

YOGA

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Hari Om

YOGA is compiled, composed and published by the sannyasin disciples of Swami Satyananda Saraswati for the benefit of all people who seek health, happiness and enlightenment. It contains information about the activities of Bihar School of Yoga, Bihar Yoga Bharati, Yoga Publications Trust and Yoga Research Fellowship.

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2: Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati;

3: Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati;

4: Swami Satyasangananda Saraswati



GUIDELINES FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

Pratyahara

When, like the tortoise which withdraws its limbs on all sides, he withdraws his senses from the sense-objects, then his wisdom becomes steady.

—*Bhagavad Gita 2:58*

Withdrawal of the senses is pratyahara. The mind has a natural tendency to run towards external objects. He who practises pratyahara is dead to the world. He will not be affected by outside vibrations. At any time by mere willing he can bring his senses under his perfect control. They are his obedient servants.

By practising pratyahara one obtains strength and peace of mind. By pratyahara the impurities of attachment are removed.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*

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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 ॥

Happy and Joyful

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Karma yoga is an attitude of how you perceive an action to be. If there is happiness and joy in doing the work, then that mental state is karma yoga. If there is unhappiness, dissatisfaction and anger and you say, "This is menial work, it is not for me," then that is not karma yoga for the mind is different. Karma yoga is only managing the attitude and the behaviour of the mind, while karma is an expression of your ability. Whether you sweep, cook, work on the computer, in a

business, in a shop, if there is joy, happiness and identification with what you are doing and feeling for what you are doing then that is karma yoga. However, if there is negation, rejection, sadness and suffering, then that is not karma yoga.

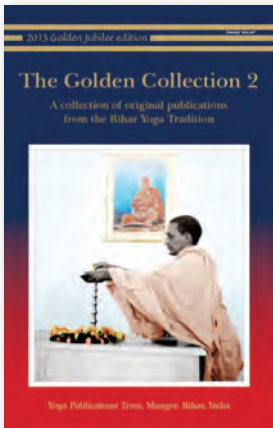
There is no need for a huge philosophy for karma yoga, or an intellectual analysis of karma and karma yoga. It is simple: karma yoga is joyous participation in life. The mind is happy, you are happy, emotions are happy. You are happy doing what you are doing, that is the joyous interaction in life. The moment you lose that joy and you feel dejected, depressed or anxious, it is not karma yoga. Then you become subject to the influences of the karma.

Karma yoga is not hard work. Karma yoga is a joyous expression of your interaction with life.

– 18 March 2012, Paduka Darshan, Munger

Karma Yoga

From The Golden Collection 2, Swami Satyananda Saraswati



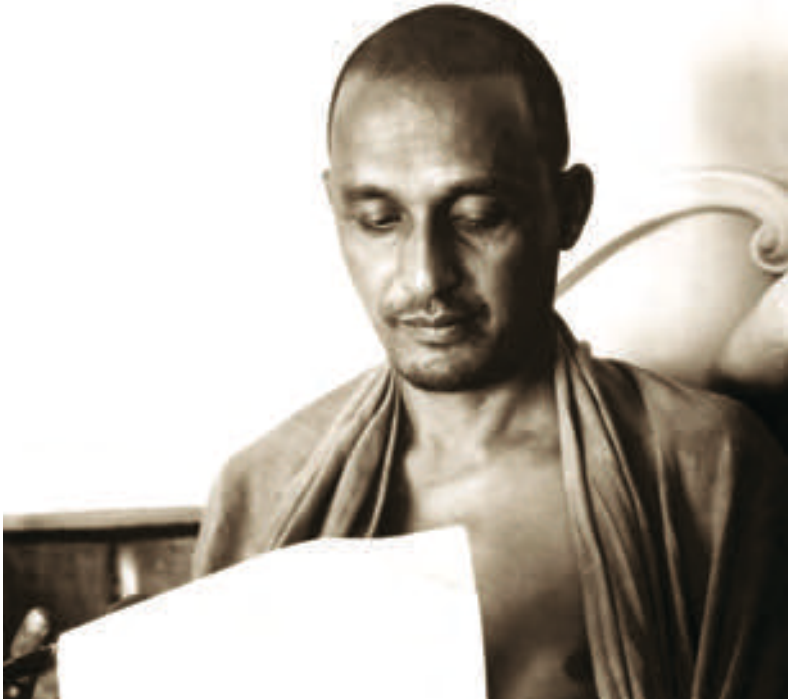
To abide by the laws of karma yoga is an uphill task, but surely not an impossible one. The karma yogi goes his way through small day-to-day happenings. The test lies in trying the attitude of a man towards daily problems, severe and ordinary. The one who can detach himself from the exciting effects of joyful events and from the maddening effects of sorrowful events is a karma yogi in the true sense of the word, for he has offered all that he had at His feet. For such a man prayer does not mean His remembrance for a few routine minutes but it means offering unto Him his whole, full life. For him then, life itself becomes a constant prayer. Make your life a constant prayer by dedicating yourself to karma yoga.

* * *

Karma yoga is a sublimated form of expression of suppressed passions.

* * *

A physician who gives medicine to a patient is not tainted with sin if the patient dies. So also you should carry on your daily life with the objective of being serviceable to mankind while renouncing the feelings of happiness and misery; for, by being devoid of ego, the liberated souls have neither any selfish motive in good deeds nor are they harmed by bad deeds. The sadhaka who treads the path of karma yoga with detachment while surrendering unto God the fruits of his actions, is like



the lotus in water, and is not bound by the fruits of good or bad actions.

* * *

In order to receive, assimilate and mobilize the divine blessings, what one has to do is to plunge in ceaseless activities, well-sustained and supported by confidence and faith.

* * *

By the study of karma yoga, the impurities of mind are destroyed and purity is achieved. What are the impurities of the mind? These are selfishness, vanity, desires, anger, greed, infatuation, envy, contempt and so on. By karma yoga the mind is fitted to receive the divine light.

* * *

Remain Humble

From Essence of Yoga, Swami Sivananda Saraswati

A real yogi does not make any difference between menial and respectable work. It is only an ignorant man who makes such a difference.

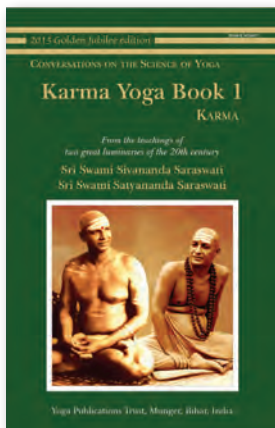
Some aspirants are humble in the beginning of their spiritual career. When they get some name and fame, some followers, admirers, devotees and disciples, they become victims to pride. They cannot do any service. They cannot carry anything on their heads or hands. That yogi who carries a trunk on his head without the slightest feeling on the railway platform amidst a multitude of his admirers, disciples and devotees, without making any outward show of humility must be adored.

