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Hari Om

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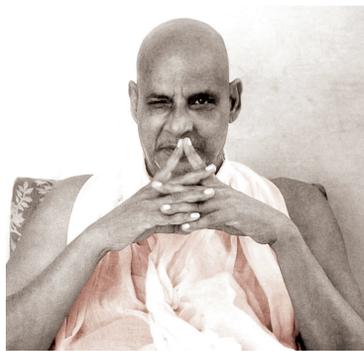
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3–4: Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



GUIDELINES FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

OBSTACLES TO SADHANA

Moha

The whole world runs on moha. It is through moha that one is bound to the wheel of samsara. Moha is a kind of powerful liquor that brings intoxication in the twinkling of an eye.

Moha creates the idea of 'mine-ness', therefore it is said: "My wife, my son, my horse, my home." This is bondage, this is death. Moha produces delusion and perverts the intellect. Through its force the unreal world is taken as a solid reality. These are the functions of moha, which is a strong weapon of maya. Even sannyasins have moha for their ashrams and disciples. Moha should be eradicated by discrimination, dispassion, enquiry, reflection on the Self, devotion, seclusion and studying vedantic literature, and by renunciation, sannyasa and Self-realization.

—Swami Sivananda

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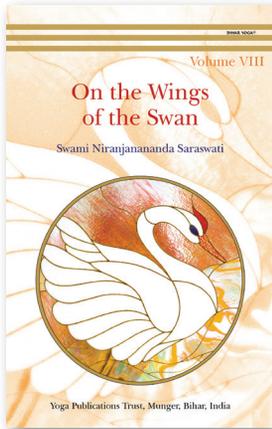
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The Yogi is superior to the ascetic. He is deemed superior even to those versed in sacred lore. The Yogi is superior even to those who perform action with some motive. Therefore, Arjuna, do you become a Yogi. (*Bhagavad Gita VI:46*)

तपस्विभ्योऽधिको योगी ज्ञानिभ्योऽपि मतोधिकः । कर्मिभ्यश्चाधिको योगी तस्माद्योगी भवार्जुन ॥

The Drive of Excellence

From On the Wings of the Swan, Volume VIII, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Yoga is experienced in the course of one's life. It enables one to become proficient and excellent in everything that is done. Yoga allows one to access the better side of life with greater ease, whether it is through increased optimism, hope, positivity and creativity, or improving one's own understanding, thoughts, communication, personality and nature. This allows one to face different situations in life in a better manner.

Yoga is a process by which one can acquire excellence. With meditation, with work, with love and even with hate, excellence is the drive. Every experience is taken to its final culmination. Yoga gives that ability.

With this ability, whatever you do in life, you will always be able to find a balance between your external involvement and internal aspiration.

– 24 September 2008, Ganga Darshan, Munger



Four Sources of Knowledge

From the teachings of Swami Sivananda Saraswati

There are four sources of knowledge: instinct, reason, intuition and super-intuition or Brahmajnana.

Instinct

When an ant crawls on your right arm, the left arm automatically moves towards the right arm to drive away the ant. The mind does not reason there. When you see a scorpion in front of your leg, you withdraw your leg automatically. This is termed

instinctive or automatic movement. As you cross a street, how instinctively you move your body to save yourself from the cars! There is no vritti in such mechanical movement.

Instinct is found in animals and birds. In birds, the ego does not interfere with the free divine flow and divine play. Hence the work done by them through their instincts is more perfect than that done by human beings. Have you not noticed the excellent work done by birds in their building of wonderful nests?

Reason

Reason is higher than instinct and is found only in human beings. It collects facts, generalizes, reasons out from cause to effect, from effect to cause, from premises to conclusions, from propositions to proofs. It concludes, decides and comes to judgment. It takes you safely to the door of intuition and leaves you there.



Belief, reasoning, knowledge and faith are the four important psychic processes. First you have belief in a doctor. You go to him for diagnosis and treatment. He makes a thorough examination and then prescribes certain medicines. You take them. You reason out: Such and such is the disease. The doctor has given me iron and iodide. Iron will improve my blood. The iodide will stimulate the lymphatics and absorb the exudation and growth in the liver. So I should take it.

The disease is cured, by a course of these drugs, in a month. You get knowledge of and perfect faith in the efficacy of the medicine and the proficiency of the doctor. Then you recommend this doctor and his drugs to your friends.

Intuition

Intuition is spiritual *anubhava*, experience. Knowledge through the functioning of the *karana sarira*, causal body, is intuition. Sri Aurobindo calls it the super-mind or supramental consciousness. There is direct perception of truth, *pratyaksha*, or immediate knowledge through *samadhi*. You know things by a flash.

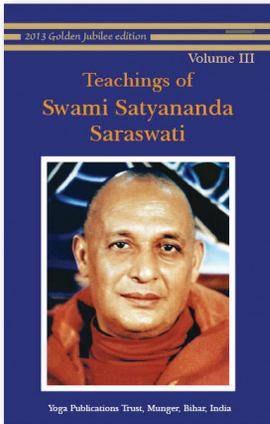
Professor Bergson preached about intuition in France to make people understand that there is another higher source of knowledge than intellect. In intuition, there is no reasoning process at all. Intuition transcends reason, but does not contradict it. Intellect takes one to the door of intuition and returns back. Intuition is *divyadrishhti*, divine vision. It is *jnana chakshus*, the eye of wisdom. Spiritual flashes and glimpses of truth come through intuition. Inspiration, revelation, spiritual insight come through intuition.

Atmajnana

Atmajnana is above intuition. It transcends the *karana sarira*, the causal body. It is the highest form of knowledge. It is the only reality.

Raja Yoga Sutras

From Teachings of Swami Satyananda Saraswati, Volume III

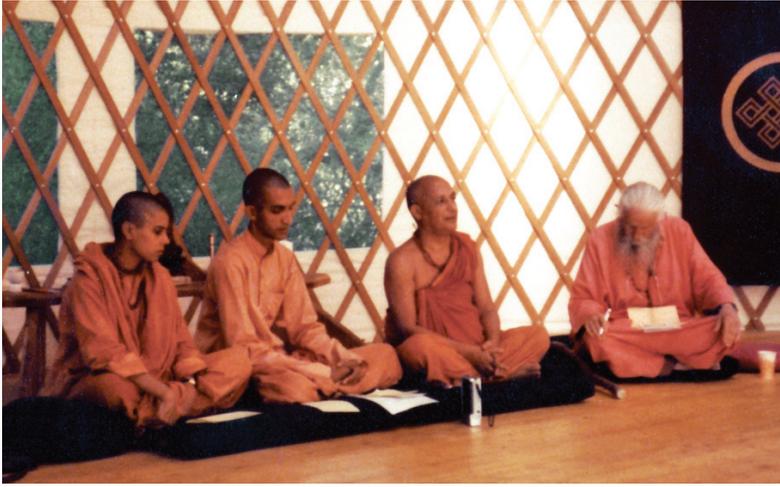


I have a vision about the integration of yoga into our present life. Although yoga is said to have been practised in the mountains, in solitude, by recluses and sannyasins, I somehow feel that it must have been some time later, and not when yoga was discovered and organized by the wise people. Because by what yoga tells us and the way it shows us, it appears to be for those people who were greatly distracted, restless and emotionally imbalanced.

Hence, I don't think yoga was realized by a calm culture in a peaceful environment.

Doctors abound on the earth because there are many diseases. Had there been no diseases, there would be no doctors. The police force is there because there are so many thieves, bandits and criminals. Had there been no thieves, bandits and criminals, do you think there would be Scotland Yard and so many other police organizations? Similarly, the philosophy of yoga suggests a very distracted, restless, ambitious and broken culture.

Look at the *Raja Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali, the *Bhakti Yoga Sutras* of Narada and Shandilya, the *Jnana Yoga Sutras* of Maharishi Badarayana, or the *Samkhya Sutras* of the *Bhagavad Gita* depicting and talking about karma yoga. They clearly indicate that the people to whom yoga was addressed were not necessarily wise and saintly people. Therefore, to say that yoga is a culture of a monastic civilization, or that it is a culture of mountains and monasteries is utterly wrong. Why do monks need yoga? I don't need it. I have no tensions, no



stresses, no strains. I can move out anytime, anywhere. And even if something happens to me, nobody loses, because I am just one. I have no wife, no family, no children, no society, no religion, no culture.

However, in our society, if one person suffers from mental or physical problems, the whole society around him suffers too. So, the first conclusion that I have drawn is that yoga is for people who are living amidst agony and facing mental or physical breakdowns. This is exactly the theme of the *Bhagavad Gita*, whose first chapter is entitled 'The Yoga of Nervous Depression' or nervous breakdown.

Calming the disturbed mind

Yoga begins when the mind is unbalanced and when you lack total control over yourself, but when at the same time, you are trying to balance yourself. It is with this sense and with this background that I'll be talking to you a little about the *Raja Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali.

Patanjali was a great scholar and rishi, who was contemporary with Lord Buddha about 2,500 years ago. There were other contemporaries of Buddha who were also very good, but we are not concerned with them at the moment.

Patanjali codified raja yoga in the form of aphorisms called sutras. The word *sutra* in Sanskrit means 'thread', and just as one thread binds the 108 beads of a *mala* (rosary), in the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali, there is a central theme which binds all the various ideas together.

Before the advent of Patanjali, a philosophy was already in existence in India by which Buddha and Buddhist philosophy were greatly influenced. This philosophical branch, which is one of the six systems of Indian philosophy, is known as the Samkhya doctrine.

In Samkhya, they have explained what the mind is, what its components are, what consciousness and matter are, and the thing which is responsible for gathering of momentum of matter in the form of creation. Samkhya deals with consciousness and the different stages of consciousness, starting from the rudimentary state which is present in minerals, then vegetables, animals and man. This consciousness is called *chitta*.

