

# YOGA

Year 5 Issue 7

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## Hari Om

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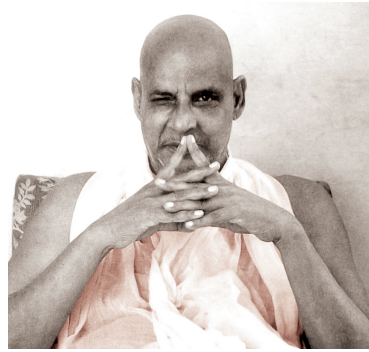
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## GUIDELINES FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

### OBSTACLES TO SADHANA

#### Anger

Born of rajas, anger is all-consuming and all-polluting and the greatest enemy of peace. When a desire is not gratified one becomes angry; the mind becomes confused and leads to loss of memory and understanding. When angry, a person will say anything and do anything he likes. Anger is a form of shakti or Devi.

Resentment, indignation, fury, wrath and irritation are all varieties of anger according to degree or intensity. Becoming irritable over trifles very often is a definite sign of mental weakness. Irritability should be controlled by developing patience, enquiry, forgiveness, love, mercy and the spirit of service. Sometimes a spiritual teacher has to express a little anger outwardly to correct his disciples. This is not bad. It has to be done.

—Swami Sivananda

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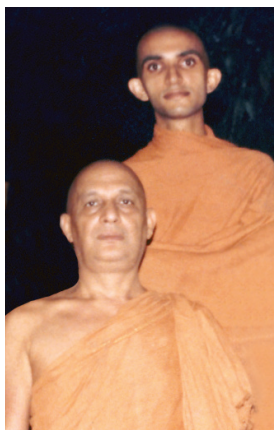
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The Yogi is superior to the ascetic. He is deemed superior even to those versed in sacred lore. The Yogi is superior even to those who perform action with some motive. Therefore, Arjuna, do you become a Yogi. (*Bhagavad Gita VI:46*)

तपस्विभ्योऽधिको योगी ज्ञानिभ्योऽपि मतोधिकः । कर्मिभ्यश्चाधिको योगी तस्माद्योगी भवार्जुन ॥

# Sharing the Same Goal

*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*



If you want a relationship to succeed in life, you have to look at one thing: do both partners share the same goal in life? Swami Vivekananda used to say, that if somebody wants to live in the South Pole and somebody wants to live on the Equator, there is going to be a problem.

Generally you tend to superimpose your expectations and ambitions on the other person, and a split happens - initially there was love, now there is hatred, anger, frustration. Initially there were high expectations, now the expectations cannot be fulfilled any more. This could be a reason why so many people are disappointed in their relationships with each other and with their partners.

It is necessary to look at the goal shared by both. If the goal is the same, then even if you are one hundred or one thousand miles apart, you will still feel close together. That closeness is supporting the activity of each other; it is uplifting the internal structure of each partner, and that is important.

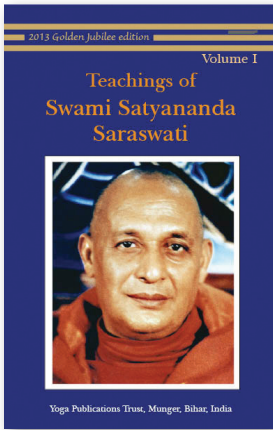
I remember a saying: If you want to know me, do not look at what I eat, how I dress, what I look like, how I sleep, how I talk, because that is not me. If you want to know who I am, then ask me, "What was your goal in life? What have you done to attain that goal in life? And what restricted you in attaining that goal in life?"

I like this saying. For me it covers relationships, personal and individual creativity as well as direction in life. If you and your partner and you and your guru can share the same goal in life, you will be the happiest persons on this planet.



# Yoga as a Way of Life

From Teachings of Swami Satyananda Saraswati, Volume I



All of you should know of the instructions of Krishna to Arjuna in the *Bhagavad Gita*. Lord Krishna instructs Arjuna about the possibility of the integration of yoga into one's daily life. At one point, Arjuna asks Krishna, "Tell me, what am I to do; should I work or should I renounce?" Here Arjuna implied he believed that yoga was something other than living life, and many people think this today. Lord Krishna re-emphasized that yoga

and karma should go hand in hand.

If life is expressed without integrating it with yoga, then it brings unhappiness, frustration and agony, which most of us experience. But when the mind is disciplined and the body is healthy and able to cope, we can maintain the efficiency of action side by side with balance of mind. Therefore, yoga is not just a pastime for recluses, it is not just some kind of sport, and it is not an escape by which we try to forget the realities of life.

I know that there are many sects in the world which try to escape from the realities of life, but yoga is neither a sect nor an escape. Yoga is a science which teaches us to be strong enough physically, emotionally and mentally to face anything, whether frustrations, disappointments, ill-health, passions or the invariable concomitants of our emotional attachments.

In the first chapter of the *Gita*, Arjuna has all the symptoms of a nervous breakdown, just as we all face nervous breakdowns in life when we are not able to resolve conflicts. Yoga doesn't start with purity; yoga ends with purity. Yoga

doesn't start with peace of mind; it starts with a disturbed mind. Yoga doesn't start with saintliness; it ends with saintliness. Yoga starts when the balance is lost. You know it. It is not just a philosophy.

When you are angry, what do you do? You try to control yourself, and trying to control yourself is yoga. When the scales are heavily loaded against you, what do you do? You try to balance them, and that's yoga, the attempt to balance them. You attempt to balance the mind in the face of adversity. Yoga deals with depressions, with disappointments and with the breakdown of our usual coping mechanisms.

Now, coming to the practical side, yoga is not only philosophy; it is more practice than theory. The practices of yoga are spread all over the ancient culture of humanity, called vedic dharma. For many thousands of years, wise people have been researching, assessing and realizing newer and newer ways of tackling man's eternal and never-ending problems of body, mind, emotions, intellect, subconscious and unconscious.

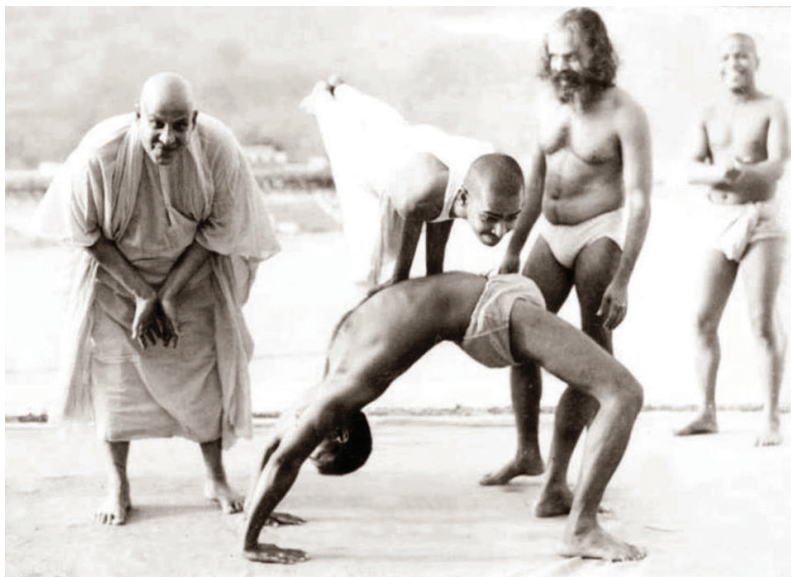
Even as the modern West is tackling the problems of material life and producing new things every day, the rishis of India, for thousands of years, have been discovering ways of self-control, self-discipline, self-understanding and self-realization. There has only been one thing in the minds of these sages – how to deal with the mind.

In the tantras, in yoga, in Vedanta, in the Upanishads, and everywhere, the subject is: how to deal with the mind and how to realize the highest consciousness in ourselves. Thus, they codified it, and as you know they called the different systems karma yoga, bhakti yoga, jnana yoga and raja yoga. Through the practices of these systems, one can deal very efficiently with the four aspects of one's nature: one's dynamism, emotional, intellectual and psychic propensities.

*– 4 September 1982, at the residence of Surendra Purohit,  
Denver, Colorado*

# The Practice of Yoga

*From the teachings of Swami Sivananda Saraswati*



Yoga is a perfect practical system of self-culture. Yoga is an exact science. It aims at the harmonious development of the body, the mind and the soul. Yoga is the turning away of the senses from the objective universe and the concentration of the mind within. Yoga is eternal life in the soul or spirit. Yoga aims at controlling the mind and its modifications. The path of yoga is an inner path whose gateway is your heart.

Yoga is the discipline of the mind, senses and physical body. Yoga helps in the coordination and control of the subtle forces within the body. Yoga brings in perfection, peace and everlasting happiness. Yoga can help you in your business and in your daily life. You can have calmness of mind at all times by the practice of yoga. You can have restful sleep. You can have increased energy, vigour, vitality, longevity and a high standard of health. Yoga transmutes animal nature into



divine nature and raises you to the pinnacle of divine glory and splendour.

