternative therapy, complementary therapy, and post-operative therapy. The first aspect of yoga therapy is as an alternative therapy. Justice Singh was giving an example in the morning about a person with a back problem, a slipped disk, and how yoga could heal it completely. That is what many of the cases are. In ailments like backache or hypertension, one is able to apply yoga as a therapy completely wherein the aid of modern medicine may not be required.

The second aspect of yoga therapy is as a complementary therapy. Say you have a condition where you are required to take allopathic drugs. Being a scientific institute, of course we would not go ahead and say, "All right, discontinue all the drugs you are taking and we'll see you in the hospital." There are instances of lifestyle disorders where one is medically advised to continue the medication, but at the same time yoga is of immense help, such as in the case of diabetes, hypertension and asthma, wherein yoga can minimize the effect of the current condition.

The third aspect, and the most important in present times, is the approach of yoga therapy used as post-intervention

or post-operatively, when one has gone through a medical intervention like surgery or the treatment for a particular disease, and one takes the help of yoga for recovery. For example, those people who have suffered a stroke or who have gone through the interventions for cancer. Recently, when we conducted programs for cancer patients who have gone through radiation and chemotherapy, we found that their quality of life improved substantially.

These are the three broad aspects in which yoga as therapy is applied: the first being alternative, where yoga alone can stride ahead, the second is complementary, and the third is post-intervention.

In 1932, Swami Kuvalyanandaji published a book titled *Yoga Therapy*, based on research which he had already conducted, in which he wrote one very simple statement. It compared life to a journey, saying, "If you are walking in a jungle, you have two options: one is that every time a thorn pricks your foot, you make the effort to take it out; the second option is to wear shoes and avoid thorns altogether."

Four principles of yoga therapy

Similarly, when he spoke of applying yoga as therapy, he broadly outlined four principles of yoga not limited to the physical level.

The first principle he said is: "The disease or condition has a very strong mind connection, therefore you need to take care of your psychological or mental wellbeing." Yoga is more about mind than about God.

We studied an experiment which he had done in the 1950s whereby a Brazilian football-lover was shown some clips about a football match. The whole viewing was geared up towards a situation which made him angry, and Swamiji recorded X-rays of his stomach. It was a simple experiment at that point of time, but it was very innovative because no one was thinking that way. What we found was that the X-rays taken when the man was normal and happy were completely different from those taken

when he was angry. Just a simple point to prove that disharmony at the mind level will affect the body, and if the body has been affected, there may be some manifestation of mental disharmony over a period of time. Therefore, one has to pay a lot of attention to the psychological aspect of an individual; that would be the first step to deal with disharmony at one's own individual level.

The second principle he said, and which we follow, is taking care of the physical self, or what he technically termed 'the neuroglandular and muscular system'. Like Swamiji said in the morning, you have to take care of your physical body if you want to move ahead on the path of yoga. *Sharira madhyam khalu dharmasadhanam*. You have to ensure that you are well at your physical level because the body is the only place where the spirit can stay.

This is achieved through practices of asana, pranayama, mudra and bandha. We try to achieve a higher state of wellbeing at the physical level, and these are very important when we look at them as therapeutic tools for any condition. However, what has happened over a period of time is that yoga has indeed become a global phenomenon, but there has also been a little cause for concern. We used to have the classical yoga: hatha yoga, raja yoga, bhakti yoga, jnana yoga, karma yoga, but over a few decades we have added hot yoga, artistic yoga, power yoga, gravitational yoga, and so on. I would not hesitate to say that it is very important to do the yogic practices as per the principles laid down in the classical texts.

For example, we conducted studies in which an asana, ardhha matsyendrasana, was done according to Patanjali's principle of *Sthiram sukham asanam*; *Prayatna shaithilya ananta samapattibhyam*, which means taking a steady, comfortable posture that gives you a feeling of blissful awareness. Then the same asana was performed in a forceful manner, where the body was actually not happy and even the mind was not agreeing with what the body was doing, the way typical 'exercise' is done. We did EEG recordings while performing the posture in the different manners, and we found that asanas

performed according to the principle of *sthiram sukham asanam* give a particular effect, both at the physical level and the mind level, while performing the asana in a forced manner gave a completely different effect.

Therefore, take care of your physical self through yoga therapy, through asana and pranayama, but do it in a way that has been prescribed, not in a way that is rather injurious to you. Nowadays there are whole books devoted to: yoga – the risks and the rewards. Earlier, we never used to hear about injuries caused through yoga. Now there are some asanas in which a person enters the posture and needs someone else to help them come out.

The third aspect is the cleansing and natural eliminative processes which are very important in yoga therapy, for example, the shuddhi kriyas which we do or shankhaprakshalana. This aspect of yoga is often practised in the classical schools of yoga, but no yoga studio or centre will offer that. In yoga therapy, someone with a backache is definitely prescribed a process that will cleanse him to ensure that further therapy will be much more effective, therefore it has a holistic aspect to it. In the holistic concept, the natural eliminative and cleansing process is a very important part of yoga therapy.

The last but not the least important aspect of yoga therapy is the emphasis laid on nutrition and day-to-day living. The yogic principle of living is following the principles of yamas and niyamas, while the yogic principle of nutrition is eating the right kind of diet, which is of *mita ahara* and *sattwic bhojan*, or balancing, simple foods taken in moderation. This is something which we are ready to ignore very easily, but which lays down our lifestyle, including when we sleep and when we wake up. People come to our health centre and I often tell them that the most important principle of yoga is to eat moderately, sattwic ahara, and eat it early – have at least two hours of gap between when you eat and when you sleep. For example, a proper timing would be to serve food at 7 pm so that one can sleep by nine. A gentleman from Mumbai once told us, “Yes,

I follow that principle. I come home at midnight, I eat at one and I sleep at two in the morning.” That is not the way! Take the yogic principles with the right understanding and in the right spirit.

Food is a very sensitive thing, so I conclude with a small anecdote. Two peacocks caught hold of a rat and a snake, respectively. They picked up these animals and landed on the same branch, wanting to chat before their next flight. The moment they sat on the same branch, the snake looked at the rat and immediately the gastric juices started to work. The rat looked at the snake and he almost died from fear. The two peacocks looked at each other and said, “Well, both of them are dying anyway since we have caught hold of them, but what is this phenomenon that even when they are both in the clutches of death, one still wants to eat, and the other still experiences fear of death, so it will have died before it dies?” Two important aspects that are a great hindrance to ourselves are these: our tongue and our fear.

Thank you.

– Address, 24 October 2013, Polo Ground, Munger



Message of Thanks from Governor of Chhattisgarh

Shekhar Dutt SM
GOVERNOR OF CHHATTISGARH



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Dated: 12 Nov, 2013

Respected Swamiji,

Thank you very much for inviting me for the World Yoga Convention 2013 held on 24th October, 2013 at Munger. It was indeed a great pleasure to attend the function. I also thank you for taking me around the splendid campus of Ganga Darshan Ashrama and sharing your rich experience and thoughts with me.

I also congratulate every member of your organization for the efforts put in to make this function memorable. Kindly accept my best wishes.