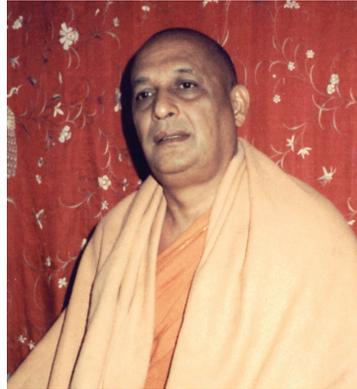
Chitta seems to be manifesting through matter in various stages. At one stage, this chitta is only existence and there is no movement, whereas in us this chitta has patterns which are called vrittis. These vrittis are the patterns of consciousness and it is through the chitta, in combination with the vritti, that knowledge and experience take place. For instance, you are aware of my presence now and I am aware of your presence now, in one particular way. This is one of those patterns of your consciousness and it is called objective cognition. Similarly, you cognize a flower – smell, sight, touch, etc. These objective forms of cognition are one quality of the chitta.

In all, there are five of those patterns through which the mind acquires knowledge, and they are known in yoga as the five vrittis. *Vritti* means 'pattern', which comes from the word *vritta*, a circle. If you throw a pebble in a pond, ripples are formed in a concentric circular pattern and they go on moving outward. This is how the patterns move and take place within the mind. The five vrittis are: i) objective awareness, ii) subjective

awareness, iii) illusory awareness, iv) past awareness and v) absence of awareness.

Kaivalya

These five patterns are important because Patanjali has said, "Yoga is a process by which you block these patterns." This means that the practices of yoga which we do, asanas, pranayama, meditation, etc., should eliminate the fivefold vrittis from the mind. Then when the objective awareness, subjective awareness, illusory awareness, past awareness and absence of awareness are removed, an experience takes place which is free from limitations, and that experience is known as *kaivalya*.



The word *kaivalya* is derived from the word *kevala*, which means 'only' or 'absolute', which is an indication of non-duality. When all the vrittis are removed, only I remain, the self, the *purusha*, the consciousness, the experiencer. I want to emphasize that the experiencer is not the mind. The experiencer is *purusha*. You may call it self; you can call it consciousness; you may call it inner being; you may call it by any name that you like. Because it has no name, that *purusha* experiences the duality, multiplicity, the variety of matter through the mind, and this mind is a reflector. The self, therefore, is experiencing matter through the reflector, which is called *chitta vritti*.

Therefore, at the very outset of the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali, it says, *Yoga chitta vritti nirodhah* – Yoga is *chitta vritti* blocking. You remove the objective awareness, the subjective awareness, the illusory awareness, the past awareness and the unconsciousness, and when all these five are removed, then the self experiences itself. It does not experience anything else. That state is called *kaivalya*, and you can just imagine how difficult it is.

– 6 September 1982, Ojai Foundation, Ojai, California

Inner and Outer Restraint

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



The various aspects of yoga need to be applied in your life in a practical manner to derive the maximum benefit from your yogic involvement. The yamas and niyamas help in this process. The first two yamas are *manahprasad*, happiness, and, *kshama*, forgiveness. The two niyamas of yoga are *japa*, acquiring the ability to disconnect with your external associations and to look inside, and *namaskara*, becoming humble, in behaviour, action and thinking.

Danti

In this sequence, the third yama is danti and the third niyama is indriya nigraha. *Danti* means inner restraint, holding the mind in check. When you ride a horse, you are holding on to the reins so that it follows your instructions and guidance. That is danti. If you leave the reins of the horse and allow it to run here and there without your control, then that is not danti. You have to imagine that you are a horse-rider to know the meaning of danti: the hands have to be on the reins always.

What is the test of danti, mental restraint? You are living in the ashram for three months and for three months you have khichadi, simple food. Then one day, you have kheer, poori, halwa, spaghetti, pizza, everything together. Can you look at it without the eyes of greed and desire? Can you enjoy it and eat it without the eyes and the mentality of greed and desire? The moment you say, "Aaaah! Pizza! Spaghetti!" there is no danti. Your desire is screaming and there is no restraint of your mind. That is the test.

When something new comes, are you able to maintain your equipoise? When the same old thing comes, are you able to maintain your equipoise? You have to be a witness to your cravings, and a witness to your personal restraint, just as you are aware of your craving and your restraint. Therefore, danti is inner restraint.

Indriya nigraha

Indriya nigraha is the outer restraint. Outer restraint can be defined in many ways, however the final outcome is your equipoise. Somebody comes and abuses you left, right and centre. Can you, without frowning, without expressing your anger and without feeling agitated, just smile, relax and withdraw? Can you control your senses to that point? Can you stop their reactions and just maintain their balance point? When you stop the reaction and maintain the neutral point that is indriya nigraha.

In certain families the children are told, "No, I won't buy you that. You need to learn to live without it. I am teaching you sanyam." However, *sanyam*, control and restraint, is a quality that you have to develop. It is not something that you can educate somebody into. Sanyam is not something that you can learn or be taught by anybody. It is something that you have to cultivate yourself by being watchful.

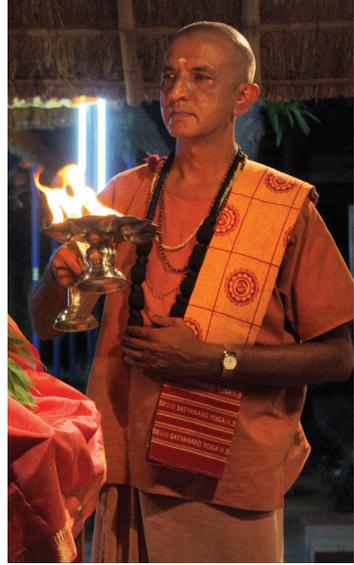
– 16 February 2016, Ganga Darshan, Munger

A Better You

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

On 5th and 6th of every month, we meet in the Akhara to remember Sri Swamiji, the teachings that he has given us and to make a positive connection with the inspiration that he has provided us with.

It is not an intellectual understanding that we need to develop but an experience of the process of yoga. Yoga leads to the awakening of the human nature and personality. That is the purpose of yoga and it is how yogis perfected yoga.



Positive connection

The perfection of yoga is seen in the life of Sri Swamiji, who was able to achieve the apex of yoga and spiritual life through effort and determination. The apex of yoga and spiritual life is the positive connection in life. It is not samadhi or moksha. That is like our promotion package. When we leave this planet we go with the farewell package of samadhi and moksha.

While we live on this planet, the aim of our life, actions, desires and aspirations has to be something which is fulfilling and complete. Not everybody can attain samadhi or moksha. It is not said that we practise yoga to attain samadhi or moksha.

The inspiration has been the connection with the positive. That connection can be achieved with the right and proper application and connection with yoga vidya. Yoga vidya is not limited or explained only by a few people like Patanjali or



Swatmarama. There have been a number of seers and sages who have perfected many aspects and branches of yoga and who have taught and given those teachings to humanity. They are inscribed in the Yoga Upanishads and in other yogic literatures of other spiritual scriptures of humanity.

Undefinable

There are two areas of connection in life: one is the *samsara* model and one is the spiritual model. *Samsara* is the worldly model, in which one's nature expresses and experiences effort, confusion, strife, difficulties, frustrations, joys and pleasures, in relation to body, mind and emotions only. The worldly model or connection makes one aware of the physical, sensorial, mental, intellectual and emotional connections that one has with the world.

The spiritual model is always connected with God, the attainment of God, the experience and realization of God. Religions have picked on the idea of this connection with God yet they have not highlighted the other aspects of spirituality which indicate the betterment of human nature and behaviour in life.

When the idea is connected to God, the path leading to God becomes an abstract path, as God is an abstract idea.

How does one define perfection? Perfection is indefinable. The moment one defines perfection, it is not perfect. How can



one define infinity? Unimaginable. If one defines infinity, it is not infinity any more. In the same manner, God cannot be defined. The moment one defines God, it is not God anymore, for it comes within the ambit of one's perception, intellect and experience.

The transcendental nature cannot be comprehended or grasped by the non-transcendental person and mind, just as the waters of the ocean cannot be contained in a container. In order for the container to become part of the ocean it has to lose all its sides and its form. Only when the container is able to become formless, can it become part of the whole ocean.

Mental magnet

Similarly, the God concept is a distant concept to every individual. However, you have glimpses when you express the good qualities in you. When you experience peace, it is an experience of God-ness in you. When you experience completeness, wholeness, it is an experience of God-ness in you. When you experience luminosity, it is an experience of God-ness in you. These are only glimpses, for after some time your mind comes back to a normal state and condition.

The glimpses are not sustainable for the nature of the mind does not support sustenance of a good idea, of a spiritual idea. The nature of the mind always sustains the worldly idea, just as a magnet will draw iron fillings to it but not wood. The world

is like the iron which the magnet of the mind will draw and spiritual life is like wood. The mind will not attract the piece of wood.

Wood contains fire inside, the capacity to become luminous, the capacity to eradicate darkness, but the mind is not attracted towards it. The mental magnet is attracted towards the worldly iron fillings: likes, dislikes, attractions, distractions, attachments, detachments, love, hate, acceptance, non-acceptance.

Natural expression

These are the two models: the worldly and the spiritual. The spiritual connection is a connection with the good, yet due to our limited perceptions any adherence to good becomes adherence to a religious precept.

How can goodness be part of any religion? How can the positive expression of yourself be part of any belief or dogma? Is becoming kind and compassionate becoming religious? Is becoming better becoming religious? Why do you associate 'being good' with a religious or philosophical ideology? It should be a natural expression, just as your desires are natural expressions within you. In the same manner, cultivating the good should be a natural expression within you.

In yoga this has been the main theme: coming to that state of harmony which is physical, coming to that state of understanding which is mental, coming to that state of equilibrium which is emotional, coming to that level of awakening which is spiritual.

Different paths, systems and methods were devised by yogis. Their thoughts and ideas are enshrined in the ancient yogic literature. The yoga known today of Patanjali or Swatmarama is only ten percent of the whole yogic subject or yoga vidya. What about the remaining texts? The teaching in these scriptures has been the cultivation of 'a better you'.

