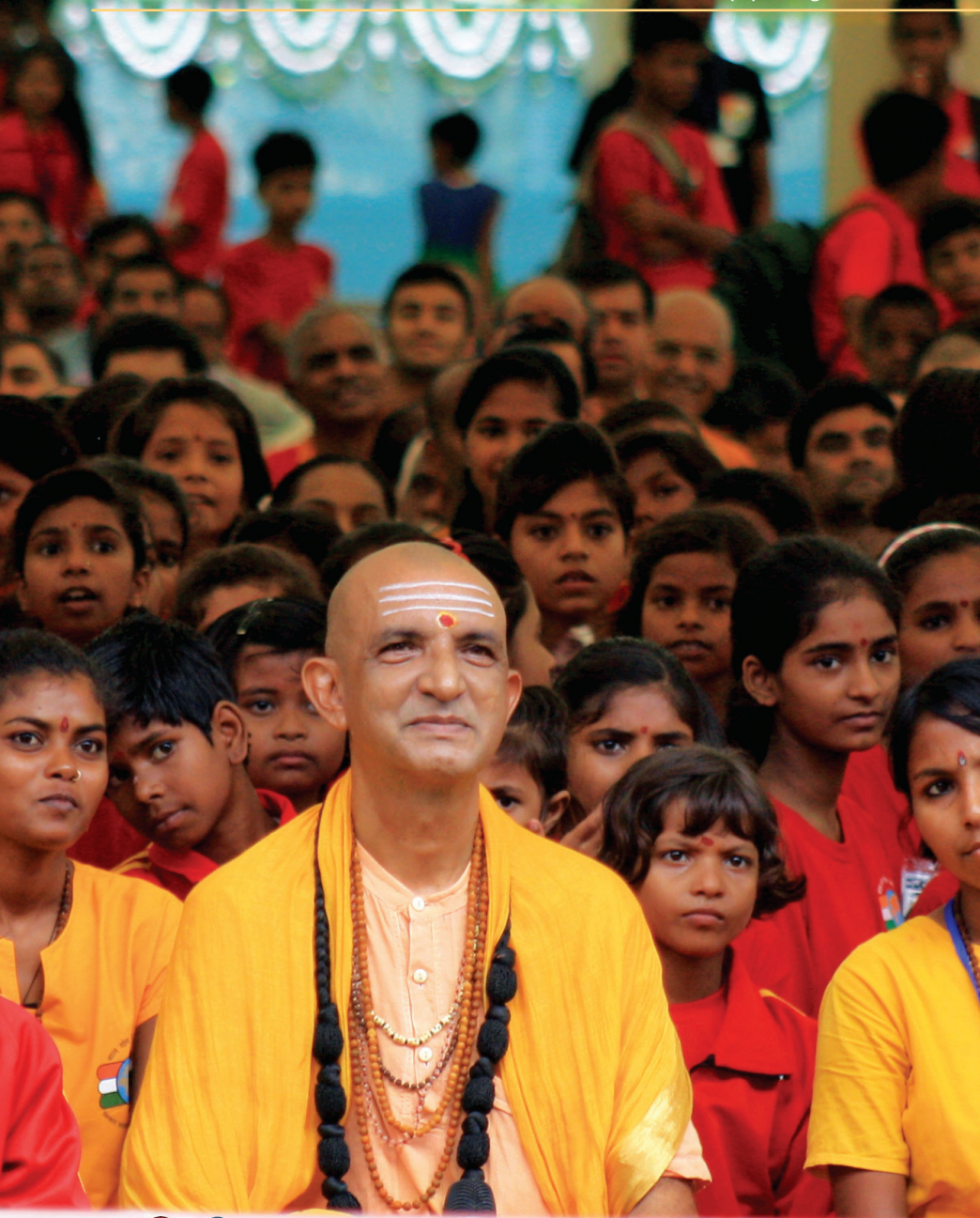


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Hari Om

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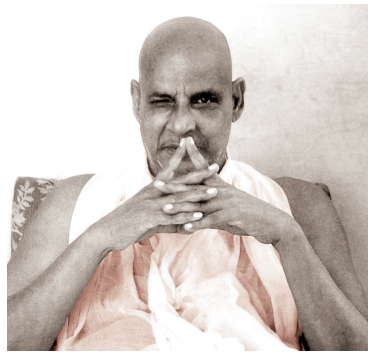
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GUIDELINES FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

OBSTACLES TO SADHANA

Hatred

Hatred is the deadliest foe and inveterate enemy of an aspirant. Aversion, contempt, prejudice, sneering, taunting, teasing, ridiculing, mocking, frowning and showing a wry face are all forms of hatred. Hatred bubbles out again and again.

In Kali Yuga the force of hatred is augmented. Hatred needs prolonged and intense treatment, as its branches ramify in various directions in the sub-conscious mind and lurk in different corners. Constant selfless service combined with meditation for a period of twelve years is necessary to eradicate it.

There is one Self hidden in all beings, so why hate others? Why frown at others? Why treat others with contempt? Why divide and separate? Realize the unity of life and consciousness and feel the atman everywhere. Rejoice and radiate love and peace everywhere.

—Swami Sivananda

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

तपस्विभ्योऽधिको योगी ज्ञानिभ्योऽपि मतोधिकः । कर्मिभ्यश्चाधिको योगी तस्माद्योगी भवार्जुन ॥

Thoughts on Culture

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Sri Swami Satyananda said that ‘yoga will become the culture of tomorrow’. What did he mean when he used the word ‘culture’? How do you define culture? Do you have culture in you? Are you cultured? If you are cultured then what is that culture? If you are not cultured then what is lacking in you? What is the meaning, what is the definition of the word culture?

Long journey

Culture is something that you adopt to live a better life, to have a better expression, a better mind, a better understanding, a better response. The positive, creative and constructive expressions of your life become the culture. If through the practice of yoga you are able to confront the destructive, distorted and negative and are able to cultivate the positive, constructive and creative, then yoga will become the human culture in the course of time.

For this an appropriate understanding of yoga has to develop. Just through the practice of asana and pranayama you cannot expect to have a yogic culture. There are nine million people who play golf every day and there are six million people who practise yoga every day. Does that mean that all six million people are cultured, does that mean that the nine million people who play golf are masters? No.

Culture is an awareness to improve one's expressions, qualities and performances in life. It is an awareness which is attainable with *antaranga yoga*, the inner yoga. The inner yoga is a long journey as each civilization develops a mindset which is unique to the ideas of that civilization. Western civilization has its own ideas, eastern civilizations have their own ideas, and many times they are not compatible as each civilization has given birth to a particular idea or belief which has become part of the human expression and culture.

Yoga has to be seen in a pragmatic way as to how it can help smoothen the spikes of the mind which are not uniform in each individual throughout the world. Therefore, it is a long journey in which you try to discover yourself.

Meditation

One of the major difficulties which I have encountered between the east and the west is the concept of meditation. I have seen people in the west meditate and I have seen people in the east meditate. The experiences are different in both groups. In the west, when people meditate they tend to encounter more of what they have suppressed. The emotional and mental stuff comes up because in the west the trend is 'Control your emotion, don't show them, don't project them'. Children are told, "Don't cry, you are a man, you are a boy, boys don't cry." Emotions are blocked and suppression takes place right from day one when children are told that people don't cry. A simple statement creates a state of suppression in the mind.

In the east, people cry as much as they want, let there be river of tears but that expression is permitted. There is less emotional

suppression in the east. If these two people meditate who will have a better experience and who will have a bad experience.

If you analyze the traits of the mind which is the gift of every civilization, you will discover that certain traits are difficult to deal with and you have to struggle and work hard to break the barrier. Certain people can easily overcome, bypass, transcend and change their mindset for there is nothing suppressed and covered by layers and layers of imposed ideas. There is a big difference between how Asians and westerners adhere to the spiritual concepts and ideas. There is a clear distinction which I have observed over the last fifty years.

Sometimes I wonder whether meditation is the right technique to be taught in the west. Maybe it should not be taught. Maybe some other form has to develop which can allow the emotions to open up without creating a crisis in one's life. There are many things that should not be practised by westerners until they come to a point where they are clear inside. There are many things which should not be practised by easterners until they come to a point of clarity and understanding within themselves.

The challenge

There are many millions of practitioners of yoga around the world yet there are few people who have actually experienced the benefits of yoga in the east as well as in the west. There are few people who have had the complete perspective of what yoga has to offer and this is something that we need to be aware of. To practise meditation for relaxation and developing spiritual awareness is only an idea not a reality.

