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Hari Om

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GUIDELINES FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

OBSTACLES TO SADHANA

Greed

Greed always makes the mind restless. A person with one lakh of rupees plans to get ten lakhs. A millionaire schemes to become a multi-millionaire. Greed is insatiable; there is no end to it. It assumes various subtle forms. Thirsting for name, fame and applause is greed. A sub-judge thirsts to become a High Court judge and a third-class magistrate thirsts to become a first-class magistrate with full powers – this is also greed. A sadhu thirsts for siddhis; this is another form of greed. A sadhu thirsts to open many ashrams in different cities; this is also greed.

A greedy person is absolutely unfit for the spiritual path. Destroy greed of all sorts by enquiry, devotion, meditation, japa, contentment, integrity, honesty and disinterestedness, and enjoy peace.

—Swami Sivananda

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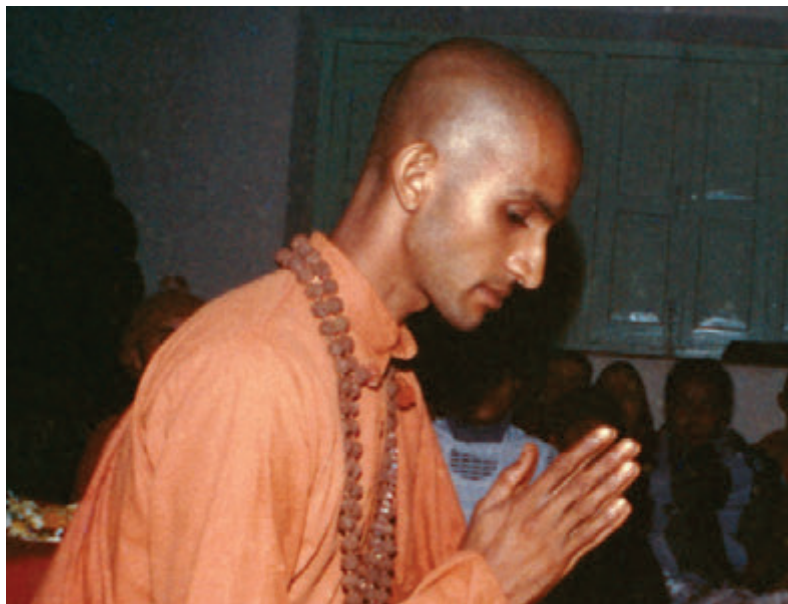
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The Yogi is superior to the ascetic. He is deemed superior even to those versed in sacred lore. The Yogi is superior even to those who perform action with some motive. Therefore, Arjuna, do you become a Yogi. (*Bhagavad Gita VI:46*)

तपस्विभ्योऽधिको योगी ज्ञानिभ्योऽपि मतोधिकः । कर्मिभ्यश्चाधिको योगी तस्माद्योगी भवार्जुन ॥

The Art of Forgiveness

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



There is no such thing as the power of forgiveness. Forgiveness is a quality and a state of mind just as happiness or depression or nervousness is a state of mind. You are forgiving, but only where your interests lie. You are forgiving to your near and dear ones if they make a mistake, yet if the same mistake is committed by a distant person, you won't be forgiving. You will treat it as an attack by the other person on your ego and arrogance.

Although you have the ability to forgive, it is limited, self-oriented and interest-oriented. That same quality, which now is only momentary, has to extend over minutes, hours, half days, full days, one week, two weeks, one month. The period of the state of mind should extend. It should not be fluctuating like it fluctuates now.

If you can maintain that state of mind, you make your mind free from the negative effects and barbs that surround you in society, and the world will recognize you as forgiving, not you. If you think, "Oh! I am forgiving," you are just creating another ego identity of yourself that you are a forgiving person.

Therefore, a person who forgives does not know that he or she is forgiving. It is a natural state of mind. If you think, "Today I forgave and I am happy," it means that you have not forgotten the incident. You are still latching on to that incident and feeling that you were able to release something off yourself. However, you have not forgiven. Forgiveness is a state of mind just as happiness, depression, sleep, dream and wakefulness are states of mind.

There is no power of forgiveness. When you are happy, that is forgiveness. When you are happy, then *kshama*, forgiveness, is natural and spontaneous. If you are not happy and do not fulfil the first yama, how can you ever pass on to the second yama of forgiveness? You think you are bright enough to bypass all the classes – first, second, third, fourth – and go straight away to the tenth class? No wonder, society is a failure until today.

Only a few people in society have made the effort to move class by class and they have become the teachers of human civilization. They do not make the same mistake, yet nobody listens to them. Everybody keeps on making the same mistake, generation after generation. Yet the spiritual teachings have been clear.

Towards happiness

People want to be empowered. They feel connected with strength, position and power and not with simplicity and humility. A person who lives simply and is humble will be seen by others as totally powerless, positionless and easily manipulated. It is only a folly of human understanding, for in reality, it is a peaceful and blissful state of mind where one has overcome the effects of ego.

Other people due to their own motivation and desire for power and position will try to manipulate the simple people who are innocent and don't bother about things. That is human nature. People always look for somebody who will obey them, yet it is a material attitude. Why do people not look at the state of mind which a person is living: a state of simplicity, happiness and humility?

There is no humility and no forgiveness in the life of an individual when it comes to other people. That is the first lesson in yoga from the yamas which begins with *manah prasad*, happiness. Make the mind content and happy. Change your ideas, thoughts, beliefs and philosophy. Chant God's name and live according to His will. With this attitude the actions, attitudes and behaviours in your life do not affect you like sharks and arrows. Instead you smile at people when they try to impose their will on you. Just see how agitated, tense and angry their features look and thank yourself for being happy.

– 2 August 2015, Ganga Darshan, Munger



Forgive and Forget



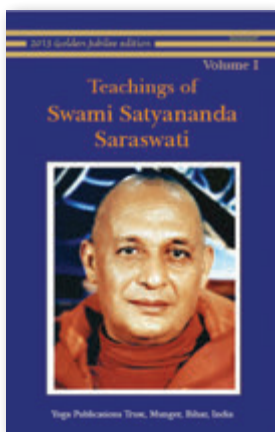
A God-realized saint never curses others even though he is provoked to the extreme, but simply prays to the Almighty – not to protect him from dangers or save him from dishonour – but to bestow jnana, light, purity and illumination on his opponents. He never hurts others even though he is hurt. He simply forgives and forgets. He remains oblivious of any wrong done to him.

A true God-realized saint finds his own beloved Deity in the thief, the debauchee, the rogue, the murderer, the assailant, the ant, the dog, the Pariah, the Brahmin, the tree, the stone, the scorpion, in fact, in the entire living and non-living creation. He is one with all.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Managing the Mind

From Teachings of Swami Satyananda Saraswati, Volume I



I am disturbed by so many distractions. How can I get rid of them?

Distractions are natural for everybody. Even if you live in seclusion at the top of the mountains, you will have distractions. If you close yourself off in a soundproof chamber, you will still have distractions. Distractions are born of desires, ignorance and unawareness of the spirit. When you are not following the inner path side

by side with external life, you will have more distractions, whether you are living in the country or in a busy city. On the yogic path you can learn to live to the fullest without being affected by distractions.

How are we influenced by living in ordinary society? Does the constant suggestion we are subjected to from advertising, newspapers, etc. affect our minds?

Everybody is under hypnosis. Constant influence is being exerted on all individuals and it is totally structuring their minds. The whole lifestyle is a hypnotic process. Delusion hypnotizes you and you are continually exposed to newspapers, advertisements, television, radio, books and magazines which keep you under hypnosis.

How are you going to dehypnotize yourself? If you manage it, you will be disillusioned about the whole scheme of society. We live within a family pattern, a man and woman live together and call themselves husband and wife. That's hypnotism. If you were to dehypnotize yourself, the family would break

up. In fact, man lives under constant hypnotism right from the time of his birth up to the point of his death. Perhaps only a few people are not under that hypnotic state.