– 6 January 2016, Ganga Darshan, Munger

The Nature of Tapas

From the teachings of Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Tapas is the third anga of niyama in raja yoga. Tapas is one of the three items of kriya yoga. *Tapas* means austerity or practice of penance.

That which purifies the impure mind is tapas. That which regenerates the lower, animal nature and generates divine nature is tapas. That which cleanses the mind and destroys passion, anger, greed, and so on is tapas. That which produces *Brahmatejas*, the effulgent splendour of Brahman, and destroys one's negative nature is tapas. That which arrests the outgoing tendencies, extroversion or *bahirmukha vritti*, and produces introversion or *antharmukha vritti* is tapas. That which destroys the vasanas, egoism, raga-dwesa and generates



dispassion, discrimination and meditation is tapas. Tapas is spiritual discipline. It is worship, sadhana and meditation.

The *Bhagavad Gita* has given very valuable hints upon the subject of tapas. A flood of light is thrown upon this subject through the divine words of Lord Krishna addressed to Arjuna. The *Gita* speaks of a threefold tapas of body, speech and mind (17:14-17):

*Devadwijagurupraajna poojanam shauchamaarjavam;
Brahmacharyamahimsaa cha shaareeram tapa uchyate.*

*Anudwegakaram vaakyam satyam priyahitam cha yat;
Swaadhyaayaabhyasanam chaiva vaangmayam tapa uchyate.*

*Manahprasaadah saumyatwam maunamaatmaviniagrahah;
Bhaavasamshuddhirityetat tapa maanasamuchyate.*

*Shraddhayaa parayaa taptam tapastattrividham naraih;
Aphalaakaangshibhiryuktaih saattwikam parichakshate.*

Worship of the gods, the twice-born, the teachers and the wise, purity, straightforwardness, celibacy and non-injury – these are called the austerities of the body.

Speech which causes no excitement and is truthful, pleasant and beneficial, the practice of the study of the Vedas – these are called the austerities of speech.

Serenity of mind, good-heartedness, purity of nature, self-control – these are called mental austerity.

This threefold austerity practised by steadfast people with the utmost faith, desiring no reward, they call sattwic austerity.

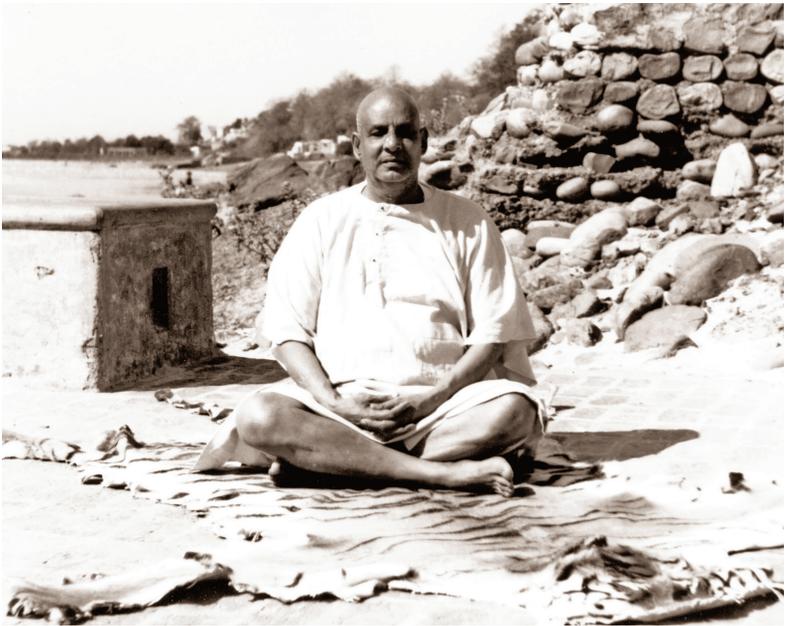
Physical and mental tapas

Conventionally, eating neem leaves, standing in water, sitting in the hot sun, bearing heat and cold, standing on one leg with raised hands, and so on are considered as tapas. People speak of such persons as tapasvins. They say, “Ram Brahmachari is a great tapasvi. He lives on leaves and has no clothing. He does panchagni tapas in hot summer.” These are all the forms of physical tapas.

Mental tapas is more powerful than physical tapas. He who bears heat and cold does physical tapas. He increases his power of endurance, but he may not be able to bear insult. He will be easily upset by a harsh or unkind word. He may take revenge and do tit for tat. He has no control over the mind. He has

disciplined only his physical body. To keep a balanced mind in all conditions of life, to bear insult, injury and persecutions, to be ever serene, contented and peaceful, to be cheerful in adverse conditions, to have fortitude in meeting danger, to have presence of mind and forbearance, are all forms of mental tapas.

Philosophically, meditation is the highest form of tapas. Fixing the wandering mind on God or Brahman is great tapas. *Vichara*, constant reflection and contemplation, and *nididhyasana*, deep meditation, are the highest tapas.

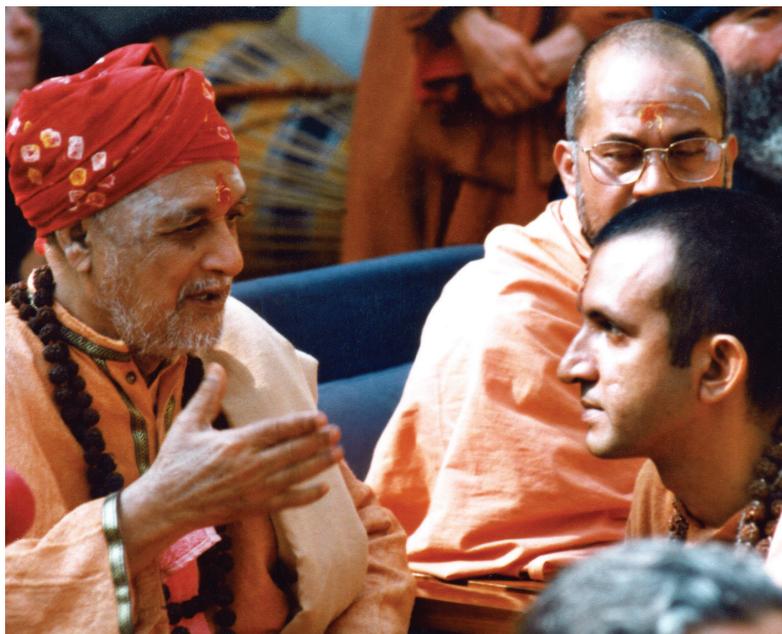


We keep imposing attitudes on the natural manifestation of life. This imposition is not spontaneous but is motivated by ego. It separates us from our real self by bringing in an artificial reality. Austerity or tapas is following a process of change and transformation for the better. It is the burning of the personality so that our true essence manifests.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Bhagavad Gita

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



At the end of each chapter in the *Bhagavad Gita*, three types of scriptures are mentioned:

Om tatsat iti srimadbhagavadgitaasupanishadsu Brahmanavidyayam yogashaastre srikrishnaarjunasamavade . . .

Thus in the Upanishads of the glorious Bhagavad Gita, the science of the Eternal, the scripture of yoga, the dialogue between Sri Krishna and Arjuna . . .

Brahma vidya

There are two types of knowledge, para and apara. *Para* means higher, transcendental. *Apara* means lower, not transcendental or *na para*.

The *apara*, the lower type of knowledge, is the material, sensorial, worldly knowledge related to the world of *maya*. Anything that happens in the realm of *maya* and *prakriti* is the non-transcendental knowledge, *apara*. Anything that takes one beyond the realm of *maya* and *prakriti* is known as the transcendental knowledge, *para*.

This transcendental knowledge which leads to the realization of one's transcendental nature is known as the knowledge of Brahman, *Brahma vidya*. The word Brahman is derived from the Sanskrit root *brihn*, which means expansion. Therefore, Brahman means ever-expanding reality, ever-expanding awareness, ever-expanding perception, knowledge and wisdom.

Vidya is the knowledge of this ever-expanding reality, the permanent reality, the transcendental nature.

The *Srimad Bhagavad Gita* is classified as a literature of *Brahma vidya*, for it seeks to transcend and elevate the individual from the gross material nature to a higher spiritual realization where the omniscience, the omnipresence and the omnipotence of the transcendental reality is realized. That is the *Brahma vidya* complement of the *Bhagavad Gita*.

Upanishad and Transactional Analysis

The *Bhagavad Gita* is also classified as an Upanishad. *Up* means near, close. Upanishad means an instruction that is given to someone at close quarter.

Sri Krishna gave the instruction to Arjuna, his disciple (2:7):

*Kaarpanyadoshopahataswabhaavah
Pricchaami twaam dharmasammoodha chetaah;
Yacchreyah syaan nishchitam broohi tanme
Shishyaste'ham shaadhi maam twaam prapannam.*

My heart is overpowered by the taint of pity, my mind is confused as to duty. I ask You: tell me decisively what is good for me. I am Your disciple. Instruct me who has taken refuge in You.

From the moment Arjuna surrendered, Sri Krishna took on the role of the guru. Prior to that, Arjuna was a patient who was complaining to the doctor about his problems.

There is a system of psychology called Transactional Analysis, TA, by which a situation of victim and master is described. A patient comes to the doctor and says, "Doctor, I have been suffering from my illness for so many years. I have visited every doctor in the city, and I have gone to every specialist and nobody has been able to help me. I know that you are the only one who can help me." The patient comes as a victim and tells the doctor, "You are the only one who can help me."

The doctor prescribes some medicines and tells the patient to come back after fifteen days. At home, maybe the patient is taking the medicine or maybe he is throwing them in the toilet. After fifteen days he comes back to the doctor and says, "Your medicine did not help me. I had placed all my trust in you, you had told me that this medicine would help."

At this point, the doctor becomes the victim and the patient becomes the master. The roles change. The doctor prescribes better medicine with high potency for another fifteen days. After fifteen days, the same situation, the patient says, "Your medicine did not help me." The doctor becomes more victim and the patient becomes the ruler over the doctor, telling him, "You have not helped me."