The practice of yoga will help you to control the emotions and passions and will give you power to resist temptations and to remove the disturbing elements from the mind. It will enable you to keep a balanced mind always and remove fatigue. It will confer on you serenity, calmness and wonderful concentration. It will enable you to hold communion with the Lord and thus attain the *summum bonum* of existence.

If you want to attain success in yoga, you will have to abandon all worldly enjoyments and practise tapas and Brahmacharya. You will have to control the mind skilfully and tactfully. You will have to use judicious and intelligent methods to curb it. If you use force, it will become more turbulent and mischievous. It cannot be controlled by force. It will jump and drift away more and more. Those who attempt to control the mind by force are like those who endeavour to bind a furious elephant with a thin silken thread.

A guru or preceptor is indispensable for the practice of yoga. The aspirant on the path of yoga should be humble, simple, gentle, refined, tolerant, merciful and kind. If you want to get psychic powers, you cannot have success in yoga. Yoga does not consist in sitting cross-legged for six hours or stopping the pulse or beatings of the heart or getting oneself buried underneath the ground for a week or a month.

Self-sufficiency, impertinence, pride, luxury, name, fame, self-assertive nature, obstinacy, idea of superiority, sensual desires, bad company, laziness, overeating, overwork, too much mixing and too much talking are some of the obstacles on the path of yoga. Admit your faults freely. When you are free from all these negative traits, *samadhi* or union will come by itself.

Practise yama and niyama. Sit comfortably in padmasana or siddhasana. Restrain the breath. Withdraw the senses. Control the thoughts. Concentrate. Meditate and attain asamprajnata or nirvikalpa samadhi, union with the Supreme Self.

# Vision of Yoga

*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

Swami Satyananda and yoga complement each other. Sri Swami Satyananda adopted yoga, not the hatha yoga, jnana yoga, kriya yoga, kundalini yoga, or mantra yoga that people know and are attracted to, but yoga as a culture, a style of life and an attainment of life.

After all, what is your exposure to yoga? Five percent exposure to yoga – it can't be more. Even the yoga teachers who have been teaching yoga for decades have only exposed themselves to maybe five or ten percent of yoga, only asana, pranayama, some pratyahara and some meditation techniques, and maybe a cock-eyed theory of chakra and kundalini.

Yoga should not be taken lightly. Sri Swamiji is the epitome of that yogic tradition and culture which was emitted by Swami Sivananda. In this tradition life becomes complete, correct and perfect. Our example is our guru, who lived a correct life, who lived a perfect life, and who lived an enlightened life. He still continues to shine brightly in the lives of people who are connected to him and he still continues to attract, through his luminosity, those people who have never seen him. Such is the power of a saint. Such is the power of an enlightened being.

We are all part of his vision. All of us who have come from near and far, the affluent and poor, no matter who we are, no matter to which caste, creed, religion, or belief we belong, we come here only for two things: to experience love and to experience divinity.



Although we speak about the experience of love and unity and listen to it many times, let me ask a question today: “Do you live that love and unity with your people, with your friends, with your neighbours, with your associates?” If you do not, then you have not learnt anything. But if you can share even one percent of that love and that unity, then yes, you’re on the right track. And this is something that each spiritual aspirant must think about. You do not have to be generous, loving and kind overnight. A bud does not become a flower instantly. It follows its course of time and destiny. In the same manner let your faith, let your belief, let your conviction become the strengths which allow what is destined for you to be realized in this lifetime.

All the traditions which Sri Swamiji has spoken about share two criteria: to have faith and to have belief. Without these two elements, you cannot attain love; forget unity. If you do not have faith and belief in your mother, you will not go near her. You will be unable to love her. If you believe in your mother and have faith in your mother, there is no need to call you, you will always be near your mother, seeking that solace, love and support. It is also stated in the *Ramacharitamanas*, that without faith, belief and conviction, not even siddhas can realize the higher nature within themselves.

We are here as part of a family, not visitors and guests, but a family that is united and together in the vision of our guru. As a family, we are sharing and experiencing the joy of being and giving together.

You may feel happy giving, but did you look at the faces of the people who are receiving? Their smile is the biggest blessing that you have ever had in your life. When you are able to create a smile of happiness on the troubled faces of humanity, that is real seva, real prem and real karuna. For that, you have to connect with the inspiration to help other people.

– 7 December 2013, Rikhiapeeth



# What is the purpose of existence?

*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*

The purpose of life is to evolve. Man is part of a fantastic, infinite evolution. He is not absolute; he stands somewhere within it.

After millions of years of existence, this creation, life itself, has evolved to the point where it manifested in the form of man. The life force within man, animals, vegetables and minerals, in all sentient and insentient creation is one evolving existence which always was right from the beginning of this universe, from the beginning of this planet Earth.

The purpose of evolution, however, is certainly not known to me. Logically, intuitively and metaphysically, no philosophy has ever convinced me of its purpose to this day. Although I have studied modern and ancient philosophies of all ages and races, I cannot tell you why life was born, why it evolves, to what extent it will evolve, and the purpose of this meaningless evolution which is going to come to an end.

If you want me to give a reply according to Hindu philosophy, the Bible or other religions, I can, but my reply to the purpose of evolution is: I do not know.

*– April 1978*



# Symbol of the Heart

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Emotion is energy in motion. Emotion is a separate level of experience to logic and intellect. When one expresses an emotion there is no logical support and foundation in it. Emotion is just an explosion of a feeling, a *bhava*.

The three terms, head, heart and hands, reflect the three qualities of life. Head represents rationality, the logical, intellectual, linear, sequential. 1, 2, 3, 4 and a, b, c, d, that is *buddhi*, the head. Heart is *bhavana*, emotion. They are separate. There is distance between them. They are not together. The third quality is action, hands.

## Two types of emotion

The heart is a symbolic interpretation of the level of existence where energy is not confined or contained by an external idea or identification, but where energy is raw.

You know that you should not get angry. But when you are angry, where has your logic gone? Where has your understanding gone? You know you should not be jealous, but when you are jealous, where has your logic gone? Where has your understanding gone?

Emotion is another ballgame. There is no logic, no rationality, no understanding, only an expression. This expression of emotion comes in two forms: self-oriented and selfless. These are the only two ways of expressing emotions.

Self-oriented becomes conditional, selfless becomes unconditional. I use self-oriented emotions to satisfy myself. I use the strength of my emotions to bring happiness to myself. Being selfless means I use the strength of my emotions to bring happiness to the life of other people.

Emotions are classified either as self-oriented or selfless. Self-oriented emotions are generally negative, and selfless emotions are generally good. Self-oriented emotions are negative because you are trying to find your own satisfaction at the expense of understanding and wisdom. When you are looking for self-gratification, there is no component of compassion, love, kindness or sympathy in it. There is only desire: I want, I need, this is my right, this is my choice.

When you express an emotion geared to help yourself, it will always be perceived as detrimental, destructive and negative, as inconsiderate, unkind, uncompassionate by other people. If you do a little helping act, for example, a lady's shawl has blown away, you bring it back and give it to her, then that shows a simple act of kindness and a positive emotion.

### **Shuddha and ashuddha**

There are two ways: One is what you do to bring happiness all around, and the other is what you do to bring happiness only to yourself. This is the difference. When you bring happiness to your environment, that is *shuddha bhava*, pure emotion; and when you bring strife to your environment, it is *ashuddha bhava*, impure sentiments.





With the heart, you are using the selfless and the selfish, self-oriented the shuddha and ashuddha emotions. The selfless emotion is shuddha, pure, and provides smooth sailing. The selfish, self-oriented, the impure emotion is the hard one, for you have to work hard to please yourself. You can go to any extent to please yourself, even to the extent of abusing somebody else.

The heart represents the repository of those expressions of life which can go both ways, towards the selfish and the selfless. Whereas the mind is only unidirectional, towards the world of senses and sense objects. The mind is not a multidirectional entity. Even in deepest levels of meditation, the mind will be pulled out to the sensorial world until and unless you attain samadhi.

The main relationship of the mind is with the sensorial world, and the main function of the heart is being the repository of the virtuous and the detrimental emotions, which can either uplift or bring you down to the ground. The heart is referring to the container of the virtue and vice of emotions.

*– 17 April 2016, Ganga Darshan, Munger*

# Sunday Satsang

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

**Sage Patanjali speaks of asana as *sthiram sukham asanam*. Does it mean that asana is that in which one is *sthira* and *sukhi*, or does it mean that *sthirata* and *sukha* are outcomes of practising asana?**

*Sthiram* and *sukham*, stability and comfort, are the outcome of asana practice. Once they are the outcome of the asana practice, the posture itself becomes steady.