Once I tried to dehypnotize myself, and I found that I had no faith in anything. I was full of doubt and I couldn't be sure of the honesty and sincerity of anyone. Therefore, it is easier for most people to remain hypnotized. But as you grow in spiritual life, you automatically become dehypnotized.

Where does restlessness come from and how can it be overcome?

Generally, restlessness is due to excessive thinking and desiring, and it indicates that the mind is not under your control. In this physical body there are two forms of energy. One is known as mental energy and the other is vital or *pranic* energy. When you are feeling restless, it means your mental energy is high and your pranic energy is low. There is an imbalance; your sense organs are very active and your motor organs are less active. In hatha yoga language, we call this an imbalance between ida and pingala nadis, or in modern scientific terms, an imbalance between the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems.

In order to harmonize the excess mental energy it is necessary for one to practise more raja yoga concentration. The best method is repetition of a mantra. The mantra can be repeated mentally, either with or without the use of a mala. It can also be practised in synchronization with the breath. Of course there are many other ways of practising the mantra, but these are the best methods for checking the outflow of mental energy.

If you are not able to do this, then there is another way of approaching the problem. You should try to increase the level of prana in the body. Either you check the quantum of mental energy or you increase the quantum of pranic energy. The purpose of hatha yoga, raja yoga, or in fact any form of yoga is to create this harmonious situation.

At the same time, on another level, there are certain hormonal secretions in the physical body which contribute to restlessness. The most disturbing hormones are adrenaline and testosterone. If you can efficiently control the outflow of these hormones, you can overcome the primary physiological factors leading to restlessness.

By regularly practising asanas, pranayama and meditation, hormonal production is controlled, the mental and pranic energies are harmonized and problems such as restlessness do not occur.

How can I have a free mind?

It is very difficult to have a free mind, and more than that, it is very dangerous. If a tiger is not kept caged, it might run free and kill many people. Before you think about making the mind free, it must be educated, trained and disciplined, otherwise it might bring destruction to you and to others.

The mind is very powerful. It is the basis of good and evil and it can manifest anxiety or balance. The same mind wants to commit suicide at one instant and to realize God the next. This means there are two stages of mind – the untamed mind and the trained mind. A yogi has a trained mind, but an animal doesn't. Now, in man there is an animal, a man and a god. Once a man has trained his thoughts and emotions, his actions are controlled, and then he can think of making his mind free.

If you do not discipline yourself before making the mind free, it will make you unhappy and depressed. It will create hatred, likes and dislikes, attachments and repulsions, and it could influence you towards self-destruction. Nowadays we are all suffering because our minds are undisciplined. So when we talk about freedom of mind, we should not forget about discipline. Discipline of mind and freedom of mind should go together; they are not independent of each other.

What is Drashta?

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Drashta is a term used in yoga to indicate a quality, a capacity of the mind which is imbued with awareness. The awareness in this quality of mind makes you aware of yourself. Right now you may think you are aware of yourself but you are not. Out of the two billion bits of information that are processed by the brain every minute, how aware are you of the information that is being received by the brain? A very minute part. Out of the millions of impressions being received by the mind every moment, how aware are you of the information being received by the mind? A very small part.

Two faces of the mind

You may be aware but you are not the observer. You may be awake, active and interactive, in the world but you are not observing. Yoga uses a specific word 'drashta' to indicate a condition of mind which is observing itself.

Sri Swami Satyananda said that the mind is dissipated, distracted, running in all directions. When you sit down for meditation you begin to think, 'I need to control my mind, I need to become still, I need to become focused', and you make the effort. What is happening there? It is the mind which is distracted, dissipated, disturbed and it is the same mind which thinks, 'I want to become stable, quiet and peaceful'.

These are the two faces of the mind. The mind has two faces, the external and the internal face. Just imagine two faces back to back; one is looking this way and the other is looking that way. When you are awake, you are identifying with the face of the mind which is in the front looking ahead, but when you are sleeping, your awareness or the identification of the mind is with the mind which is looking inward, so you are not aware of the outside.

It is inaccurate to say that there are two faces of the mind, but for the sake of talk, discussion and understanding. In normal life we are in the front face but in meditation we block out the front through pratyahara, and we direct our gaze inwards into the other side. We start looking inwards and the moment we begin to look inwards, there is this awareness that 'I'm looking in'. That is the state of drashta.

True and false nature

In the first three sutras of Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* it is said:

Atha yogah anushasanam.

Yogah chitta vritti nirodha.

Tadha drashta swaroope awasthanam.

These three sutras convey the concept of the external mind and the internal mind. The first sutra says, 'Instructions on

yoga', or 'the disciplines of yoga'. This leads to the second sutra, 'Quieting the dissipated mental behaviour' which is the external face of the mind. Once this quieting of the external behavior, the dissipation and agitations have been brought to a minimum, then the peaceful state of mind makes one look inward. That is the third sutra, 'Then the observer realizes his true nature'.

According to these sutras, true nature is looking inwards and false nature is looking outwards. The false nature connects one with maya and the true nature connects one with atma.

When you are in maya, you are involved, you are the enjoyer and the doer, the *bhokta* and the *karta*. Karta is the performer or the doer and bhokta is the enjoyer. Coming out of the identification of karta and bhokta, which relates you with maya, makes you observe your essential, spiritual nature and that is drashta.

– 15 March 2015, Ganga Darshan, Munger



Concentration

From the teachings of Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Tatpratishedharthamekatattoabhyasah.

For removal of those (obstacles and accompanying symptoms) the practice of concentration on one principle (is to be done). *Yoga Sutras* (1:32)

Worldly pleasures intensify the desire for enjoying greater pleasures. Hence, the mind of worldly people is very restless. There is no satisfaction and mental peace. The mind can never be satisfied, whatever amount of pleasure you may store up for it. The more it enjoys the pleasures, the more it wants them. So, people are exceedingly troubled and bothered by their own minds. They are tired of their minds. In order to remove these botherations and troubles, the rishis thought it best to deprive the mind of all sensual pleasures. When the mind has been concentrated or made extinct, it cannot pinch one to seek further pleasure. All botherations and troubles are removed forever and the person attains real peace.

Nature of the mind

The mind is drawn towards various objects. There is dissipation of mental energy or the powers of the mind, in various directions. The rays of the mind are like the rays of light, scattered in the case of worldly-minded persons. When the rays of the mind are scattered over diverse objects, you get pain. When the rays are gathered and concentrated by practice, the mind becomes concentrated and you get *ananda*, happiness, from within.

When you see your dear friend after six years, the *ananda* that you get is not from the person, but from within yourself. The mind becomes concentrated for the time being and you get happiness from within your own self. When you are in