The reality is confronting the distorted and disturbed states that manifests from time to time with conviction, strength, optimism and hope. The reality is not allowing oneself to be swayed by the powers of negativity. That is where the challenge lies, that is where the challenge lies.

– 17 May 2015, Ganga Darshan, Munger

Be a Model Parent

From the teachings of Swami Sivananda Saraswati

A child has an inquisitive nature. Knowledge is acquired only through this inquisitive nature. Mischievousness is also a manifestation of this inquisitiveness. A child wants to find out; it wants to know. When the child is awake at night, it goes on asking various questions. You get annoyed! No, you should take immense delight in answering the questions intelligently so that the child will satisfy its curiosity.

A baby may not understand the sublimity of your words, but you should always sing the most sublime lullabies, entertain it with inspiring stories, and avoid all negative thoughts, words and actions in its presence. You should always be positive and spiritual in your approach towards the baby. The parents must never quarrel or speak ill of anybody before the child. You should be all encouragement, love and kindness. You should never show a wry face, nor get annoyed or disgusted.

This does not mean that you should dote on the child. When the child grows into a boy or a girl, when it has learnt to walk, to talk and to play, you should mix discipline with love. Even then you should not frighten the child nor instil any kind of negative emotion. Lovingly and intelligently you should try to maintain discipline, and you should make the child understand the glory of a disciplined life. If your earlier training has been good, you will find that your children will need no chastising. They will readily obey you. And, if you take care to see that they choose the right type of companions, you will have no problems at all.

Even a problem child can be moulded properly if your approach is the right one. The problem child is essentially a creation of the parents. Obstinacy should be met with firmness spiced with love; ignorance should be met with knowledge

coated with compassion; idiocy should be countered with intelligence coupled with kindness. Let the child's heart know that you are sincere, eager and earnest in your attempt to mould him into an ideal citizen, a glorious adult dedicated to the good of the world. You will succeed.

It is for the parents to adapt to the child, not for the child to adapt to the parents. In many cases the child receives no real love from the parents, except mere attachment grown out of constant association. The parents think they love the child who is the apple of their eyes, but they really do not. There is a complete disregard for understanding the mind of the youngsters, a lack of the sympathy sought by them. In the name of the child's welfare, the parents often permanently break its tender heart. By chastizing a child before outsiders the problem is aggravated rather than remedied. An unhappy companionship between the parents is often a serious menace to the future home of the adolescent. Many things the child hears at an early age are implanted in the young mind, but when the years bring maturity there is a severe shock which shatters the reverence for the parents. Therefore, the parents should never utter any vulgar or obscene words before the child.

Youth, the most impressionable period, offers the best opportunities for yogic culture. The inner education, training in character building and in the practice of yoga has the best effect on a person while still young. When children learn and practise yoga from a young age, they will have a firm spiritual outlook on life, which no one will be able to break or shatter later on.

Today's education fails to give adequate training in how to lead a happy and useful life. This is why yoga is so valuable. Together with school education yoga makes a complete and ideal child.

– Printed in YOGA, Year 3, Issue 3 (May–June 2004)

Welcome to Yoga Instructor Course 2015

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Swami Sivananda gave instructions to all his disciples: “When you go out into society, do not propagate Vedanta philosophy: *Aham Brahmasmi* – “I am Brahman.” Those ideas are not the requirement of human society. Vedanta may be your aspiration as a sannyasi, but it is not a requirement. Teach yoga, be a yoga teacher, and teach people how to overcome the physical distress, the illness, disease, imbalance, irregularities which are physical and material in nature; how to strengthen, activate and properly use the senses, the *karmendriyas* and *jnanendriyas*; how to work with the intellect, apply the mind and logic, and innovate ways to do things, not just follow a trend-set pattern.” These were Swami Sivananda’s words.

God has given you enough grey matter in the head to be innovative. After all what is the difference between you and Christ, Krishna, Rama or Vasishtha? There is no difference. They came with the same grey cells that you have, with the

same red blood, with the same body organs, with the same *swabhava*, nature, trait and character of senses, attractions, distractions, likes, dislikes that you have. They were ordinary people. They were human beings, yet they were able to express their higher qualities, which you are unable to express due to your limitations.

Head, heart and hands

The mind has to apply its knowledge. You have knowledge, but you don't apply it. When you apply knowledge, it becomes wisdom. Applied knowledge equals wisdom. The task of the head, the mind is: slowing down the *vritti*; *pratyahara*, learning to withdraw the senses, controlling and guide them; *dharana*, focusing the attention and awareness, stopping the agitations of the mind, rectifying the habits and behaviours.

That is the management of the head through *raja yoga*. Management of the head, the brain and mind, everything that happens there and that connects you with the outside world is *raja yoga*.

Swami Sivananda said that feelings, *bhava*, connect us to each other. The presence of feelings indicates an intimate, deep connection, and the absence of feelings indicates separation and strangeness. This heart and the emotions have to be developed. The negative traits of emotions in the form of anger, hatred, passions, jealousies have to be lessened.

Swami Sivananda gave the instruction that the focus of *yoga* is not self-realization, but the development of the faculties of head, heart and hands; brain, emotions, and performance or interaction. In this manner one's entire life is affected and there is growth and upliftment.

Integral yoga

This instruction was carried forward by Swami Satyananda when he came to Munger. With it in mind, he developed an integrated approach to *yoga*. He did not emphasize one *yoga*, like many schools emphasize only *hatha yoga*. Other schools



only focus on bhakti yoga as part of religion and devotion; others focus only on jnana yoga as part of discovering one's own self. There are schools that have picked up one specific item and who are teaching that.

Through his efforts, Swami Satyananda made Bihar School of Yoga one of the first institutes to teach an integrated yoga for body, mind, emotions and psychic development. These aspects were catered to: the physical or *annamaya kosha*; the pranic energy and emotional dimension or *pranamaya kosha*; the mental, intellectual, logical, linear dimension or *manomaya kosha*; the behavioural patterns, habits, samskaras, the tweaking of the negative into positive or *vijnanamaya kosha*; and experiencing the inner peace and luminosity or *anandamaya kosha*. These are the five dimensions that yoga has to access: the physical, pranic, mental, conscious and atmic.

Swami Satyananda said that any practice of yoga for any individual must cater to these five levels, not only physical, not only pranic as that will create an imbalance in the body and in life. He developed an interesting system incorporating a series of practices of asanas which are sequentially, progressively developing the body for higher, advanced practices.

First, it begins by loosening the body, with the pawanmuktasana part 1 series, for each and every joint and part of the body. Second, it gradually strengthens the major organs of the

body, especially the digestive system, the pancreas, kidneys, liver, bladder, intestines, stomach, through the practice of the second part of the pawanmuktasana series. Each area, each section of the body is looked into, exercised, defects rebalanced, optimum behaviour attained, and then one moves on to the next group of practices.

Bihar Yoga tradition

Swami Satyananda developed what we teach today in the name of the Bihar Yoga tradition. It is not a brand. It is a recognition of a school that is propagating the classical style of yoga as conceived by the rishis and munis, with the same spirit and focus.

Swami Satyananda trained yoga sannyasins to be the first yoga teachers. Yoga sannyasins have no children, no husband, no wife. We have no distraction, and only one focus. We have made vidya the purpose of life and we try to live that *vidya*, science, to the best of our ability. Each one makes an incredible effort.

Our purpose is not commercial in any manner. We have come to yoga because we like it, not because we want to make a profession and establish a centre.

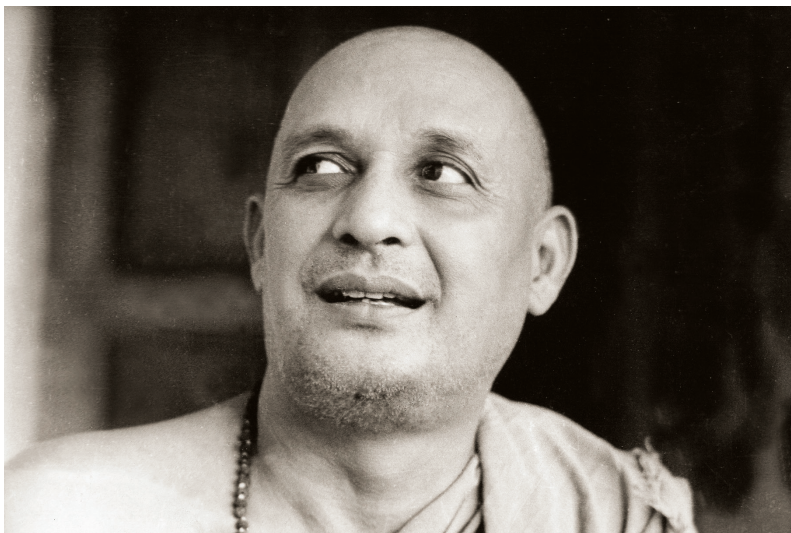
Our focus in teaching yoga is not on how you can earn more money through yoga, but how you can experience yoga in the best manner possible. If you have come to learn how to make more money through the practices of yoga, you have come to the wrong place as that aspiration of yours will never be fulfilled in this place. If you have to come to experience yoga and in the truest sense of the word 'sincerity' share that experience with others, then your commitment and sincerity will take you a long way.