Who can sit for five minutes without moving? Stillness does not come naturally, for stillness is not the nature of the senses. The entire body is governed by the senses. Distractions in the body are caused by the senses. Distractions and disturbances in the mind are caused by the senses. When you practise asana, you are not practising a physical posture. The body takes on a physical posture, however the effect of it is to reduce the hyperactivity of the senses. Once the hyperactivity of the senses



is reduced, the body enters into a state of comfort and ease. Then a posture can be maintained for a longer period.

Patanjali is advocating only those asanas which are static and comfortable. His first sutra is: *Atha yogah anushasanam* – ‘Now, instructions on raja yoga’. This is interpreted by many people as meaning that raja yoga is a continuation of a previous yoga, and that previous yoga is hatha yoga.

By the time you come to raja yoga, you have done all the physical movements that you need to do. Therefore, the focus of raja yoga is not on the practice of asana, but on the maintenance of the physical posture.

Even if you do vrischikasana, sirshasana, mayurasana, or surya namaskara, in a manner in which you are experiencing steadiness and comfort in all the different movements and postures, you will be fulfilling the criteria of Sage Patanjali.

The stillness of body and mind in a posture will lead you to pratyahara, introversion. Although stillness and comfort are the outcome of the asana practice, you have to remember that the statement is being made in relation to the stillness leading to pratyahara.

**What is pratyahara? Is it withdrawal of senses from external objects, withdrawal of the mind from the senses, or withdrawal of the thoughts?**

Pratyahara is an interesting topic. The purpose of asana is to silence the hyperactivity and the agitations of the senses and the mind, leading to the experience of pratyahara. There are three ways I have defined pratyahara and there are three progressive stages of pratyahara.

### **The turtle**

Sri Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita* tells Arjuna to withdraw the senses and the mind, just as a turtle withdraws the arms, legs, tail and head into its shell. Therefore, according to the *Bhagavad Gita*, withdrawing from everything and being self-contained is pratyahara.



Now, what does one withdraw? The senses and the mind. There are five physical senses, the *karmendriyas*, the organs of action; and there are five organs of knowledge, *jnanendriyas*; which are the physical senses. And there is the mind, the sixth sense, the sixth sensory organ.

### **Pratyaya, the old file**

There is a word in Sanskrit *pratyaya* which means an image created in the mind. For example, a guest or student comes and stays one month at Ganga Darshan. You relate and interact. Then the person goes back home, yet in your mind, you have the *pratyaya*, the image. Whenever a letter comes, whenever an email comes, the same *pratyaya* will set in, and the same information will come forward. It is like pulling the old file to know who that person is. That is *pratyaya*.

*Pratyaya* indicates a connection, an awareness in you about someone or something. This can happen with any object, even a stone can become a *pratyaya*. If you are walking on the street and you trip on a stone, the stone will become a *pratyaya*. If you are seeing a nice flower, that flower will become a *pratyaya*. If you see on your early morning walk, two dogs fight, that image will become a *pratyaya*. Anything that one receives through the senses becomes a *pratyaya*, an impression.

Pratyahara is to rid oneself of these impressions for these pratyayas also cause opinions. This person is nice, this person is not nice. This person is good, this person is bad. This person is helpful, this person is gentle. This person is loving, this person is cantankerous. This opinion, based on pratyaya, is the cause of the disturbance in your mind during meditation. That has to be eliminated.

### **Prati-ahara, feeding oneself**

We are continuously receiving inputs from all sources and all directions. That is *ahara*, feeding oneself. How many sounds are you hearing? An incredible number of sounds, however the brain is filtering only those which are relevant at present. *Prati-ahara*, everything is coming in. You may only be aware of a partial fragment of the whole experience, yet everything is taken in.

Is it possible to reverse that? Instead of it coming in, can you put it out and empty yourself of it? This emptying oneself is known as *karma kshaya*, or the reduction of samskaras, or overcoming the karmas. Therefore, the three stages of pratyahara are:

1. Withdrawal – to stop the agitations of the senses.
2. Observation – to disconnect from the pratyayas, the impressions, which are cluttering the mind.
3. Emptying – to throw out all the rubbish from the mind.

These three stages indicate the sequence in pratyahara.

Whatever practice you do, whether it is thought or emotion observation, mantra repetition or breath awareness, it is only a step to move into the stages of pratyahara in a more controlled manner.

### **How can we do our duties in the best possible way, yet avoid projection of our egos?**

The English word is ego, but the Sanskrit word is *ahamkara*. How to deal with this ego, this *ahamkara*? It is distracting, disturbing and hard to manage.



Ahamkara is not ego. It is composed of two words. *Aham* means I, *akara* means form, shape or identity. Therefore, the word *ahamkara* means my identity, my nature, my personality. What I am, the whole thing, is ahamkara, the self-awareness, the self-identity. Self-image, self-prestige, self-esteem become part of self-recognition, ahamkara.

This is good, as long as you are content. When this ahamkara, this pure self-awareness, comes in contact with external sense objects, it does not remain ahamkara. It transforms into something else. The self-identity or self-awareness when in relation with sense objects takes the form of *abhimaan*, arrogance, and *ghamand*, pride.

Pride and arrogance, *ghamand* and *abhimaan*, together, are known as ego in English. Ahamkara is not known as ego. The statement, "He is very egotistical" is always negative. "He has a big ego" is always in a negative context. Therefore, you have to deal with your pride and arrogance, not with your self-identity, your ahamkara. You have to deal with your ego, which is the combination of pride and arrogance, *ghamand* and *abhimaan*. This can only happen through self-observation, and reminding yourself continuously and constantly what you have to do.

You train an untrained animal, a dog, horse, bird, any animal by repeating the instruction over and over again. You have to be more alert and aware than the animal to actually control and instruct the animal. If you are not alert, you will not be able to teach anything to the animal. You have to keep on repeating, "Sit, sit, sit, sit, sit," every time the animal moves. Are you able to do that to yourself? If you are not, start from the beginning again.

That is the level of competence one has to acquire to succeed in yoga. For that, the *drashta* identity, the *sakshi* identity, the witness identity is important. You have to be able to witness, rather than be caught and swept in the stream and flow. You have to become the witness of yourself. Therefore, continuously remind yourself, "No, not this, not this, not this, not this."

Anything which triggers a negative response has to be eliminated. “Oh no, that person is again going to bug me.” Instantly, that thought has to be disposed of for it will fuel your pride and arrogance, and you will be caught more in your ego-pride and arrogance, and you will be caught more in your ego-centric behaviours, than in your ego-free behaviour.

This is where most people fail as they cannot differentiate between ego-centric behaviour and ego-less behaviour. No matter how great or how elevated a sadhaka might be, when he has to give up ego-centric behaviour and express ego-less behaviour, he fails. That is the test of a sadhaka.

– 6 March 2016, Ganga Darshan, Munger



Self-confidence comes by means of experience and proper training, but egoism is one's gross nature. It has nothing to do with experience and nothing to do with training or guidance.

–Swami Satyananda Saraswati

# Sadhana and Transcendence

*From the teachings of Swami Satyananda Saraswati*

## **Is there an ego and how is it related to Brahma?**

There is ego. I discuss things, but on the level of sadhana. I don't go into all these things. I keep the books in this room and do sadhana in that room. Keep your intellect down, keep your logic off. Just practise like an innocent person.

For a sadhaka there is no ego, no jivatma, no Brahma. He doesn't know what is what. An innocent person doesn't know what he is ultimately going to be. The merger can be defined, I am defining it to you because satsang is taking place, but actually I don't define it to myself. Why should I postulate with myself? I have reached the destination. There is no postulation. What the reality is like, what the experience is like, it is to myself.

I know *Om Namah Shivaya*, nothing beyond this. I know in one asana I have to sit down, *Om Namah Shivaya*, *Om Namah Shivaya*. Anything that is beyond that is not my immediate concern. What is the ultimate experience? For myself I don't know but for the purpose of sadhana, for the sadhaka, I will have to say, on the basis of the shastras and the gurus.

When I am in sadhana, all my books, all my knowledge, all my erudition is on the bookshelf there, locked. I don't want to know it. I don't know whether Brahman is light or anandam. This experience, how does it taste, how does it feel, I don't know. Let me have an experience, that is all. The path of sadhana is very powerful, bereft of erudition, bereft of all the knowledge you have achieved from the books, shastras, guru or anyone.

The only thing that carries you further is that one little point of sadhana. Maybe it is mantram or maybe your guru has given you something else. That little thing, that little light, alone carries you. If you move with postulation, Brahman is

anandam, anandam is ineffable bliss, then you will be lost in your own makings.