Sage Jada Bharata carried the palanquin of King Rahugana on his shoulders without murmuring. Sri Krishna shampooed the legs of a raja when his barber devotee was on leave. Sri Rama carried a pot of water for the ablution of one of his devotees. Sri Krishna took the form of a menial servant as Vithoo and paid the money to the Nawab on behalf of his devotee, Dhamaji. If you really want to grow on the spiritual path you must do all sorts of service daily until the end of life. Then only you are safe. Do not stop doing service when you have become a famous yogi. The spirit of service must enter every nerve, cell, tissue and bone of your body. It must be ingrained in you. Then only you will become a real full-blown practical Vedantin.

Is there any greater Vedantin or karma yogi than Lord Buddha? He still lives in our hearts because the spirit of service was ingrained in him and he spent his whole life serving others in a variety of ways. A magnanimous soul, one without a second! You can also become a Buddha if you apply yourself diligently to selfless service with the right mental attitude.

Samskaras, Seeds and Impressions

From Conversations on the Science of Yoga – Karma Yoga Book 1:
Karma



What is the force of samskara?

Swami Satyananda: A person is not just this body; a person is not just habits – a person is something beyond this. The personality is the totality of experience an individual has had, right from the time of conception to the point of the grave, and maybe before and after as well. *Samskaras* are the residues of experiences. In the soil there is potentiality. During summer the soil is generally dry and grass seldom grows,

but the moment it begins to rain, grass springs up everywhere. How could this happen? There must have been grass seeds in the soil. Samskaras were there, and from the samskaras the grass grew.

Samskaras are the dormant potential of man's existence. Some of them can be experienced in this life and they influence one's thoughts, actions, philosophy and also reactions. Success and failure, accomplishments and expressions in life are all controlled by the samskaras of life. All actions are influenced by samskaras. Pain and happiness, good and bad actions are due to samskaras, and it is due to samskaras that a person is under the state of hypnosis called *maya*.

The present state of life is a result of a series of samskaras from the previous incarnation. These samskaras influence the mind. The present incarnation, the present karma, the personality, motives, desires, failures and accomplishments

are consequences of the totality of the seed formations which one carries within, even today. They cause incarnations and the whole cycle of birth and death is a result. In every incarnation, new seed formations are added and the old seed formations are experienced and exhausted.

The cause of bondage in the form of samskaras must be eliminated, if liberation or emancipation is desired. As Sri Ramana Maharshi said, "Samskara, or predisposition, is the cause of *samsara*, the cycle of births and deaths."

Samskara is responsible for incarnation and for destiny. It is the basis of evolution. This process of generating samskara has to be stopped, so that the process of involution can start, one can stop going forth and start coming back, stop going outside and start coming inside.

What are the different theories for exhausting samskaras?

Swami Satyananda: The problem of exhausting old samskaras has been discussed in all religions and philosophies by scholars, and various ways have been suggested. Some felt that the old samskaras can be exhausted more quickly by not creating any new karma, but people could not follow this method. Others felt that through selfless actions one could get rid of the karmas and exhaust the old samskaras. Ultimately, it was found that karma cannot be exhausted even by selfless and compassionate acts, because once the arrow has been released from the bow, it must reach its destination. One cannot destroy the karmas which are released from one's ancient stock; one must suffer or enjoy them.

Then the theory arose whereby one could transcend the karmas by realization of the self through methods, such as raja yoga or jnana yoga, and in this way the karmas would be destroyed. Logically and practically this was also found to be incorrect, because not everybody could become self-realized. If only one person out of millions of people destroys his karmas and attains realization, it is not such a great method. For this reason the theory of self-realization was also refused and stands refuted even today.

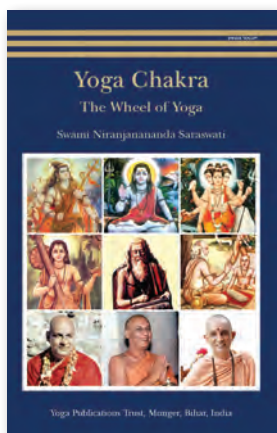


Then came the theory of exhausting the karmas through a rigorous life of austerity, self-abnegation and self-mortification. From this idea many cults arose in both the East and the West. They thought that by suffering voluntarily, one might not have to suffer in the future. This seemed a logical deduction, but it was not true, because even those who had undergone tapasya, still suffered after that.

Ultimately, the best method for the exhaustion of karma is the practice of yoga in accordance with the spirit of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Yoga practised with the background of the complete understanding of the mind, senses and sense objects is the most effective method. Therefore, it is necessary to take up the yogic method in order to exhaust and destroy the old samskaras. In yoga there are also different methods for exhausting the impressions of the subconscious mind. The most effective means of harmonizing karma is through karma yoga.

Three Aspects of Karma Yoga

From Yoga Chakra, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



The purpose of inner yoga or *antaranga yoga* is to manage traits that are inherent and genetically-embedded in your personality and nature. In the yogic tradition these personality traits are known as six associates who are born with you when you take birth. These companions remain with you until your last breath. They give rise to your nature, mindset, personality, habits, traits, and character and they make you what you are right now.

Overcoming the six friends

Who are these six friends? *Kama*, desire and passion inherent in every life form – even a newly born baby has desire, nobody is free from it; *krodha*, the aggressive drive; *lobha*, greed, emphasizing the need; *moha*, delusion, infatuation; *mada*, arrogance, self-assertive identity; *matsarya*, envy, jealousy towards other people who are more successful or better off than you, the comparative mindset. These are the six qualities of life that are born in the mind itself at the time of birth. You can see this in the behaviour of children too. You can identify which trait is highlighted at any particular moment: they may be volatile, aggressive, dynamic and unstoppable, expressing their *krodha*; they may be envious of every other child who has something in their hand, and go and snatch it away and slap them. These traits build human nature.

They are not traits that you can rectify through parental influence or through education in school or college. There is no induction of thoughts that can help you to balance the negative

output and the projections of these traits. These traits form your personality, and they are related to *karma*, action, *jnana*, knowing, and *bhavana*, feeling. Karma, jnana and bhavana become an integral part where these six associates express their power, as it is in karma that you realize how much aggression, greed, drive, need, jealousy and envy you have. Karma highlights these subtle traits of your personality. Similarly, thinking highlights the subtle traits of your personality, not the senses, body, muscles, abdomen, lungs or heart. The intellect highlights these traits and the emotions express these traits.

Every action, thought and emotion in one way or the other expresses the intensity of the six traits at different times. Sometimes the intensity may be less, sometimes the intensity may be more. Thus, through inner yoga, through karma yoga, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga, you manage the effects of these six traits.

In outer yoga, hatha yoga, raja yoga and kriya yoga, you develop and cultivate *sanyam*, control, and in inner yoga you manage the inner traits that make up your life, nature, personality, your aspirations and ambitions, your tamasic and rajasic nature. Since in these three yogas we are dealing with traits that are subtle and invisible in life, yet we all respond and react to them, they constitute the inner yoga.