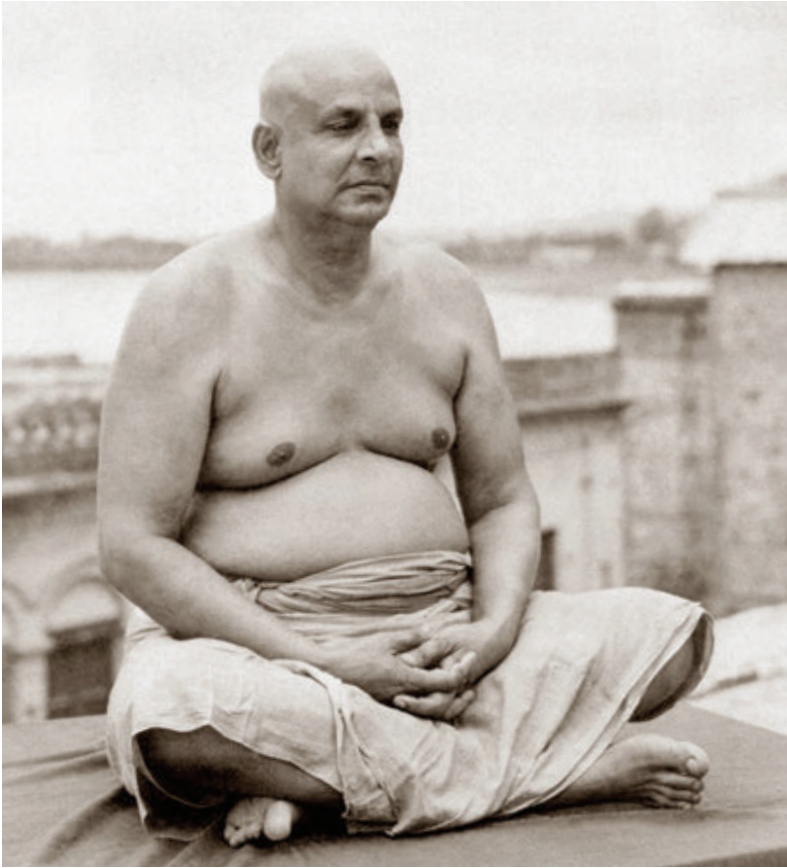
Kashmir and enjoying the picturesque scenery of Muttan, Gulmarg, Sonamarg, Chashmashahi and Anantanag, your mind will be suddenly upset by shock if you receive a telegram which brings the unhappy tidings of the untimely demise of your only son. The scenery will no longer interest you. It has have lost its charm for you. There is no more attention. There is depression. It is concentration and attention that gives you pleasure in sightseeing.

For purposes of concentration, you will have to gather the scattered rays of the mind patiently through *vairagya* and *abhyasa*, non-attachment and sustained practice, through *tyaga* and *tapas*, renunciation and austerity, and then march boldly with indefatigable energy towards God or Brahman. Through constant sadhana, the mind must be checked from externalizing. It must be made to move towards Brahman, its original home. When the mental rays are concentrated, illumination begins.

The mind is compared to quicksilver, because its rays are scattered over various objects. It is compared to a monkey, because it jumps from one object to another object. It is compared to moving air, because it is unstable and fickle. It is compared to a furious, rutting elephant, because of its passionate impetuosity. The mind is known by the name Great Bird, because it jumps from one object to another object just as a bird jumps from one twig to another, from one tree to another. Raja yoga teaches us how to concentrate the mind and then how to ransack the innermost recesses of our own mind.

Nature of the mind

Kshipta, mudha, vikshipta, ekagra and niruddha are the five yogic bhūmikas. The *chitta* or mind manifests itself in five different forms. In the *kshipta* state, the rays of the mind are scattered on various objects. It is restless and jumps from one object to another. In the *mudha* state, the mind is dull and forgetful. *Vikshipta* is the gathering mind. It is occasionally steady and at other times distracted. By practice of



concentration, the mind struggles to gather itself. In the *ekagra* state it is one-pointed. There is only one idea present in the mind. The mind is under perfect control in the *niruddha* state. To stop the modifications of the mind *dharana*, concentration, is practised

By manipulating the mind, you will be able to bring it under your control, make it work as you like and compel it to concentrate its powers as you desire. He who has learnt to manipulate the mind will get the whole of Nature under his control.

There is no limit to the power of the human mind. The more concentrated it is, the more power is brought to bear

on one point. A scientist concentrates his mind and invents many things. Through concentration, he opens the layers of the gross mind and penetrates deeply into higher regions of the mind and obtains deeper knowledge. He concentrates all the energies of his mind into one focus and throws them out upon the materials he is analyzing and so finds out their secrets.

Some practical advice

Some medical students leave the medical college soon after joining it as they find it disgusting to wash the pus in ulcers and dissect dead bodies. They make a serious blunder. After studying pathology, medicine, operative surgery, morbid anatomy, bacteriology, the course will be very interesting in the final year.

Many spiritual aspirants leave the practice of concentration of mind after some time as they find it difficult to practise. They also make a grave mistake like the medical students. In the beginning of practice, when you struggle to get over the body-consciousness, it will be troublesome. It will be a physical wrestling. The emotions and *sankalpas*, ideas and fancies, will be abundant. In the third year of practice, the mind will be cool, pure and strong and you will derive immense joy. The sum total of pleasures of the whole world is nothing when compared to the *ananda* or bliss derived from meditation.

Do not give up the practice at any cost. Plod on and persevere. Have patience, cheerfulness, and tenacity. You will succeed eventually. Never despair. Find out by serious introspection the various impediments that act as stumbling blocks in your concentration and remove them with patience and efforts one by one. Do not allow new *sankalpas* and new *vasanas*, *desires*, to crop up. Nip them in the bud through *viveka* and *vichara*, discrimination and reflection.

Know that you are progressing in yoga and *sattwa* is increasing, when you are always cheerful, when the mind is even and concentrated.

Karmic Stress

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Elimination of tension is not such a simple matter. There is a problem which has to be 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. Stress arises from this inner store of experience.

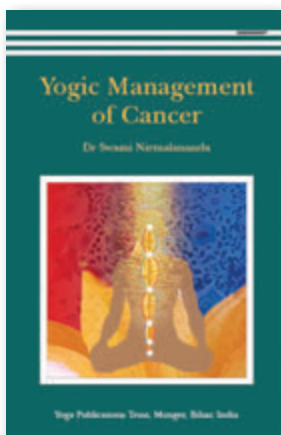
Happiness and unhappiness lie deep in you and these experiences are stored in the form of *samskaras*. Within you they are accumulated in the form of particles. From particles they become waves of energy. These waves then develop into a force which later emerges as an experience. So, your experience of happiness or unhappiness arises in the form of a wave that is born of one particle.

Another name for this is karma. These archetypes collectively form the karma of an individual. It is on account of them that your mind, emotions and personality are formed. If you suffer in life it is because of your deep-rooted karma. To deal with stress the karmas have to be purged out by the practice of yoga.

– Printed in YOGA, Vol. 5, No. 5 (September 1994)

A Perspective on the Gunas

From *Yogic Management of Cancer*, Dr Swami Nirmalananda

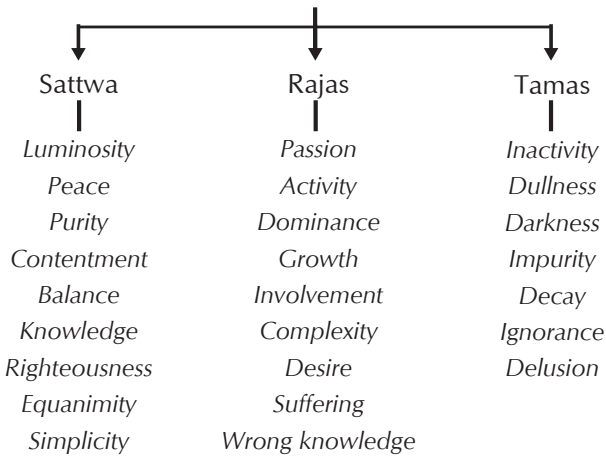


Prakriti is made of three qualities, the three *gunas* – sattwa, rajas and tamas, which exist in a state of equilibrium when she is in the dormant state. When the *gunas* lose their state of equilibrium, prakriti becomes active and creation takes place, evolution starts and the cycle of birth and death begins. When they regain their perfect equilibrium, involution begins, creation dissolves and the cycle of birth and death comes to an end. Thus the *gunas* are both the cause of creation and also the inherent qualities of all that is created. For example, a stone has inherent qualities of solidity, heaviness and immobility; a river has inherent qualities of fluidity, coolness and transparency, and a deer has agility and tenderness as its inherent qualities.

Each and every thing that exists in this universe, therefore, is under the influence of these *gunas*. The way we think and act is constantly influenced by the *gunas*. Our thoughts, attitudes and actions decide our future desires. As long as we have unfulfilled desires and the fruits of actions that have not been lived through, we continue in the birth-death cycle. The quality of these desires and the fruits of actions that are not yet lived through decide the nature of the next birth. Thus they bind the self, *atman*, to the cycle of life and death by drawing it into the wheel of karma. The *Bhagavad Gita* (14:5) says: “Purity, passion and inertia – these *gunas*, qualities born of Prakriti, bind fast the indestructible *atman*, the Self, to the body.”