With warmest regards

Yours sincerely

(Shekhar Dutt)

Swami Niranjananda Saraswati
Yogapeethadish
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Yoga in Sports

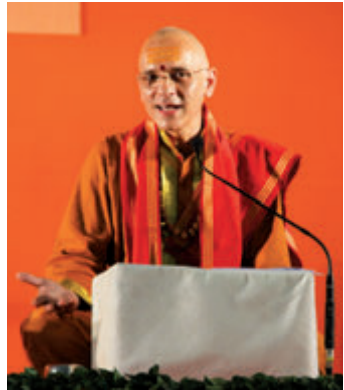
Dr Swami Mudraroopo Saraswati, Doctor/Yoga Teacher, Serbia

To say that I feel honoured and privileged to speak on this occasion would be an understatement. I will only do my best and leave the rest to fate, and in fact, anything of value in what I am going to say is due to Bihar Yoga and to Swamiji, and all the faults are mine only.

We have heard from Swamiji on more than one occasion about the difference that exists between what we know and what we apply in our lives. It made me realize that this difference actually determines the quality of life. There are many excellent students of engineering colleges, but not all of them become great engineers. There are excellent medical students in medical schools, but great doctors are few. So there is a path, and there are steps to be taken, between acquiring knowledge, learning something, and applying it later in life. This also goes for yoga.

In the beginning we learn yoga; we learn techniques, we learn practices, and then we need to apply what we have learnt in our daily lives. The application of yoga in different sections of society and in different fields of human activity has been pioneered by the Bihar School of Yoga and Sri Swamiji, and further organized and fully established by Swami Niranjan.

The yoga that has been applied in society, as Sri Swamiji used to tell us, is not yoga that will just make the body look better, or make us feel better, but yoga that will make us better people. This yoga is not an abstract concept, but something



real and efficient, a tool that we can use to improve the quality of our lives and transcend our limitations.

One human activity which is based on constant striving for improvement and on transcending the limitations of mind and body is sport: modern sport. I am sure that classical yoga, such as Satyananda Yoga, has and will have a major role to play in the future developments of this field. As the achievements of modern sportspersons aim higher and higher, a deeper level of harmony and integration is required within the whole personality of a sportsperson, and not simply of the physical body.

Hatha yoga

We are finding more and more references from the research being conducted by different universities all over the world as to the validity of yoga in sports, especially of hatha yoga and raja yoga. These two branches will play a major role in the development of modern sportspersons.

Coming first to mind is, of course, asana. Stemming from the long-standing cooperation between the Bihar School of Yoga and SAI, Sports Authority of India, the Ganga Darshan ashram often hosts different types of sportspersons who continue their sports training while they attend yoga classes and live the ashram life. In the asana classes, a certain quantity of muscular imbalances and postural imbalances can be clearly observed



once the sportspersons of high calibre sit or lie down on the yoga mat. Even simple asanas like shavasana or vajrasana become challenging for some of the high-end sportspersons. Apart from rectifying the posture imbalances, the research findings have proved that through asana, a fine-tuning of precise motor skills is achieved, the sense of balance and coordination is improved, and the risk of injuries is seriously reduced.

Next, of course, is pranayama. It has been found that a strong link exists between the breath, the physiological processes in the body, the state of mind and the level of performance. Synchronization of physical movement with the breath has become one of the cornerstones in the contemporary training of sportspersons. That is one of the basic rules of even asana practice as we know in yoga. In fact, the deeper we look into the modern sports research being conducted today, we find either classic yogic practices being implemented and called by their yogic names, or specialized techniques that are not named as yogic techniques but are very clearly rooted in the principles of classical yoga practices.

An example of a yogic technique being adopted for sports training is one termed 'Diaphragmatic Breathing Technique', or DBT. This is nothing but abdominal breathing, one of the first steps we use in learning yoga or teaching yoga to any student. A lot of research has already been done and is still ongoing in this field. The findings are that both the strength of the diaphragm, a principal breathing muscle that provides eighty percent of the efficiency of the breath, and the relaxed state of the diaphragm have serious and real implications in an improved performance of modern sportspersons. Research findings from different universities all over the world come to support these statements.

Apart from abdominal breathing, the yogic technique of bhastrika pranayama is found, again under another name, in the high-end contributions of scientific research on the training of sportspersons. It is called the 'Bellows Breathing Technique', and I will quote the definition of that technique: "Deep

abdominal inhalations and exhalations equally emphasized in a smooth, fast and flowing rhythm.” This is a very accurate description of the technique of *bhastrika pranayama*. It has been found that when this practice is done just prior to a competition or event, the results of the athlete are significantly improved.

Having an even bigger field within *hatha yoga* is *kumbhaka*, which definitely has an important role to play not only in modern sport development, but in the medical field as well. Usually we define it under the name of ‘Interval Hypoxic Training’, hypoxia being the state a practitioner enters after breathing air with less oxygen. The effect of that event is the reduction of the level of oxygen in the blood. Research in *kumbhaka*, the breath-retaining technique, brings us to the same conclusion where, when the breath is held in *kumbhaka*, two events happen: the level of oxygen in the blood is reduced, and at the same time, the level of carbon dioxide is built up. The most recent physiological statement is that the carbon dioxide will be reabsorbed by the tissues, leaving the end result of the practice to be deprivation of oxygen. This is the same state achieved by the so-called interval hypoxic training, which has been proved to have the effect of a real endurance exercise, and which considerably improves the physical performance of the sportsperson.

Raja yoga

While the physical aspects of *hatha yoga* in sport are well known, the field of *raja yoga* is now beginning to open up. We can see clear connections between the most modern sports psychology investigations and techniques devised by sports psychologists, and the classical practices of *pratyahara*.

The most intriguing area in this field is the state of being called ‘the zone’, ‘the flow’, ‘the second wind’, or ‘the last burst’. It has been defined as an alternate state of being that sportspersons sometimes enter where previously unavailable resources of the body and the mind become available to

them, and they go on to achieve high, and sometimes astonishing, results. That is the definition given by modern sports psychologists to this state of being. They describe it as the state of being in which



action itself becomes the aim, where there is no consideration of rewards or achievements; the pleasure is purely derived from the action itself. They describe it also as an autotelic experience, from the Greek words 'auto', meaning self, and 'telic', meaning end – that experience which is an end in itself, which is gratifying intrinsically. From this description I think we can recognize that it is a yogic state of being which sportspersons are accessing. It would be a high objective for modern sports psychologists to better understand this state of being and devise techniques to help sportsmen enter this state at will.

There are certain techniques already being used in this field, and we will quickly go through them to recognize their yogic root from raja yoga. One of them is called 'centring' and what it implies, in a simplified manner, is abdominal breathing with a focus on the area just behind the navel. What we have here is abdominal breathing with awareness of the kshetram of manipura chakra, the seat of power, performance and dynamism. We can infer that by doing this practice of manipura shuddhi, in the long term, the effects would be much more stable and longer lasting.

Another method is called 'mental rehearsal', in which a mental blueprint of a successful performance is installed in the mind of the practitioner. The sportsperson visualizes the key aspects of the event that is going to come and participates in it mentally. It is required that all the five senses are included, and

it is considered to be a cornerstone of success in modern sport. Here we can recognize the basic principles of visualization from yoga nidra, for example, clear images that are nested in the background of all the five senses, but done in a particular moment of pratyahara, after proper preparation of the body, mind and senses. The effects of this kind of yogic visualization will be deeper and more efficient.

Another technique is called 'error parking', implying the reality that when a sportsperson commits a mistake during a competition, he is sometimes thrown off balance irreparably and cannot regain his composure. So the technique they are taught is to wipe out that mistake by some ritualistic behaviour. We can sometimes observe, in a tennis match for example, some awkward movements performed by the players that can even look a bit childish, but it is most likely that they are employing the techniques taught to them by the sports psychologist. I would suggest that if they practised antar mouna and reached Stage 3, they would be able to wipe that mistake, the ache, the feeling created by the mistake off their minds without the ritualistic movements.