You fight

This is the relationship that develops between patient and doctor, victim and master. Arjuna did the same thing, when for a long time he just kept saying, "This is happening and that is happening. I don't know what to do and all my knowledge and understanding is failing me. Please help me and I surrender myself ultimately to you."

Sri Krishna was not the normal doctor. He threw everything back on to Arjuna. He did not say to Arjuna, "I will save you." He asked Arjuna, "Do you know where your obligations and



duties lie?" Arjuna said, "No." Then Krishna said time and again, "You have to fight, you have to fight, you have to fight." He gave the philosophy of the *Bhagavad Gita*, yet in every chapter he said, "You have to fight."

Sri Krishna is saying in every chapter, "You fight," yet the philosophy that he is giving is of Purusha and Prakriti, of Brahma and vishwaroopa, of the trigunas, of karma yoga, bhakti yoga, raja yoga, jnana yoga and Samkhya yoga. He speaks on everything under the sun, yet in every chapter he says, "You fight," thus putting the onus back on Arjuna.

Sri Krishna says, "It is your duty, your dharma to fight, not mine." He was anticipating that if he gave the answers to Arjuna, Arjuna would say, "Why don't you fight?" Sri Krishna was clever, "Arjuna, remember your dharma. You are the warrior, this is your dharma, however, remember the other aspect which is non-material and spiritual. There everything is different, it is not seen the way you perceive things now." In that process he showed Arjuna the transcendental form - *vishwaroopa darshan*.

Even after showing the transcendental form, he says to Arjuna, "You fight." Arjuna could have said at that time, "My Lord, why don't you eat everybody? You can consume everybody in that universal form, and thus avoid the bloodshed. Just pounce on the enemy and all the Kauravas will be gone. Or just blow and they will all fly away."

It is this close interaction between Krishna and Arjuna, that makes the *Bhagavad Gita* into an Upanishad. Only two people heard it. When Krishna was talking to Arjuna between the two armies nobody else heard it.

From that perspective, the philosophy of the *Bhagavad Gita* is recognized as an Upanishad. From the perspective of informing someone about the transient nature of the world and identifying the transcendental nature, the *Bhagavad Gita* is Brahma vidya.

Yoga shastra

The third type of scripture is yoga shastra. The philosophy and systems that Sri Krishna gives to Arjuna to attain awareness of the self and mastery over one's mind is the process of yoga. This yogic process is more a raja yoga process, for Sri Krishna does not speak of asana and pranayama. He speaks on the condition of managing the mind, the condition which Arjuna was facing. Arjuna was not having a physical problem, he was having a psychological problem.

For the management of psychology, he gave Arjuna instructions of raja yoga as the main yoga. Sri Krishna spoke on other yogas as well, like bhakti yoga and jnana yoga, to indicate the states of mind which one can acquire through a balanced approach to yoga.

The *Bhagavad Gita* is possibly the only book which has these three faces: Upanishad, Brahma vidya and yoga shastra.

– 13 March 2016, Ganga Darshan, Munger

Mudra

From Tantra Darshan, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



The use of mudras has been widely mentioned throughout the tantra shastras, in yogic literature, and they have been an integral part of traditional arts and dance for centuries. There are innumerable types and forms of mudras. Different traditions, schools of philosophy and systems of sadhana utilize various groups of mudras to attain specific goals such as physical and mental wellbeing, emotional expression, invocation of deities for worship and altering the deeper layers of consciousness. The use of mudras is a powerful key for linking the material and psychic realms.

Even though every tantric text has its own set of mudras which seek to achieve a particular aim, fundamentally, mudras create a link between the gross body and the psyche, a tool which connects one with one's subtle nature. Mudra sensitizes the mind to the experiences of *pranamaya kosha*, the pranic

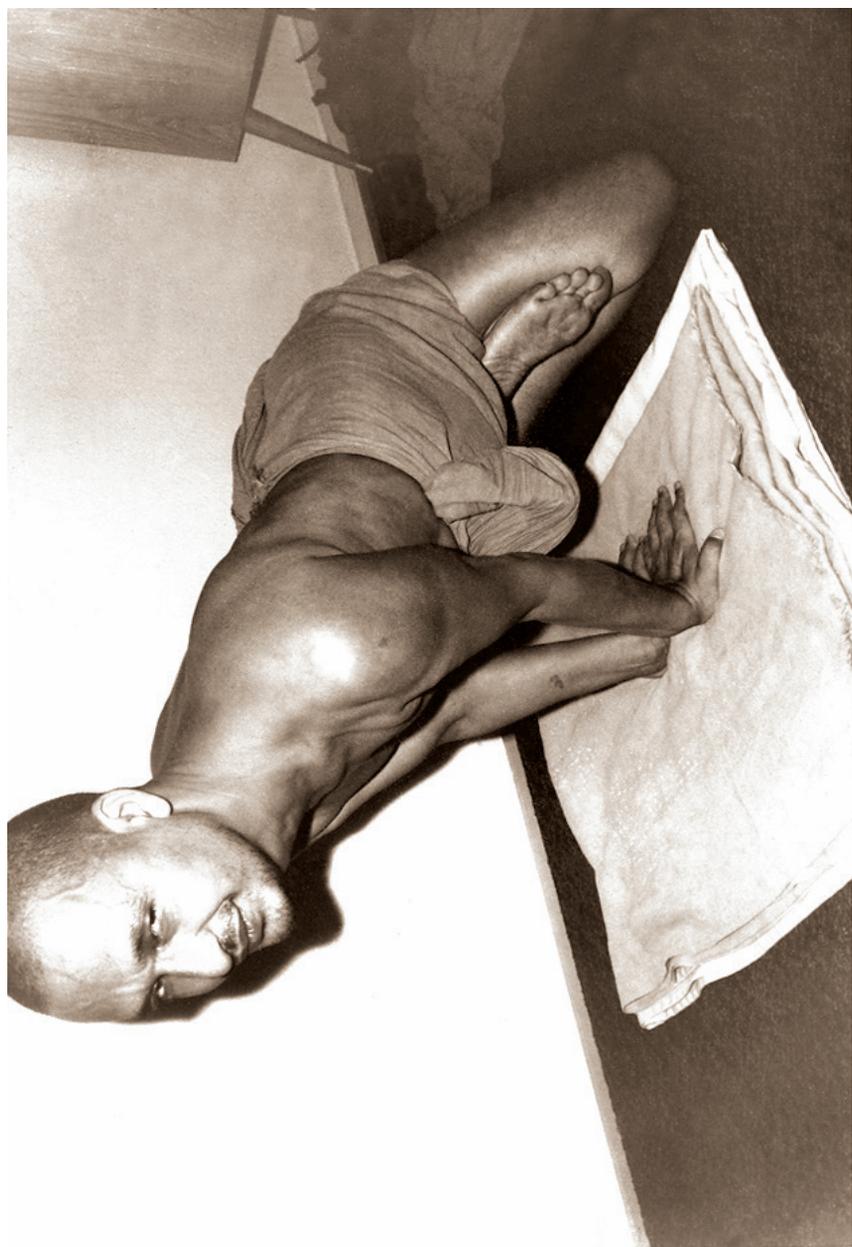
body. In meditation, certain mudras like jnana mudra and chin mudra are used which are simple and can be performed by everybody. There are many other mudras which are also used in meditation, in mantra, in anushthanas and worship. Every deity has a mudra for invocation, and even to invoke guru there is a particular mudra. The purpose of mudra is to express the inner experience. By practising mudras, the individual dwells on and tries to experience the indescribable meaning contained within a mudra. In this way it is possible to call up inner forces which otherwise lie hidden and dormant, and this is what makes mudra a powerful tool of tantra.

What is mudra?

According to *Kularnava Tantra*, the literal meaning of the word *mudra* is 'that which brings happiness'. The word 'mudra' comes from the root *mudh*, which means pleasant, to be happy, content, and at ease. In this context, mudra becomes that practice which brings a sense of ease and contentment in the body-mind unit. This is achieved by removing all the spikes and dissipations of prana and the corresponding negative states of mind. According to the linguists, the word 'mudra' also includes the word *dravaya*, which means to be compassionate or sympathetic. Thus, mudra implies becoming compassionate through delight or happiness. According to tantra, the *devas*, or gods, become compassionate towards a practitioner of mudra and they fulfil all the wishes and desires of such a sadhaka.

Mudras are the subtle physiological postures adopted by the body to alter the flow of prana within the physical body. In doing so, a link is created with the psyche and a psychological response is created or evoked within the psychic body. In this way, prana is the link between the external, physical body and the internal, psychic body. Mudras are a vital tool for accessing the spiritual realms within. They create a bridge between the external behaviour, function and performance of the body and the internal expression of the higher mind. Mudras can also









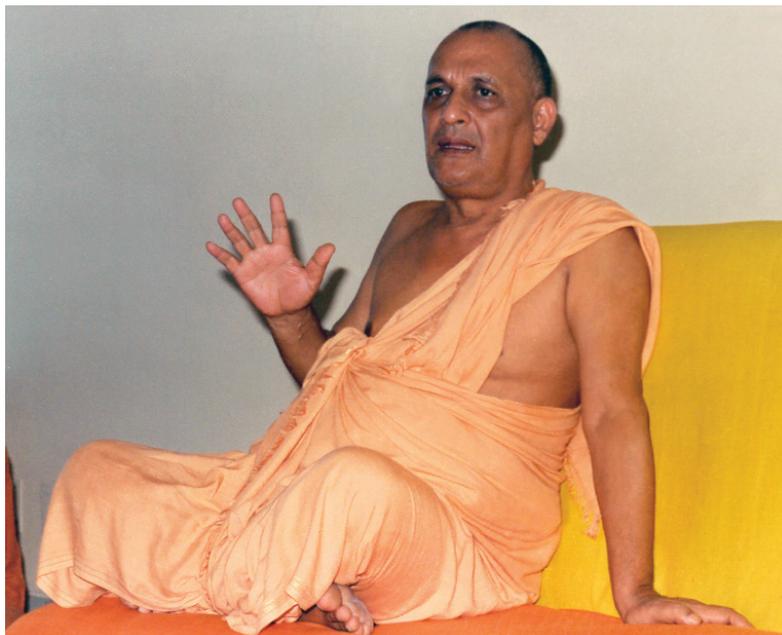
be described as psychic, emotional, devotional and aesthetic gestures or attitudes. Just as the physical act of crying is the symbol of unhappiness, and dancing, singing and laughing are the physical expressions of happiness, the inner consciousness also has symbols, and these are mudras.