Types of gunas

The gunas can be identified by their unique characteristics. The *Bhagavad Gita* (14:6–8) describes sattwa as stainless, luminous and healthy and as that which binds the atman by attachment to happiness and knowledge. Rajas it describes as having the nature of passion, being the source of thirst and attachment, which binds the atman by attachment to action. Tamas it describes as deluding, born of ignorance and as that which binds the atman fast by heedlessness, indolence and sleep.



The gunas always exist in combination. Nothing can be made up of pure sattwa or only rajas or tamas. One of the gunas may dominate while others provide a support on which the predominant one can stand, or they may exist in different permutations and combinations. In general the lower forms of life and non-living things represent tamas guna. As the life form evolves rajas guna appears in increasing amounts. Sattwa guna is found interspersed everywhere in nature and in various life forms.

The dynamics of the gunas are ever-changing. At no two moments can the status of the gunas be the same in a given individual or situation. Our thoughts and behaviour patterns are constantly under the spell of the play of the gunas. When sattwa predominates we think and act in a given way, but

when rajas is dominant we think and behave differently, and when tamas dominates we think and act in yet another way. Our personality type is decided by which guna predominates overall.

However, we need not be a passive puppet dancing to the tune of the gunas. The gunas are changing spontaneously and can also be changed at will. With our conscious will we can change the dominance of a particular guna and bring in the guna of our choice. For example, when a job has a deadline and at midnight we want to ward off sleep, we drink a cup of strong coffee or take a cold shower to change tamas into rajas. When we want to change a guna to suit the demands of the situation, then an appropriate guna can be brought in by thoughts and actions conducive to that guna.

Overall in one's personality tamas should be minimized first by bringing in rajas, and then rajas overcome by enhancing sattwa. The ultimate aim is to go beyond sattwa, that is not to be interested or attached to the sattwic state, but to remain non-attached and balanced in all the states.

The influence of the gunas on health

According to Ayurveda and yoga, disturbance in the gunas, usually excessive rajas or tamas, leads to ill health. Too much rajas causes diseases such as anxiety, irritable bowel syndrome, high blood pressure, angina and other heart conditions, diabetes and hormonal imbalance, to name just a few. Excess tamas may cause depression, obesity, infections, tumours, degenerative disorders such as arthritis, dementia and other conditions of this nature. *Cancer is a manifestation of accumulated tamas guna.* Sometimes both rajas and tamas are deranged together in different proportions, leading to diseases. Sattwa is a state of balance and good health.

Yoga in Prison

This is the translation of an article published in the Swedish daily newspaper Dagens Nyheter, 12 September 2007

At Norrtälje prison, the inmates imprisoned for crimes of violence, learn how to control their rage. Yoga is included in the treatment program. "Yoga creates harmony and gives the interns an opportunity to practise self-discipline. It is a very good tool for those who really want to change their life."

A big room in the basement has been converted into a yoga hall. There is a blue Buddha statue in front of white walls; a dark blue wall is decorated with a colourful sun in the middle. It could be any yoga centre, if it were not for the bars at the windows below the ceiling; if it were not for the high walls surrounding the building, barbed wire and locked gates and the fact that the people practising yoga are incarcerated criminals serving long sentences.

We are at Norrtälje prison. Here Eva Seilitz, yoga teacher and health and wellbeing consultant, is conducting yoga classes for a group of interns a couple of times a week. They also have access to a yoga program on DVD which is being shown on TV-monitors in the individual cells through the internal TV-system.

It all started in the summer of 2002.

"When the request came I had started to work as a coordinator helping women who are victims of domestic violence in the municipality of Norrtälje," Eva tells us. "One of the most important questions was to find treatment models for men who abuse women. I had also been thinking for some time about what we could do to stop the increase of violence, drug addiction and criminality in society. Is it possible to motivate criminals to change their lifestyle by using yoga and relaxation?"

After three years of yoga during the summer holidays when the other treatment programs had a break, Eva was asked if she would like to start yoga for the interns as part of the ART (aggression replacement training) treatment program. ART is about learning to control anger and aggressive behaviour and training in social competence and ethics. Yoga is an excellent support and complements the other components of the program, as yoga also has an ethical component, where through the body one works with one's inner self. Norrtälje prison is also about to start another program, PREPARE, for younger criminals where yoga will be a part.

Yoga for something very good

Eva Seilitz is educated in Satyananda Yoga. The method is a soft form of hatha yoga, where one develops strength and flexibility, as well as relaxation and meditation. Results show that most participants are positive about yoga. It has given effects such as:

- Increased feeling of mental peace and control;
- Increased concentration and motivation to study;
- Increased physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing;
- Increased feeling of calm and better sleep.

This is what some of them said:

"I have come to terms with my past through yoga and meditation. To forgive myself and to forgive others is the key to inner peace."

"Through yoga you get good health. It should be an important integrated part of the day and be obligatory. It is an activity that leads to something very good."

"I have cleaned out twelve years of my life. I have a complete new life energy and am experiencing feelings that have been completely buried. I can even cry which I was not able to do before. It is as if someone has made a hole in a thick crust and it all just comes pouring out."

Sweden is not the first country that offers yoga in prisons. In USA the Human Kindness organization was founded in the

1970s and in England a foundation, The Prison Phoenix Trust, has educated yoga teachers since the 1980s.

Research has shown that the interns manage with smaller doses of medicine and have a greater motivation to do something about their lives. What makes the project at Norrtälje prison exceptional is that yoga is integrated in the criminal welfare programs, and that prisoners are using an internal TV-system. Internal TV is a resource which could be used much more than it is today, according to Eva Seilitz.

Has she never been scared or felt insecure standing in front of a group of criminal men?

“No,” she says. “I have always been amazed at how sensitive and receptive they are. Only on two occasions have I had disciplinary issues, but it was possible to solve them. To practise yoga is a difficult challenge for many of the men. In the beginning they feel a bit embarrassed, feel it is a bit silly. It also requires patience and concentration to learn some of the practices, but they are trying and making an effort. Many of the interns are surprised what effect the practices have. Sometimes they come to the yoga class angry over something, thinking that they want to skip the yoga class. However, after the class they leave with peace of mind. Yoga creates harmony and gives them an opportunity to practise self-discipline. It is a very good tool for those who want to change their lives.”

Josef

Josef is incarcerated for twelve years for a violent crime he committed. He has done five years. He does not justify himself for he knows he deserves the punishment.

“For the first time I think that the department of criminal justice has found the right thing. If yoga can help only one percent of the interns it would be worth introducing yoga in all prisons. For me it was a turning point.”

Josef is from a war zone in the Middle East. Violence was an everyday occurrence when he grew up. He was a child

soldier and he has seen things that no human being should see. When he was twenty he came to Sweden.

“I couldn’t control myself and I ended up in fights, exploded at every little provocation. You do something silly without thinking about it. It just happens. In the social circles I was part of there was also some cocaine which didn’t help.” “It is hard to be in prison,” he says. “You struggle with the feeling of guilt. You are locked up and just want to break out. If you are not mentally strong you will go mad.” Yoga has given him a new perspective on life.

“I am able to see my shortcomings, what I have done with my life, and that every action has a consequence. It is also easier for me to restrain myself today. For sure there is always something that happens in a prison that upsets and irritates you. Now it is enough for me to regain my composure with three deep breaths.

“Before I had no peace of mind or spirit. I despised myself and therefore I also despised others and everything around me. I had to start from scratch to build self-respect. Yoga has also given me respect for others. I don’t mean the respect that you demand in the criminal world, which is based on fear, but a respect which is based on care and consideration.”