My concept of sadhana is this – what guru has said. In one word *gurumukhmantra*, guru's mantra, initiation from his mouth. Maybe it is Sri Ram, then that is all. He has not told me how to do it, what to expect, rules and order, what to do. He says Sri Ram, that is all. You can do one minute, ten minutes or twenty minutes, or the whole day, full week or full life, it is up to you.

What guru has told you innocently, simply and unassumingly you must also accept simply and unassumingly, quietly like a seed in the earth. Let it stay there, let it grow into a fine tree and let it bear fine fruit. That is the secret, nothing beyond.



My guru gave me initiation and enough spiritual strength and blessings. Gurus can do this much only. It is the student who has to do intense and rigorous sadhana.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

# Dear Reader

*From the teachings of Swami Sivananda Saraswati*



The vast majority of persons, even the so-called educated people, have no definite aim in life. They drift here and there like logs in an ocean. They do not know what to do.

Some students complete the BA and MA degrees but they do not know how to proceed further. They do not have the power of judgement to select a good vocation that is suitable to their temperament, that can bring them prosperity and success in life. They become lazy. They are unfit for adventurous enterprises, for any kind of speculative business,

or any kind of activity that demands knack, pluck and skill. They waste their time and finish their career in gloom, despair and sorrow.

The energy is there, the intellect is there, but they have no definite aim or purpose. They have no ideal. They have no program of life. Hence they meet with failure. Everyone of you should clearly determine the aim of your life. Then you should chalk out a line of work that is congenial to your aim. You should have your ideal and try every second to live up to that ideal. You can realize the ideal right now through determination or after ten years by walking with faltering steps. It does not matter much. The ideal and the aim must be there. Then you can develop your will.



When one has successfully finished one's duties as a householder, when the sons are settled in life, when all the daughters have been given in marriage, one should devote the remaining years of one's life to spiritual pursuits, to study of religious literature and to divine contemplation. Many have no definite ideas as to what they are going to do. Even after retirement from active service they take to some other vocation. They are still greedy. Till the end of life they count money and entertain thoughts of their grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Pitiably indeed is the lot of these people! Blessed is he who spends his whole time in study and meditation in a solitary place after serving humanity and fulfilling all his obligations!

Man spends a great deal of his time in acquiring material wealth. This only gives him pain and sorrow. He should at least spend the last years of his life in prayer and in the service of mankind, and thus do something for the purification and evolution of his soul.

### **Tat Tvam Asi**

Dear readers, I want to place before you one important point. I have no such words as 'cannot', 'difficult', 'impossible' and 'weakness' in my dictionary. Those who attempt to develop their will should remove these words from their dictionary also. They are expression of a weakling. Become a lion. Become a spiritual hero. Become a champion on a spiritual field.

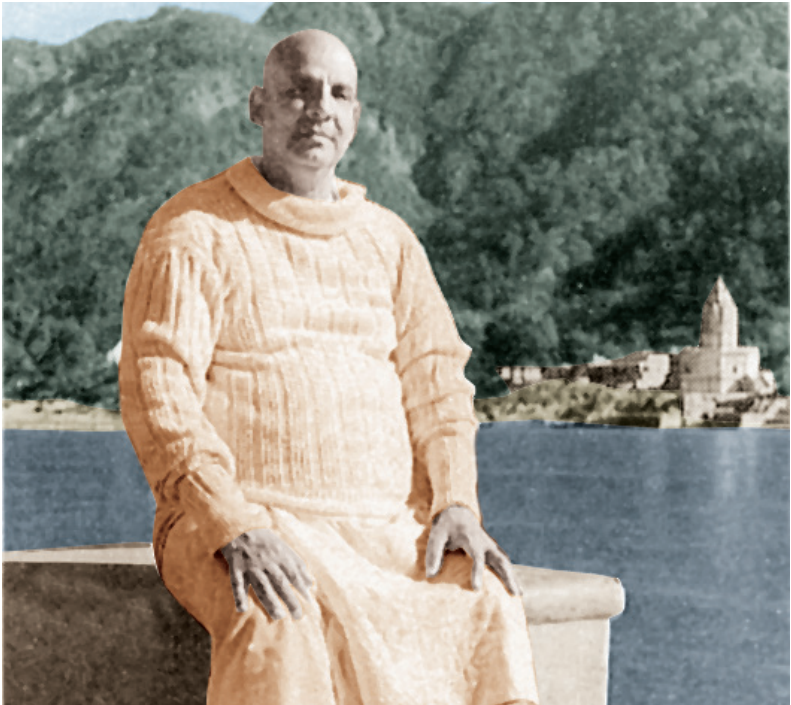
By mere willing or chanting of *Om*, mountains should be crushed to powder. By mere willing, all the waves of the ocean should subside. Lord Jesus did this and you also can do the same. Whatever one person has achieved others can also achieve, if they only will. This is the grand law of nature. Mother Prakriti is unbiased. She looks at all her children with equal vision.

Therefore, never entertain negative thoughts. Understand the glory, splendour and power of the Self, which is at the back of your mind, thought and will. Understand the magnanimity

and immortal nature of that hidden, interpenetrating essence. Know that this Self is the storehouse of all bliss, knowledge, power, peace and joy. Feel that the sun, the moon, the stars and fire perform their respective functions at your command. Feel that the air moves, the rain falls, the fire burns, the river flows, the sun shines, the stars glitter, and the gods, Indra, Agni and Yama do their respective functions at your bidding.

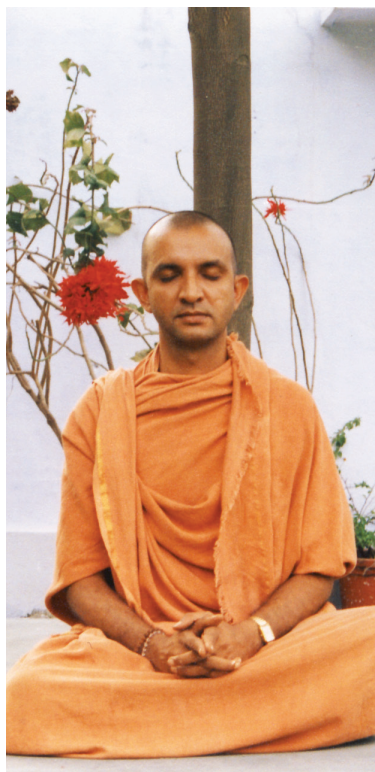
You are the glory of glories, sun of suns, light of lights, divinity of divinities, emperor of emperors, God of gods! You are truth, you are Brahman, you are the pure, imperishable, undecaying atman that pervades this whole universe!

Realize your eternal freedom and satchidananda nature, your centre, ideal, goal and heritage. Rest in that ocean of light, knowledge, love, peace, joy and bliss. Realize the significance of the great sentence of the glorious Upanishads – *Tat Twam Asi* – That Thou Art.



# Pratyahara – Never the Same

*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*



When you make food, you put condiments in it to give it taste. Salt is one kind, turmeric is one kind, jeera is one kind. The masalas are add-ons that you put in the food to bring out a taste or to create a taste.

In the same manner, observation of the mind and elimination of stuff from the mind is known as pratyahara. If you are observing the thoughts as in antar mouna, it is part of pratyahara. If you are observing the daily routine as in the Review of the Day, it is part of pratyahara. If you are relaxing as in yoga nidra, it is part of pratyahara. Whatever practice you are doing, it is part of pratyahara.

Observation of the daily routine is not the same as antar mouna, for the focus is different. The focus of antar mouna is clearing your thoughts, whereas the focus of observation in the Review of the Day is to recognize where you have succeeded and failed.

The intention is different, the process may be similar, for they all belong to the same category of pratyahara, however the focus and intent of each practice is always different, never the same.

*– 24 April 2016, Ganga Darshan, Munger*





## *My Prayer*

Teach me to be still and  
To notice your loving eyes on me.  
Bless me to have a strong conviction,  
To walk on the path you show.

Gurudev! You are the tower of my strength,  
Shower your tender compassion on me.  
You have shown your mercy to me  
In many wonderful ways,  
I will only be filled by you.

Fill my whole being with your love,  
Turn my weeping into joy.  
Accept me as your child,  
As your frightened child.