Karma yoga (3 stages)

Antaranga yoga begins with karma yoga, as nobody can be without karma. Karma is the main foundation and stay of life. The classical definition of karma yoga is that it leads you to immunity to karmas. One can define karma yoga in many ways, however, what is the purpose according to the yogis and the yogic scriptures? The purpose is not something conjured up by your intellect.

The first purpose of karma yoga is *atmashuddhi*, self-purification: *Yoginah karma kuroanti sangam tyaktoatmashuddhaye* – “Yogis perform karma, with objectivity, for self-purification.” That is the first philosophy of karma yoga, to attain self-

purification. Now, self-purification is a broad concept. It is not something that you can identify as, 'If I do this I will be purified.' One has to work on identifying all the different components within this broad canopy of atmashuddhi; relationships, associations, expectations all play important roles. You must identify all these things, including your needs, ambitions, strengths, weaknesses. To attain self-purification, every aspect of your nature has to be monitored and managed. It is not enough just to say that through karma yoga you attain atmashuddhi. You have to identify the areas of atmashuddhi: emotional shuddhi, intellectual shuddhi, sensorial shuddhi. All these are different types of shuddhis.

Atmashuddhi also relates to an important word: objectivity. You have to understand objectivity not from the perspective of attachment or detachment, but simply as knowing. When you know then you manage the responses of either attachment or detachment in a better manner. Whether you are attached or detached does not matter. Therefore awareness of objectivity, in relation to your actions, leads to self-awareness, harmony, inner balance, or purification.

Attainment of atmashuddhi leads to the second stage of karma yoga, *akarta bhava*, the feeling of 'I am not the doer. I am an instrument which is being played by an invisible hand and I do the bidding,' 'Let Thy will be done.' *Karta* is the idea of doership, 'I am the doer', while *akarta* is not having the idea of doership, 'I am not the doer.' When the concept dawns in life that you are not the doer, you simply become the medium through which actions are performed. *Akarta* is when you are not the doer, enjoyer or experiencer of the karma and the karma is not a binding agent. When there is *karta bhava*, 'I am the doer', then karma binds you. When you are an instrument which is being played, then karma does not bind you and this leads to *naishkarmya siddhi*, freedom from the effects of karmas. This is the third aspect of karma yoga.

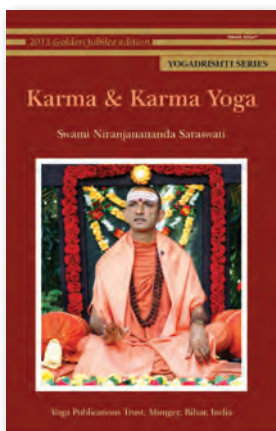
Naishkarmya siddhi is the attainment of karma yoga. You develop immunity to karmas, people, situations and the

environment, and remain connected with your own peace and comfort. Every moment of your life becomes a new moment that you live with one hundred percent awareness. Nothing is a routine anymore; even if you have to sweep the same street every day for twenty years, it does not become a routine. Every day what you do is done as if for the first and the last time in your life and you give your best. Every moment leads you to a new experience of participation and involvement in karma, yet it frees you from the suffering that comes when you identify with karma. When this stage awakens, at least thirty percent of the darkness of the six associates becomes less.



Karma and Dharma

From Karma and Karma Yoga, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Through the fine-tuning of our nature, through the practices of yoga and fine-tuning of our karmas by cultivating a balanced attitude and awareness, we learn how to flow in life with ease and grace, understanding and wisdom. That learning is known as karma yoga. It is harmony of karmas which are performed unconsciously, subconsciously and consciously through the body, mind and ego.

One learns from all the different exposures one receives. When you are able to confront the exposures and crises that you come across in life in a positive way, it becomes a learning process. The aim is to follow the human dharma, not contradict it. When you follow the human dharma, when you flow with ease and grace in life, when you cultivate understanding and awareness, then you are free. If you don't follow your dharma and don't apply your *jnana*, wisdom, then karma will bind you.

Karma fructifies only when it is attached to dharma. Therefore, to harmonize karmas, know the human dharma first. Human dharma is the inherent responsibility. When karma and dharma unite, the karma changes, it becomes *kartavya*, duty. To perform a karma as duty, it is necessary to attach it with dharma. The word 'dharma' is not being used here in the sense of religion; dharma is our natural responsibility. To come to terms with karma, make duty the primary component and not the karma. Attach yourself with responsibility as in that there is a beautiful union of karma and dharma. With this union, everything flows naturally, the

plans get made, the actions are performed, the results come about and life progresses.

When you look after your home and family, educate your children, you do it as your duty, the feeling of kinship makes you constantly aware of what's going on. If something goes wrong, you are immediately involved and see that involvement as your responsibility. If two members of the family are fighting, you go and tell them, "Don't fight," and see it as your responsibility to do so, you don't see it as karma. Therefore, any karma that brings out the dharma through which harmony and a positive environment are created is duty. This duty is to be connected with all five types of karma.

If you are able to see all that you do in life not as karma but as *kartavya*, then you are a karma yogi. Thus, to become a karma yogi is as simple as perfecting karma. How? Become like the tree which will give its fruits irrespective of who climbs up to pluck them, who throws a stone to bring them down or who cuts the tree to pick the fruits. In every condition, the duty of the tree is to give fruits. Nature always follows duty and a human being follows karma. Nature looks upon everyone equally, but a human being holds himself as primary on the basis of karmas. When duty is followed everyone receives equal importance.

The simple way to become a karma yogi is to connect the karmas with dharma. If you want to become a karma yogi through *sadhana*, if you want to progress by calming the dissipations of your life, then come to terms with the four aspects of the mind, *manas* or rational mind, *buddhi* or intelligence, *chitta* or memory and *ahamkara* or ego, in which the biggest adjustment has to be made with ego.

The last block is the ego. The ego causes the maximum pain, because it makes you aware of yourselves, it makes you aware of your position, your name and fame. It takes us to the peak level of the experience of our self. And it is this ego that binds a person to the karmas and makes them turn away from dharma. That is why we are not able to see a karma as

responsibility, but think of it as a burden. And the ego is fed with desires.

To manage the ego, it is necessary to come to terms with oneself. For as long as there is ego, you will continue to react to your environment. In reaction, only the negative conditions of the mind will be expressed. There will be continuous action and reaction in life and conflicts with others. You will react to what others say or do and then go and try to trouble them in turn. Until the ego is tackled, you cannot come to an agreement; when there is no ego, an agreement is reached and karma turns into karma yoga.