In the beginning the yoga practice was a struggle, both physically, mentally and emotionally. Josef was a bodybuilder and had strong muscles, but he was not very flexible. Some of the practices were almost impossible to do. The first three months he was ready to give up many times. Many of the other interns quit the program, which was a shame. However, it gave him more personal and individual practice.

“After some time it was much easier and finally I wanted to do the practices regularly in my cell, every morning and evening.”

Future plans

Yoga has given him many physical effects He sleeps better, the pulse and blood pressure have decreased. He has more clarity

of mind, he says. Before there was just complete chaos in there; he was not able to concentrate. Now he is studying economics. When his wife and children come to visit, they practise yoga together. He is also writing a book with simple yoga practices for children in Swedish, French, Italian and German.

The ward is calmer nowadays. Josef tells us about the time when the wardens forgot to lock them into their cells in the evening. "If this had happened a year back nobody knows what would have happened. If we had been pissed off with somebody we would have killed him, or we would have completely ruined the place, or overtaken the guards and broken out. Nothing of this sort happened. We baked a chocolate cake, watched a movie and played cards. Then we made a little cave or hut with blankets in the kitchen and went to sleep in it together. We stayed because of Eva and her yoga. Today we have a very good relationship with the people working in the prison and the management is supporting the yoga project."

Anders Ekstrom who is the manager of the prison thinks that yoga has become a very important complement and support to the traditional treatment program. "The interns who are aggressive have become calmer and those who study get better results. We are now going to make an evaluation and see if this is something that should be integrated in criminal welfare at large. This autumn we are going to conduct a research study with Karolinska Institutet, the biggest hospital, medical university and medical research facility in Sweden, on the effect of certain medicines on attention deficiency syndrome which every fourth intern suffers from. We are going to integrate yoga in the treatment."

www.dn.se/insidan/yoga-gor-aggressiva-fangar-lugnare











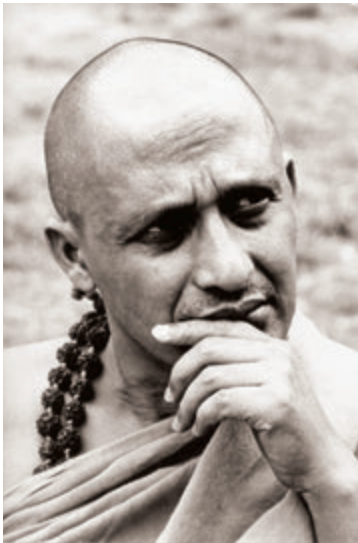






Yoga Nidra in Prison

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



The greatest tragedy of man is that he doesn't know how to deal with tension and his negative thoughts and emotions. In fact, the mistake is with religions. They have not dealt with man's problems in a scientific manner. Instead, they have said, "Don't think like that. Don't do this. Don't agree with that." This is dictatorial ordinance. Man and society cannot be rectified by dictatorship; there must be a very systematic and scientific approach.

Therefore, during the practice of yoga nidra, if the mind is vacillating and full of anxiety, and if negative thoughts come, don't let them disturb you. Give them a free passage. If you allow them free expression, at first your yoga nidra practice may not appear to be successful, but after some time, the negative thoughts and all turbulence will automatically cease and tranquillity will prevail.

In 1968 I had my first experience of this principle. While on a tour of the USA, I was invited to teach yoga in a detention camp. I was very happy to do so, but when I was shown into their large hall, I found myself confronted with six hundred monkeys.

Then a man who seemed to be an officer offered me a cigarette and I felt offended. In India, even when people offer flowers, they ask first. I was not used to such behaviour, and they were not used to acting any differently. I thought I would

have to leave the hall immediately as teaching yoga seemed out of the question. But I had come to teach, so as a last resort, I decided to try yoga nidra.

It took six or seven strong people to get everybody to lie down on the floor, but still they kicked and pulled each other, smoked and spat. Sometimes they turned around and stared at me, saying "Hey man, what's happening?" The whole time I was just repeating the same sentence over and over again, "Please close your eyes and don't move." I would also close my eyes so I couldn't see what was happening. It was unbearable, but I kept on for forty-five minutes.

After the class I got out quickly. The next day I telephoned the head warden and told him I wouldn't be coming back. "But you must return!" he exclaimed. "For the first time in my experience all the inmates went to their rooms quietly and slept. Never have we had such a peaceful evening. In the morning when they were woken, the first thing they said was, "Keep your eyes closed and don't move."

When I arrived for the next class, they were all lying calmly on the floor, so I told them to stand up for surya namaskara. But they said, "We don't want to do exercises, we want to practise yoga." So I put them into yoga nidra and for seven days they practised with increasing improvement. Even though initially they had seemed over-excited, negative and dissipated, they did respond internally.

How did such a change come about? When a man is disturbed and under tension he becomes negative and his behaviour is influenced. When he relaxes, he becomes positive. Therefore, you must remember that in yoga nidra it is not necessary to make yourself peaceful. If you are disturbed or agonized mentally, it does not matter. Even if you are not able to lie down, don't use force. The important thing is to just expose yourself to the practice.

– Printed in YOGA, Vol. 21, No. 5 (May 1983)

Message to Yogic Studies Students

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Hari Om Tat Sat

It is a nice day today to wish you all goodbye. Although the weather is cold outside, the heart is warm. It is this warmth of heart that you have to go out with. Warmth of heart does not mean a sentiment or a feeling but positivity, happiness and optimism. These are the three qualities that we look for and aspire to in life, and they represent the warmth of the heart.

This is what we try to achieve in yoga too. Yoga has been given many definitions. One is physical, related to the practice and the perfection of the physical practices, asanas, pranayamas, and hatha yoga. Another aspect of yoga is purely psychological, the management of mental conditions, states and vrittis. Another stage of yoga is spiritual, the path of discovering oneself.

Yoga vidya

In one yoga practice you do not cover all the three grounds. In the four-month course that you have had at Ganga Darshan, the focus has been on all aspects in a little measure so that you are able to experience the integrated form of yoga. This has been the teaching of Swami Sivananda, later furthered by our guru, Sri Swami Satyananda. For them yoga is a vidya.

Vidya means knowledge and this knowledge is not only physical or how to get rid of one's physical problems or mental, psychological disturbances. The purpose of *vidya* is to connect one with wisdom so that human thinking, human interaction, human behaviour can be harmonized. That is the purpose of *vidya*. Through learning, knowledge, understanding and by applying the principles of positivity in one's life one comes to a state of harmony, peace and contentment. That has been the focus of yoga. In society 80% of people practise the physical yoga yet that is a miniscule part. The classical literatures of yoga speak of *chitta vritti nirodha*, the psychological management which was the thrust of Sage Patanjali.

Sage Patanjali never taught asana and pranayama. Patanjali was never the master or propagator of hatha yoga. His main concern was psychological and the improvement of human psychology. The main concern of Swatmarama and Gheranda and others was improvement of and harmony in the physical body. These are different trends in yoga which people have not yet explored.

In the hype of yoga people have latched on to the physical component and there is nothing wrong with that. However, as a teacher you have to know that there is something beyond the physical component that yoga is aiming to help you understand. There is something beyond the mind and beyond the human psyche that yoga is trying to help you understand.

That understanding is your understanding, it is not the yogic understanding for the path of yoga is defined already. You have to grow on that path, build up your own experience, and have the right attitude to make your life a quality life, and therefore, in the ashram environment there is training where certain disciplines are to be adhered to.

Self-improvement

People see discipline as bondage but I don't. People see discipline as restriction but I don't. I see discipline as a way to prepare ourselves to become more free, more creative,

more understanding and more aware. That is the purpose of discipline for me. Not to restrict your creativity but to give a direction to that creativity, the mind has to be prepared.

Ultimately all reactions and responses in your life are from your own mind, from your likes and dislikes, from your attachments, attractions, detachments and repulsions. These are the only reasons why you face conflict, struggle, stress and tension in life. If you are able to keep your mind in your grip, there is no reason for anybody to suffer and struggle. That has been the philosophy of yoga.