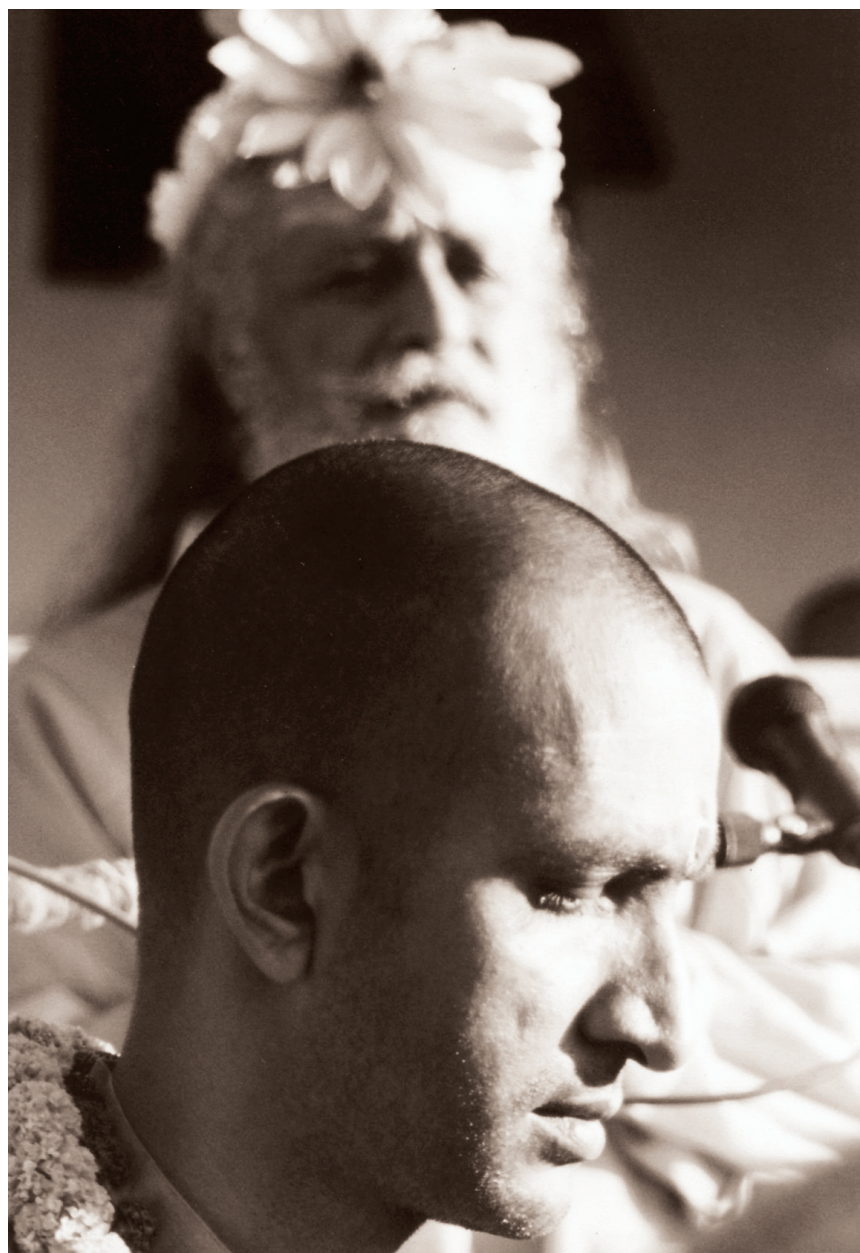
—Sanyasi Sukirti, Rajnandgaon, India













# Nights of Inspiration

*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*



## **Sivaratri**

Sivaratri is a night on which many things have happened. According to the Shivapurana, the stories of Shiva, when the universe was created, it was not inhabited by any life form. Brahma and Vishnu saw this created universe and debated as to who was the first person, who was superior and senior?

It is a natural human behaviour. If two people meet anywhere in the world, the first impression is the age. Before you even speak, what you look for is the age. If somebody is elder, you speak in a certain manner. If somebody is younger, you speak in a different manner. The first awareness is, who is senior? Am I bigger, or is the other person bigger? Am I smaller, or the other person is smaller?

This became the debate, because Brahma and Vishnu were immortals. While they were having this debate about which one of them was the greater, a pillar of fire appeared between

them. This pillar of fire appeared on top of the mountain Arunachalam.

That pillar of fire was so huge that Brahma and Vishnu, the two immortals, decided to find the beginning and the end of this pillar of fire. Brahma took the form of a swan and flew up. Vishnu took the form of a boar and dug down. For eons, they went searching, digging and flying, yet they could not find the beginning or the end of this pillar of fire.

When they were exhausted and tired, they met again in the centre place and while expressing their inability to find beginning or end, and wondering what this pillar of fire represented, they heard a sound.

That sound was the sound of *Om*. In the vibrations created by *Om*, they saw the image of Shiva. The first appearance of Shiva in the beginning of history happened on Sivaratri, the night when he emerged from the dark as a luminous pillar of fire, representing the vital force. Fire contains everything, heat and light. That was Shiva.

After Shiva appeared as the pillar of fire, the creation of life forms began. He was the catalyst for the creation of life forms in the universe where no life forms had previously existed. He became the first pranic power.

Shiva appeared twelve more times. His appearance coincided with the day of Sivaratri. Whenever he appeared these twelve times, he became the self-effulgent jyotirlinga, the twelve jyotirlingas. These twelve jyotirlingas represent the manifestation of Shiva at different times, in different ages, to fulfil one purpose of dharma. Whenever they appeared, that night was called Sivaratri.

The third incident of Sivaratri is the marriage of Shiva and Shakti, which is a paradox in itself. Shiva was a renunciate. He used to live in the *smashan*, cremation ground. His ornaments were snakes and scorpions and the animals that crawl in the cremation ground. His powder was the ash of the bodies burnt in the cremation ground. An introvert who has rejected the world, attachments and associations, suddenly marries a





woman of great beauty, the Cosmic Mother, Parvati, and is united with her.

It is a big paradox in the history, the philosophy, or the tradition of Shiva. The same idea is reflected in kundalini yoga too. When kundalini rises to sahasrara and unites with Shiva, it is known as the marriage of Shiva and Shakti. Both become one and are united. Just as kundalini unites with Shiva in sahasrara, the cosmic principle of shakti unites with the cosmic principle of sentient consciousness in the night of Sivaratri.

This was the first Big Bang. When Shiva and Shakti came together, the explosion happened, the Big Bang. The marriage and union of Shiva and Shakti, is the cosmic Big Bang. In life, the spiritual force is the force of faith. The only thing that negates faith is doubt. In spirituality, there is always a conflict between doubt and faith. They always are at logger heads.

Disciples say that they have faith in their guru, they also say that they doubt the guru'. Disciples say, 'I surrender myself to my guru'; and disciples also say, 'Don't tell my shortcomings to the guru, he will get angry with me. Hide my shortcomings from the guru'.

There is a play of doubt and faith, acceptance and non-acceptance. Due to this game which goes on continuously in ourselves, we are not able to connect with the true spirit

of Shiva. This connection allows us to experience openness, clarity, creativity and *shanti*, peace. We are always doubting our faith, and consequently we are actually moving further away from that spiritual force of faith to which we should be moving.

On Sivaratri, you need to be aware of how to cultivate faith and remove doubts, and how to connect with the strength of this spiritual power and spiritual experience. The more faith increases, the closer you are to experiencing divinity, as it allows you to transcend your limitations.

If you read the story of the marriage of Shiva with Shakti, you will see that it is also a game that Shiva plays with Shakti, a game of doubt and faith. Shiva tries to create doubt in the mind of Shakti, but Shakti remains firm. She is ready to curse Shiva for creating doubt, for making the effort to create doubt in her mind. When you are totally identified with faith and are unshakable in that, then Shiva comes to you. The biggest obstacle in spiritual life is doubt, so make an effort to avoid it. The biggest strength of spiritual life is faith, so make an effort to protect it. That is the story of Sivaratri.

– 7 March 2016, Ganga Darshan, Munger

### **Holika dahan**

The night before Holi, the festival of friendship and colours, is the night of lighting a bonfire, known as *Holika dahan*, the burning of Holika. There is absolutely no connection, no relationship to the festival of colours.

The story of Holika dahan, the lighting of bonfire, goes back to remote antiquity. Prahlad, a pious son was born to a terrorist king Hiranyakashyap. Prahlad survived many attempts on his life which were made by the cronies of Hiranyakashyap, upon instructions from the king, his father. The reason was that Prahlad did not acknowledge the supremacy of his father as the ruler of the world, instead he acknowledged Narayana as the supreme ruler of the world.

Because of this ideological difference, the father gave the instruction, "Kill my son." Various methods were adopted. The son was given poison, it did not affect him. The son was thrown from the mountain top, rolled down and remained unhurt. The son was thrown in front of a wild elephant to be trampled upon, nothing happened.

When these methods of assassination failed, the sister of the terrorist king whose name was Holika, said to Hiranyakashyap, "I will kill him. I have a boon. I have a fire-resistant cloth, woven in Brahma loka. If I wear that fire-resistant cloth, I can go into any fire and I will not burn. I will carry Prahlad and he won't have the fire-resistant cloth, so he will burn."