We teach yoga, not as a profession but as a vidya. How you apply it in the correct manner, in the appropriate manner is a trust that is given to you.

– August 2015, Ganga Darshan, Munger

Satsang on Health

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



What is peace of mind?

Peace of mind is a balanced vision of life. It is not subject to achievements and losses; it is an understanding of everything in life. The external life is full of ups and downs and for a weak man it can become tiring, or even exhausting. But for a strong man, every ascent is a joy and every descent is a game.

What are the spiritual methods for relieving tensions of the mind?

If the tension is too acute, one should leave home for some time and stay in a peaceful environment such as that of an ashram. This is the first step. The second is satsang. When something is wrong with your car you take it to a garage and leave it with a good mechanic for a few days. He will find out what is wrong with the car and clean and service it. Likewise, when there is a lot of tension in your mind the best thing to do

is to put your car into the hands of a good mechanic. Satsang is the best way. If the tension is not acute, then a few asanas, pranayama and the practice of yoga nidra can be undertaken.

Tensions are threefold – muscular, mental and emotional. If muscular tension is due to over exercise you need to rest a little more. If it is due to lack of exercise then you have to make yourself more active. If your tension is mental, due to a lot of thinking and day-dreaming, then you should work hard through karma yoga to give direction to your mind. Mental tensions arise when you have too much time to think. Emotional tensions, due to love, hatred, death, are more difficult to eliminate and have to be handled with accurate precision through bhakti yoga. For the relief of these threefold tensions one has to follow the spiritual path.

What is the way to stop thoughts from going deeply into the mind?

When a thought comes to your mind, your approach to it is of the utmost importance. Suppose, for example, you either like or dislike the thought of having diarrhoea, that thought will always re-enter your mind. It has the potential to go deeply into your mind. However, if you see the thought but refuse to have any relationship or association with the idea, i.e. if you are completely neutral towards it, then it will quickly cease. When you just remain a witness, a seer of an experience, it ceases, but when you become involved with a thought, or emotionally affected by it, either positively or negatively, then it will go back into the mind and be recycled.

What is the secret of happiness?

The secret of happiness lies in connecting the mind with its source. Once you are able to do this, happiness flows. When you know the source, you become an elevated person in thought as well as in action. Happiness is within your reach, and you can hold it firmly, but incessant and noble efforts are necessary.

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

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

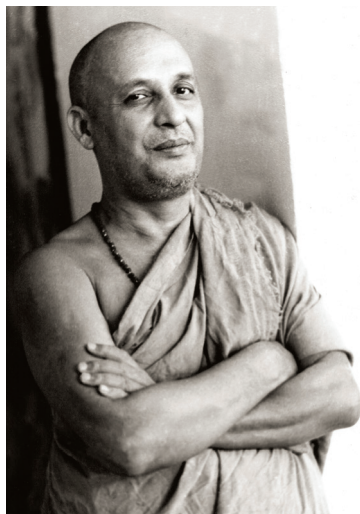
How are you going to dehypnotize yourself? If you manage it, you will be disillusioned about the whole scheme of society. We live within a family pattern; a man and woman live together and call themselves husband and wife. That's hypnotism. If you dehypnotize yourself, the family would break up. In fact, man lives under constant hypnotism right from the time of his birth up to the point of his death. Perhaps only a few people are not under that hypnotic state.

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

How can I stop my mind from criticizing other people?

There is no harm in criticizing other people in your mind. If you stop this mental process then you will criticize others openly and will harm them. I think criticism is part of evolution. You have to accept it and face it, no matter how bitter it may be. If you don't want to criticize then you are going to be criticized. Then what will happen? You will be wounded. You are going to get a shock, because you are an idealist and you have failed to accept realism.

So, when these kinds of negative thoughts come into your mind you must understand them, not from the religious point of view, but as laws of nature. Nature has certain laws and negativity is one of them. If there is no negativity,



there can't be progress in life. We hear people say, "This is negative," or "Oh, my mind thinks negatively!" What do you mean by it? If there is dark, there should be light. Day and night balance each other. Positive and negative forces indicate the constant evolutionary process of the mind. If a baby tries to walk and falters and falls, it means he is evolving. If he doesn't make a move, it means he is paralyzed.

During life there are many times when you are negative, and then you become positive again. Just like the cycle of day and night, the attitude of your mind changes from time to time. When evil thoughts come into the mind, religious people shudder. We are kept from the reality of nature by religion. We ought to be told that evil thoughts are as much a part of the human mind as good thoughts. Evolution is a constant movement like a quantum – forward, backward, forward, backward. The evolution of life that you have reached in your human incarnation has never moved in one straight line. It has moved back and forth, back and forth. This is how energy moves. When these thoughts of criticism come into your mind, let them come. You should have an attitude of understanding towards them; they are your offspring. A thought of criticism has not been imported from outside; it is your own creation.

If you disagree with one of the attitudes of your mind, you are creating a friction between yourself and yourself, between one attitude and another. This is what leads people to schizophrenia. All schizophrenics are those who have been unable to maintain amicable relations with themselves. It is most important that you have a friendly relationship with every dimension of thought that comes into your mind. After

all, what is a thought? It is not an emotion; it is a bubble of energy, this way or that way, it is a negative and a positive energy. Don't worry about the thoughts of criticism. Sit down quietly and go on criticizing as much as you like.

What is the best way to overcome complexes?

Ashram life and karma yoga are the best therapy for people with many mental problems. In my ashram I tell people to work so hard that they have no time to think or be unhappy. Complexes disappear miraculously when the mind has no time to dwell on them.

I am disturbed by so many distractions, how can I get rid of them?

Distractions are natural for every man. Even if you live in seclusion at the top of the mountains, you still will have distractions. If you close yourself off in a soundproof chamber you will still have distractions. Distractions are born of desires, of ignorance and unawareness of the spirit. When you are not following the inner path side by side with external life, you will have more distractions, whether you are living in the country or in a busy city. On the yogic path you can learn to live to the fullest without being affected by distractions.

Is it possible to control anger and jealousy?

Anger is one of the biggest barriers in life and jealousy is absolutely unnecessary and useless. When you are angry with somebody at least it has some kind of advantage – the person with whom you are angry obeys or respects you, but jealousy has absolutely no regard at all. In my opinion you should never worry about jealousy or anger, but practise shashankasana and it will help. Sit in vajrasana, bend forward and touch your forehead to the floor. Bring your arms forward and rest them on the floor or clasp the hands together behind your back, remain in this posture for 2 to 30 minutes. Shashankasana helps to control the adrenal glands and calms the mind.

What is the best way to deal with aggression in oneself?

Aggression can be combated by the practice of sheetalī and sheetkārī prāṇayāma, but I think you should firstly make a thorough study of your personality. Aggression is a part of your nature which developed during the course of your life and sometimes you can cause psychological disturbances if you try to arrest a natural aspect of your personality.

Although I have suggested prāṇayāma, I personally feel that one should make use of one's nature in constructive and creative work. A man with an aggressive nature can be very dynamic. He can utilize his personality to bring about great changes in society.

Which yogic practices can help a person suffering from fear of riding on buses, trains, planes?

Normally children do not have this type of fear. They are afraid of darkness and particular personalities, but they are never afraid to travel in airplanes and buses, or even to go near a fire. This type of fear usually occurs in people over 35 years of age.

There are two basic reasons for such fears. One is an accumulation of fat in the nervous tissues and physical organs of the body, especially in this age group. In younger people the rate of metabolism is much faster and this prevents the body accumulating excess fat in any organ or part of the body. In order to reduce these fears the accumulation of fat has to be eliminated.

The second cause is due to the physiological process that occurs in the body as a response to a frightening or confusing situation. When fear is experienced in the brain it is passed on to the body via the glandular and nervous systems which prepare the body for fight or flight.