You have to go into yoga with the understanding that it will make you more free from your limitations. By removing your inabilities it will make you more able. With that idea of self-improvement you have to go into yoga. If the idea of self-improvement is not there, yoga has no meaning. It only becomes an exercise, a gymnastic or aerobic practice the way thousands of studios around the world teach yoga.

Remain a student

As a final message, please remember to remain a student always. Never consider yourself to be a teacher. As long as you are a student, your mind will be keen to learn and absorb. If you feel that you have concluded your studies, your mind will shut down. So, make the effort to remain a student all the time so that you are able to imbibe, learn and absorb from your interactions, your sadhana, your teaching and your practice the best that yoga can offer you.

– 24 January 2016, Ganga Darshan, Munger



Sound Sleep At Last

Hari Om

I would like to share my experience as a yoga sadhaka at BSY. I came to BSY on 2 October 2015 to join the four-month Yogic Studies course. Now I have completed three happy months and I can feel the changes which have happened to me knowingly and unknowingly.

I work for a bank and I always had problems with my sleep. It started when I was sixteen. I cannot say it was due to my lifestyle or any past experience with life. Honestly, I don't know why I had a sleeping problem.

Sleep paralysis

When I slept at night or during the day, it was not always good sleep. Sometimes I felt that I was being pulled out of my bed and dragged out of my room and I could do nothing but experience what was happening to me. On a few instances I felt that someone was vigorously holding my throat and I felt choked due to lack of air. Those moments were horrifying because at the same time my body was fully paralyzed. I was able to open my eyes sometimes but was not sure whether what I was seeing was real or some kind of dream. I was petrified whenever that happened and sleeping became impossible after that.

It was not happening every single day; it was intermittent, sometimes night after night and sometimes it was gone for weeks. I noticed that when it happened, most of the time it reoccurred twice or thrice during the same sleep. It was very scary in the beginning, especially at my young age. I used to run to my father and sleep next to him if it happened. Later on it became a part of my sleeping experience; however I did not get proper sleep at night.

Enter yoga lifestyle

After consulting a doctor I was told that I had sleep disorder or insomnia. According to the doctor I was deeply stressed which I never believed. I was demotivated by what the doctor said. Of course I had problems in life like everyone but I was not and am not a miserable person. I was advised to follow a schedule for my eating and sleeping habits and to make it a routine. Due to my work and other activities I was unable to eat and sleep at fixed times. The pills did not help either.

After coming to BSY I joined the APMB and yoga nidra classes. The ashram environment gave me so much happiness and the yogic living in the ashram put me in a perfect routine. Since the food was served at fixed times, I had my breakfast, lunch and dinner at the same time every day. Within two months of yoga practice I realized I had only had one bad sleep in the beginning shortly after my arrival. Gradually I started to forget about the problem as it was not happening to me anymore. After about two and a half months I became aware that my sleeping problem was totally gone. Now I feel relaxed before going to bed and sleep without any of those scary nightmares.

I am amazed by what yoga has done to me in such a short span of time. It has also changed my way of thinking and looking at life. I am glad I came to BSY. I want to sincerely thank my guru for giving me an opportunity to study here. In turn, I promise that I take yoga not just as a practice but as my lifestyle.

– Student of four-month Yogic Studies 2015–2016



Thoughts on the Practice of Mouna

Of all the practices we have been given mouna is the most difficult. I have been thinking in relation to my own efforts to practise mouna and how to make it into a practice of swadhyaya, not only a discipline to be followed, but to experience the purpose and effects of the practice. The most difficult organs to control and regulate are the mouth and the tongue, both in regard to what goes in and what comes out.

What comes out is a projection of our mind and when we are asked to keep mouna our mind naturally rebels and finds every excuse not to keep mouna. Somebody else speaks to us and we think, well, then I can also speak. We think that what we have to say is so important and urgent that it cannot wait. When somebody asks us something, we feel impolite if we don't answer and are afraid of the reaction from the other person.

In my own practice the first thing I asked myself to do was to observe the things or incidents that made me break mouna and the impulses in the mind that made me want to speak when keeping mouna. There were a few things that I was able to observe.

First impulse

The first impulse I noticed is related to social and cultural conditionings. We are considered to be rude if we don't say 'good morning' or 'good night' or 'how are you?' the moment we meet someone.

If we have to be together with someone in silence after 30 seconds we start to feel uncomfortable. Try riding in the lift with people you know in silence, even with people you don't know. First you smile and nod but then what to do. You have to

look down and wish that the ride would finish asap. However, if the ride lasts longer than just a few floors everybody starts to relax and rather than an oppressed and uncomfortable silence it becomes a relaxed and natural silence. The same happens if you have to share a room with someone. In the beginning it is very difficult to keep mouna but after some time you notice that you actually start to see and listen to the other person beyond words and speech, beyond the external appearance and beyond your own projection. In the silent communication of mouna we actually get to know each other better than in the verbal communication.

More impulses

The second impulse is related to memories. We meet a person we know and immediately certain memories rise to the surface regarding something that we want or need to tell this person.

Next comes the projection of our sensorial experiences. We experience something and immediately we feel the need to share this experience with somebody whether good or bad – what a beautiful sunset, the food is really tasty, it is very hot today, that person is looking like this or like that – and on it goes the whole day. However, this instant commentary stops us from expanding our awareness and deepening our experience.

With the practice of mouna when we stop that impulse to run our verbal commentary we are able to get out of our head and experience the present moment which we are able to expand and deepen – in silence.

Then comes the need to constantly project our mind and our ego. What we are thinking, our opinions, what we know and don't know, what we have done, our memories and life stories. Our biggest fear in life has nothing to do with the outside world or external circumstances. Our biggest fear in life is to be with ourselves, our mind. The most confronting experience in life is our own mind and we have made our own mind our greatest enemy. In order not to face our mind we have

to project it. When it comes to the practice of mouna, we have to face our own mind and we have to do it with acceptance, with kindness, gentleness and befriend our mind. The practice of mouna allows us to begin this process of becoming aware of our mind and the content of the mind, thoughts, emotions, reactions and memories that we store, accumulate and project in our interactions.

Self-image

Through our speech we are also projecting our self-image. It is important for us to keep up our self-appearance. When we keep mouna and are not able to project ourselves we feel naked and vulnerable. It also means that we have to be with ourselves and see ourselves without the make-up and the different masks that we have created.

People sitting on a bus or waiting for a plane at the airport are unrelated to each other. As soon as they start to speak to each other appearance comes in and the mask is put on, the different mannerisms and expressions are put in place of how they want the world to see them and how they think they have to be and look like in order to fit in.

All this happens without us even being aware of it. Mouna does not actually mean not to speak, but since it is such a strong and uncontrollable impulse or activity of the mind the practice begins with external silence so that we can start to observe the impulses of speech and become aware of what we speak and why we speak.

How much of what we speak is necessary? How much of what we speak is appropriate or inappropriate? How much of what we speak is constructive and positive or destructive and negative? With the practice of mouna we begin to become aware of these questions and how much energy is used and wasted with unnecessary speech. It also brings us closer to the experience and the expression of our natural self.

– *Swami Maitreyi, Colombia*

Two Chatter Boxes

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



There are only two types of beings on this planet who chatter continuously: birds, who from morning to night chatter, chatter, chatter, and people, who from the time they wake up until the time they go to sleep, love to chatter. Silence does not come in the dictionary of human beings. If they are told

to keep silent, it is always seen as a discipline that they have to rebel against.

What is speech?

Speech is an expression of behaviour, and not only human behaviour for animals have it too. When does an animal speak or try to speak? The animal, whether it is a dog or any other animal, will try to convey when it needs something, or when it wants something. When the animal is in pain, it will try to utter some sounds or when the animal is happy, it will try to express itself. Therefore, happiness, pain and need are the three conditions where speech is used to express what one feels.