Mudras are not isolated to one type of technique or practice like asana, pranayama, bandha or kriya. They are a combination of subtle, physical movements that alter the mood, attitude and perception, and deepen one's awareness and concentration. They can be defined in many ways according to their use and purpose. Yoga also considers mudras to be psychosomatic gestures which are used for various purposes within its branches. Hatha yoga uses a set of mudras to rectify the imbalances of prana. Meditation uses a set to induce greater concentration, focus and awareness. Raja yoga uses mudras to induce deeper, subtler and altered states of consciousness, where the thoughts and sentiments can be bypassed, and one can reach the state of *shoonyata*, the state of void beyond the mind.



Heart Disease

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



The yogic management of the diseased heart is slightly different from that devised by the medical scientists, but in my experience, both systems can be used in conjunction for the patient's benefit. As you know, many yoga experts in India have appeared publicly from time to time and stopped the heart completely for some minutes, hours or even for many days.

In earlier times, people either witnessed these events or believed in them, but in recent years, such feats as burial underground followed by resurrection have been carried out in the presence of physiologists and cardiac physicians, using laboratory monitoring equipment, and the results have been validated scientifically and widely publicized in medical journals and newspapers in India and other countries.

The clinical definition of death is stoppage of the heart for three minutes or more and a death certificate is issued on that basis. But these experiments on yogis have shown conclusively that the human heart can be voluntarily stopped and then induced to function again after more prolonged time periods, as a result of yogic training.

How is this relevant for cardiac patients? In the first place, it leads to the conclusion that the heart is not an independent organ failing of its own accord, and that heart disease is an effect or result of an imbalance or loss of control occurring elsewhere. Where then does heart disease originate from? Surely, it is in the brain, where specific vasomotor centres have been isolated which control the rate, intensity and regularity of the coronary impulses. Therefore, if someone is suffering from cardiac arrhythmia (uncontrolled, irregular heart beat), angina (pain due to cardiac insufficiency) or a slow failing heart, we should really say that he has some malfunction in the coronary control centres of the brain, rather than something fundamentally and irreversibly wrong with the heart itself.

The most important factor leading to derangement in the coronary impulses emerging from the brain is a prolonged, excessive build up of anxiety and emotional conflict arising in domestic, marital or employment situations, coupled with a high level of subconscious intra-psychic stress arising from deeper unresolved and suppressed conflicts and memories from childhood and early life experiences. These cause fear and insecurity whenever they bubble up to the surface of the mind. When deep feelings of anger, competitiveness, jealousy, aggression, rejection and so on are not vented but are denied expression and suppressed back within the mind, the cardiac impulse becomes unsteady. This occurs when the tension and strain relayed down to the heart as an excessive level of sympathetic nervous activity. As a result, the heart strains and labours excessively, and heart strain and failure is the end result. Therefore, our mental and emotional metabolism is directly reflected in the performance of our hearts, and this

is why in yogic therapy we approach the problem here at its roots, whereas medical science, which focuses more upon the heart itself, relies on long-term drug therapy to bolster up the failing heart mechanism, with little reference to the underlying causes on the mental and emotional planes.

If a yogi can stop and restart the heart through specific psychophysiological training, then surely a cardiac sufferer can learn to recognize and gain control over the anxiety generating mental patterns which are constantly throwing his own heart mechanisms into revolt and disarray. We have found that lasting cardiac relief cannot be gained while the load of environmental and intra-psychic stress remain suppressed and unresolved.

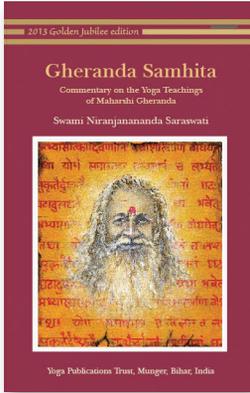
Approaching heart disease in this way, we follow a yogic treatment program which has proved tremendously effective for cardiac patient, and a new awareness of his situation soon emerges. He begins to recognize and understand his problem more objectively, in the light of this relaxation, as confidence in his ability to relax his mind is gained. By going beyond the constructive confines of his mental anguish into a refreshing realm of relaxation, a new, more joyful person begins to emerge spontaneously, confident of his abilities to live. He no longer feels confined in an impossible predicament in which he is estranged from his own failing heart, but sees that the root cause is his own thinking, and that he possesses the power to heal his own heart and mind through yoga.

— printed in *YOGA Vol. 19, No. 2 (February 1981)*



Ghatastha Yoga

From Gheranda Samhita, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Prologue verses 1-2

*Ekadaa chandakaapaalirgatvaa
gherandakuttiram;
Pranamyā vinayaadbhaktiyā gherandam
pariprichchhati. (1)*

Once King Chandakapali went to the hermitage of Sage Gheranda and, after prostrating before him with due humility and devotion, asked him a question.

*Ghatasthayogam yogesha tattvajnaanasya kaaranam;
Idaaneem shrotumichchhaami yogeshvara vada prabho. (2)*

O Yogeshwara, god of yoga! I wish to learn ghatastha yoga, which is a means to self-realization. O Yogeshwara! O Lord! Kindly tell me about this.

Sage Gheranda is addressed by the king as *Yogeshwara*, the god of yoga, thus acknowledging him as the founder of yoga and the teacher of yoga. King Chandakapali then asks Sage Gheranda to explain to him the teachings of ghatastha yoga by which a person can attain self-realization.

Chandakapali was a king. In spite of being a king, he went to Sage Gheranda and asked him the question: "How can yoga, which is based on the body, help us to know the final truth?" *Ghatasthayogam yogesha tattvajnaanasya kaaranam*. Actually four questions are included here:

First, what is self-realization?

Second, what is ghatastha yoga?

Third, how should this yoga be practised?

Fourth, is it possible to attain knowledge through yoga?

Questions one and two

The first question is: what is self-realization? How can this be understood? *Tattva* means reality. *Tattwajnana* means knowledge of that reality or truth which is behind the human body, mind and soul. How can that be understood? This is the first question of all philosophers. What is the aim and purpose of human life?

While one is alive and while prana is inside the body, life can be enjoyed and in the process of enjoying life the consciousness is externalized. Due to this externalized state, the internal life cannot be controlled and balanced. *Tattwajnana* means knowledge of the final truth, or *atmajnana*, knowledge and realization of the self which is responsible for this body and for this universe. Attainment of *tattwajnana* or *atmajnana* depicts another state of life which not only provides external experience, but gives the experience of balance, control and harmony between the external and internal life

The second question is: what is *ghatastha yoga*? *Ghata* means mud pot or pitcher. When imagining a pot, a form made out of clay appears on the mental screen. Its external form is seen, but what it contains is unknown. Maybe the pitcher is empty, maybe it is filled with water, maybe it is filled with grain. It can contain anything, but there is only knowledge of its external form. *Ghatastha yoga* is yoga based on the body.

One sees the body, experiences the body and confronts its various diseases. In order to make it happy and contented, *purusharthas* and *karmas*, efforts and actions to attain a goal, are performed. When the body feels cold, one wears clothes. When it feels hot, the clothes are removed and the fan is switched on. When the body needs to rest, one sleeps. All these external activities of the body are experienced, but what are the other elements inside the body? No one knows. What are the different energies inside the body? Why does one perform *karmas* in one's life? Why does one think? No one knows.

The creation of the body has taken place by a strange coincidence. One may say that coincidence is nature, Brahman or God. What is that energy which has constructed the

body, and awakened other energies inside the body? Such questioning shows that when yogic practices based on the body are begun, they have a direct effect on the mind, calming the mental activities. The effect of physical yoga is felt in the mind. Once mental peace is attained, the karmas and samskaras can be performed harmoniously. It is therefore essential to learn about the subtle as well as the physical or gross elements that are responsible for building the body. When both the physical and subtle elements are understood, it can be said that ghatastha yoga is commencing.

Questions three and four

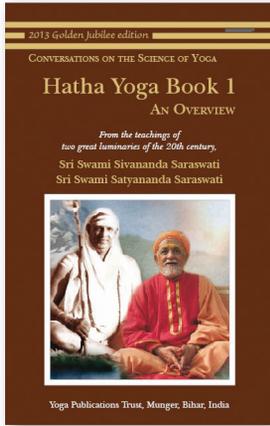
The third question is: how is this yoga to be practised? In fact, how a person should go about the yogic practices is the subject of this whole book.

The fourth question is: what is the result? Is it possible to attain self-realization through yogic practices? Attainment is the result. If yoga is practised, one will definitely benefit from the effects. How much is achieved depends on each person's capacity to prepare for and undertake their sadhana. Only then can the result be known. However, the rule of nature is that there has to be a result from each karma or action. Waving a hand in the air creates a result, which is secret. If a mosquito lands on the body, a wave of the hand will cause the mosquito to fly away. This is a gross, external result, but it has a subtle result as well, which is the creation of sound. One is unaware of this result. It can be called a subtle effect or secret result that friction is taking place between matter (the hand) and air. A sound is produced, but it is not heard. If the ears were capable of hearing very subtle sounds, perhaps that sound would be heard. Similarly, with yogic practices, subtle or secret results are created which will be experienced, but may not be noticed or understood with one's current level of wisdom.

Sage Gheranda drew attention to the scientific and critical aspects of yoga by using many metaphors and comparisons, such as calling his system ghatastha yoga.