Hiranyakashyap agreed. They lit a big bonfire and Holika sat in the fire with her fire-resistant blanket and Prahlad on her lap. The boon became a curse, as it was not being used for the purpose it was intended. She burnt and died, and Prahlad remained safe. That incident happened on Holika dahan. The bonfire is lit and people celebrate and remember that event.

It is not the memory of a woman dying in a fire, screaming her heart out; it is not the memory of a boy coming out of the fire unscathed. If it was just a story, it would have been lost ages ago. However, even today after many thousands of years, after the passing of many ages and yugas, the memory of the story still lingers on, and people enact that moment by lighting the bonfire. Why?

What is the teaching of that event that took place so many thousands of years ago? Why is that moment still recognized today by lighting a bonfire?

You have to understand the nature of Prahlad. Prahlad lived a life of bhakti to Narayana, devotion to Narayana. You may think of devotion as worship, and that is where you do not see the secret which is kept in front of you, the open secret of bhakti.

In the *Narada Bhakti Sutras*, it is stated: *Atatho bhakti jignasa* – clarify the doubts on bhakti, explain what it is. The second sutra says: *Param prema roopa* – Bhakti is transcendental love.

Bhakti is not ritual, not remembrance but transcendental love. That *param prema roopa*, the transcendental love, is the union of flames of spirit.

That was the state of Prahlad. His spirit was united with the transcendental spirit. He was living the ultimate *param prema* experience. For him nothing existed except Narayana. He was living that experience continuously, and therefore he was protected by the cosmic powers and forces. He survived all attempts to kill him.

The enactment of Holika dahan, the lighting of a bonfire, is to remember the idea of *param prema roopa*, the quality which made Prahlad survive. It is not to remember that Holika died, or that the boon became a curse, but to remember the quality of Prahlad's bhakti.

It is the *param prema roopa* quality which protects everybody. It brings together, it closes the distance and unites the bhakta and Bhagavan, so that these two become an inseparable power.

– 22 March 2016, Ganga Darshan, Munger



# Doubt – the First and Biggest Obstacle

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Swami Sivananda used to say that doubt is the first barrier in spiritual life. It is the first obstacle. Doubt actually takes you away from your path. Doubt is supposed to be the first obstacle and it can happen at any time. Doubt is a natural expression of the weak mind, the infirm mind, the unsettled mind. It is this nature of the mind which has to be first managed, controlled and developed. The antidote of doubt is *vishwas*, believing, trusting.

## Discovery

Reflecting back on my half century of life, I do not see or recall having had any doubt ever. I never doubted whatever my guru said, or whatever he did, or whatever he was. In fact, I only realized that doubt is the first obstacle when I read Swami Sivananda's article, for I had never experienced it.

Suddenly things started to fall into place. I used to think why other people are behaving in this funny manner. Sometimes they are accepting, sometimes they are not accepting. When they are accepting, there is trust and faith; and when they are not accepting, there is always a doubt and criticism.

Afterwards, I started to watch people. I realized that this doubt is the eccentric behaviour of the mind. This doubt comes when there is desire for self-gratification and desire of being selfless. In both situations, self-gratification and selflessness, doubts come up for human behaviour is only desire.

## Desire and comparison

From morning until evening, you are in the realm of desire all the time. Desire affects your interaction with other people



because you feel that they are not compatible. The desire to have your own authority, the desire to have your own post and position, the desire to be able to tell other people what to do and to project yourself as somebody who is big or important. These desires actually guide your motivations.

When you see that there is no scope for your desire fulfilling itself in this direction or in that direction, doubt comes in: 'Why am I not able to fulfil it? Is there, something wrong? Am I not being guided? Am I not being instructed?' Then comparisons begin: 'That person is advancing, I am not. This person is doing that, I am not.' After the comparisons, the jealousies begin, then hatred comes in. From doubt, you are actually destroying all your life.

### **Be aware and manage**

I never had any doubt, neither about Swami Satyananda, his teachings, his lifestyle, or his mission. In my heart I knew that if he is my guru, he always does the best for me. If he is the



gardener of my life, he will ensure that my plants in the garden are well looked after.

As a gardener, he will ensure that the best is grown in me. If thorns grow in me, it is because he felt that I was appropriate for the thorns and not the flower. In both cases, I accepted him totally as the gardener of my life. Whatever he did, he was the master.

When you do not have the confidence, when you do not have the trust, which are your own inner creations, doubts will arise. Therefore, Swami Sivananda classifies doubt as the first major obstacle in spiritual life.

People say cultivate this, cultivate that, yet I would say the opposite: Eradicate doubt, forget cultivation; be aware of the main obstacle in your life and try to manage it. If the antidote of doubt is faith, trust and belief, then cultivate that with wisdom, not just blindly, but with correct intention and appropriate action.

There is no guideline for overcoming doubt. There is no meditation, there is no asana or pranayama. You just have to be aware of that state of mind and learn to manage it.

### **The shade of doubt**

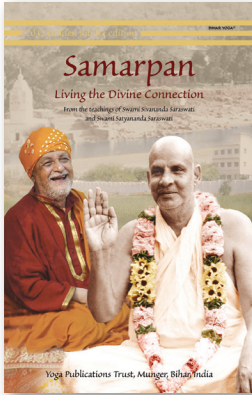
Doubt is like leprosy. It simply grows. Once you are captured by doubt, you become a mental leper. There is no hope after that, once doubt takes root. All the best intentions and motivation cannot help, and there is no medicine to cure doubt. The only antidote for doubt is faith. If you are established in faith, doubts cannot shake you.

I found the shade of doubt in everyone. I realized that doubt was the reason why people are unable to progress in their spiritual life. Despite receiving instructions, ideas, inspiration and motivation, there is failure due to doubt. Therefore, it is doubt which has to be managed.

*– 13 March 2016, Ganga Darshan, Munger*

# Guru and Disciple

*From Samarpan: Living the Divine Connection, Swami Satyananda Saraswati*



The guru is the one who guides the disciple's life systematically, the one who steers the boat. In order to learn how to surrender to God, one must first have a guru. Surrender needs to be practised first with the guru, for without the grace of guru the path of surrender is not easily discovered. One needs to have that connection through which grace can flow. Without a living connection, without a guru, it is very difficult to connect with the subtle Supreme Reality, and receive His grace. The disciple's relationship with the guru is the test of the disciple's sincerity and devotion. In submission, however, the disciple is not throwing away his personality, but rather offering his limited self to one who will change it into the infinite Self. God takes over from there.

The guru and disciple are strangers to each other in the beginning, but the disciple finds faith in the guru. First, he practises surrender and belief in the guru and finally in God. He starts learning the A, B, C of surrender through the guru and develops it with continuous practice. In this faith, he sees the shadow, reflection and splendour of God. When, through practice, one's faith becomes strong, clear and divine, when it is generated through a pure mind and heart, one sees God. Then God, who was defined in various ways by other people, becomes apparent. The *Guru Stotram* says:

*Gururbrahma gururvishnuh gururdevo maheshvarah.*

Guru is Brahma, guru is Vishnu and guru is Shiva.

Guru is Brahma because he creates for his disciple a new and wondrous world; he is Vishnu because he sustains and protects him; he is Shiva because he annihilates the world of individuality. All great saints have underlined the necessity of a guru. It has also been said in the *Ramacharitamanas* that no one can cross the ocean of samsara without the guru's help, even if he is Brahma or Shiva.

The guru represents two realities: the teacher and the all-permeating Essence. The guru is both the teacher and the being who dwells in the disciple's heart. As a teacher he can teach, and as the indweller of the heart, he guides the passages of the disciple's evolution and spiritual fulfilment. A true guru-disciple relationship is an experience of union with the inner spirit, which makes one go deeper into oneself and brings one closer to God. It is an experience that completely stupefies one.

From a practical point of view, the guru is qualified to tell the disciple how to practise surrender because he has undergone the entire process himself. There must have been a time when he was affected by mental agitation, faced conflicts and was pulled by the passions of life. Based on how he managed and overcame such situations, he can guide his disciples through their mental and emotional experiences. It is obviously safe to seek the help of a person who has undergone the same experiences as oneself, and mastered them.

### **How does the guru bring about samarpan?**

One cannot know the level of one's consciousness or the faults that lie within. One may try to correct one's social and mental faults, but there are faults embedded deep within the personality. Therefore, the guru often performs an operation on the disciple known as egodectomy, removal of the ego. This operation is so difficult that many disciples cannot bear it. However, if it succeeds, then they reach the goal. Surgery on the ego can be achieved by surrendering oneself to God also, but God is much too kind. Guru is a very hard person; he knows his duty; he knows how each and every individual

should live, think and act. He does everything to pulverize the ego of the disciple. One may not understand this unless one becomes a disciple. The ego is the barrier between the individual and divinity, between disciple and guru. It is a very hard nut to crack; it is the 'I' which can sometimes be very subtle. It is because of the ego that complete surrender becomes difficult. The greater the ego, the lesser the receptivity. As the ego becomes subtler, the receptivity becomes greater.