Speech in Sanskrit is known as *shabda*. Speech which is spoken through the mouth is known as *vac*, and Saraswati is called *Vac Devi*. She is the goddess of learning and *Vac Devi*, the shakti, the power who controls and regulates speech.

Saraswati as a goddess, not as a demonical power, but as a godly power represents the positive, the beautiful, the just, the wisdomful that has to come out in form of *vac*. If Saraswati was depicted as a demoness, then the negative would be represented. However, since Saraswati is represented as a goddess, it is the positive of the speech power that one has to be aware of. The wisdom of Saraswati is *Vac Devi*, *Vac Shakti*, the power of expression through speech.

Connecting to the positive Saraswati

This power of expression through speech on the positive side is thoughtful and wisdomful and on the negative side it is irrational and critical. One is the positive Saraswati and one is the negative Saraswati. If you are optimistic, happy and convey happiness through your speech, the positive Saraswati is with you. If you are criticizing, gossiping and using speech to express your anger and negativity, it is not the positive Saraswati who is sitting on your tongue at that time. Although the speech is there, it is not white, it is black. The speech does not contain wisdom, it contains hurt. The speech does not

contain love, it contains destruction. So ask yourself, is the Saraswati on your tongue the positive or the destructive aspect?

In the scriptural descriptions of the vedic, tantric and other philosophical and spiritual systems in Asia, as well as in religious traditions like Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, emphasis has been on what one speaks, how one should speak and what the purpose of speech should be.

What is the purpose of speech, why should one speak at all? Speech is taken to be a shakti, an expressive power of the mind. Speech pulls on the shakti of the mind for the mind is like a battery. When one speaks a lot one is actually depleting the battery of the mind as the mind is being used. One is not recharging the mind, instead one is wasting the energy of the mind.

If one is restrained, thoughtful and full of wisdom in what one speaks, then one is conserving the battery which will last longer and be more effective.

The focus has to be on luminosity and the positive. Restraint in speech is also an indication that one can remain connected with positivity by remembering the deva and the devi aspect, the positive and the luminous aspect of life.

– 14 March 2015, Ganga Darshan, Munger



Language Without Whim and Fancy

Yoga teachers need to follow certain rules and disciplines when teaching Satyananda Yoga. One such rule is the use of Sanskrit names for yoga practices; other disciplines of this tradition are to maintain simplicity, to focus on clarity, and to adhere to the style as propounded by the masters rather than indulge in personal fancy.

History and therapy

Sri Swami Satyananda and Swami Niranjanananda emphasized the need to use the correct names. In a satsang given on 10 February 1983, at Caxton Hall in London, UK, Sri Swami Satyananda explains why he insists on the use of Sanskrit names:

“In this country, some yoga teachers use English names for yogasanas, some use Sanskrit names but do not pronounce them correctly. Maybe they consider it useless to place importance on the sounds of Sanskrit names.

“We must use both names in order to avoid confusion, for we are responsible for posterity. After two hundred years, research scholars might do research on yoga, and if they just have the names lotus pose, cobra pose, peacock pose, they will be confused as to how this peacock pose came about. There will be a gap in history. Therefore, we must use both names for the postures: mayurasana or peacock pose, bhujangasana or cobra pose.

“So do use both names, do not be guided by your individual whims and narrowness of mind, and do not become blind to history, for history is a current. This current has to be maintained. If you lose the link, in two hundred years researchers will call it cobra pose and wonder whether this cobra pose came from

the English people, Danish people, the Balkans or who. Where did it come from? If they happen to hear bhujangasana, they will say, 'Okay, let us see. This is Sanskrit, it must have come from somewhere in India.' Then they will be able to link the cultural movements taking place in England with reference to India. These are historical blunders which I try to avoid as much as possible and you should also do."

Swami Niranjanananda views the importance of Sanskrit names from another angle. The sounds of Sanskrit names have therapeutic value and thus influence body, pranas and chakras:

"It is good to have an understanding of Sanskrit names. The Sanskrit word *bhujangasana* is translated as 'cobra'. However, the Sanskrit name is a combination of the mantras *bhu, jan, ga* and each syllable affects the chakras in its own way specific to that posture.

"In the past, the Sanskrit names played an important role in the system of yoga. The yogis were able to perceive the problem in the patient and relate that problem to a chakra. Common sense says that indigestion relates to manipura chakra. The yogi would have felt that a particular chakra was being affected by an illness, a condition of body or mind. By prescribing bhujangasana he would have instantaneously given the idea to the patient and yoga teacher that this particular posture dealt with the awakening and rebalancing of certain major and minor psychic centres. In this way, Sanskrit names played an important role in ancient therapy.

With the advent of science, the system of observation and treatment of illness has been refined, but the Sanskrit names have been retained. Everyone should try to maintain them as much as possible."

Aim for clarity

Other than the use of Sanskrit names, the general language in a yoga class should be clear and simple. There is a tendency among teachers to adapt their language to modern trends. A student should never have to guess or wonder about the



meaning of an instruction but be able to follow it spontaneously and focus on the practice. Instructions are guidelines leading the students gently into the practice and the experience of the practice. They should never deter or confuse the yoga practitioner.

A few examples demonstrate where this trend can go and how far it takes the student away from simplicity, clarity and the original intention of the Satyananda Yoga tradition:

Update your visuals leaves tremendous scope for interpretation at what has to be done. Who would know what to do with an instruction such as *Set up your legs*? Expressions such as *Zoom into the feeling of your legs*, or *now run your awareness through your right leg* – are just attempts to replace the straightforward ‘become aware of your legs’.

‘Body-mind’ is an expression which may read easily but given as an instruction is an unnecessary abbreviation. Instead of saying *the breath relaxes your body-mind*, it would be more pleasant to add a simple ‘and’ and have ‘the body and mind relax’. With an instruction such as *Now tune into the feedback of your breath* – the student is at a loss about what to do. ‘Become aware of your breath’, ‘watch your breath’, ‘watch your breath slow down’ are clear instructions which guide students. Vague instructions are no instructions.

Trendy language has no place in a yoga class. Students should ‘feel at ease’, ‘be comfortable’ and not have to figure out what to do when they hear – *let yourself be guided by your comfort zone*.

Bridging the past to the future

Besides lack of clarity, the teacher should express respect and appreciation for a teaching and tradition that has withstood the tests of time and been part of every civilization on earth. To start a class casually with, *Let's all do three Oms* does not express the due sentiment. Introducing the class with 'We shall chant the mantra *Om* three times together' sets the tone of esteem for the science of mantra, and for the intent of the yoga class.

In the same vein, the announcement, *Let's do the beginning (or finishing) Shanti mantras'*, is not only dismissive but incorrect. At the beginning of a class or sessions the Shanti Mantra is chanted, at the end the Shanti Path. The dignity inherent in the tradition must be communicated with equal dignity: not flippant but light, not solemn but sober.

Sri Swami Satyananda's concern was to safeguard the tradition within the 'current of history'. Satyananda Yoga is not fancy or fashionable yoga. It is classical yoga through and through in its content, its mode and language of delivery. Therefore, teachers should heed Sri Swami Satyananda's advice and 'not be guided by their individual whims and narrowness of mind'.

At the conclusion of the World Yoga Convention 2013, Swami Niranjanananda expressed his wish to the assembled delegates:

"Our gurus were our Rama, and we, the first generation sannyasins, were the monkeys. We did the bidding, and helped build the bridge to fulfil the vision of Rama. Now, as future generations walk upon that bridge, it is our request and prayer that you maintain the bridge in its pristine glory and purity, so that when our masters walk again on this hallowed earth, they see that the light they had lit so many years and centuries ago still continues to burn bright, and still gives light to all the travellers. This is our wish."