The Basis of the Body

From Hatha Yoga Book 1, Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Out of many, many authorities on hatha yoga, one is an outstanding personality. His name is Swatmarama. He compiled a book on the hatha yoga system, known as the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*. This can be translated as *Light on Hatha Yoga*. The term *pradipika*, however, actually means self-illuminating or that which illumines. It is a text which illumines a multitude of physical, mental and spiritual problems for aspirants.

Before him, the chief disciple of Matsyendranath had already written in Hindi. The name of that disciple was Gorakhnath. He was a yogi much greater than his own guru. He wrote books and poems on hatha yoga in the local dialect. But in India there is a tradition that the original texts must be in Sanskrit. So Yogi Swatmarama compiled the entire wisdom of hatha yoga in Sanskrit.

The beauty of *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* is that it solves a very great problem of every aspirant. The shatkarmas, asanas and pranayamas, which are covered in other texts, are discussed but the yamas and niyamas of raja yoga, and of the Buddhist and Jain system were completely eliminated. Experience has taught that in order to practise *yama* and *niyama*, discipline and self-control, a certain quality of mind is needed. Often when one tries to practise self-control and discipline the result is more problems in the mind and personality. If harmony is not created in the personality, then self-control and self-discipline create more conflict than peace of mind. Restraint and self-control have always been expounded as philosophical or

religious principles, but from the spiritual standpoint they have mercilessly failed to assist humanity in the task of evolution.

In *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* the first thing one notices is that Yogi Swatmarama does not worry about self-control and self-discipline in the form of yama and niyama at all. Self-control and self-discipline should start with the body. That is much easier. Asanas are discipline, pranayamas are discipline, and *kumbhaka*, retention of breath, is control. Sit in *padmasana*, the lotus pose, for fifteen minutes – that is self-discipline. Why fight with the mind first? One has no power to wrestle with the mind, yet people always wrestle with the mind. Thereby a pattern of animosity is created within the mind itself! One mind wants to break discipline while the other mind wants to maintain discipline. But there are not two minds – one mind is trying to split itself in two. This split can be found in everybody.

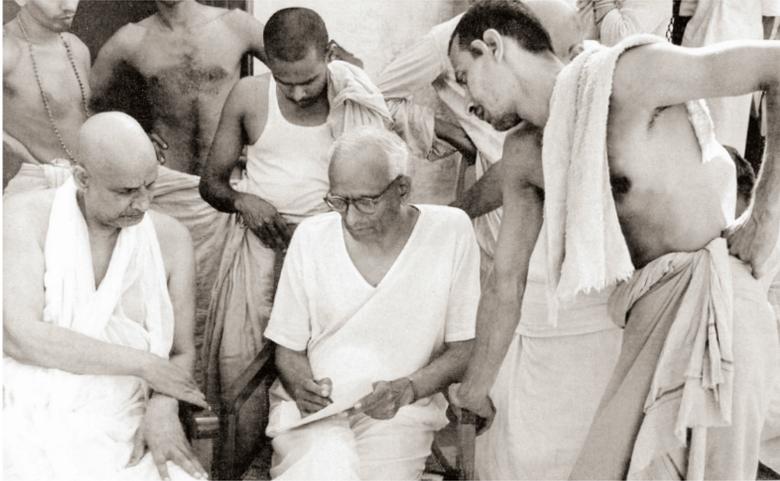
The danger was clearly realized by the authorities and masters of hatha yoga. Therefore they said, first discipline the body, and explained what they meant by the body. They said that the subtle elements or *tattwas* and the energy channels or *nadis* within the body should be purified. They said that the behaviour of *prana*, the vital force, the entire nervous system and the various secretions in the body should be properly maintained and harmonized.

It should always be kept in mind that the body, the mind and the spirit are not three, they are one. At one level of existence the body is experienced. At another level existence is perceived as the mind. Spirit should never be considered to be different from the body or the body to be different from spirit. They are one. The basis of this body is divine.



Two Noble Qualities

From the teachings of Swami Sivananda Saraswati



Perseverance is continued application to anything which one has begun. It is the spirit of persisting till success is attained.

Perseverance is steadfast pursuit or execution of a resolution or course marked out. It is persistence in purpose and effort. It is a kind of assiduous endeavour. God readily helps those who persevere. If you have perseverance, you can easily accomplish all that you wish.

That which distinguishes the strong from the weak, is the tendency to persevere, to persist in spite of all hindrances, obstacles, discouragements and seeming impossibilities.

A man of perseverance never meets with failure. He always attains success in all his undertakings. With steady perseverance, great difficulties come to an end. When you start any work, you should not leave it till you attain complete success. Pursue it resolutely.

A man of diligence, vigilance and strong resolution grows into a genius. The nerve that never relaxes, the eye that never

blinks, the thought that never wanders – these are the true masters of true victory. Victory belongs to those who are most persevering. Perseverance gives us power over our weakness and takes us from poverty to wealth.

Patience

Patience is a noble quality born of purity. No success, either in the material world or on the spiritual path, is possible without it. Patience develops the will. Difficulties do crop up at every stage, but these must be overcome through patient effort and perseverance.

The success of Mahatma Gandhi was due to these qualities. He was never discouraged by failures. All the great persons of the world have achieved fame, great success and eminence through perseverance and patience. You too will have to develop these virtues slowly.

A patient man always keeps his head cool. He keeps a balanced mind. He is not afraid of failure and difficulties. He finds out methods to get himself strengthened. For the practice of concentration of mind, one should have unyielding patience. Many people are discouraged when they encounter some difficulties and give up the work as hopeless. This is very bad. Aspirants should not give up their sadhana if they encounter any trouble or difficulty.

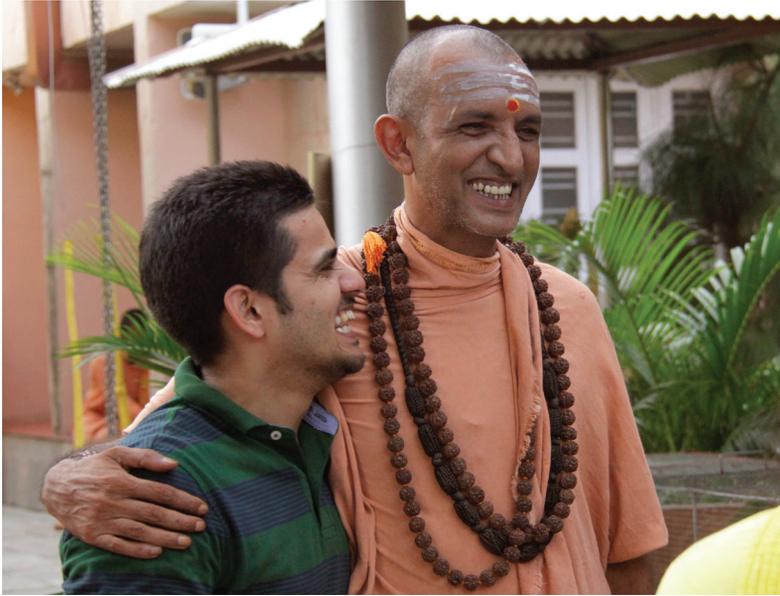
Ants collect particles of sugar and rice and store them up. How patient and persevering they are! In the Bible, you will find the words: "Go to the ant, thou sluggard, and observe its ways and be wise!"

A patient man cannot get irritated even a bit. Patience helps a man in the conquest of temper. It gives immense strength. Do all the routine tasks of the day patiently. Virtues develop slowly. Be eager to develop them. Have the mental image of 'Om patience' in your mind. The habit will slowly develop.

Meditate on these virtues in the morning. Try to do all the actions of the day patiently with intense application and perseverance.

Acceptance

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



The mood of lightness and happiness reflects a state of human mind, which is known as acceptance. Lately there has been much talk in society, the political and social circles and the media about the rising intolerance and non-acceptance of people. Intolerance and non-acceptance begin when you do not identify with other people, but only with yourself. Intolerance is a selfish, self-oriented, self-motivated expression.

A glass of milk

Tolerance is the first and acceptance is the final step. You can tolerate somebody and not accept. Yet when you accept then there is nothing beyond that acceptance. When your child is screaming, do you tolerate or do you accept? When some other child screams, do you tolerate or do you accept?

The human culture in general based evolution, progress and growth in the material dimension on the principles of tolerance and acceptance.

If human society were tribal and we were all isolated, governed by intolerance and non-acceptance, humanity would be dead by now. We would not be alive. Different tribes, groups, cultures used integration when support and help were needed. Tolerance and acceptance were always the foundation for growth and progress of human civilization.

When the first Parsis, Persians, came to India, they landed on the coast of Gujarat. They sent an application to the king for asylum and asked for a place to live. The king sent them a glass filled with milk and said to the messenger, "Give this to the chief." The Persian chief looked at the glass full of milk, took some sugar and mixed it. Then he said, "Take it back to your king." The king received the glass, tasted the milk, and said, "They are welcome."

It was a simple act, yet in this incident, the glass full of milk represented the statement, "There is no space for you. We are already full." However, the Persians took some sugar, mixed it, and said, "Don't worry. We will integrate ourselves and you will accept us. We will become one." And they became one and are still one until today. That is known as acceptance, not as tolerance.

Watch out for the warning bell

Acceptance is when you become one with the idea, environment, thoughts and with everything that allows you to grow. Non-acceptance indicates the opposite, which takes away your support for growth. Acceptance creates the foundation for growth.

Tolerance makes you recognize your individuality. By recognizing individuality the two remain two. With acceptance, the two separate individualities become one.

Whenever there has been strife, it has been due to the lack of tolerance and non-acceptance. This is a clear indication that

tolerance and acceptance lead to harmony. In harmony, there are better options and opportunities for people to focus on their growth, progress and development. In strife, it is difficult to find your balance as you are fighting on many fronts for your mental, ideological, economic gratification, or whatever gratification you seek.

A light and happy mood is an indication of acceptance. In the state of non-acceptance, there is no feeling and no joy in life. People are just simply watching other people. In non-acceptance, there is separation and non-participation. In acceptance, there is total merger.