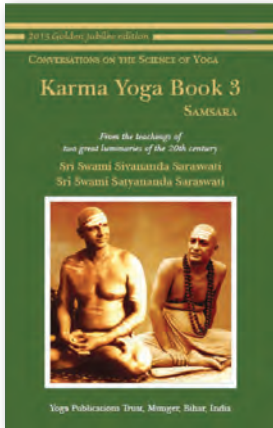
Go on following the human dharma, don't allow the ego to raise its head, get to know the circumstances, thought processes and needs of others, and even as you work for your own welfare, strive to work for others' growth also. These are the signs of a karma yogi and this is an internal process through which one can make the character pure and calm.

So, when we add the word 'yoga' to 'karma', it means acquiring the ability to observe, understand and flow with ease and grace through life by cultivating immunity to the sensitive nature of the mind and sensitive expressions of the ego, the aggressive behaviour of the ego. We try to make our actions positive, liberating, constructive and perfect. This is the whole process of karma yoga.



Fate and Effort

From Conversations on the Science of Yoga – Karma Yoga Book 3:
Samsara



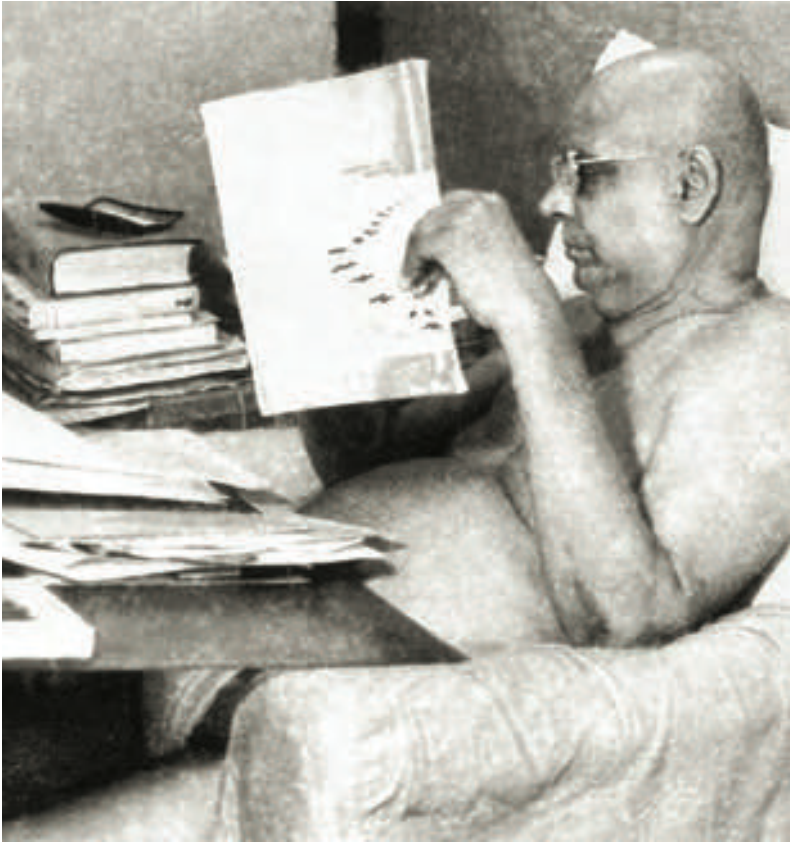
Can destiny be influenced by effort?

Swami Sivananda: Prarabdha karma is only the purushartha of previous births. The self-effort of today becomes the destiny of tomorrow, so self-effort and destiny are one and the same.

God and purushartha are synonymous terms; they are two names for the same thing. What is destiny after all? It is one's own make-up. One has created certain things and can also destroy or undo them. One is thinking in a particular way now: "I am Mr So and So, I am a Brahmin, I am a doctor, I am stout, and I am a householder." This is *prarabdha karma*, the karma which is bound to fructify in the present life. One can change this particular mode of thinking and think: "I am Brahman, I am omnipotent, I am the witness or *sakshi*, I am God, I am neither the body nor the mind, I am Truth, I am the all-pervading, pure consciousness." This is purushartha.

One is the architect of one's own fate, the master of one's own destiny. One can do and undo things. One sows an action and reaps a tendency. One sows a tendency and reaps a habit. One sows a habit and reaps a character. One sows a character and reaps a destiny. Therefore, destiny is one's own creation – it is a bundle of habits. One can undo it, if one likes. Purushartha is self-exertion – it can give one anything. It is said in *Yoga Vasishtha* (6(2):157:28):

*Na kinchana mahaabuddhe tadasteeha jagattraye;
Yadanudveginaa naama paurushena na labhyate.*



There is nothing in all these three worlds which is hard to be acquired by means of earnest endeavour and intense application.

Lakshman also says to Sri Rama in the *Ramayana* (Kishkindha Kanda, 1:121):

*Utsaho balavaanaarya naastyutsaahat param balam
Sotsaahasya hi lokeshu na kinchidapi durlabham.*

Strenuous effort alone is powerful, O worthy sir! There is no might greater than exertion. Indeed nothing whatsoever is difficult to attain in all the worlds for a man given to endeavour.

Character is the determining factor in victory and defeat, success and failure, and in all the issues of life. A person of good character enjoys life herein and hereafter. Thoughts are the bricks with which character is built. Character is not born; it is formed. Determination to build a definite character in life is needed, and it must be followed up with persistent striving. The human being is not a creature of circumstances; one's thoughts are the architects of one's circumstances.

A person of character builds a life out of circumstances, steadily persevering and plodding. He does not look back, but marches forward bravely. He is not afraid of obstacles, never frets and fumes, never gets discouraged and disappointed. He is full of vigour, energy, vim and vitality, ever zealous and enthusiastic. Character is power, it is influence, and it makes friends. It draws patronage and support, creates friends and funds, and opens a sure and easy way to wealth, honour, success and happiness. A person shapes his life by building his character.

Destiny can be conquered by changing one's habits and mode of thinking. Now you think: "I am the body." Start the spiritual anti-current and think: "I am the immortal, diseaseless, sexless atman." In this way one can conquer death and attain the immortal seat of supreme splendour. Destiny can be disarmed by virtuous deeds and right thoughts. Everyone has freewill to act. By self-exertion Ratnakar became Valmiki, by self-exertion Markandeya conquered death, by self-exertion Uddalaka attained nirvikalpa samadhi, and by self-exertion Savitri brought her husband, Satyavan, back to life.

Therefore, one should apply oneself tenaciously to enquiry and meditation. One should be vigilant and diligent. Overcome tomorrow's evil by today's self-exertion. Destroy unholy desires, *ashubha vasanas*, through holy desires, *shubha vasanas*. Slay unholy thoughts by holy thoughts, and gain victory over destiny. Do not yield to fatalism. Do not become impotent. Stand like a lion. Exert and attain independence, *atma swarajya*.

There is a magazine of power and a vast ocean of knowledge within. All faculties are latent within. Unfold them and become a *jivanmukta*, a liberated soul.