There are techniques that teach sportspersons to use, for example, a keyword to try and describe the quality they would like to exhibit during their competition. So swimmers 'glide', runners 'explode' and cyclists 'spin'. They repeat this command to themselves prior to the competition. We may infer that if they do a simple yoga nidra before the competition, in which they reach the visualization stage and invoke certain symbolic images that install these psychophysiological states of the quality of flow, spin or explode in the mind, they would achieve better results.

Another technique is called the 'pre-event routine' in which sports psychologists, as part of the team that prepares high-end sportspersons, insist that the player write down exactly what their routine will be on the day of an important competition. We may say that if this exercise is done as a real-time visualization of their upcoming timeline, again performed

in one of the pratyahara practices like yoga nidra, then the images, the memory and the planning would be much deeper and more connected to the upcoming reality.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would say that the human body has certain genetic evolutionary limitations, and that modern sportspersons are gradually reaching the physical pinnacle of these human body possibilities. It is becoming clear from the investigations into sports psychology that the future improvements of results lie in the investigation of the mind, and also in the application of the mind-improving techniques. In this context, I think we can understand sport as an example or paradigm of any other human activity, and the role yoga has in all of them.

I believe we can definitively say that yoga is a valid, efficient, simple and cheap addition to the development of athletes, or in any other field of human activity, and the yoga teacher in relation to sport must become a valuable member of the development team.

– Address, 24 October 2013, Polo Ground, Munger



Running Adds Firepower to Yoga: the Gradual Transition from Pranayama to Pratyahara and Beyond

Atul Agarwal, Mumbai

Yoga develops the breathing technique and also the core of our body consisting of backbone, hand-leg and abdominal muscles, and gives us a platform to exert ourselves in strenuous physical activity such as running, mountain climbing, soccer. These physical activities in turn build up endurance and willpower.

Running

- i) Running is a natural instinct among humans and a way to express both joy and fear.
- ii) If proper precaution is taken it does not cause wear and tear in the body. In fact, it further strengthens the joint muscles, reducing the load on the joints.
- iii) Running long distances increases the heart rate 2.5 to 3 times more than normal and we gradually learn to maintain this increased rate for a longer duration. It is also observed that the resting heart rate of regular runners falls in the range of 40–50.
- iv) In some Buddhist monasteries the monks are required to run for an hour every day before sunrise.
- v) Initially I combined running with awareness of breath and later added mantra also. Though it is difficult in the beginning to get into the rhythm, once I do, it becomes easy and helps to focus on mantra even better than during practice in a relaxed sitting position.
- vi) Running helps in yoga and yoga helps in running.
- vii) Students at the American School Mumbai (all nationalities) are regular runners and are fit.

Experience during running long distance

After running for a certain duration and reaching a constant heart rate of 150–160, most thoughts cease to exist and all one can think or hear is one's breath. Even though we are dead tired, the urge to stop is equal to the urge to continue. The mind remains calm the whole day.

Running and children

We conducted a 5 km run (no race, with no prize) for children in the age group of 5 to 15 years and about ninety children participated. The parents thought 5 km was quite long but were surprised to see them run and complete effortlessly. The children suggested that we have this event every week if not every month. Some of them became regular runners.

How to incorporate running as a spiritual practice

Pratipaksh action: Swami Niranjan speaks about developing *pratipaksh bhavana*, opposite thinking and feeling, as a means of performing the yamas and niyamas. As urban and sub-urban Indians we hardly do any physical activity and this calls for pratipaksh action: to perform vigorous and strenuous physical activity. Outdoor running is probably the best, however, not all places in India are suitable for running.

Sankalpa: having a sankalpa helps in enduring the pain and making the run more meaningful during endurance running. The sankalpa can be, 'Let the pain endured by me help in relieving the pain of others'. This way the runner gets a feeling that the run is not an action in futile but in line with the teaching of 'serve, love and give'. This is only a theory and I request Swamiji to throw more light on it.

Equilibrium running zone

After overcoming the initial pain of running when the individual has a strong desire to give up, there comes a stage when the pain and the urge to stop diminish. This stage can be called 'equilibrium stage', and it is always rewarding to run in this equilibrium zone.

Meditate immediately after a vigorous run

Cool down and sit for five minutes with the awareness at the eyebrow centre. You will be able to feel the pulsation at ajna, vishuddhi, anahata, manipura and maybe swadhisthana and mooladhara chakras, all at the same time. The intensity of pulsation is highest at ajna and gradually decreases as you go down, and it is lowest, if at all perceptible, at mooladhara.

Yoga nidra and running

After approximately one to two hours of running one can do a capsule of yoga nidra. There might be a strong tendency to fall asleep as the body is tired.

Suggested steps to running

- i) Start with ten minutes of continuous running either early morning or late evening with a one hour gap after dinner.
- ii) Build stamina at the rate of five minutes every week so that gradually you can run continuously for at least forty-five minutes.
- iii) Just before completing the run, exert the maximum you can with a 200 to 400 metre sprint.
- iv) Meditate on the eyebrow centre and observe the chakras.
- v) Run for at least five days a week with one long run of forty-five minutes to one hour.
- vi) Perform the capsule of yoga nidra for rejuvenation.

Benefits observed

Greater clarity in thought; less mental turbulence; a higher level of concentration during mantra sadhana and kriya yoga; and enhanced self-confidence and willpower.

Side effects

Muscular and body pain followed by slight headache. This tends to disappear once the body is used to running.

Global Tribute – UK

Swami Pragyamurti

We have come from the UK to participate in the celebrations of the Golden Jubilee of the Bihar School of Yoga, and to express our solidarity with the mission of Sri Swami Sivananda, Sri Swami Satyananda and Sri Swami Niranjanananda, and the yogic vision that they have propagated through the Bihar School of Yoga.

Sri Swamiji has given us the best job in the world, us yoga teachers: to be able to pass on the beautiful system of yoga to all kinds of people in all kinds of places. Today, the western world is obsessed with all things physical and the various schools of yoga reflect this obsession, with a focus on physical exercises. However, there are always people who want and need a deeper and broader focus, and these are the ones who come to our centres in the UK, and become fascinated by the depth and variety of practices we have access to. We have also been able to reach out to people with special needs, such as people living with HIV and prison inmates, through Sri Swamiji's grace. We are deeply grateful for the ancient Indian tradition of guru and the spiritual lineage through which these techniques are transmitted. And we can never find the way to adequately express our profound gratitude for having been allowed to be part of this extraordinary process of self-development and for the privilege of being able to pass it on. Since the 1960s when I met Sri Swamiji, my only prayer to him has been – 'Thank You'.

Thank you Swamiji.



Yoga-Meditation: Antidote for Stress, Anxiety and Worry

Swami Smaranananda Giri, General Secretary, Yogoda Satsanga Society of India, Ranchi, Jharkhand



I would like to share with you a few thoughts on the topic of yoga-meditation as an antidote to stress, fear and worry. The *Taittiriya Upanishad* says: "From joy we have come, for joy we live and in that sacred joy one day we shall melt again." In a world of duality, where we see so much pain and suffering around us, such a statement may sound

unrealistic. Isn't it so? If there is so much pain and suffering around me, is it possible that I have come from joy, that I live in joy and that one day I shall melt again in that joy? However, the words of an Upanishad cannot be taken lightly. We may not grasp the full import of such a statement intellectually, but there is hope. If we practise the eternal principles that have been well mapped out by the ancient rishis, we will find the truth in such a statement. There is hope.