By serving the guru ceaselessly, the ego of the disciple is effaced. He no longer thinks, "I came to my guru for self-realization and he is only getting me to clean the toilets! He has an unpaid servant in me." The guru creates conditions so that the disciple may purify himself. He also gives sadhana that will aid the process. In the course of time, the disciple's ego is gradually curbed and surrender occurs spontaneously. All one's worldly ways and abnormalities end; the external current is switched off and the internal light comes on.

There is an awakening which comes only when one has totally laid down one's arms. The surrender of disciple to guru is not like the surrender of a servant or a war prisoner, but once the disciple has surrendered, he knows it and says, "Take my life and do what you will." The true guru does not make his disciple surrender the world, but his limited self, the veil of ignorance that hangs between his ego and the all-pervasive reality.

The guru also continuously tests the disciple's sincerity and devotion, for he has to make sure that the disciple's mind will not shake at any moment. It is very important that the guru is able to handle the disciple without any difficulty. If the disciple does not respond to the guru's instructions, suggestions or inspiration at the ordinary intellectual level, then how can the guru direct him in the higher realms? The guru should be able to influence and direct his disciple's mind, his conscious thinking, in any direction: right, left, down into the ditch, up on to the mountain, into fire or water.

For that purpose, the guru gives the disciple different tasks to check whether his awareness is responding and how far





he has progressed on the path of surrender. Disciples realize the quality of their faith only when the guru presents them with certain difficult tests. This is especially true of sannyasin disciples who live with him, who have a total relationship with him. At a certain time during their stay, they are tested. At that time the disciple who passes is the one whose faith does not break. The guru gives him something in the form of a reward. It is called *guru kripa*, guru's grace.

A teacher, an acharya, can help one learn asana, pranayama and simple meditation practices, but such a master has limitations. Only the guru without limitations knows how to lead the ignorant and the blind to the path of self-realization by opening their third eye. A disciple may be academically intelligent, may have the highest of faculties and immense wealth, but his spiritual eyes are not yet open due to the veil of illusion or ignorance, *maya* or *avidya*. Only the guru can help one develop inner vision. Self-purification and karmic dissolution start in the service of guru. The disciple can carry on sadhana only in the conscious realms, while the guru helps him in the unconscious. He opens the closed door for the disciple and makes self-awakening possible. As the disciple develops his relationship with the guru, based on *bhakti* and *shraddha*,

devotion and faith, an awakening begins to take place within him. The external guru helps to awaken the inner guru; he acts as a detonator to explode the guru tattwa within.

When the awakening begins, a transformation comes about in the structure of the mind and consciousness. It is not just a change, but a complete metamorphosis akin to a dog becoming a horse. The mind becomes entirely different; the structure of thinking undergoes a total transformation in quality, form, assessments and values. At the same time, perception or inner cognition becomes very subtle; one is able to apprehend the subtle essence. In this enlightened state of existence come revelations and inspirations, and a clear-cut path unfolds before one. One realizes what is to be done. If nature has chosen one to become a Christ, to lead thousands of people, to heal hundreds, one will do it. This is when the disciple becomes a tool, a medium, an instrument of the cosmic process.

### **What the disciple must do**

There are three types of disciples and a guru ordains them for different purposes. There are the lay disciples or householders; sannyasin disciples or the monastic order; and the interior disciples. For each type, surrender takes place in a different dimension. If the lay disciple surrenders through devotion, it is sufficient. He does not have to surrender his business, family and children to the guru, but he must offer true devotion so that the guru can help him find peace of mind and right understanding.

The monastic disciple has to surrender his desires and worldly ambitions so that when he leaves monastic life, his entire personality has been transformed. Then he can become a very good messenger of the guru's teachings. The third category of disciple, the intimate disciple, has to surrender everything. Such disciples are very rare, never very many, and the guru selects them for himself. First this disciple is tested, and only those who prove worthy are taken in. These disciples offer everything.



In every type of disciple the one indispensable qualification for surrender is to carry out immediately and spontaneously the commands of the guru. The attitude must be as if some unknown and unseen power compels him to do the work. It is not for the disciple to judge whether he is qualified or competent to undertake the task. He should not even think how it will be possible to complete the task. The disciple who tries to assess his competence before undertaking a task loses his chance to utilize his hidden powers. That is why the disciple should carry out the commands without forethought. It will prove to be a great boon, because then he may enter into the subtle regions of consciousness. If in this sphere he acquires that good quality, then in the next sphere the same also happens. If the disciple's ordinary consciousness is coloured by opposition to the guru's commands, then he will find it difficult to go beyond the plane of ordinary consciousness.

There are two necessary conditions for surrender. The first is faith that one will be able to surrender, and the second is the awareness, "My guru is within me." To achieve these may require breaking the existing patterns of the mind. This is the first step towards samarpan. One must be able to lose one's engrossment in the imaginary problems the mind has imposed upon itself, whether neurosis, psychosis, schizophrenia, frustrations or disappointments. Faith allows this to happen; it solves many problems of the mind so one can proceed to experience the inherent truth. To get there, however, one must first accept oneself. One has to come to the point where one can say, "I can do nothing; I cannot renounce; I cannot control the mind. My mind is full of terrible thoughts; I have bad habits!" Such acceptance is humility, and with it begins the process of emptying oneself.

A disciple of a guru or a devotee of God has to be as humble as a blade of grass, egoless and totally submissive, as if he does not exist, as if he were a flute. A hollow piece of bamboo can be made into a flute, but only when there are no knots can it produce a sweet melody. As long as the individual exists, the guru cannot be in him. In order to allow the guru to function through him, the disciple has to empty himself. The process of emptying oneself is the only practice or sadhana a disciple has to undertake. "Before you, I do not exist. I cannot think. You think through me. I leave the choice of my life in your hands" - this state of mind has to be practised. After all, how long can one hold one's head high if it is full of arrogance and ignorance, conflict and duality? To rend this duality may take lifetimes. Maybe one's guru is not great. He may be an ordinary man, but when the disciple empties himself, surrenders himself completely in total humility and obeisance, things happen. If one surrenders the ego to others in this world, one is liable to be exploited and destroyed. But when one surrenders the ego to a person who is compassionate and one's well-wisher, life changes. This person is one's guru, the one in whom complete trust may be placed.

# Great Teachers, Great Disciples

*From the teachings of Swami Sivananda Saraswati*



It is the institution of *guru-parampara*, the guru-disciple lineage, that has, from generation to generation and down the centuries, closely safeguarded and handed down the living experiences of the seers of the upanishadic age. Spiritual knowledge is a matter of *guru-parampara*. It is handed down from the guru to the disciple. Study the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. You will have a comprehensive understanding.

Gaudapadacharya imparted self-knowledge to his disciple Govindacharya; Govindacharya to his disciple Shankara; and Shankara to Sureswaracharya. Matsyendranath imparted divine knowledge to his disciple Gorakhnath, Gorakhnath to Nivrittinath, and Nivrittinath to Jnanadev. Totapuri imparted knowledge to Sri Ramakrishna, and Sri Ramakrishna to Swami Vivekananda. It was sage Ashtavakra who moulded the life of Raja Janaka. It was Gorakhnath who shaped the spiritual



destiny of Raja Bhartrihari. It was Sri Krishna who made Arjuna and Uddhava become established on the spiritual path when their minds were in an unsettled state.

All the great ones had their teachers. Swetaketu learnt the nature of Brahman from sage Uddalaka; Maitreyi from the great seer, Yajnavalkya; Bhrgu from Varuna; Narada Rishi from Sanatkumara; Nachiketas from Yama; Indra from Prajapathi. Several others humbly went to the wise ones, observed strict Brahmacharya, practised rigorous discipline and learnt Brahmagyana from them.

All sophistry and ostentation, learning and conceit, have to be cast aside before the disciple approaches the guru. The whole personality of the pupil should be effaced if the wisdom of the teacher is to illumine the self of the pupil.

It is said in the *Svetasvatara Upanishad*: "To that great one who has supreme devotion to God and as much devotion to the guru as to God, do the truths become illumined."

### **Remover of darkness**

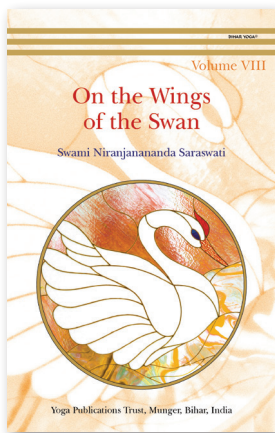
Now, open your eyes and note carefully what is going on in this world in all walks of life. Even a cook needs a teacher. He serves under a senior cook for some years. He obeys him implicitly. He pleases his teacher in all possible manner. He learns all the techniques of cooking. He gets knowledge through the grace of the senior cook, his teacher.