Experiments conducted on thieves preparing to enter and steal from a house at night have shown that the flow of adrenal secretions is greatly increased. Their whole body is fighting their unconscious fear. As a result, at that time they may feel like going to the toilet, they may sweat profusely or experience heavy breathing.

There are two ways of overcoming the fear complex. In the first case one should try to metabolize the fat accumulation. In the second case one should practise antar mouna. Let the fear come and just witness it, observing the effects it has on your mind, body and emotions. After some time you will realize the cause of your fear and find that it is rooted in a forgotten childhood experience.

If you practise shashankasana for half an hour daily, you will be able to control the secretion of adrenaline and the fright and fear will then gradually diminish. If you practise shashankasana, antar mouna and pranayama regularly, after some time you will relive the childhood experience in your mind and all fear will vanish like a miracle.

Is there any specific practice that one can perform for immediate relief from feelings such as anxiety, grief, guilt, envy, remorse, jealousy, fear?

One should practise awareness of the natural breath. This will bring immediate relief.

My adolescent daughter is not happy. She is an under-achiever in school, angry at home, has few if any friends and is refusing any help. What do you suggest for her?

When your children have gone out of your hands and they need help, then you should encourage them to try ashram life for some time. If you expose your child to ashram life, a different environment, different people, different activities, freedom of speech, thought and deed, and then expose them to asanas and pranayama, you will soon find them reacting positively.

What can yoga do for mentally retarded children?

Some work has been done on the effects of yoga on mentally retarded people, especially children, and it has been found that if the child is properly guided through the practice of important asanas, a great deal of change can be brought about. The asanas that are particularly recommended are those which have

a direct effect on the hormonal secretions of the pituitary body. These include sarvangasana and sirshasana. After these asanas have been practised for some time, pranayama and bandhas should be slowly introduced. These techniques will definitely make an improvement, but I think there is still a lot of work to be done. Parents tend to be very careless about their mentally retarded children and they are not obtaining the desired results from the systems they expose their children to. If you send the child to a school, some of his faculties may be developed, but what about the fundamental structure of the brain?

Sometimes a mentally retarded child has perfect brain structure, but there is some psycho-emotional block which has been created by the parents or by his environment. When this is the case, the practice of yoga nidra is beneficial. The child might not understand the practice, but that is not important. If the teacher uses the right form of yoga nidra, he can get into the child's deeper mind and influence his whole personality. Thereby he may be able to bring him out of the psycho-emotional confusion.

For the best results with yogic therapy it is essential that we have a clear-cut diagnosis of the child's retardation so we can determine the category to which he belongs and the correct method of treatment.

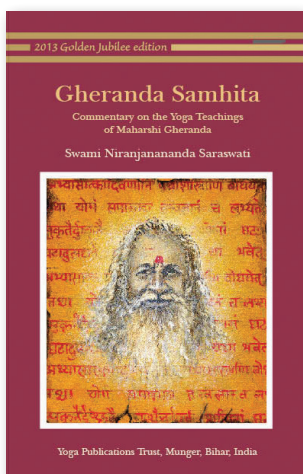
What is the place in the universe for people with an unbalanced mind? And what is the purpose of their existence?

Those who are crazy are the people that have completely rejected the whole scheme of your society. They are the people who have been searching for the truth. Because they did not find it in your society, they lost every hope. They could not find what they were aspiring for in the environment society offered so they went what you call crazy. But in the next life they will become swamis like myself.

*– 16 September 1979, Paris, France;
printed in YOGA Vol. 18, No. 5 (May 1980)*

Mudra and Bandha

From Gheranda Samhita, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



In yoga, the significance of mudras and bandhas is even greater than that of asana and pranayama, because mudras influence pranamaya and manomaya koshas. In the body, many sensations originate within the nervous system and many changes take place on the mental plane. In the pranic field, the production of energy in the body also fluctuates. For these reasons, both activity and dissipation are experienced in the inner mental state and also in the pranic state.

Expressing and creating a feeling

From the gross point of view, *mudra* is a term meaning a gesture or a particular mood or feeling of consciousness. The mudras described in the yogic scriptures are manifestations of special moods or feelings of consciousness, *chitta*, and states of energy, *prana*. Knowledge of mudras and their techniques is known to very few *sadhakas*, practitioners.

In Indian dance, different mudras or gestures are used to depict a particular mood or feeling. Anger is depicted through the eyes, the position of the hands and the physical posture. This is just one example. It has also been observed that if a particular mudra is practised for longer periods of time, a feeling created by that mudra is experienced. The same kind of sensation depicted by the mudra is created in the body and mind. This also happens in daily life. For instance, an angry person raises the eyebrows, tenses the hands and clenches the fists. Even if one is not angry, this feeling will gradually

manifest if these physical actions are adopted. Whichever physical state is adopted creates a particular kind of sensation in the nervous system and brings about a change in the brain waves. This change in the brain waves influences the state of consciousness and for some time that particular feeling is experienced inside on the mental plane.

The mudras and bandhas which have been described in the yogic texts are helpful in putting to rest and controlling the sensations and stimulations of the nervous system. The mudras known in yoga are often shown in portraits, images or idols of saints and sages or gods and goddesses, for example, jnana mudra, chin mudra, shankhmudra and abhaya mudra.

Mudras such as ashwini mudra, vajroli mudra and tadagi mudra are practised in kundalini yoga and kriya yoga. These mudras influence pranamaya kosha and are used to change the flow of prana. Their influence is felt on the brain as well and they help in awakening a certain feeling inside chitta so that one becomes introverted and internalized. These practices are also helpful in achieving one-pointedness and concentration.

Towards inner stability

The *bandhas* are in fact physical and psychic locks which disrupt the sensations being created in the nerves inside the body and brain, and awaken other specific kinds of sensations. Any process of contraction or expansion in the internal organs, whether in the neck, throat, perineum or anal region, changes the reactions, emotions and the quantum of energy in the internal organs. It brings the body to a stimulated or peaceful state, resulting in the experience of a feeling of inner stability.

Many philosophies, religions and systems of thought in the world believe that it is necessary to completely detach oneself from the external world in order to experience some sort of spiritual or inner realization. The main aim of mudras and bandhas is to help attain an inner state in which external emotions and events do not scatter the mental state. One should be able to keep the mind one-pointed in prayer or meditation

and not allow any negative feelings or reactions to manifest internally.

It is said in Vedanta that everything is transitory; it is all *maya*, illusion and delusion – leave it, and abide in the truth. But in yoga and tantra it is said that whatever state one is in should be used as a ladder to higher states. Yoga believes that if one wishes to attain one-pointedness and some sort of spiritual experience, that experience can be achieved through the medium of the senses also. The senses may be expanded and activated so much that the mind spontaneously becomes one-pointed. Mudras can play a role here; for example, khechhari mudra is related to the senses.

Sage Gheranda describes the process involved in the practice of mudras and bandhas. One can activate, expand and absorb oneself in the sensations manifesting inside by adopting a particular technique. Making use of physical and psychic gestures activates the sensations of annamaya kosha, pranamaya kosha and manomaya kosha in order to go inside them.



Prana and Pranayama

From The Science of Pranayama by Swami Sivananda Saraswati



Prana may be defined as the finest vital force in everything which becomes visible on the physical plane as motion and action and on the mental plane as thought. The word *pranayama*, therefore, means the restraint of vital energies. It is the control of vital energy which tingles through the nerves of persons. It moves his muscles and causes him to sense the external world and think his internal thought.

Pranayama according to the *Yoga Sutras*

Tasmin sati svasaprasvasayor gativicchedah pranayamah.

Regulation of breath or the control of prana is the stoppage of inhalation and exhalation, which follows after securing that steadiness of posture or seat.

This is the definition of pranayama in the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali (2:49). *Svasa* means inspiratory breath. *Prasvasa* means expiratory breath. You can take up the practice of pranayama after you have gained steadiness in your asana. If you can sit for three hours in one asana, continuously at one stretch, you have gained mastery over the asana. If you are able to sit from half to one hour even, you can take up the practice of pranayama. You can hardly make any spiritual progress without the practice of pranayama.

Vyashti and samashti

Prana is *vyashti*, single or individual prana, when the individual is concerned. The sum total of the cosmic energy or cosmic prana is Hiranyagarbha who is known as the floating 'Golden Egg'. Hiranyagarbha is *samashti prana*, cosmic prana. One match stick is *vyashti*, single. The whole match box is *samashti*. A single mango tree is *vyashti*. The whole mango grove is *samashti*.