Therefore, the idea is to observe the rigidity of the mind and the nature of the mind. Whenever you come across any situation which you see as the rise of intolerance and non-acceptance, it should ring a warning bell in your mind telling you, "I am not on the right track, I am not on the right track."

– 8 November 2015, Ganga Darshan, Munger



Nine Days at Ganga Darshan



I feel many people (including myself) are too busy on social platforms and do not live in the present moment. Technology has made us so busy that we forget the people around us. At times I feel irritated with people around me who constantly are fussing with their smartphones.

Testing myself

I came to the conclusion that I cannot change people but I can change myself. “Everyone thinks of changing the world but no one thinks of changing himself,” said Leo Tolstoy. I needed to slow down, get grounded, find inner harmony again and withdraw from everything and everybody.

I have never been to an ashram before. Yes, an ashram sounds to be the right place to practise and experience what I was looking for. An ashram is a place with little distraction. Technical devices are prohibited, you have to observe silence, work selflessly, following a disciplined daily routine and study your inner self. BSY is known to be one of the strictest ashrams in India.

For this reason I chose BSY. I wanted to step out of my comfort zone and put myself in a kind of extreme situation

to test myself. How far can I go and how do I feel with that? I went to BSY for nine days beginning of March 2016.

An ashram is neither a yoga retreat nor is it supposed to be an escape from your current life, but it is a respite from worldly pursuits. "An ashram is a place of simple living, where you can develop a positive attitude and an understanding of selfless service. It is a place of inspiration because it does not teach or preach," says Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati.

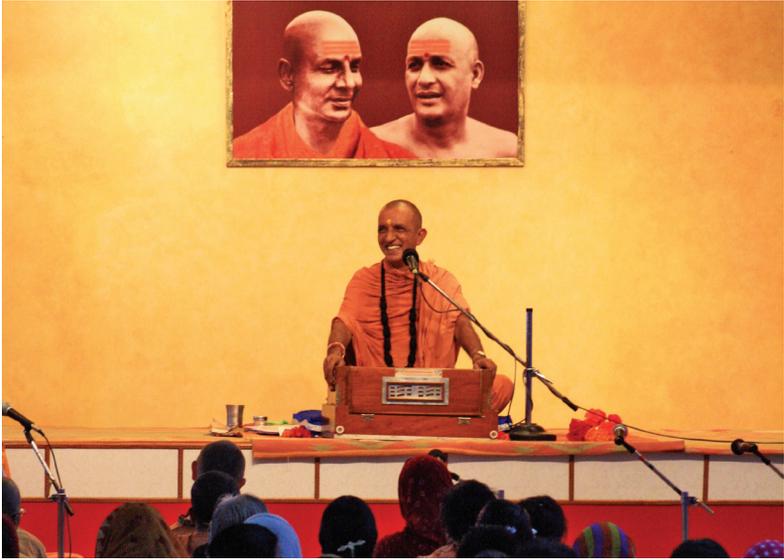
Don't visit an ashram if you have gone through some emotional trauma the last months (e.g. divorce, death in the family, etc.). You won't be able to concentrate on your self-studies. The ashram management wants you to come strong because ashram life is rigorous. Not just physically but also psychologically. You spend a few hours a day in silent mode. You live in closed quarters with strangers. Do not expect to get pampered or spoiled there. Everybody works internally with themselves.

Seva and satsang

The first three days I felt very weird in the ashram. I was not used to this guided routine and to someone telling me what I have to do the whole day. I felt irritated by the high walls around the ashram and the window grills everywhere.

Ashram means 'come and work'. During my stay in the ashram I had to work in the kitchen, do gardening, clean the dormitories for the ashram guests and serve food in the food hall to the residents. One benefit of practising seva is you attain a sense of inner peace. It comes out of the satisfaction of doing whatever you can for the common good of others. Another benefit is that society improves as a result of your seva. The most important benefit is that it helps you progress on your path by eliminating your ego and overcoming your selfishness, bit by bit.

What I liked the most during my stay was the weekly Sunday satsang with Swami Niranjanananda. I was lucky to join satsang with Swamiji two times. *Satsang* means 'the



company of the truth'. Satsang is not a discussion, philosophy or academic debate; it is a reflection. People who participate in satsangs regularly become more reflective and intuitive. Satsang can also help people to develop the quality of positive thought and action.

Inspiration

Yoga means 'union', so the task in yoga is to find union and balance between the body and mind, our thoughts and the source of thoughts, and to become One. To become one is to be centred, to be a balanced person, a conscious person.

Swami Niranjanananda says: Purify your body and mind by:

- cultivating awareness;
- observing your own life and actions;
- disciplining and restructuring your personality;
- managing the mental and emotional distractions and disturbances;
- developing positive qualities which uplift your nature and expressing these qualities, so that other people will be uplifted as well.

Okay, understood, but the challenge is trying to put that understanding into practice and living it every day, outside the ashram with all the daily distractions. Of course this takes practice and effort. It is not a teaching that you hear once and think you can master immediately. Lifestyle changes take time. There will be trouble, trial and error and pain.

At the end of my nine days in the ashram I know it was only a glimpse of what I could have experienced. I wished I could have stayed longer. I felt an amazing sense of self-awareness and strong connection with the here and now. I am again in tune with my own inner rhythm. Every experience in the ashram (chanting mantras, practising mouna, doing seva, eating a balanced diet of light and nutritious food, self-study and attending satsang) helped to relax my mind. It controlled my thoughts and brought me back to the present.

Ashram life is not for everyone but for me it was simply right. I found staying in an ashram to be healthy and creative. A few days can do wonders, but a few weeks or even months can really make a lasting difference in your life. I found in these few days what I was looking for and got even more. It won't be my last time I visit an ashram.

– Helena Hoffmann, Bangkok



A Simple Advice

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

It is easy to teach asana, pranayama and meditation, but how can we teach our students to do karma yoga or seva outside of an ashram environment?

I don't think that karma yoga or seva should be taught outside the ashram. They are not components for society. They are part of the ashram routine, discipline and culture.

It is the gurukul environment which combines aspects of karma yoga, seva, jnana yoga, bhakti yoga and other yogas. Your home is not an ashram. It is your home, with a different culture, a different system and different priorities. In your home, you live accordingly and when you come to the ashram, you live according to the disciplines of the ashram.

Karma yoga is not something for people living in society, for they do not understand the concept of karma yoga. Even in the ashram, it is difficult to explain to people what karma yoga is.

Karma yoga is an aspect of the ashram culture and not of society. If you want to bring certain concepts of karma yoga to society, it should be the *kartavya* aspect, your obligation and duty. Recognize that and work to fulfil it at home, in society and in your family.

If you can follow your obligation and duty with happiness and creativity, then you understand the concept of karma yoga in your own environment. That is a simple advice.

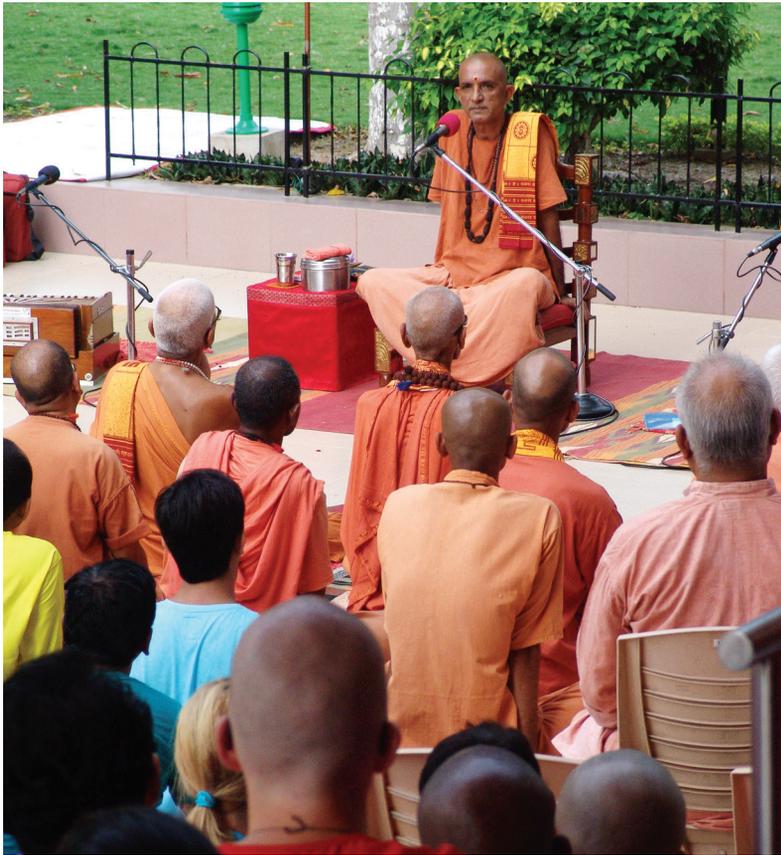
– 18 October 2015, Ganga Darshan, Munger

There is no difference between spiritual and worldly life. That is where we make the mistake. If we believe that our spiritual life is our daily life, and our daily life is our spiritual life, there will be no conflict.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Jnana Yoga in Daily Life

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



People want to know if jnana yoga can be lived like karma yoga in day-to-day activities. What is meant by jnana yoga? When you are observing yourself, it is jnana yoga, not karma yoga. When you are observing your reactions and responses, it is jnana yoga. Through your intellect you are analyzing these reactions: Why do I get angry? Why do I get frustrated? Why do I feel happy? Why do I feel depressed? These questions are

questions of jnana yoga. Therefore, one cannot live without jnana yoga.

Jnana and ajnana

You can live without karma yoga. Just sleep for twenty-four hours in your room. You can live without 'eating yoga' when you stop eating for a day. However, you cannot live without jnana yoga. You cannot stop thinking. If your thinking is constructive and positive, it is jnana yoga. If it is conspiring, negative and critical, it is ajnana yoga. Your mind is going through this practice all the time.