Positive overcomes negative; this is the immutable law of nature. *Purushartha* or self-exertion is a mighty power; it is the lion or the elephant. *Prarabdha* or destiny is the cat or the jackal. God helps those who help themselves.

If we are subject to destiny, why should any effort be made?

Swami Sivananda: The person who advocates the theory of *purushartha* says, "I am not a straw to be tossed about hither and thither. I can change my *prarabdha*. I have a free will of my own; I will make it pure, strong and irresistible. I will work out my salvation and become free." Another philosopher says, "Everything is pre-arranged in the Grand Scheme. God knows the details of a man's evolution from mineral to liberated soul. In reality all is *prarabdha*, but *purushartha* is preached to give an impetus for the person to work in right earnest. Otherwise he will become slothful and dull." If a person succeeds in an attempt, he calls it *purushartha*. He says, "I really exerted myself and I have succeeded." If he fails, the same man says, "What can I do? Without God nothing can be done: no atom can move, no leaf can wave in the air."

Destiny is one's own creation. Life is governed by the law of karma; the law operates and one reaps the fruits of one's actions. The theory of *prarabdha* does not make anyone a fatalist. No one can remain inactive even for a second, because there is an urge from within to work. The *Bhagavad Gita* (3:5) says:

*Na hi kashchitkshanamapi jaatu tishthatyajakarmakrit;
Kaayate hyavashah karma sarvah prakritijairgunaih.*

Nor can anyone, even for an instant, remain actionless, for everyone is helplessly driven to action by the qualities, or *gunas*, born of nature.

For a bhakta, all is prarabdha, because he is a person of self-surrender and has to glorify the power of the Lord. For a Vedantin, all is purushartha, because he is a person of self-reliance, who has to glorify the power of his own strong will, *atma bala*. Both are correct from their own standpoint.

Each soul must fulfil the law of karma to gain divine wisdom. Each soul must sit alone at the gate. The guru can lead him up to the gate, but no one can push him through. Everyone must fight their own battle of self-purification, concentration and control of mind. In *Manusmriti* (7:205) it is said:

*Sarva karmedamaayattam vidhaane daivamaanushe;
Tayordaivamachintyam tu maanushe vidyate kriyaa.*

Success in every undertaking depends on destiny and man combined. The acts of destiny are out of the control of man. Think not of destiny, but act yourself."

Purushartha can do and undo things. If one is ailing, one must do purushartha; instead one takes medicine and leaves the results to prarabdha. Prarabdha is the result of one's own thoughts and actions. One should change the mode of thinking. Fatalism produces inertia, so one should exert oneself. Man is the master of his destiny. An aspirant should think, "I am the immortal self," and he will become the immortal self. As a person thinks, so he becomes; this is the immutable law. One's destiny is mapped out by one's thoughts. A person has only as much power as he imagines he has. The limit of a person's thought is the limit of his possibilities. The world around one is as one has willed it to be, because the circumstances and environments are the materialization of one's thoughts. The experiences a person has in the world rise or fall in accordance with his thoughts. Whatever thought is cherished by one in the world will ultimately be realized.

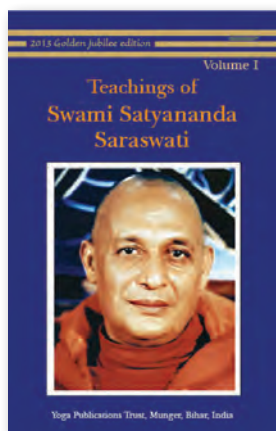
Human effort and divine grace are interconnected. It is true that everything is predestined and preplanned by the Lord,

and everything takes place in accordance with the holy writ. But God has also given the individual free will to do right or wrong, to discriminate between *preyo marga*, the path of sensorial enjoyment, and *shreyo marga*, the path of righteousness. A person endowed with true wisdom as to the fleeting and painful nature of worldly enjoyments, can exert himself in the right direction to do or undo his *prarabdha*, the portion of karmas that has ripened for actual experience in this current birth.



Necessity of Karma Yoga

From Teachings of Swami Satyananda Saraswati, Volume I



In my early days when I lived in Sivanandashram with my guru, I thought that when I left the ashram I would remain quiet and contemplate. However, in 1964, when I started the ashram in Munger, many people came to stay with me, but nobody remained for more than three or four months. This was because there was no work for them in the ashram. They just learned and practised a lot of asanas, pranayama, mantra, meditation, etc., but this did not create stability in them because their minds were not purified.

After a few years, we started a little bit of work in the ashram - gardening, printing, editing, bookwork, typing or kitchen work, and since then the number of inmates has been growing every week. Now people stay in the ashram for years together. Sometimes they remain for five, ten or twelve years, with all the difficulties of ashram life. On Sundays I often tell the swamis to close all the departments. Sometimes I don't allow them to work at all for three consecutive days and they become so restless. Many of them keep coming to my room asking me to give them some work. So now the swamis and the guests realize that nature has created in man a desire and a compulsion to work. That is the positive role of desire in life.

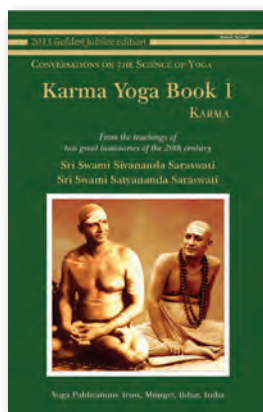
If man did not have desires, he would not be compelled to work and if he did not work, his mind would not grow. For a person who has not evolved beyond tamo guna and rajo guna it is compulsory to work. Even if he has great wealth and all the necessities of life in abundance, he must still work. Only

when you have reached the state of *sattwa*, the highest point of balance and equanimity, may you remain without work, without karma. For purification of the mind karma is essential, and if you practise karma yoga, you attain purity much more quickly.



Karma in the Bhagavad Gita

From Conversations on the Science of Yoga – Karma Yoga Book 1:
Karma



Is it possible to renounce action in order to eliminate karma and avoid its effects?

Swami Satyananda: People may try to give up their karmas, believing that stress, tension and pain spring from them, but it is not possible to do so. Karmas are imposed on everyone by certain laws of nature. It is said in the *Bhagavad Gita* (3:27):

Prakriteh kriyamaanaani gunaih karmaani sarvashah.

All actions are fashioned in all cases by the qualities or gunas of nature only.