Tapping inner security

In the second chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*, 'Samkhya Yoga', Bhagavan Krishna says in verse 40: *Swalpamapyasya dharmasya trayate mahato bhayat*, meaning - "Even a little practice of this dharma, this yoga, will save you from dire fears inherent in this life." It seems that as long as we have life, what is guaranteed is anxiety. Whether it is a boy of ten or a youth of twenty, a housewife of thirty or a retired person of seventy, the question

















of 'What next? What's going to happen?' is always there. That anxiety seems to be inbuilt in society, and from anxiety stems fear, and other problems. Bhagavan Krishna did not assure us that we will be saved from the troubles of life, but he said that we will be saved from the fears that come out of these troubles. Therefore, if we practise yoga-meditation, we can be calmly active and actively calm throughout our lives despite all the troubles around us. No matter what is happening around us, no matter what may happen to us, we can still be joyful. That is the assurance given by Bhagavan Krishna which cannot go wrong, if only we practise in the way that he advised us.

I would like to share with you a short story. One person had a lot of difficulties, mainly financial, and because of this he had other difficulties: family difficulties, professional difficulties. He tried and tried, but he could not get through them, he continued to face problems. One night he had a dream where the Lord appeared to him and advised, "Go to the outskirts of the town. There you will find a sadhu, ask him and he will give you a diamond which will solve all your problems."

The man was very happy. The next morning, before the sun rose, he rushed to the outskirts of the town. To his pleasant surprise he saw a sannyasi sitting there under a tree. So he went to the sannyasi and asked him, "Diamond? Diamond? Diamond?" The sadhu said, "What?" The sadhu did not have the dream, the man had the dream, so he didn't know. The man then narrated the dream to the sadhu, saying, "The Lord asked me to collect the diamond from you." The sannyasi said, "Oh! Now I understand. A few days ago when I was walking in the woods, I found something there. This is what the Lord must be referring to." He took the diamond from his shoulder bag and gave it to the man, "Here is the diamond." That diamond was so huge, so precious and so rare, and it would solve all his problems and the problems of his children and their children. He was very happy to have it; in one go, all his problems solved!

He went home. However, that night he could not sleep, he continued to toss around in his bed. The next morning, before

the sun came up, he rushed to the same spot on the outskirts of the town and found the sadhu. Addressing the holy man, he said, "Here is your diamond. Please take it back." The sadhu was surprised. "Why?" he asked, "The Lord asked you to collect it from me; I gave it to you wholeheartedly. Why do you want to give it back?" The man said, "There is something in you by which you were able to give away this diamond so easily. I want that something. Not this diamond."

There is something inside us, that inner security, which is more valuable than the most valuable diamond. That diamond could give material security, health insurance and much else even to a sannyasi, yet he was able to give it away easily. There is something inside each one of us, something special that we should tap. Yoga-meditation is the way.

Root cause of problems

I would like to give you an example. Suppose you have fever and you approach a doctor. The doctor immediately gives a tablet of paracetamol. You take it and the temperature goes down, but is that all the doctor gives? No. Along with the paracetamol he also gives an antibiotic, because paracetamol only reduces the temperature, giving you temporary symptomatic relief. The root cause of the temperature, the bacteria inside, has to be removed by antibiotics. An antibiotic is required to remove the root cause of the fever; paracetamol alone will not do.

It is the same with your problems. You say, "I have this financial problem, I have this family problem, I have this professional problem, I have this relationship problem, I have this social problem." All of these problems are there; however, if you try to remove the financial or the family problem only, it will reappear in some other form. So understand the root cause of these problems and remove it. That root cause which is giving rise to all these external problems should be removed. Otherwise we are only trying to have symptomatic relief by removing the financial problem or the family problem. What is the root cause of these external problems? It is ignorance, *ajnana*.

Ignorance is the root cause; ignorance of the truth that 'I am divine'. I am ignorant of that highest truth. That is the cause of all these problems. If I am divine, and if I really know and realize it, then these problems would not make an impact on me.

Nourishing the soul

Let me put this in some other words. I have this body. I take care of this body, by right diet, right exercise, and so on. I must take care of this body because it is my responsibility. When I take care of this body, the body in turn gives me health and mobility. It is not only a body that I have to take care of, but I have a mind, too. I have to take care of the mind by intellectual pursuits, by positive thinking. If I do so, the mind gives me intelligence in return, the ability to get along with others in society, the mind gives me all that. However, many people stop here. They take care of their body, they take care of their mind, but that is not adequate.

I also have a soul. I have to nourish my soul, too. Nourishment for my soul is deep contemplation, or yoga-meditation. That is the nourishment for my soul. If I nourish my soul properly, cultivate it properly, then in turn, the soul gives me something: intuition, perfect joy and unconditional love. All this doesn't come from the body or the mind; unconditional joy can only come from my soul, and I have to nourish and take care of the soul by proper meditation. I am a threefold being: body, mind and soul. It is my responsibility to develop all three in a harmonious way so that I receive health, intelligence, perfect love, intuition and that unconditional joy. Here I stop for a little while and talk about another topic.



What is God?

What is God? 'God' is a word we have been hearing from childhood. Did we ever stop and contemplate what God is? There are many books written on this concept, many lectures given. All are correct in their own right. However, to me, to my heart, the closest definition of God is this: God is Satchidananda. That is the definition of God that I like most, the definition closest to my heart. God is Satchidananda. Let me explain.

'Satchidananda' is a word we have been hearing from childhood. We even name our children Satchidananda, but what does it mean? You see, we don't know what God is, we have no concept, but whether God is a 'he' or a 'she' or an 'it', there is someone called God. Can that someone be sorrowful? Even if we do not know much, without any loss of generality we can definitely start with the assumption that God is joy, someone who cannot be sorrowful. However, to say 'God is joy' or 'God is bliss' is a gross understatement. God is not simple joy.

When I take a mango, it gives me joy. When I take a second mango, it gives me further joy. However, the third mango doesn't give me the same joy. Isn't it so? The fourth one I don't want to take. By the fifth mango, I will hit the person who gives it to me, because of the theory of diminishing returns. The theory of marginal utility applies. Not only to mangoes, it applies to every item; every experience in this creation is governed by this. Any experience that you think of which gave you some happiness once, twice, thrice, slowly loses its charm. There is one thing in this creation which is not subject to the theory of diminishing returns, and that is God and contact with God. God-contact is ever-new. So God is not simple joy, He is ever-new joy. God is not simple ananda, He is *nitya-navina-ananda*, ever-new joy. Always joy, always ever-new.

There are devotees who meditate one day, the next day they meditate and the next day again they meditate; day after day after day they meditate. Somebody else who does not meditate

may think, 'Yesterday I saw him meditate. Can't he skip it today? How does it matter?' No. He knows that God-contact is ever-new, ever-new joy.

Now God may be ever-new joy, but what good is it if God is not aware of His ever-new joy? So God is also ever-conscious, ever-aware of His ever-new joy. So God is ever-conscious ever-new joy. What is consciousness? *Chit*, chit is consciousness. God is *chidananda*: ever-conscious, ever-new joy.