The energy in the body is prana. By controlling the motion of the lungs or respiratory organs, we can control the prana that is vibrating inside. By control of prana, the mind can be easily controlled, because the mind is fastened to the prana, like the bird to the string. Just as the bird that is tied to a post by a string, after flying here and there, finds its resting place on the post, so also this mind-bird after running hither and thither, in various sensual objects, finds its resting place during deep sleep in the prana.

Pranayama according to the *Bhagavad Gita*

Apane juhvati pranam pranepanam tathapare; Pranapanagatee ruddhva pranayamaparayanah.

Others offer prana (outgoing breath) in apana (incoming breath) and apana in prana, restraining the passage of prana and apana, absorbed in pranayama. (4:29)

Pranayama is a precious *yajna*, sacrifice. Some practise the kind of pranayama called *puraka*, filling in. Some practise the kind of pranayama called *rechaka*, emptying. Some are engaged in the practice of pranayama called *kumbhaka*, by impeding the outward passage of air, through the nostrils and the mouth, and by impeding the inward passage of the air, in the opposite direction.

Sum total

Prana is the sum total of all energy that is manifest in the universe. It is the sum total of all the forces in nature. It is the sum total of all latent forces and powers which are hidden in men and which lie everywhere around us.

Heat, light, electricity, magnetism are the manifestations of prana. All forces, all powers and prana spring from the fountain or common source, atman.

All physical forces, all mental forces come under the category 'prana'. It is a force on every plane of being, from the highest to the lowest. Whatever moves or works or has life, is but an expression or manifestation of prana.











YRF Editorial

*From Yoga Research Foundation: Volume One, YRF Journals:
1989–1990, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

The concept of health from the yogic viewpoint is not only confined to the physical aspect but to each and every strata of our personality. The United Nations has defined health as being physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and social. Well, this theory is not the property of the United Nations. It belongs to the United Individual and the basis is commonsense. This is exactly what yoga has been proposing for many hundreds and thousands of years.

There seems to be a lack of understanding of our own personalities in every kind of ‘-pathy’. If you look at allopathy, does it actually treat an illness or disease, or does it only treat the symptoms which manifest in the body or the mind? I feel that rather than being able to really cure an ailment, allopaths themselves are unable to fully understand the integration of body, mind, environment, emotion and spirit in an individual. A similar analysis can be made of other ‘-pathies’ as well, though there are some which recognize the psychological factors behind an ailment or disease, or the pranic imbalance which causes an ailment or disease. The concept of total health has been a continued feeling of people who have been aware and not of those people who have simply tried to misuse and overuse the equipment of this instrument provided by God.

Indulgence, disease and imbalance

This concept has been clearly defined in yoga as *bhoga*, *roga* and *yoga*. *Bhoga* does not refer to the pleasures that we seek, but to the states of fulfilment, contentment, satisfaction and enjoyment within the body, mind, emotions, spirit and society. When these states are imbalanced, then *roga*, disease, will manifest. The effort which seeks to bring about the balance is

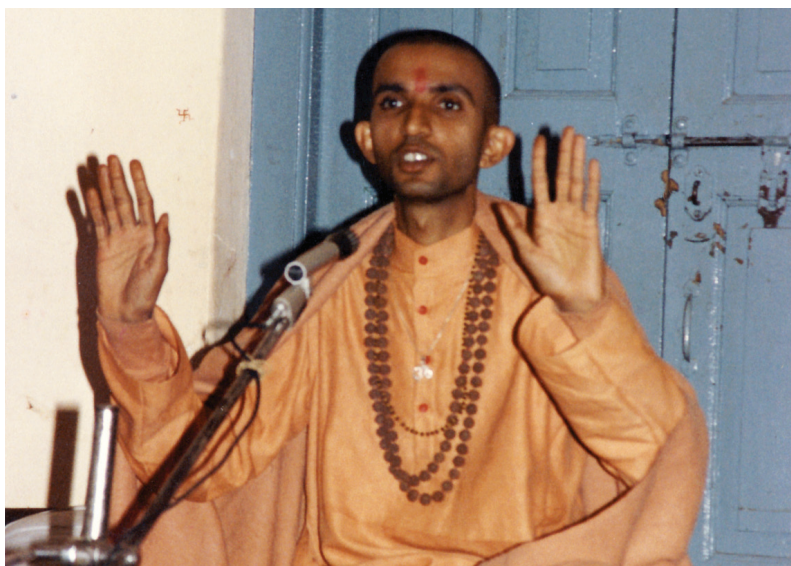
then known as yoga. Looking at health and disease from this angle brings fresh insight.

Why do we get stomach problems, indigestion, diarrhoea, dysentery, gas, bile, hyperacidity? Because there is an imbalance in our diet and we do not follow the natural pattern, the natural biorhythms of the body. This mistake is creating more and more imbalances within our system which have to manifest in one way or another. So the whole concept of therapy in yoga revolves around the removal of imbalances and blocks.

Somebody may be suffering from a physical ailment and that is definitely going to have a foundation in the mental and emotional structure and this affects the normal and natural performance of the internal organs. The body behaves and performs in a particular pattern over which there is no voluntary control. Digestion happens automatically, spontaneously, we cannot control our digestion. We cannot control the secretion of fluids, we cannot even control our heartbeat. We can simply control the external activity. The involuntary actions, the autonomic activity continuously happening within us is, however, subject to stress and tension, misuse and overuse.

There is another concept in yoga which defines the cause of human problems. Four things are the cause of many ailments: imbalance in *ahara*, diet; imbalance in *nidra*, sleep; imbalance in *bhaya*, fear, phobia or any kind of suppression or anxiety, and imbalance in *maithuna*, sex, so one does not get sensual or sexual satisfaction. These states are bound to create more psychological problems, which will then reflect on the body. These various factors which eventually cause a disease have to be considered and monitored according to the yogic philosophy.

The practices provided in yoga place equal emphasis on physical exercises as well as on the techniques of relaxation, concentration and pranayama which help in increasing the level of vitality, stamina and strength within the personality.



The practices selected in a yoga program lead to the gradual release of blocks from the pranic structure, or pranamaya kosha, but they also go further than that. Yoga believes that there IS a difference between the emotional, pranic and mental influences and provides techniques for dealing with them.

Three types of lifestyle

We know that there are three types of people who have been defined as the *sattwic*, balanced, the *rajasic*, dynamic, or the *tamasic*, dull. These three types represent a style of life more than a person or an individual. It is noticeable that sattwic people will not suffer from any kind of illness or disease. They might get an occasional cough, cold or fever, an occasional body ache or headache but they are not going to suffer any more than this. They will never come down with jaundice, hepatitis or TB, no matter in what environment or in what condition they live because the sattwic lifestyle simply represents a lifestyle which is balanced and integrated. This would also reflect on behaviour, the thinking pattern, the emotional pattern, on diet and on the states of mind.

Rajasic people are prone to be sick; tamasic people are prone to suffer all their life, because the tamasic personality represents not just imbalance, but chronic imbalance. So yoga therapy recognizes that there are only two kinds of people who are suffering: the rajasic and the tamasic. Therefore, yoga approaches the individual according to the type of personality. How that is done is very much between the student and the teacher and the ability of the teacher to recognize the need, the condition and the state of the student.

Emotional sensitivity

What of the behaviour of mind and the behaviour of emotion? We can easily define everything in terms of family pressure, work pressure or dissatisfaction with the family and social structure. We have our ambitions, needs and weaknesses, feelings of insecurity, of not being able to face certain situations in life. Generally we understand the whole thing as creating pressures, suppressions and anxieties in our mental and emotional structure. But a disease is not monitored by the level of anxiety, frustration or euphoria that is being created. Rather we have to see the mental and emotional sensitivity of the individual because maybe in the same situation people who are less sensitive will respond differently. Here our outlook, our perception and our sensitivity is also involved.

Depression, anxiety, likes and dislikes on the emotional level can cause illness, physiological diseases. Work pressure or family pressure, worrying about the education of the children or the completion of a job, can cause high levels of stress and anxiety which can produce illness, headache, watering of the eyes, palpitations of the heart, high blood pressure, different kinds of diseases. We take a pill to remove the headache, but the worry is still constant in the mind. We have eliminated the flashing red light that is indicative of the malfunction in the instrument, but we have not corrected the actual malfunction. Even our approach towards therapy is very much symptomatic, physical and external.

So, the work environment cannot be the cause of a problem, a disease. It is our approach, our outlook, our reaction which may become the problem. Family pressures are there in every family in one way or another, as is the drive to fulfil our ambitions and satisfy our needs. The response of the rajasic mind and the response of the tamasic mind is different in such conditions; by monitoring the rajasic state or the tamasic state of mind and its sensitivity, we are able to judge how far the ailment has altered, influenced or affected the body.