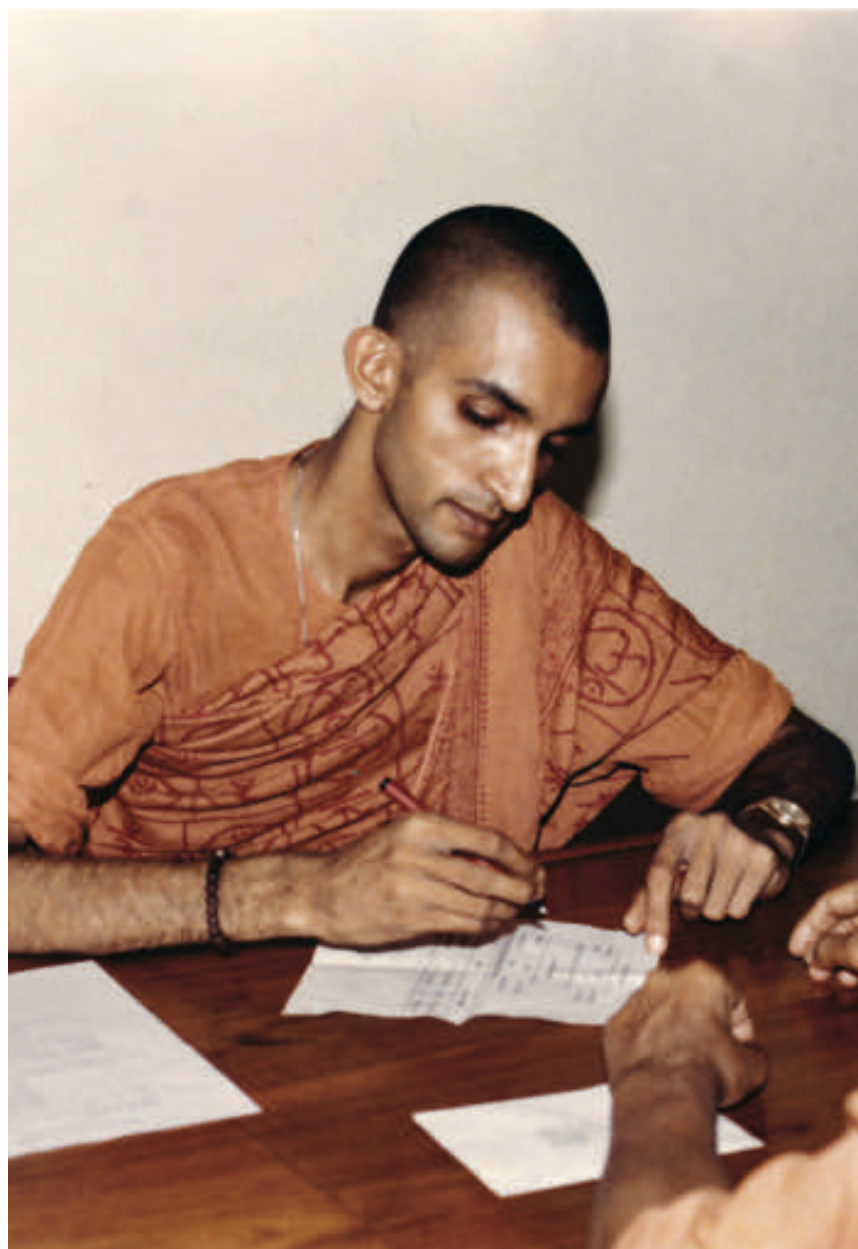
Prakriti compels one to act through the interaction or the intermediate agency of the three gunas: sattwa, rajas and tamas. Therefore, the law of karma cannot be renounced and one should not try. The *Bhagavad Gita* (18:60) gives very clear instructions on this point:

*Svabhaavajena kaunteya nibaddhah svena karmanaa;
Kartum nechchhasi yanmohaatkarishyasyavasho'pi tat.*

O Arjuna, bound by your own karma, born of your own nature, that which from delusion you do not wish to do, even that you will do helplessly!

Even if one were to renounce the external karmas, such as walking, typing, going to the shop and working in the kitchen,









the mental karmas would continue. Karmas do not belong only to the body; they belong to the realm of the mind and desires. Even if one were to completely abstain from action, one could not stop thinking. The monk who lives in a monastery without a family also does karma. Even a person with plenty of money who does not have to work still does karma. The external actions that one does in everyday life are not the significant karma. The desires entertained in the mind are the real karma. When a person desires, it is karma.

Karma is a movement that takes place within the body, mind or emotions. No one can remain for a single moment without action, whether it is physical, mental, emotional, or on some other level of being that one does not observe. According to the *Bhagavad Gita* (3:6), there is not a moment in life when one can remain without action:

*Karmendriyaani samyamya ya aaste manasaa smaran;
Indriyaarthaanvimumoodhaatmaa mithyaachaarah sa uchyate.*

He who, restraining the organs of action, sits thinking of the sense objects in his mind, he, of deluded understanding, is called a hypocrite.

A person must act as long as he remains alive. The nature of his mind and his desires will compel him to act. If his desires, passions and ambitions do not compel him to act, he will become lethargic and dull. Desire, passion and ambition stimulate karma, they are the fuels for karma.

One should not misunderstand the philosophy of karma. Even if one sits down the whole day and does no work, one is still creating karma. Without moving the body or involving the senses, karma is constantly being created in the realm of the psyche, within the deeper dimensions of the mind, but those dimensions are so mysterious that one does not understand them. There is not a moment in life when the path of inactivity or inaction can be followed. One may not move, talk or participate in family affairs, but one is still thinking.

In addition to that, there are involuntary actions, such as digesting, assimilating, and so on. No one can renounce action.

What type of action, physical or mental, can be abandoned? Sneezing, sleeping, writing, speaking and sitting are all actions or karmas. Even renunciation is action, because the abandoning of action is also an action. What do people mean when they say they have renounced the world? Has anybody been able to abandon action until now? Nobody can do it, even if they want to. A person's desires will compel him to act. As long as a person has ambitions and desires, he will have to act. A porter, a sadhu, a leader, a householder, everybody has to perform karma or act.

There is no such thing as renunciation of karma, no philosophy as such. The *Bhagavad Gita* teaches the utmost necessity of karma, because nobody can escape from karma. Karma cannot be eliminated by renouncing action or even by renouncing one's intentions. Sri Krishna says (3:4):

*Na karmanaamanaarambhaannaishkarmyam purusho'shnute;
Na cha sannyasanaadeva siddhim samadhigachchhati.*

Not by non-performance of actions does man reach actionlessness, nor by mere renunciation does he attain perfection.

The dialogue in the *Bhagavad Gita* between Krishna and Arjuna took place on this particular point. Arjuna felt he should try to escape from the clutches of karma, from the emotional turmoil of involvement with everyday life. He thought the easiest solution would be to stop doing karma, to be detached from everything. With this in mind, he wanted to renounce, but Krishna disagreed. What is important in life is one's relationship with karma; the entire action should be evaluated from that view. Yoga has nothing to do with giving up action. It is about transforming the purpose and the meaning of life.



Why is action necessary in life?

Swami Satyananda: In the *Bhagavad Gita*, when Arjuna refused to perform his role and act, Krishna asked him, "If you will not act, what will you do?" Arjuna replied, "I will leave, go to a monastery and stop all actions. The monastery will feed me and I will read scriptures all day long. I will not have to tell lies, I will not have to fight and kill, I will not have passion or hatred for anyone, I will not worry about anyone. I will just need a little food and the whole day I will be in meditation." But Krishna said, "No, that is not the way for you."