Now God may be ever-new joy, and He may be ever-conscious of His ever-new joy, but what good is it if it exists only for a little while and then is gone? That is for me human. As a human being, I can only think of things between my birth and death, for a finite period. However, God is, God was and God will be. God is ever-existing, eternal. That is *sat*, truth. God is ever-existing, ever-conscious, ever-new joy, *sat-chit-ananda*. God is Satchidananda. That is a description of God, Satchidananda.

I don't stop here. Whenever I describe God I have something more to say. My full description of God is this: God is Satchidananda and *Aham Brahmasmi*. What does it mean? *Aham* means I, so 'I am Brahman'. Potentially I am ever-existing, ever-conscious, ever-new bliss. That is what my potentiality is, I am That. The only thing is that I am ignorant of this. Yoga-meditation is the key which takes me to that point. It gives me a glimpse of that ever-existing, ever-conscious, ever-new bliss. I don't have to get it from outside. It is inside. I am there. It is mine. No one can take it, because it is my birthright.

From joy to joy

Now you understand the meaning of the aphorism in *Taittiriya Upanishad*, "From joy I have come. For joy I live and in that sacred joy one day I will melt again." I am that joy, and if that is true for me, if I can contact that joy through meditation, then I can boldly say that no matter what is happening around me or to me, I can always be joyful, because that is what I am. If we are contacting God that way in our regular yoga-meditation,

we can be calmly active and actively calm throughout the turbulent days of our life, and that is the state of *sthitaprajna*; no matter what is happening around us we can still be joyful.

There may be suffering in life. That we cannot avoid, because suffering is something that is thrust upon us by circumstances over which we have no control. Yet joy is something that we can generate. Essentially, I would like to say that suffering and joy can go together. There can be suffering, there can be pain in me, my body can be aching, but still I can be joyful. That is possible with yoga-meditation, and we give thanks to our ancient rishis and guru parampara who have kept those sacred meditation techniques alive and given them to us.

What happens when we are regularly meditating? Suppose there is a person with mental depression in the family. Friends and family members are so interested in him. They try to lift him up by arranging parties, movies, special food, and so on. They try to take him out of the mental depression, but that person is depressed, he cannot be at parties; they cannot make him better. The same thing happens to someone who is in touch with God through meditation. He is in such a mental state that although the circumstances around him may be trying to pull him down, still he stays there.

That was the state of Bhakta Mira. She had so many problems, probably much more than what you and I are going through in life, yet she was always joyful because she could contact that God-joy. Bhakta Tukaram, Bhakta Mira, they were all like that. We have so many examples around us. I would like to tell you one thing. This joy is not something that is unknown to us. We are joyful when we take a mango, but this is so different. The joy of God-contact in meditation is so different. To explain I would say that joy has three shades: physiological, psychological and spiritual.

Three aspects of joy

Physiological joy is experienced when, for instance, I take a sweet. Immediately my taste buds are excited, and that is why



I am joyful. Something happens physiologically: the tongue, the taste buds are stimulated. The same thing happens in meditation. After you meditate, your body feels very light. You don't feel the sixty kilograms you are carrying; the body feels so light. It shows up in the eyes as well. Physiologically, there is some change. This is the physiological aspect of joy.

Psychologically, joy is experienced when the trigger is not physiological, I don't need to take a sweet or a mango to be happy. Suppose I am sitting here and I hear some good news. Something good has happened to my family or my country. Immediately I feel very happy psychologically. Not from anything that I am seeing, but psychologically. The same thing happens in meditation; you don't receive anything physically, but psychologically you feel well, you feel the assurance that all is well.

The third aspect of joy is spiritual. This joy is most important for me. To explain the spiritual nature of joy, I would like to quote

Paramahansa Yoganandaji, whom I follow. Paramahansa Yoganandaji is the author of the book *Autobiography of a Yogi* and founder of the Yogoda Satsanga Society. He said, "When bliss comes over you, you recognize it as a conscious, intelligent Universal Being to whom you may appeal, and not as an abstract, mental concept." Mark his words. He said when that bliss comes over you in meditation, when that joy comes over you, you recognize that joy as a conscious, intelligent Universal Being to whom you may appeal.

This means that the experience of joy comes with the sense of a presence, a higher presence. I don't mean that after meditation you see a person with two heads and four hands sitting on a throne. If someone sees this, fine, no problem, but this presence is not necessarily felt that way. The joy comes, and you recognize that joy, "Yes, Lord, yes." It is a conscious, intelligent Universal Being to whom you may appeal. Without seeing anyone, without having a vision, without hearing any sound, you know that you are in the presence of something higher. That is so beautiful about this meditation. The presence, the existence of God is proven to you to the core of your being. It is not intellectual any more. You are not reading or listening to some lectures. It is simply your own experience. Without seeing, without hearing, you are convinced. That is the joy. That joy comes not only to Bhakta Mira and Bhakta Tukaram; ordinary human beings can also feel this joy.

I will tell you a story where ordinary people were able to feel that joy. When we were doing research work at IIT Kharagpur back in 1981, one of our friends finished his PhD work and was going for his viva voce exams, the oral examinations, the final stage to get a PhD degree. The students were all waiting in a seminar hall for an external examiner to arrive and conduct the exam. Professor B. Nag, the man who built the first computer in India in the 1970s, was coming to Kharagpur for examining. He was a little late, and so we were all waiting, students and senior scholars. As soon

as he arrived, he asked the head of our department where the first candidate was. My friend came forward, and our Department Head, Professor Saraf, introduced him, "Here is the candidate." As soon as Professor Nag saw my friend, he stepped back. He said, "You appear so relaxed, as if the exam is already over." This was the comment of the external examiner, "You? You appear so relaxed as if the exam is already over." Usually, what does an exam mean? 'Thump, thump, thump, thump' – the heart is beating fast. Whether it is a Class 1 schoolboy or a PhD student, an exam means the heart beats fast. However, my friend said, "I am prepared, so what is the problem? I am ready." He had been meditating for about a year or so. That is the beauty that comes from meditation.

The stillness of meditation

I will share with you another point about what meditation is. One person approached a saint and asked him, "Holy Sir, I want to know God. I am very busy. I don't have much time in life, so please tell me what is God in one sentence." This sounds quite familiar, doesn't it? Generally, we don't have much time for God. We want to know what is God in one sentence. The sadhu said, "Son, why in one sentence? One word will do."



The man asked, "What is it?" The sadhu answered, "Silence." Then they had the following exchange:

"What? God is silence?"

"Yes, God is silence."

"What is silence?"

"Meditation."

"How do you meditate?"

"In silence."

"How do you get that silence?"

"By meditation."

Here the three words, 'silence', 'God' and 'meditation' are used as if they refer to the same thing, which is true, because in a higher sense what he is talking about is not the mere silencing of vocal cords. Vocal cords have to be silent, thoughts have to be silent, emotions have to be silent, anxieties have to be silent, eyes have to be silent, tongue has to be silent, skin has to be silent. All the senses have to be silent. All the senses have to be subdued. Thoughts, emotions are all absent.

So where are you? For me a better word is 'stillness' or *nischal*, rather than silent. In this stillness, where are you? *Aham Brahmasmi*. When you don't have thoughts, emotions, anxieties, sight, hearing, where are you? You are with your real self. That is what the saint spoke about. If you go to that stillness, you experience God. That is the fifth step of Patanjali's ashtanga marga: yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara. Pratyahara is that stillness, that interiorization. Then come dharana, dhyana and samadhi. That interiorization is a part of meditation. That is why you meditate, to get to a stage where thoughts, ambitions, anxieties are all subdued. You are so clear, but your mind is active.