A junior lawyer wants the help and guidance of a senior advocate. Students of mathematics and medicine need the help and guidance of a professor. A student of science, music or astronomy wants the guidance of a scientist, a musician or an astronomer. When such is the case with ordinary secular knowledge, what about the inner spiritual path wherein the student has to walk alone with closed eyes.

The spiritual path is thorny, rugged and precipitous. It is enveloped in darkness. The guidance of a guru who has already trodden the path is imperatively necessary. He will be able to throw light on the path and remove obstacles.

# True Mirror

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



From whom do we learn yoga? In the spiritual tradition, we learn from the guru, whereas in the social tradition we learn from a teacher or a professor. There is a difference between a professor, teacher, reader, lecturer and a guru. Those people who identify with social identities say, “I am a professor of yoga, I am a teacher of yoga, I am a graduate of yoga, I am this of yoga, I am that of yoga.” This indicates that their understanding is limited. What is the difference between a teacher and a guru? The teacher, whose knowledge is bookish, teaches but does not live yoga, whereas the guru lives yoga and does not teach. If you can emulate the teachings of the guru, if you can incorporate the teachings of the guru in your own life, you will have a deeper experience and realization of the whole process.

You have to accept the guru as the guru and not as a trouble-shooter, not as a consultant for family matters like marriage, divorce, profession, job or studies. The role of the guru is clearly defined. In the simplest sense, the role of the guru is as a spiritual guide, not a marriage consultant or an academic consultant. Ask the guru how you can attain mental peace, how to develop your positivity and creativity, and you will get the answer. If you can accept the guru as a spiritual guide, you can grow and succeed in life. However, if you think of the guru as your consultant and that by following his advice you will be happy in life, find a good partner, a good

profession and make money, then that relationship will not grow at all. You might be happy, fine, but there is no growth, no connection.

### **Spiritual independence**

The association with guru has to be without expectation. There should be no expectation from the guru; rather, there should be an expectation from yourself. What do you expect from a tubelight, a ten-volt bulb or a hundred watt bulb? To give light. Yet, what do you do when you are able to see? If there is light and you decide to shut your eyes, the light has no meaning. However, if there is darkness and you decide to open your eyes in the dark, you will be able to see one day. Therefore, the expectation should be from yourself, not from the guru.

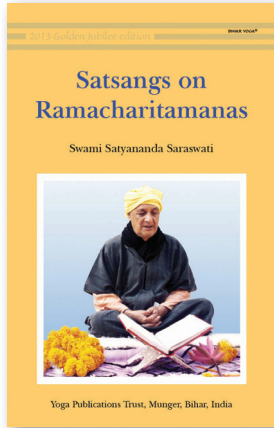
Just as in the bathroom you see yourself in the mirror, in spiritual life guru is the mirror in which you see your spiritual self reflected. In the bathroom you look in the mirror to groom yourself; in the same manner, when you look at the guru and your reflection, you try to groom yourself to become that beautiful self. The expectation has to be with yourself, not with the guru. Guru is only a mirror that will show you whatever you are at that time. So, how to develop a relationship with guru without getting dependent on the guru? People become dependent when they begin to expect too much from the other person. However, if you expect improvement from yourself then your dependence will decrease, and that is the secret of spiritual development.

– 18 August 2008, Ganga Darshan, Munger



# The Last Goal

From *Satsangs on Ramacharitamanas*, Swami Satyananda Saraswati



You may have everything: intellect, money, power, beauty, but without devotion, your life is barren; you have no stuff. Devotion to God is the ultimate sadhana. Yoga is not the ultimate sadhana; yoga prepares the road. Just as the road roller from the Public Works Department prepares smooth roads for cars to drive on, yoga prepares inroads for the mind.

Devotion is not going to a temple or a church to pray. Devotion is love and romance with God. Your mind is dancing with God. He is my lover, my beloved. I am *prakriti*, *jivatma*, female, He is male; He is my husband; He is everything to me. That attitude must come. When all the passions are transformed, then you will have no passion for anything except Him.

It is said in the *Narada Bhakti Sutras* that according to sage Narada, devotion is characterized by complete dedication of all activities and observances to God, and by the experience of extreme agony while forgetting Him. There are many instances of such devotion. The gopis of Vrindavan can be cited as examples.

The last goal in life is the attainment of total surrender to the Divine, and taking refuge in Him, nothing else. If you do not achieve this, then you have to come back with a return ticket in your next birth!



# Sambandh

*Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

There are beliefs that any relationship is cultivated for seven lifetimes. Some people believe that even the relationship of husband and wife will last for seven lifetimes. These are only speculations, whether it is in relation to husband and wife or whether it is in relation to guru and disciple.

## **Develop the connection**

What matters is the connection: the deeper the connection in this life, the closer you will be together in other lives as well. If the connection is not deep, if it is just superficial, then it is just a passing, 'hello and goodbye'.



It is that connection which has to be looked at, not the theory or the speculation whether the relationship with the guru will last for one life or for seven lives. If you can identify with the aspirations of your guru, then the connection may go beyond seven lives to seven hundred, seven thousand or even seven million lives. However, if you cannot identify with anything, then it won't last even this lifetime.

Some people come here only once and have no desire to ever come again. On the other hand there are others who will make the effort to come again and again to keep connected and to develop that connection. As it happens in real life, it happens in spiritual life too.



## **Beyond identification**

There is a word in Hindi *sambandh* which means connection. Sambandh can also mean identification. *Bandh* means to lock, and *sam* means total. Therefore, sambandh means total locking.

When we see each other, we are creating an idea, an opinion and an understanding of each other. Our perceptions are bound and butted on all sides by our views about each other. My understanding of you, which is now bound by certain ideas and opinions, is defined as sambandh. This is how I know you as.

Identification and dis-identification happen at that point. They are the outcome of my sambandh, of recognizing you in a particular manner. If I engage with you, it is because I can identify some aspect with which I can interact. If I disengage with you, it is because I do not find anything in you with which I can interact.

Identification and dis-identification are not important, but how you view your sambandh, how you acknowledge your sambandh, how you hold your sambandh is important. If there is infatuation in the sambandh, then identification will be different. You will have more the feeling of belonging, wanting, desiring, needing. If the identification is not there with the sambandh, you will feel more isolated and aloof.

Interaction and non-interaction are not the issue. That is your choice. What is important is how you define and identify a connection which allows you to develop, maintain and sustain that connection or to change, alter and reject that connection. Sambandh is more important than identification and non-identification.

If you disconnect, like blowing out the burning match stick, then that sambandh is finished in one moment. However, the more integrated you become with the aspirations, inspiration and luminosity of the guru, with that faith and conviction, the longer the connection and the sambandh remain.

– 3 April 2016, Ganga Darshan, Munger



## Yoga Publications Trust

### Yoga: The 2nd Chapter

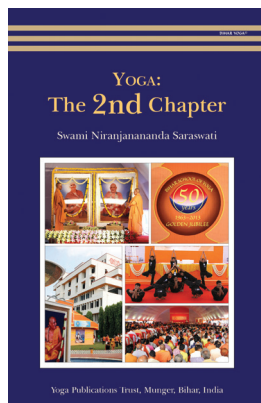
Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

31 pp, soft cover, ISBN 978-93-84753-40-5

At the World Yoga Convention held in 2013 in Munger, Swami Niranjanananda stated: "The first chapter of yoga propagation is over. Now the second chapter begins, focusing on consolidation and better application of yoga, with sincerity, seriousness and commitment."

In this next level of yoga, the practices of yoga are expanded and become the vehicle to experience and express wellbeing at deeper levels, in turn transforming one's way of thinking, behaving and acting.

In this booklet, Swami Niranjanananda opens the door to the path where yoga practice can become a lifestyle, and usher in a culture of peace and positivity. He invites all to join him on this new journey.



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



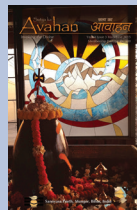
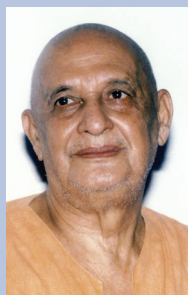
### Websites

#### [www.yogamag.net](http://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/](http://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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Jul 15-18	Guru Poornima Satsang Program (Hindi/English)
Jul 19	Guru Paduka Poojan (Hindi/English)
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
Every Saturday	Mahamrityunjaya Havan
Every Ekadashi	Bhagavad Gita Path
Every Poornima	Sundarkand Path
Every 5th & 6th	Guru Bhakti Yoga
Every 12th	Akhanda Path of Ramacharitanas

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

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