Very few people are able to live such a life. The majority cannot do it, because the mind is under the sway of the three gunas: sattwa, rajas and tamas. The people who are sattwic by nature have exhausted their karmas and fulfilled the purpose of nature, so they have no desires. They remain the same, even if they are exposed to wealth, beautiful men or women, and all the luxuries of life. They are all right if they have everything, and all right if they don't. It is said in the *Bhagavad Gita* (18:26):

*Muktasango'nahamvaadee dhrityutsaahasamanvoitah;
Siddhyasiddhyornirvikaarah kartaa saattvika uchyate.*

He is called sattwic, who is free from attachment, non-egoistic, endowed with firmness and enthusiasm, and unaffected by success or failure.

The performance of karma, however, is necessary, even for the sattwic person, because if he were to give up karma, the others would imitate him. Therefore, the sattwic person should set an example for the ordinary people by doing karma. If he doesn't, the balance of nature will be disturbed, because nature has created desire and action, and without them people will not evolve. It is said in the *Bhagavad Gita* (3:26):

*Na buddhibhedam janayedajnaanaam karmasanginaam;
Joshayetsarvokarmaani vidvaanyuktah samaacharan.*

Let no wise person unsettle the minds of ignorant people, who are attached to action. He should engage them in all actions, himself fulfilling actions with devotion.

Most people are under the sway of rajo guna. They are dynamic and aggressive; they want this, that, and everything. The rajasic person, who is active by nature, will go mad if he renounces or gives up karma. Then there is the tamasic person, who is lazy, lethargic, indolent, and procrastinating. This person will not evolve unless he works. Krishna tells Arjuna that it is safer for everybody to perform karma, whether one works through the body, mind, or intellect. He has conveyed this teaching in all the eighteen chapters of the *Bhagavad Gita* (3:8). His constant advice to Arjuna is to act decisively:

*Niyatam kuru karma tvam karma jyaayo hyakarmanah;
Shareerayaatraapi cha te na prasiddhyedakarmanah.*

Do thou perform your bounden duty, for action is superior to inaction. Even the maintenance of the body would not be possible for you by inaction.

While living in this world one must continuously perform karma. Krishna explained to Arjuna his *swadharma*, the most appropriate duties for him to perform, and made him aware of what he should be doing. Similarly, each person must perform certain duties, and none can ever escape them. Nature compels everyone to do karma. Even those who renounce the world cannot avoid this natural compulsion. It is said in the *Bhagavad Gita* (3:33):

*Sadrisham cheshtate svasyaah prakriterjnaanavaanapi.
Prakritim yaanti bhootaani nigrahah kim karishyati.*

Even a wise man acts in accordance with his nature; all beings follow their nature; what can restraint do?

All the creatures of this world have some duties to perform. They have their *swadharma*, and the performance of *swadharma* is compliance with God's will. Just as the nature of wind is to blow, water to flow and fire to burn, likewise every person has certain duties to perform. Nature has allotted specific duties to everybody. Krishna tells Arjuna that renunciation of action is in no way appropriate. Even sages, mahatmas, sadhus and sannyasins cannot renounce action. According to the *Bhagavad Gita* (18:7) anybody who renounces action is a sinner:

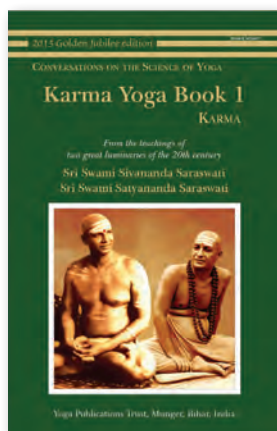
*Niyatasya tu sannyasaah karmano nopapadyate;
Mohaattasya parityaagastaamasah parikeertitah.*

Verily, the renunciation of obligatory action is improper. The abandonment of the same from delusion is declared to be tamasic.

God himself takes birth to perform action: Rama, Buddha, Christ and Krishna performed karma. Lord Krishna incarnated to kill Kamsa, and Rama took birth to kill Ravana. The incarnations of God have been born with the sole objective of performing some specific karma.

Purification

From Conversations on the Science of Yoga – Karma Yoga Book 1:
Karma



What is the role of karma yoga and ashram life?

Swami Satyananda: Karma yoga means to act without any selfish motives. If a person can work with dedication and detachment, this is karma yoga and it will purify the dross of karma. That is why in the olden days, householders used to visit ashrams. They lived there for some time and participated in the ashram activities. They never received any money, remuneration, certificates

or diplomas. In the ashrams, kings and ordinary men lived equally and in a natural and harmonious way. Of course, the ashram lifestyle was completely different to that which existed at home. It was specifically designed so an aspirant could purge his karmas.

A process of purging takes place with karmas and the mind in the same way that one gets diarrhoea after stuffing oneself with too much rubbish food. This may cause a lot of suffering and inconvenience at first, but it is a form of purification. When the mind is overwhelmed by thoughts, emotions, passion and excitement, one must understand that one is purging on the psychological plane. At this time, it would be beneficial to expose oneself to ashram life, where the lifestyle offers the possibility of bringing about inner purification.

Yoga Capsule (Digestive)

2017 – A Heavenly Experience



I have been practising yoga for the last two years, however, this is my first ashram experience. My first impression about the ashram was very pleasing. I feel people living in the ashram are content. The best part about the ashram is its routine and strictly following it is another part.

I conclude I am super satisfied with my stay at the ashram and I am certainly coming back. I fully lived the last seven days and enjoyed every moment of it. When I went out for one hour to buy books, I can't explain how much I missed the ashram after ten minutes. I didn't enjoy being outside even for one hour! This is funny but I really wanted to come back to the ashram when I was outside.

In the end I want to thank the management for accepting my application and inviting me for this heavenly experience.

– Praveen Sahni, New Delhi

Yoga Capsule (Arthritis and Rheumatism) 2017 – Impressions

The ashram is very well planned and maintained. I realized that neti, kunjal, some specific asanas, yoga nidra and Review of the Day should become part of my daily routine. The asanas were taught with minute detailing which was very important. Overall it was a very enlightening and good experience which I hope will help me lead a more healthy life ahead. Thank you.

– *Madhuri Choudhary, Indore*

It was really a great experience to live ashram life. I learnt discipline, self-control and positive thinking. Our daily life is not well organized, so now I will try to do a well-planned and systematic routine life.

– *Nina Goyal, Indore*

All exercises and asanas helped to break physical stiffness as well as to overcome my mental agitation about being able to recover my health again.

Awareness of breathing and the body allowed me to feel normal emotionally in spite of physical pain and discomfort.