That is why the Bible says, "Be still and know that I am God." Jesus is referring to this stillness. The classical example is: If God is *Aham Brahmasmi*, then God's reflection is in me, I am a part of God; but why can't I perceive this? The classical example given in spiritual literature is this: "If you want to see the reflection of the moon on a lake, the lake has to be still." If

the lake is ruffled you cannot see the reflection of the moon. The moon is there, but you cannot see it. Even if you see it, it is distorted. So God's reflection is in me. God's presence is in me, but the lake of my mind, the lake of my consciousness, is always ruffled. This is why I am not able to see. "Be still and know I am God," Jesus says.

In the *Bhaja Govindam* it is said: *Satsangatve nisangatvam, nisangatve nirmohatvam, nirmohatve nischalatatvam, nischalatatve jivanmukti*. *Satsangatvam* leads to *nisangatvam*; *nisangatvam* leads to *nirmohatvam*, freedom from delusion. Freedom from delusion leads to *nischalatatvam*, stillness, and stillness leads to *jivanmukti*, liberation. One step below *mukti*, salvation, is stillness.

A Chinese proverb says, "The entire world surrounds the one who is still within." Here it is not the physical world that is surrounding you, yet the one who is still within is the king of kings. How do you achieve that? Through yoga-meditation.

We must be so grateful to our guru parampara, starting from Patanjali and even earlier, to Bhagavan Krishna, for giving us the techniques which you and I can use in our own homes. We don't have to go out to the Himalayas to practise yoga; we can practise and be benefited in our very own homes.

– Address, 26 October 2013, Polo Ground, Munger



The actions of the mind are indeed actions. The body is really one's thoughts, moods, convictions and emotions objectified and made visible to the naked eye. It is a point worth noting with care that every cell in the body suffers or grows, receives a life impulse or a death impulse from every thought that enters the mind, for one tends to grow into the image of that which one thinks about most.

– Swami Sivananda

A Multidimensional Marvel

Sannyasi Atmapadma, Mumbai



When attempting to write down a few impressions of the World Yoga Convention and the Golden Jubilee celebrations, the first thing that comes to mind is that it is beyond words.

This program was not only massive in sheer numbers – over twelve thousand people came from all over India and the world to participate, of which over four thousand delegates were accommodated within the ashram – but also in terms of the multiple layers of activities. This was not one event, but a series of events taking place at the same time, making it the most multidimensional program I have ever seen in my life. What a marvel of superb planning and skilful execution! It is only guru's grace that can pull off something so complex and so inspiring in such a smooth way!

Modern technology

One of the biggest surprises was the full embrace of modern technologies by the usually technologically-conservative Bihar School of Yoga.

Starting 1st October, the dedicated WYC Helplines became available to answer participant's queries. The excellent database helped to give on-the-spot answers and the relief and gratitude was palpable in delegates struggling with the postal service or fax or the ever-busy regular ashram phones.

During the WYC itself, from registration to food to prasad, everywhere was a simple scan of the barcode on the WYC badge, doing away with cumbersome lists and long waits.

Much to the delight of those who couldn't make it to Munger, for the first time ever, live streaming of all sessions was available for viewing via the internet. Thousands were able to watch in awe, wonder and much gratitude.

Then there was the launch of the Bihar Yoga App, another first, loaded with teachings and inspiration. Authentic yoga knowledge and inspiration is now just a click away on the phone, tablet or computer!

The cup brimmeth over

Sri Swamiji in his time, and then Swami Niranjan have for years been disseminating yoga from Karna Chaura, where the generous King Karna distributed gold. This year, however, to quote Swamiji, even King Karna would have to bow in respect!

Satyam Yoga Prasad as an idea and as an experience was unbelievable. It was difficult to take in mentally, take out physically and even more difficult to take back home. Hundreds of books, CDs and DVDs, always abundantly stocked, and one was totally free to take as much as one wanted and was able to. The only thing limited was the time one was allowed in, as thousands had to take their prasad too. Catalogues had been thoughtfully provided beforehand so as to help make the best of the time inside, and sevaks were always within easy reach to give out as many bags as asked for.



When I went in to receive the Satyam Yoga Prasad, I saw all types of reactions – some joyfully picking, some greedily gathering – but all struggling to carry the golden load. The cup literally brimmed over! I have now experienced in a material level what is often said about guru’s grace; it showers equally on all, is ever-abundant, and what you can get is limited only by your own capacity to receive. In the world where we are constantly feeling that we are not getting enough, here is guru so generously giving us an experience of supreme abundance!

The physical collection is only the first step, and then came the difficulty of it carrying back and carting it home. Some people actually had to return bags as it was not possible to take so much back with them! And of course a lifetime is not enough to truly absorb and assimilate the priceless teachings contained in this prasad.

Satyam Darshan

There were three live events conducted daily and in parallel as part of the Golden Jubilee celebrations at Ganga Darshan. One was the non-stop kirtan, from 6 am to 6 pm, conducted by groups from across the world, and the second was the continuous performance of rare tantric havan. Going past the amphitheatre or Akhara transported one to different realms altogether.

The most moving for me was the third, a film on the life of *Satyam*. Swamiji's lila manifested a great air-conditioned movie hall on the lawn next to Main Building, and there was shown a film no words can do justice to. From Rishikesh to Munger to Tryambakeshwar to Rikhia, the film traced the journey of Sri Swamiji. Richly infused with Sri Swamiji's poetry, photos, rare video clips and soul-stirring music, the film left many of us in tears. Sri Swamiji's presence is so strong and so palpable in this film. It is a truly inspiring and powerful reminder of the light of our lives, Sri Swamiji.

Last but not the least were the special evening programs. The dance drama performed by the Chennai group, Yoga Chaitanya, was wonderfully produced and enacted.

A special mention about the presentations by the very talented sannyasa trainees. On days three, four and five, they told the life stories of Sri Swami Sivananda, Sri Swami Satyananda and Swami Niranjan in a very creative and original way. The narrations were interspersed with photos and beautiful kirtans, bhajans and songs, accompanied by graceful dancers. It was amazing and inspiring to see so many radiant flowers blossoming under Swamiji's watchful care.

As we return home, laden with prasad, inspiration and blessings, the only thing that comes to mind is to say, again and again: Thank you Gurudev!



Precious Moments

It was a grand Convention! Everything had such quality:

The KAC

The walk to the Polo Ground

The friendly police

The bookstore

The cinema

The quality of the film

The organization of food

The walk around the ashram

The photos spread out all over the ashram

The hangar at the Polo Ground

The Akhara

The pandits and the havan

The hairdressing of the trees

The asana poster outside the KAC

The minimalistic decorations at the stage of the Polo Ground

All the repairs in the ashram

The accommodation

The workers in their beautiful new clothes

The creativity of the decorations department

The joy of measuring the kids for their karate outfits

Kundan's humility when trying the new outfit

The sound of the karate kids preparing for their show

Their show

Swami Yogabhakti's talk

Her thanking Swami Satsangi

The English speaker from Varanasi

Swami Satsangi's talk

Your translations

The final kirtan at Satyam Vatika

The interaction with Satyananda Yoga people from all over the world

Talks with old friends

The peaceful days after the majority had left

The birds in the morning.

Thank you for the precious beautiful moments. I do appreciate them.