– Swami Yogatirtha

Connection and Openness

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Ganga Darshan will always remain a place of hardness and discipline. A hospital is not a place where healthy people stay. A health centre is not a place where healthy people go. Although the name is health centre, it is filled with sick people, and yoga centres are filled with bhoga people.

This *bhoga*, this desire for enjoyment, distracts and diverts the mind and does not allow it to become focused. Just as when

living in a hospital, surrounded by hundreds and hundreds of sick people you are focussing only on your health improvement, in the ashram the approach and understanding has to be similar.

Everybody has problems and is sick mentally, emotionally, psychically, spiritually, physically; we are all weak and sick and have to look after our health. When the doctor says, "This is what has to be done," then do it. In a hospital the way to improve is by following the yogic instructions of the doctor. In the ashram you will improve by following the yogic instructions.

Therefore, the systems in this ashram are not going to change; perceptions, responses and awareness will need to change. You need to remove the masks that you put on every day. You need to connect with positivity in life for it is the destiny of every human being.

Connecting to positivity is not becoming part of a group. If connecting to positivity can improve your life, then why not do it? These are the questions you should ask yourself every night when you go to sleep:

Where did I lose my positive connection today?

Why did I lose it?

Then the next day make the effort not to lose that connection. Every night when you go to sleep, think of one good thing that you can try to do the following day to maintain the connection with the positive. In this way, you will gradually be able to deal with the mental responses and distractions which do not allow you to connect with yourself.

Secondly, learn to open the mind, learn to keep the eyes open. With the mind and eyes open there are many opportunities in this life that you can avail yourself of. Otherwise you can be doing the same thing for many years; yet if your mind and eyes are not open, you will always need to be guided.

If you shut your eyes and mind, there is no learning no matter who you are and what you claim to be. If you can keep your eyes and mind open, learning is fast.

– 24 January 2016, Ganga Darshan, Munger

My Favourite Part



Hari Om

I am sending you some 'more proof' of the positive effects of practising yoga. During the fall semester 2015, I realized what a blessing it is for me to have this platform to bring a comprehensive yoga experience to college students, faculty and staff at Cleveland State University, Cleveland, Ohio.

Yoga classes meet twice per week for 50 minutes and consist of asana, pranayama and/or a meditation practices. Spring semester starts soon with about one hundred students signed up for yoga classes. I am looking forward to another awesome semester of doing my part in lowering stress levels and increasing happiness of students at Cleveland State University! Here are some of the responses received from the students:

“My favourite part of yoga class has been getting the opportunity to escape the stress and work load from all my other classes, and just focus on me and learning how to do something new. Personally, I liked learning yoga nidra, but I enjoyed the physical movements more because yoga nidra would put me to sleep. I particularly liked the anti-rheumatic movements because I tend to have sore muscles and joints, and these exercises relieved a lot of that pain.”

“My favourite part of the yoga class has been the extra energy and positivity I have after. On days when I go directly to work after yoga I am much more awake and lively, and ready to work. I also like that I can use the skills learned on my own to help when I am low-energy, cannot sleep, or am in a bad mood. It is amazing how many benefits there are to yoga.”

“I plan to integrate the practices to gain energy and become more awake. I want to use the breathing practices to sooth myself from reaching breaking points. I want to use practices to slow my world down and become aware of how my body is feeling. To relieve pain and encourage others to try yoga out too.”

“My favourite part of yoga class is a very specific moment - when we state our sankalpas (personal resolve, goal or affirmation) during yoga nidra. I have stuck with one that, if in time I can genuinely embody, will help my life holistically. If nothing else, it brings to mind a goal that without this class I may not think about enough to ever have a shot at reaching.”

“Before taking this class I did not realize how much of one’s self one has to give to the practice. I also did not know that yoga was about so much more than just flexibility but so much awareness needs to be dedicated to the craft and with that awareness a lot of healing, both physical and mental, can be done.”

“As the semester progressed, I learned that my mood had improved and my stress levels had decreased due to the continued practice of yoga.”

“I love seeing everyone smiling and being happy and relaxed in this class and I think that is what I loved most about it.”

– Sent by Swami Atmarupa, Atma Center, USA


Make Others Laugh

Some people laugh their whole lives through
They know how to laugh and make others laugh.
Other people spend their whole life crying
Tell me which kind are you?

Laughter is an art.
Sometimes laughter comes spontaneously
But that's a different thing
Later such persons also cry.
But when you know how to laugh
And make others laugh
You will never cry again.

When you see someone laughing,
You can't control yourself
You must join in.
Therefore the person who can make others laugh
Is really in tune with himself and with them.

So how will you learn the art of laughter,
This most excellent of yogas?



If you really wish to perfect it
You will have to consider your life as a joke,
For life begins in one second
And in one second it ends.

Even when you cry
Consider your crying as the greatest joke.
Because of its temporary nature
You can't maintain the state of tears
Before long you will be tired.

But you can laugh constantly, day and night.
For there are many ways to laugh
You can laugh loudly or softly,
You can just smile,
Or laugh silently in your mind,
But you will never tire of laughing
And you will benefit greatly from it too.

Now I'll tell you a secret
If you don't want to cry
Then learn how to laugh.
How? You will find the way.

—Swami Satyananda Saraswati

Happiness



Happiness comes from peace of mind and real happiness is within you.

The sun of suns is ever shining in you, but your blind eyes cannot see it. The eternal sound is within you, but your deaf ears cannot hear it.

Be always cheerful, laugh and smile. Try to be happy always for happiness is your true nature.

Keep the mind in a state of moderation. Never let it run to excesses for extremes bring about reaction. The mind always runs to extremes, either extreme depression or extreme joy. The mind can never be calm in extremes, even in excessive joy there is no peace. Therefore, let the mind be cheerful but calm.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati



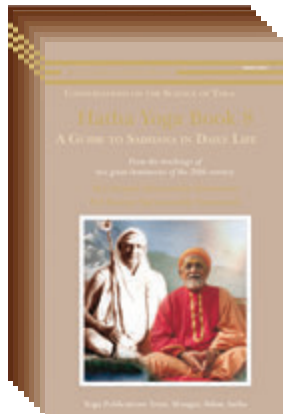
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Websites

www.biharyoga.net

The official website of Bihar Yoga includes information on: Satyananda Yoga, Bihar School of Yoga, Bihar Yoga Bharati and Yoga Publications Trust catalogues.



www.yogamag.net

The official website of Yoga magazine contains an archive of over 30 years of the magazine. This archive is fully searchable and ever expanding.

[Avahan Online](http://www.biharyoga.net/sannyasa-peeth/avahan/)

www.biharyoga.net/sannyasa-peeth/avahan/ provides online access to *Satya ka 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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Yoga Peeth Events & Training 2016

Apr 24-30	Yoga Capsule: Digestive (Hindi)
Jul 15-18	Guru Poornima Satsang Program (Hindi/English)
Jul 19	Guru Paduka Poojan (Hindi/English)
Aug 1-30	Yoga Instructors Course (Hindi/English - for nationals)
Sep 24-30	* Hatha Yoga: Shatkarma Intensive (Hindi/English)
Oct 1-30	* Progressive Training for Satyananda Yoga Teachers (English)
Oct 3-Jan 29	* Yogic Studies Course, 4 months (English)
Oct 22-28	* Raja Yoga: Asana & Pranayama Intensive (Hindi/English)
Nov 5-11	* Kriya Yoga: Preparatory (Hindi/English)
Nov 7-Feb 2017	* Yoga Lifestyle Experience
Dec 19-23	Yoga Chakra Series III (Hindi/English)
Dec 25	Swami Satyananda's Birthday
Every Saturday	Mahamrityunjaya Havan
Every Ekadashi	Bhagavad Gita Path
Every Poornima	Sundarkand Path
Every 5th & 6th	Guru Bhakti Yoga
Every 12th	Akhanda Path of Ramacharitamanas

* Indicates training & courses available in English language for Overseas participants

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Ensure that you do not bring your mobile with you.

For more information on the above events contact:

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