Your difficulty or problem is that you think jnana yoga is questioning 'Who am I?' Yet if you do not even know what makes you angry, how will you ever know who you are? If you do not know what makes you happy, how will you ever know who you are? If you do not know what you desire, how will you ever know who you are?

Jnana yoga is something that you cannot live without. Most of the time this jnana yoga is ajnana yoga. In *ajnana yoga*, the yoga of ignorance, you fall deep into the pit which you have dug for yourself. If you do not like someone, then with ajnana yoga anger, hatred or jealousy will keep increasing. If you do not like somebody yet you begin to love that person, then with that jnana yoga the animosity will decrease day by day.

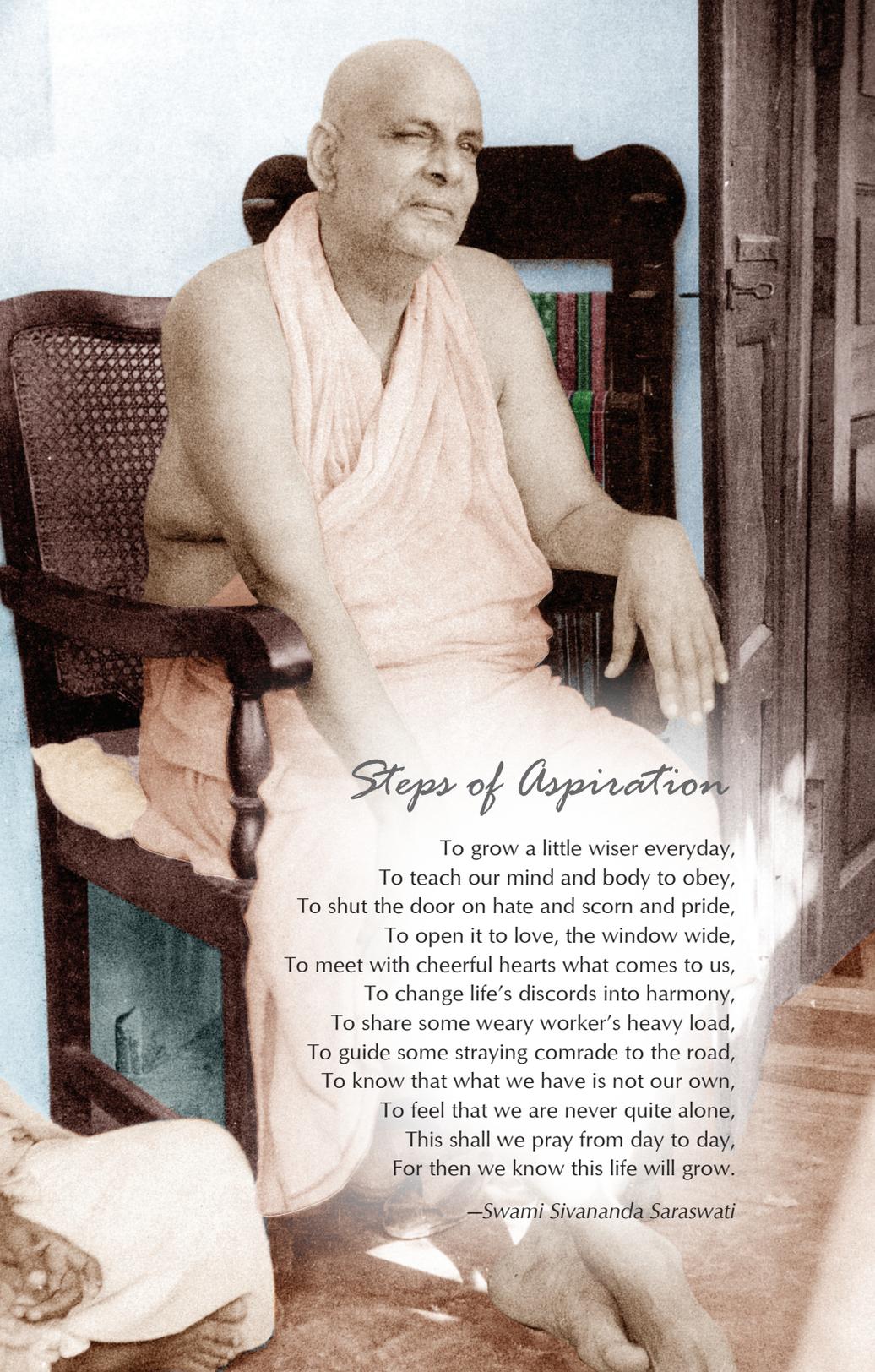
Therefore, ask yourself, 'which yoga do I live?' Most of the time you are living ajnana yoga. You have your opinions, your choices, your likes and dislikes. You hold on to it and that is your ajnana yoga.

Have you ever lived jnana yoga? Ajnana yoga will find no place in your life if you live jnana yoga.

– 2 November 2014, Ganga Darshan, Munger

Become the master of your mind and apply it to various jobs from morning to night.

—Swami Satyananda Saraswati



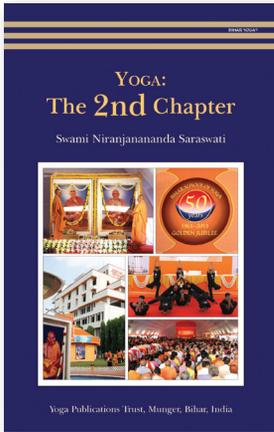
Steps of Aspiration

To grow a little wiser everyday,
To teach our mind and body to obey,
To shut the door on hate and scorn and pride,
To open it to love, the window wide,
To meet with cheerful hearts what comes to us,
To change life's discords into harmony,
To share some weary worker's heavy load,
To guide some straying comrade to the road,
To know that what we have is not our own,
To feel that we are never quite alone,
This shall we pray from day to day,
For then we know this life will grow.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Towards a Better World

From Yoga: The 2nd Chapter, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



The culture that we wish to see in our children is the culture that we have to imbibe today and work to propagate. That is the subject of the second chapter of yoga as well. Swami Satyananda used to say, "You cannot isolate yourself in an air-conditioned room while the raging fire outside is burning everything in its path. You cannot think, 'I am safe in my cool house.' The fire will come, envelop the air-conditioned house and burn it down as well."

One has to work towards creating positivity and goodness, otherwise the human race will be held responsible for creating an environment where a disconnection from human culture and human effort to achieve the best has taken place. Today, achieving the best is conceived as pushing oneself forward by pulling others down, whereas only in the last generation it meant carrying everybody forward with you.

Once a traveller went to a remote place in Africa. He saw children playing in a field there and he thought of giving these poor children something to eat. So he placed some fruits in one corner of the field and told the children, "Look, there are some fruits there, you can run over and eat them." The children started to run. When they were halfway there, one small child fell down and started to cry. The other children were running, some were almost at the goal. They all stopped. Some had the fruit close at hand; they could have just reached out and grabbed whatever they wanted. But, they all stopped, came back to the fallen and hurt child, lifted him up, and moved together as one to the fruit plates.

That is the meaning of coming together and moving together. That is the meaning of support and growth. Everybody in the spirit of *atmabhava*, the sense of unity and oneness, supports the community and there is no craving for personal gratification. Of course there is no denying personal gratification, but there is no craving, only awareness and restraint, *sanyam*.

These are the understandings, in terms of lifestyle and sadhana, that have to now develop in yoga; not only how we can best learn, practise and teach, but also what aspects of culture we can give to the future generations by first imbibing them ourselves and then propagating them. This is one contribution every spiritual-minded person must make for the betterment of the global human society.





Yoga Publications Trust

Hatha Yoga Pradipika

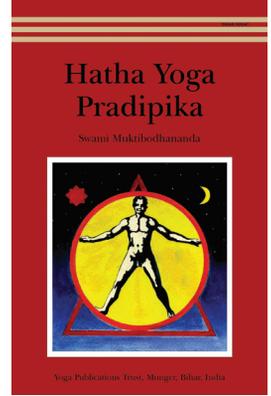
Swami Muktibodhananda

715 pp, soft cover, ISBN 978-81-85787-38-1

Hatha Yoga Pradipika (Light on Hatha Yoga) includes the original Sanskrit text compiled by Maharishi Swatmarama with a translation and thorough commentary in English by Swami Satyananda Saraswati and Swami Muktibodhananda.

This text elucidates the entire science of hatha yoga (asana, pranayama, shatkarma, mudra and bandha) as it was conceived and practised not only for health and fitness, but for awakening the vital energies: pranas, chakras and kundalini shakti. It points out that hatha yoga is not just a physical practice but a process of cellular transmutation from gross to subtle to divine. Thus hatha yoga was considered to be the foundation of all higher yogas.

Line drawings and diagrams illustrate the text.



Reprint

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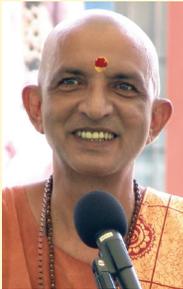
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Websites

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.

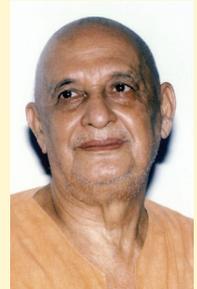


www.yogamag.net

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

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

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|------------------|--|
| Sep 24-30 | * Hatha Yoga: Shatkarma Intensive (Hindi/English) |
| Oct 3-30 | * Progressive Yoga Vidya Training (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 7 2017 | * Yoga Lifestyle Experience |
| Dec 19-23 | Yoga Chakra Series (Hindi/English) |
| Dec 25 | Swami Satyananda's Birthday |

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|-----------------|---------------------------------|
| Every Saturday | Mahamrityunjaya Havan |
| Every Ekadashi | Bhagavad Gita Path |
| Every Poornima | Sundarkand Path |
| Every 5th & 6th | Guru Bhakti Yoga |
| Every 12th | Akhanda Path of Ramacharitamans |

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

Please be aware that mobile phones are NOT permitted in the ashram.
Ensure that you do not bring your mobile with you.

For more information on the above events contact:

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