—Sannyasi Chaitanya, Denmark

Yoga Nidra for Health and Spirituality

Dr R. S. Eswar Reddy, Alternative Medicine Specialist, Andhra Pradesh, India

Yoga nidra and health: tapping the subconscious mind

As an ardent devotee of Ma Saraswati, I believe more in providing knowledge and wisdom to the health seekers so that they may have a holistic understanding of health and disease. During consultation I advise a healthy diet and lifestyle along with an ayurvedic prescription. However, most of the patients take health knowledge on a conscious level only and come back after a few months with the same chronic disease such as asthma and kidney stones. As Swami Satyananda's yoga nidra makes it easy to access the subconscious mind to seed or implant practical health and wisdom, I advise my patients to attend one course of yoga and yoga nidra. For this purpose I use sankalpa or resolve in the given models.



Health is wealth, without it all other achievements are meaningless, so I sincerely practise healthy diet and healthy lifestyle. I am aware of the splendid work of my vital organs and body, and I provide it with healthy food and follow a healthy lifestyle to regain lost health from the deeper levels.

Healthy wisdom visualizations

After rotating the consciousness with systematic awareness of body parts, one takes the seeker further into his pranic body with breath awareness. These instructions are given slowly and elaborately, but here I will present them briefly:

With every breath, you are taking plenty of oxygen into the lungs, and from here sending it to every cell, tissue and organ. Feel the breath as pranic energy that is energizing and healing every cell, tissue

and organ of the body. It is purifying, energizing and rejuvenating the whole body. Feel this divine, soothing moonlight-like energy slowly purifying and revitalizing the body from the hands and fingers to the toes, and from toes to top of the head. Repeat two or three rounds. As all impurities and the root cause of disease are removed you feel perfectly healthy, light and rejuvenated.

Natural living

You are walking in the forest. There you see trees, plants, grass, flowers, dancing peacocks, running rabbits, flying doves, beautiful butterflies, busy ants and squirrels; feel the cool breeze, smell the fragrance of different aromatic flowers, hear the chirping of birds. You are near a pond with lotus flowers and fish moving hither and thither. All these living beings are quite active, healthy and happy, just because they are living natural, spontaneous, heartfelt lives. They do not have hypertension, diabetes, asthma, heart problems, vision problems and other psychosomatic disorders. Compare their diet and lifestyle with humans, ponder over it. Life is simple, and nature is our divine mother; understand her, respect her, love her, be part of nature, live in her lap, taste real happiness, contentment, harmony, peace, tranquillity and bliss.

Life donors

You are strolling in a wheatfield. It is food that nourishes and makes us live. We survive from what grows from Mother Nature's womb: grains, cereals, fruits, nuts, vegetables. While taking food, say thanks to farmers and to all the persons and materials involved in producing your food and bless them. We cannot survive without oxygen even for a minute, and this life-saving oxygen comes from the kingdom of plants, so spare one minute per day to say thanks to nature and the plant kingdom.

Super Centenarians

You are in the hilly area at sunset with tribal people sitting near a campfire. They are dancing and singing together wholeheartedly. Slowly the full moon rises up in the sky in all its splendour. The natural beauty and their happiness are beyond the reach of so-called modern and civilized people. After they rejoice, they sit together and eat after offering prayers to the five elements and Supreme Power. They eat natural food with a lot of reverence and gratitude to the food. Some



of these people are Super Centenarians, and the secret of their long life is simplicity, humility, gratitude, love, harmony, service and whole-hearted behaviour with a natural diet.

Changing mindset

Most people give maximum priority to education and financial aspects of life, but there are many more aspects of life: family relations, health of body and mind, social behaviour, professional progress, cultural activities, personal hobbies and the devotional and spiritual quest. Balancing all these aspects of life according to situations and needs is real yoga. When we grossly neglect the health aspect, the body reacts with some chronic disease.

The health seeker must acquire knowledge about the wonderful functions of the vital organs and the root causes of diseases. He must understand the need for positive thinking, yoga and meditation, a sattvic diet and nutrition. He has to avoid the company of smokers, excess eaters, drunkards, junk-food eaters, negative thinkers, and so on. He should be in the company of positive, healthy and spiritual persons and try to follow their lifestyle. Occasionally staying in spiritual ashrams like the Bihar School of Yoga is a sure way towards transformation.

Spiritual yoga nidra

In this way we are identifying with divine consciousness, not with the five koshas. What are we, really? Are we just flesh, organs, bones and mind?

The five sheaths that encase the *jivatma*, or individual, personal soul, can be compared with the skin of an onion. The deeper self is apparently something else. The body, thoughts, emotions and intellectual knowledge are merely skins that cover the core of our existence. When we identify with body and mind we are limited in time and space. In spiritual reality we are divine beings with human experiences. Though in sleep or dreams we are experiencing beyond the body and senses, the moment we wake up we are again identifying with our body and mind only. Persons with predominant gunas of *tamas*, inertia and ignorance, and *rajas*, restlessness and ego involvement, cannot understand deeper and subtle meanings of spiritual aspects. As we improve and gain more and more qualities of *sattwa*, harmony and balance, we understand the five elements, the three gunas, the five koshas, the six chakras, the deeper meaning of the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Viveka Chudamani*, *Ashtavakra Gita*, Upanishads, and the sacred teachings of rishis, saints, bhaktas and sadgurus.

Move from karma to dharma

We are more involved in selfish karma with a lot of expectation on the results. Yogavatar Sri Krishna advised selfless karma. We are divine beings who have taken a human body to evolve into higher beings, not to regress back to the animal level. Due to illusion or *maya* we behave as though we are born to enjoy by acquiring material things. In this comparative and competitive material life, we acquire negative karma which becomes *sanchita*, stored, and *prarabdha*, unavoidable, karma from the maladies of the present-day society, and we suffer in this vicious circle. Spirituality is the only solution for all the maladies of the present-day society.

When we know that only oneness exists, that each and every thing is part and parcel of this oneness, and when we can tap into the inner happiness, then where is the scope for *kama*, desire; *krodha*, anger; *lobha*, greed; *moha*, infatuation; *mada*, pride; and *matsarya*, jealousy? I want to imbibe the wisdom of saints and sages; the wisdom that we are divine beings, *sat-chit-ananda swarupa*, the very form of truth, auspiciousness and bliss, through yoga nidra. Once we go beyond the five koshas with the predominance of a sattwic nature, we are sure to be a part of bliss which is incomparable with material happiness. The easiest way to evolve from lower chakras to higher chakras is to serve,

love and give. With this attitude, our ego dissolves slowly but surely, and the ever-existing inner light shines forth. One of the best ashrams for this transformation is the Bihar School of Yoga.

Spiritual visualization: divine jyoti

You are in a forest, under a waterfall. Your head and entire body is drenched in water, you are singing and dancing, ventilating many suppressed feelings and emotions. Then you take a sunbath and enter into a spiritual ashram, where you find paintings of Ganesha, Sita-Rama, Hanuman, Krishna, Ma Durga, Ma Lakshmi, Swami Satyananda, and so on. The akkanda jyoti is illuminating the entire hall where you are together with divinity. There is an air of sanctity, with the melodious, vibrating primordial sound of Omkara, the fragrance of sandal sticks and dhoopam making you more devotional. Some disciples and spiritual seekers are meditating. You are transfixed with these spiritual surroundings and spontaneously sit for meditation.