We need to differentiate between the experience of the body, the mind, the emotions and the sensitivity. At the same time, we cannot neglect our ambitions and needs and become full-time yogis in order to enjoy optimum health. We can, however, make an effort as a yoga teacher, as a therapist, to understand a disease or a problem from a different point of view. A student is not a guinea pig on whom we test this chemical or that chemical, this yoga or that yoga. There has to be an understanding of the total structure of the individual before a therapy can really become effective. There has to be an understanding of whether the person is rajasic or tamasic, and on that basis you try to correct the lifestyle, along with the necessary assistance that you might provide in the form of a pill or yoga program.

Holistic approach

Some emphasis has to be placed on correcting the lifestyle so that people are able to feel more harmonious, more balanced and integrated within themselves. Many people have been helped through yoga, like Dr Swami Shankardevananda, author of *Yogic Management of Asthma and Diabetes*, whose inner realizations through yogic sadhana sparked the turning point in his asthma. Very few therapies can provide that.

Gradually, as we become more aware of the difficulties in treating a disease and the patient, we will try to have a more holistic approach in future. Even now, during this Symposium, the whole discussion has been on the enlargement of the

bronchial tubes. "Take this bronchodilator, it will enlarge the tubes so that you can breathe more." It is a physical concept. We are living at a time when we need those physical parameters to motivate us but we have to utilize that knowledge in the projection of our ideas. Once we become involved, then the changes will happen in our perception and in our understanding which will make us our own therapists. Then we will not have to rely on spirometry tests or bronchodilators, but on our own judgement and commonsense of what is right for our health. To rise beyond the physical parameters we need to fully understand them first. After we have understood, in total, then we can try to pick up another area.

The ideal or correct concept of any therapy should parallel the concept of health which has been defined as physical, mental, emotional, social and spiritual. The concept of therapy should be the same as the concept of health. It is not a problem; it is something which we will realize after a few generations because right now we are in the process of investigating yoga by experimenting with the different ideas and techniques that science is discovering every day.

From a satsang on the yogic psychophysiology of disease, given at the 2nd International Doctor's Symposium, January 1990, Ganga Darshan.



Counter-Thoughts

From the teachings of Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Thoughts of worry and thoughts of fear are fearful forces within us. They poison the very sources of life and destroy the harmony, the running efficiency, vitality and vigour. While the opposite thoughts of cheerfulness, joy and courage heal and soothe instead of being irritating. They immensely augment efficiency and multiply mental powers. Therefore, be always cheerful, smile and laugh.

Grand law of nature

Every thought, emotion or word produces a strong vibration in every cell of the body and leaves a strong impression there. If you know the method of raising an opposite thought or counter-thought, then you can lead a happy harmonious life of peace and power. A thought of love will at once neutralize a thought of hatred. A thought of courage will immediately serve as a powerful antidote against a thought of fear.

When there are diseases, discord, disharmony in the cells of the body owing to the influence of vicious thoughts, worry-thoughts, fear-thoughts, hatred-thoughts, jealousy-thoughts, passion-thoughts, you can neutralize the poison or canker in these diseased, morbid cells and establish peace, harmony, health and new vigour and vitality, by entertaining sublime, soul-stirring, life-giving, sattwic and divine thoughts.

This is done using the vibrations of *Om* chanting, by repetition of the different names of the Lord, by pranayama, kirtan, singing of the name of the Lord, by the study of the *Bhagavad Gita* and the holy scriptures, and by meditation.

Very carefully watch all your thoughts. Suppose you are assailed by gloomy thoughts. You experience depression. Take a small cup of milk or tea. Sit calmly and close your eyes. Find out the cause for the depression and try to remove the cause.

The best method to overcome the gloomy thoughts and the consequent depression is to think of inspiring thoughts and inspiring things. Remember again, positive overcomes negative. This is a grand, effective law of nature.

Now think strongly of the opposite thoughts, the opposite of gloom. Think of those things that elevate your mind. Think of cheerfulness. Imagine the advantage of cheerfulness. Feel that you are in actual possession of this quality. Again and again, repeat the formula, *Om cheerfulness*, mentally. Feel, 'I am very cheerful'. Begin to smile and laugh several times.

Various methods

Sing. Sometimes this can elevate you quickly. Singing is very beneficial to drive off gloom. Chant *Om* loudly several times. Run in the open air. The depression will vanish soon. This is the pratipaksha bhavana method of raja yogis. This is the easiest method.

The method of driving gloom by force, by willpower, by assertions, by command, taxes the will very much, although it is the most efficient. It demands great strength of will. Ordinary people will not succeed. The method of displacing or dislocating the negative feeling by substituting the opposite, positive feeling, is very easy. Within a very short time the undesirable feeling vanishes. Practise this and feel it. Even if you fail several times, continue. You will be successful after some sittings and some practice.

In the same manner, you can treat other negative thoughts and feelings as well. If there is the feeling of anger, think of love. If there are thoughts of jealousy, think of the advantages of charitableness and magnanimity. If there are thoughts of gloom, then think of some inspiring scenery that you saw some time ago, or recall to mind some inspiring passage.

If there is harshness of heart, think of mercy. If there is passion, think of the advantage of celibacy. If there is dishonesty, think of honesty, integrity. If there is miserliness, think of generosity and generous persons.

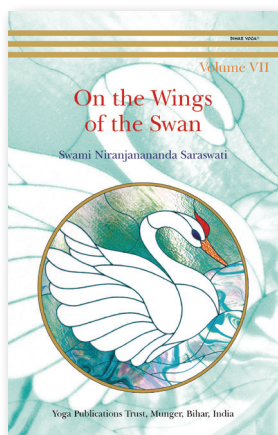
If there is infatuation or *moha*, think of discrimination and *atmic vichara*, reflection; if there is pride, think of humility. If there is hypocrisy, think of frankness and its invaluable advantages. If there is jealousy, think of nobility and magnanimity. If there is timidity, think of courage.

You will drive off the negative thoughts and feelings and be established in a positive state. Practice of a continued type is essential. Also be careful in the selection of your companions. Talk very little, and that too, only on useful matters.



The Secret of Life

From On the Wings of the Swan, Volume 7, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



It is easier to fall back into the same old pattern than to improve and constantly try to improve yourself, to know and to apply. Success in life depends on continuously trying to know, learn and apply what you have learned. That is the secret of success in life.

Never have the thought, 'Oh, I know this already'. Those who believe that 'I know this already' are the losers in the long run, because the ego comes up and says, 'I know it from before'.

With this thought, a natural barrier goes up which stops the learning process.

When you believe that you do not know anything, even when you may be master of the subject, you will always find that your performance improves each time. That is the secret of life.

— 23 October 2007, Ganga Darshan, Munger



I Know What I Am Doing

From Taming the Kundalini, Swami Satyananda Saraswati



It is indeed a hopeful sign that in spite of the responsibilities of family life, you have commenced practices. Can one fulfil the mission of life rightly by remaining a professor, a principal or a member of an institution? All these are just expressions of gross desires. You should never believe that you are carrying the burden of the family or the society. Like the sparrow wishing to measure the heavens, there are people, not wanting, who suffer from such delusions. Sadhana will suffer as long as this disease is not cured.

This path of sadhana appears to be difficult at the outset, but later on it suddenly becomes easy. Sadhana becomes easy for those who have come to know its mysteries through a guru. People are told that a guru is not necessary, but great souls have considered a guru to be indispensable on the path of yoga. You should, therefore, test your self-imagined conclusions on the

touchstone of truth. It will not be proper to alter the technique of yoga to suit society's interests.

A sadhaka must always remember his *sankalpa*, determination. The test does not lie in how much sadhana you have practised but how alive you are to your sankalpa. Therefore, go on revising all your good resolutions. Take a bird's eye view of your last year's progress.

If difficulties distract the sadhana at times, let them come. Do not leave your efforts. If it is not possible to practise sadhana in one fixed posture, intensify the practice of inner silence or indwelling in any position. Intense concentration is at times achieved by doing sadhana at any odd hour. But endeavour to keep the time for sadhana fixed and steady.

Whatever your domestic and social responsibilities, let them be. Once again I awaken you to the supreme goal. To the exclusion of all social duty, realize your birthright and serve people by your attainments.

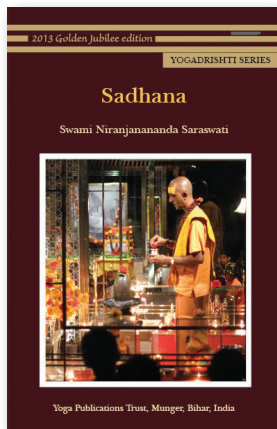
If you have faith in what I say, your family affairs will be settled satisfactorily. I say this to you in full confidence. I am leading you towards the study of yoga because I know what I am doing.