As you are going deeper and deeper into your being, you go beyond the five sheaths and you find a tiny divine light, your atmajyoti or jivatma, shining. Now you see a sparkling ray of divine light coming from the akhanda jyoti, the *Paramatma*, the Cosmic Soul, transmitting more divinity into your jivatma. With this transmission, the tiny jivatma is brightening and expanding slowly but steadily into anandamaya, vijñanamaya, manomaya, pranamaya and annamaya koshas. All your five sheaths are overflowing with divine energy. As the koshas are now purified, you are nothing but divinity. You are fully identified with your divine nature; every cell and atom of you is reverberating with bliss. You are listening to the divine unstruck sounds of anahata chakra. You are experiencing satchitananda. As a divine being, you are light only. You are seeing everything around you as divine light, all other devotees, the paintings of gods and saints, the walls, the chairs, the floor, everything is appearing as sparkling divine light. They have all lost their physical appearances. What a splendid experience it is, and with thanks and gratitude you come out from this Jyoti Mandir just as light in human shape. You are still in the trance of divinity; you are nothing but pure bliss.

Babaji's cave

You are in the foothills of the sacred Himalayas as part of a spiritual quest. The Himalayas themselves are the abode of many rishis, saints

and sadgurus from time immemorial. Kailash Mansarovar is one of the most sacred places on this planet. It is the abode of Lord Shiva and Parvati. You are trekking from Kukuchina to reach the cave where Mahavatar Babaji once meditated. Babaji is living, but gives darshan with his physical body only to those he likes. With all devotion and reverence to Babaji, you enter into this sacred cave, you are listening to the unstruck divine sounds of anahata chakra. You sit with closed eyes, and you are experiencing the immense harmony, peace, tranquillity and bliss in this sacred cave. You are visualizing Babaji in the form of divine light, that light is entering into every cell and atom of you everywhere!

Experience of yoga nidra

Most of the people who attend these suggested classes of yoga nidra have changed to a healthy diet and lifestyle. For the first time they came to know the invaluable work of the vital organs. Some started to keep their hands on the heart daily to listen to the heartbeat and say thanks for its life-saving service. They reduced or stopped smoking and consumption of alcohol, soft drinks, junk and non-vegetarian food. They ate more vegetables, fruits and nuts. Through print and electronic media they improved their knowledge and understanding of health and disease.

Patients with diabetes, hypertension, asthma and other chronic diseases are opting for yoga, naturopathy, ayurveda, Unani, homeopathy, and other natural therapies instead of solely depending on allopathic medicine.

Yoga nidra provided maximum benefits to psychosomatic diseases. Even cancer patients experience relief from fear of imminent death as they came to know that they are divine beings. Many cancer patients went into deep hypnagogic states within minutes of overcoming the pain of cancer. Certainly the lifespan is extended qualitatively and quantitatively. Many of them come to natural picnic spots on Sundays to rejoice in the lap of Mother Nature. We conduct moonlight picnics also to feel and experience the divine grandeur and splendour. Many people experience peace and tranquillity.

During creative visualizations they had deep inner peace, and the experience of an energized body or lightness of the body. Some felt that they could not talk after yoga nidra as they had gone deeper into

subtle koshas, and some told me there was no disturbance of thoughts during yoga nidra. For many patients yoga nidra paved the way to join some spiritual institution like Yogoda Satsanga Society, Chinmaya Mission, Ramakrishna Mission, and others.

Yoga and ayurveda

Both yoga and ayurveda have their roots in the Vedas and are interlinked in health and healing. *Swarna bhasma*, gold ash, or its combination with ayurvedic medicine works wonders – this is my own experience and that of Dr Prasad Rao, who received a gold medal in the Commonwealth Games for powerlifting at the age of sixty, won with help of the yoga of Sage Patanjali and ayurveda. Therefore, my humble request to Swami Niranjani is to integrate ayurveda into yoga therapy so that many people benefit without the side effects of allopathic medicines.

My thanks and pranams to each and every one and everything – they are all manifested divinity in various forms.

—Workshop, 23 October 2013, Ganga Darshan, Munger



The Laughter on My Screen



Within the first week of arriving at the ashram, I was rushed out to Paduka Darshan for seva. There was a video satsang that needed to be edited and had to be edited fast. I couldn't quite understand the extreme urgency of the situation as the World Yoga Convention was almost a year away. However, everyone seemed to be in a mad rush, so I joined in on the excitement and began my face-to-face lessons with Sri Swami Satyananda while editing.

At first it was like a dream come true, spending my days with Sri Swamiji and listening to satsang, but after a couple of weeks, I was tired and mentally constipated with knowledge. After a few months I had heard so much about nadis and chakras that it was a relief to edit a Hindi satsang where I was able to enjoy Sri Swamiji's charismatic expressions and mannerisms without understanding a word he said.

Over a six-month period I was downloaded with all the knowledge I needed to reach enlightenment; however, the only impression I can retrieve from my brain is of Sri Swamiji laughing. Rajarishi, my editing companion, and I would watch his laugh over and over again, and slow-motion the parts where he would erupt with laughter and his whole body would reverberate with joy. It was such a pleasure to watch.

After nine months, with the use of two computers, the teachings of a master and the assistance of two semi-functional sannyasa trainees, 126 new satsang DVDs were created on the teachings of Sri Swami Satyananda.

It has been such an amazing experience for me to be part of this technological yoga revolution. I am ever grateful to Swamiji for the beautiful samskaras he continues to bless us with.

—Nimai, Australia (Sannyasa Trainee)



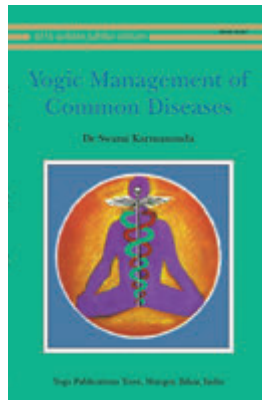
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www.yogamag.net

The official website of *Yoga* magazine. Includes worldwide links to Satyananda Yoga centres and teachers, a brief history of *Yoga* magazine, news and more.



Avahan Online

www.biharyoga.net/sannyasa-peeth/avahan/. Provides online access to *Satyaka Avahan*, the bi-monthly magazine of Sannyasa Peeth, which contains the higher teachings of Sri Swami Sivananda, Sri Swami Satyananda and Swami Niranjanananda, along with the programs of Sannyasa Peeth.

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Sep 12	Swami Satyananda Sannyasa Diwas
Oct 1-Jan 25	4-month Yogic Studies Course (English)
Dec 11-14	Ashram Life, Yoga & Satsang
Dec 25	Swami Satyananda's Birthday
Jan 1 2015	Hanuman Chalisa
Jan 2-11	Kriya Yoga Course (Spanish & Italian)
Jan 21-24	Sri Yantra Aradhana
Jan 24	Basant Panchami Celebration
Feb 1-May 25	Bihar School of Yoga Foundation Day
Feb 14	4-month Yogic Studies Course (Hindi)
Mar 1-30	Bal Yoga Diwas
Mar 3-20	Yoga Instructor's Course (Hindi)
Jun 1-Jul 25	Yoga HMC*: Asthma (Hindi)
July 27-30	2-month Orientation in Yogic Science & Lifestyle (Hindi)
Jul 31	Guru Poornima Satsang & Aradhana
	Guru Paduka Poojan
	<i>*HMC: Health Management Course</i>
Every Saturday	Mahamrityunjaya Havan
Every Ekadashi	Bhagavad Gita Path
Every Poornima	Sundarkand Path
Every 5th & 6th	Commemoration of Sri Swami Satyananda's Mahasamadhi
Every 12th	Akhanda Path of Ramacharitamanas

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For more information on the above events contact:

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