– 1 March 1961, Ahmedabad, India



Two Aims

From Sadhana, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Sri Swami Satyananda says that the purpose of human life is to cultivate spiritual awareness. He is vocal and emphatic when talking about the cultivation of spiritual life, as for him that is the most important process in life. He always says that God-realization or self-realization is not the aim of life. It is the cultivation of spiritual awareness for which we have taken this birth, therefore all our efforts and actions should lead us to the stage

where we can experience the spiritual awareness within.

Sri Swamiji's statement is, "Cultivation of spiritual awareness is the aim of life." My statement is, "The aim of life is also to develop efficiency and proficiency in all things that you do." Therefore, you have two things before you: the cultivation of spiritual awareness, and the development of proficiency in everything you do in life. Both of these aims relate to the effort that every individual makes to overcome the limitations and restrictions of personality and develop a greater degree of creativity, positivity and optimism in life.

Influence of the gunas

The mind and the senses are integrated with each other. While the mind has to be groomed and trained to experience spiritual life and develop spiritual awareness, the senses have to be groomed and guided to become more efficient and proficient in their involvement in the day-to-day world. When we are born into this life, our mind, senses, consciousness and *pranas* or energies, exist in a dimension where the tamasic nature is

predominant. There are three different *gunas*, qualities. One quality and nature is sattwic, next is rajasic and the third is tamasic. *Sattwic* means pure, harmonious and luminous, and this is the final experience of an awakened mind. Next to sattwa is *rajas*, which represents the dynamism, motivation, determination, drive and inspiration to achieve, become and realize. The third nature is tamasic; *tamas* means defined, not negative. In fact, do not think of categorizing these *gunas* as either good or bad, positive or negative. They are neither positive nor negative; they are only characters, traits, conditions and qualities of life. Just as the weather is sometimes hot and at other times cold, depending on the season, in the same manner, in the manifest dimension the *gunas* – sattwa, rajas and tamas – represent qualities and conditions which your mind expresses and experiences from time to time. Most of the time, the expression and experience of life is tamas. You are ten percent sattwic, forty percent rajasic and fifty percent tamasic.

Tamas represents darkness. In darkness or in the absence of light, you cannot see things although they are there. It is possible to see things only when there is light. We are sitting here now, in the sunlight, and are able to see each other. However, if we were sitting here in the middle of the night in total darkness, who would see whom? In the presence of light, things come into the field of perception, and in darkness you are unable to see anything although the same things are there. This is tamas. Tamas has been called by different names, such as darkness, illusion and ignorance. Since life is under the influence of tamas, the mind, the mental patterns or *vruttis* are also moulded by tamas. This tamasic mind blocks you from seeing the beauty inherent in life.

Rajas is an activity of the mind. When you speak of the mind, you think of it as the one word, 'mind'. From the yogic perspective, the two behaviours or expressions of the mind are sankalpa and vikalpa. *Sankalpa* means clarity, focus, sharpened awareness, knowing the right and appropriate. *Vikalpa* is the opposite of sankalpa: distractions, dissipation and



diversions. The mind swings between sankalpa and vikalpa. This swing between clarity or confusion can be experienced in the thoughts, feelings, emotions, intellect and logic. Sometimes thoughts are clear, sometimes confused. Sometimes emotions are clear, sometimes confused.

The main condition of the mind, during predominance of the rajas quality, is sankalpa and vikalpa: clarity and confusion. Rajas dominates these states. When there is clarity you are motivated, you are inspired to do better things, new things. With the change of mind, there is a change of mood, which expresses greater happiness, optimism and hope. When you fall in the trap of vikalpa, the mind becomes clouded; hopelessness and despair set in and you are unable to use the abilities or inherent strengths that you have. At that time you tend to identify more with the shortcomings and weaknesses in life.

Sankalpa and vikalpa are behaviours of the rajasic mind. This body, this brain and this mind are coloured by tamoguna, just as the clothes that you wear are coloured orange, yellow, blue, green, pink or red. When you are interacting with the environment and with the world, your mind is coloured by tamas. The colour of tamas is the conditioned nature, the conditioned quality: "I believe this and I do not believe that." This applies to nearly every situation.

Become an ocean frog

There is a story of a frog that had lived in a well all his life. He reached his middle age, half his life having gone by and still he had never left the well. Then one day, while he was admiring the world of his well, he heard a sound: 'plop'. He looked around and saw that another frog had fallen into the well. He said to the newcomer, "You look new to me. Where have you come from?" The newcomer frog replied, "I come from the ocean." The frog of the well asked, "Where is the ocean?" The newcomer said, "It is not too far from here." "Is it as big as my well?" the well frog asked, as he jumped from one corner of the well to the other, feeling very proud. The newcomer frog answered, "It is much bigger than this well." "It cannot be," said the well frog. He took another big leap and asked, "Is it as great as my leap?" The ocean frog said, "Yes, it is much bigger than that." The well frog answered, "Well, anything that you can't put in my well doesn't exist. Anything that does not fit in the well does not exist for me."

You are the well frog, as you have created your own world, your own associations, contacts, circles, and you live within that world which you have created. In the world of your creation, everything is fixed: your expectations, beliefs, ethics, morality and concept of right and wrong. Your lifestyle is fixed and your expectations about how to behave in society are also defined.

Where everything is defined and you have to live within the parameters of the definition is known as the tamasic nature. If you try to change that tamasic nature, that act becomes rajasic. In this life, you are predominantly tamasic by nature: your body is fixed, your mind is fixed, your emotions and sentiments are fixed, and your spirit is also fixed. There is no growth in the spirit, as it is contained in a non-growing personality, body and mind.

In order to cultivate spiritual awareness, you move from *tamas* to *sattwa*. This is the definition given of spiritual awareness, of spiritual realization. Identify not with the

changing and craving nature of the mind, but with the pure, luminous and peaceful nature of the mind. The journey from tamas to sattwa is the spiritual journey. This is the essence; this is the secret of spiritual life. You have to go from tamas, from the present condition of living, to sattwa, the purer, more luminous, more tranquil, harmonious and creative way of living.

Our paramguru, Swami Sivananda, says that to overcome the predominance of tamas in your life, negate its influence by imbibing divine qualities. Only when you imbibe a divine quality, one positive trait, do your vrittis or mental patterns change. This is the way to get out of the narrowness or the limited nature of your present life. The ignorance of the present life is removed and light comes in. As you leave the area of darkness and enter into the sphere of light, you experience luminosity within. You awaken the uplifting energies and your consciousness evolves into the higher dimension of intuition. You connect with creation and the creator.



Satsang On Children

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



To what extent can yoga affect the foetus?

There has been a tradition, not only a belief, but a tradition which has always maintained that right from the moment of conception we can provide good positive samskaras to the foetus, to the baby inside the womb. There have been many examples in history, and I think that modern science is even recognizing this concept where after the third month when the soul actually enters the womb of the mother, it is possible to give positive samskaras, positive education to the unborn child so that when the child is born it will be a different child altogether.

Many people are experimenting with such ideas and practices of yoga and I have personally seen people having very good results. The quality of children taking birth after a yogic connection between their parents is incredibly different to those who have had no connection with a spiritual tradition or a yogic tradition. I can only say that it is possible to train the foetus through yoga and in the course of time that person can become a genius.

How can we bring children to the right path?

Before you do that you have to control yourself and bring yourself to the right path. You have to be an example for your children. It is only through example and practical experience that you can instruct your children to develop their potential and creative nature. Just teaching a child all sorts of morality will not improve him, especially if you tell him that he should not do this or that, but you do the same things yourself. Children are very observant, they are very pliable and you can mould them to any shape.

The first thing that you have to do in order to improve the quality of the child's consciousness and awareness is to let him express himself freely; even if he speaks rudely to you, let him. If you cannot let him insult you, you are suppressing his nature, but if you allow his mind to flourish by giving him freedom of expression, whether verbal, moral, physical or intellectual, he will grow up to be an intelligent and creative person.

Freedom of expression is important and it has to be accompanied by proper samskaras. You can give them proper samskaras through the practice of asana and pranayama, and gradually introduce them to the different practices and principles of yoga so that they are able to build a solid foundation for their future. If they begin to practise yoga from a very early age you will find that in their later life they will not face the same type of tension and frustration that you face, and even if they have to face it they will be well equipped to handle those situations that you are not able to handle yourself because you have never been given the basic training.

If you want to bring your child to the right path, give him this basic yoga training which will enable him to cope with all eventualities.

How can parents set a good example for their children?

Parents, especially mothers, have a lot of emotional and psychic influence on their children. Fathers have an intellectual influence on their children, and mothers have an emotional



influence on their children. It is best if the father and mother together can make an effort to provide a good understanding in the child by becoming an example of the life which they wish the child to lead.

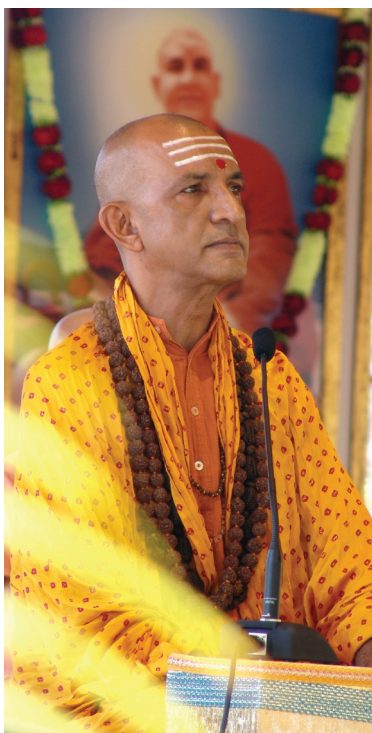
Children tend to pick up many things psychically, not intellectually, not logically or rationally. Children know when you are telling them a lie; they feel it intuitively. They may not be able to figure out the sentence in which you said the lie but they know that you have told them a lie somewhere. They have a very keen, very active intuitive ability up to the age of eight or twelve years. Then the intellect begins gradually to take over.

From the yogic point of view it is said that all parent must be able to provide their children with good samskaras as well as an understanding of the lifestyle. This can only happen if you live your own life sincerely, without imposing your ambitions and your expectations on your children. So you have to make an effort to change yourself first, because only through being a righteous example can you teach others how to live in the right way.

– Printed in YOGA, Vol. 6, Issue 5 (September 1995)

Dharma

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Religion is made from the Latin word 'religare' which means to come together, to come closer. Who comes closer? God and the individual. The word religion denotes a connection between God and the individual.

In Asian traditions, religion is known as dharma and dharma is something that you hold, you acquire, you possess. Dharma is a concept which indicates the beauty of life and enhancing the beauty of life. Expression, thinking, performance, interaction, all is clubbed under the concept of dharma in Asia. It is not just belief in God.

From the eastern perspective, dharma is actual positive and creative, harmonious and balanced human expression and behaviour. That is the concept of *dhaarayate iti dharmaha*, the positive quality that you imbibe. The positive expression that you have is your dharma. From this perspective, dharma becomes a way of enhancing the quality of your personality and connect you with your duties and obligations. It enhances the positive and beautiful within you.

There are two components of dharma. One is known as *kartavya pradhana*. *Kartavya pradhana* is interacting in the positive, harmonious, constructive, creative manner. Every action in life is constructive, positive, creative – *kartavya karma*

pradhaan. The second aspect is *guna pradhaan*, cultivation of better qualities in life, cultivation of human qualities in life. Karma pradhaan and guna pradhaan are the two aspects of dharma in Asia.

This concept of dharma indicates a process of change, transformation, improving and becoming better. To be realized properly, dharma is linked with bhakti, which is of two types, *apara*, the lower, gross, material, and *para*, the transcendental.

Apara bhakti manages your mental states and conditions, difficulties and distresses, problems and dissatisfactions in life when you pray for the fulfilment of a desire or the eradication of a problem. Apara is something that connects you to the world and you try to improve this outer world by following the path of bhakti and dharma.

Yogis or people of spiritual traditions follow the para bhakti and the para dharma. Para bhakti is not the ritualistic but the experiential knowledge, and para dharma is not the social duty but the effort to improve oneself from inside. Dharma is an expression of the qualitative, positive and creative nature of life which does not have any negative component in it.

To live dharma, to live the precepts of dharma some people come together and decide to live their life according to the mandates, disciplines, regulations and systems of the dharma. They form a group which becomes a *sampradaya*, tradition. Dharma is the original idea, and the group is made of like-minded people who want to live that dharma and who don't want to be distracted and diverted by other things which can take them away from dharma.

They form a group and the foundation of this group is the discipline, system, methodology and the routine. The way you are meant to act and behave, the code of conduct, becomes part of the sampradaya, and everything that becomes part is meant to enhance and develop the experience of dharma.

– 14 June 2015, Ganga Darshan, Munger

Sanatana Dharma

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Sanatana is a name which indicates continuity, permanency, a link that exists from one point to the next point to the next point, all being interconnected. Continuity, permanency, inter-connectivity are the ideas of the word *sanatana*.

Another idea of the word *sanatana* is something which has no beginning and no end, something which is continuous. A circle is *sanatana*. Where is the beginning of or the end of the circle? Any point where you put your finger becomes the beginning and also becomes the end. There is no defined linear beginning and linear ending. The linear beginning and linear ending is another concept. The circular concept of *sanatana* has no beginning and no end.

Purpose and aim

This thought predates every other cultural and religious belief as other religions and theories came much after the *sanatana* idea. The *sanatana* idea was to explore the goodness within along with the concept of righteousness, *dharma*, and justice, the appropriate manner to do things, *nyaya*.

There is no founder in *Sanatana dharma*. All other religions have had a founder. Christ was the founder of Christianity. It reflects his thoughts. Buddha was the founder of Buddhism. It reflects his thoughts. Prophet Mohammed was the founder of Islam. It reflects his thoughts. Similarly, the different religions which came later have identified an image, a person, an idea, a concept which somehow links the individual on this material plane with some higher force in heaven, the godly plane.

In *Sanatana dharma*, the ancient Indian system, there was no founder. There was no aim such as 'I have to discover God within me'. The only purpose was to explore and discover the goodness within. With this idea the *Sanatana dharma*

developed as a method of expressing and fulfilling one's potentials, obligations and duties with clarity and contentment of mind and peace in one's heart.

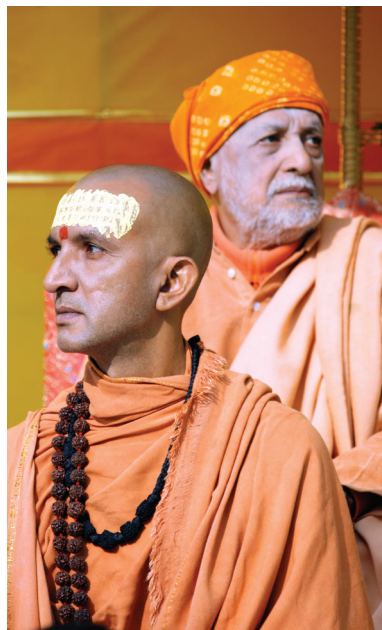
Explore your beauty

That was the society which was envisioned by the rishis. No dogma, no ritual, no personal god, no personal founder of belief system, yet everything belongs to the same pool of knowledge. Even after writing four volumes of Vedas, at the end the seers said, "*Neti-neti*" – "What we have written is not conclusive. There is more that we do not know."

This was the statement of the enlightened people of this region who said that my experience is my experience. It cannot be your experience.

It cannot be the final experience and that final experience is not knowable. Therefore, if that is not knowable, then develop the good, the beauty and serenity, develop the garden of your life and maintain it.

The whole concept of Sanatana, the continuous dharma, developed from this idea. This is the philosophy which sannyasins follow. They don't follow Shaivism or Shaktism, although some components and symbols are there. They don't follow any other -ism, yet they do not negate any -ism. They are not negating anything. They follow the dharma which brings out the inherent beauty and that is Sanatana dharma: explore and discover your own beauty.



– 30 August 2015, Ganga Darshan, Munger



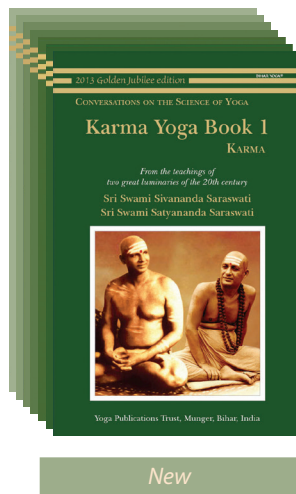
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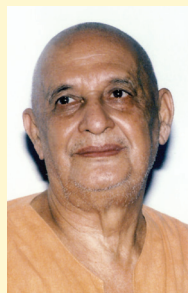


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