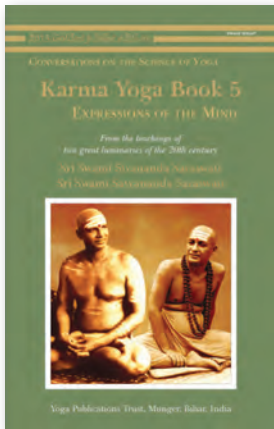
Yoga nidra, ajapa japa and Review of the Day were completely new to me. The practice of these is helpful in focusing well and making me fresh and full of energy.

The engagement in the daily routine was helpful in understanding the meaning of constructive engagement and positivity towards others. The *Sundarkand* chanting remained the most enjoyable time.

– *Rakesh Kumar, Dhanbad*

A Question of Attitude

From Conversations on the Science of Yoga – Karma Yoga Book 5, Expressions of the Mind



How should hopes and expectations be dealt with?

Swami Niranjanananda: Exponents of karma yoga say that one should strive for the completion of an action, each action being a creative expression, done with perfection and without expectation of a result. However, the realities of life show that no one is evolved enough to deny the results, the fruits of action.

Whenever there is any action, there is a natural craving for a better outcome or result. Even though it is said not to expect results and to keep on doing one's duty, in reality everyone expects results. It is one thing for Sri Krishna to say in the *Bhagavad Gita* (2:47) that one has the right to perform karma but not the right to its result. However, as a normal individual one cannot make that statement – with what authority would one say it? A human being expects results, even a spiritual aspirant expects results. If one does japa, one wants to have an experience; if one practises meditation, one wants darshan.

It is not wrong to expect results, but hankering after and obsession with the result is wrong. With obsession, suffering and pleasure come. When pleasure comes, an individual is attracted towards what is pleasurable. *Sukhanushayi ragah* – one is attracted to those conditions, situations and objects through which happiness and pleasure can be experienced. That is called *raga* or attraction. Alternatively, one feels aversion, *dvesha*, towards conditions which cause suffering;

one does not want to suffer because one is fearful of suffering. *Dukhanushayi dweshah* – there is rejection of the conditions which cause suffering. The hankering is for the result which is pleasing because it is believed it will make one happy, but if the result is seen as displeasing, one avoids it.

Both success and failure have to be accepted. Often when there is failure one says it was the will of God and when there is success one says it was one's own doing. This indicates a tamasic frame of mind, as the person is not willing to take responsibility for his actions. Just as day and night are accepted as natural events of life, success and failure are also natural events of living.

One may have the expectation of a benevolent, auspicious and fruitful result, but one should not hanker after it or be obsessed with it. If there is obsession, creativity and awareness are lost, and one acquires tunnel vision. Looking at the world through a pipe gives limited vision. In obsession, the mind focuses only on one thing. In depression, people think gloomily; in elation, they think only of happiness. All these states indicate tunnel vision.

When a person performs a karma, he should do it well. Whatever he has to obtain in return, he will get. If he drinks water, his thirst is bound to be quenched. It doesn't take a bucket of water, one glass will suffice. The circumstances come and go, and expectations are always there in one form or another. What needs to be handled is attachment to a result. Karmas have to be performed with awareness and without paying attention to gain and loss. Being able to balance oneself between gain and loss is the highest balance of life.

Whether one's efforts succeed or fail, one must assume the attitude of a witness and allow the state of *samatvam*, equanimity, to come into one's life. That state has been called yoga. When the mind is balanced and contented, one feels happiness. One may continue to have expectations, but not be obsessed with them. When one expects a result, it becomes the goal and purpose of life, which enables one to make an effort.

If the expectation is renounced and one says, "Whatever has to happen will happen," no one will be able to walk the path due to too many diversions. Therefore, whoever comes into this world should walk with an expectation, but success or failure should not lead them astray.

How can a sattwic expression of action be achieved?

Swami Niranjanananda: In order to achieve a meditative process in karma yoga, there has to be awareness of the *gunas*, which are the aspects, qualities or nature of the phenomenal world. These aspects have been divided into three categories: *tamasic*, meaning a state of inertia or ignorance; *rajasic*, meaning a state of dynamism and activity combined with full ego involvement; and *sattwic*, meaning simplicity and equanimity in action.

Simplicity in action is the sattwic karma that the aspirant is trying to evolve. In the course of his growth he begins from the tamasic pattern or frame of mind. Tamasic actions are deluding in nature. They are performed for self-satisfaction and many times harm another individual. They are actions with a limited vision and concept and are subject to the state of ignorance or *avidya*.

On a higher level the next form of action is known as rajasic. These actions are performed for the fulfilment of a personal desire with ego, effort, drive, motivation and expectation of a result which is self-satisfying. Most of the world population works on the rajasic level of karma. To go one step beyond the rajasic nature should be the main thrust of a positive ashram type environment, where karma is done without any dislike, hatred or disturbed feelings, and where the karmas or actions flow from one state to the next. Such karmas uplift the whole group; they do not just satisfy or fulfil the ambitions of one individual.

Actions done without any kind of expectation, hatred or dissipation of mind, and which flow from harmony to dedication to compassion and to the integration of one's personality, are known as sattwic. It is this sattwic karma which

has to be evolved and striven for. Once one is able to strive on this path, one can achieve different states of awareness and realization.

The final statement that the yogas make is to live karmically, trying not to reject the karmas, or to build upon them. The statement, 'Live karmically', is not only yogic. In different traditions such as Tao, Zen, Buddhism, Hinduism or Christianity, the same concept of flowing with life has been emphasized. Generally, what happens is that instead of flowing with life, there is struggle. If there is struggle in anyone's life, one can be assured that the karmas are not sattvic but rajasic. If there is struggle in the mind, thoughts or beliefs, one is living under the influence of rajas. At the time of struggle, actions originate from the ego, which superimposes itself upon one's ideas and beliefs and therefore upon one's actions. The aim is to flow with the karmas that come in life, flow with the nature of life, with total awareness and detachment.

What are the results of overcoming ego and becoming the non-doer?

Swami Niranjanananda: Once the ego is eliminated, the concept, feeling or idea comes that 'I am not the doer; God is the doer'. The same sentiment has been stated in Sanskrit: *Na ham karta, Hari karta, Hari karta hi kevalam*. The meaning is simple. It is the knowledge and wisdom that no one is the thinker; someone is guiding the thoughts. No one is the actor; someone is acting through the individual. No one is the performer; someone is performing through the individual. The one who is performing is the cosmic self, Hari. This is the knowledge of a jnani, it is the feeling of a bhakta and it is the life of a person who acts, a karma yogi. The same is expressed in the Bible (John 10:29-30):

My Father and I are one, but my Father is greater than me.

It is a beautiful concept that my Father and I are one; there is no distinction between the two, 'I' do not exist as an individual, as I have merged myself into the divine consciousness. But in

the same sentence it is also said that still my Father is greater than me, and is the one who acts. There is no sense of ego identity here. *Na ham karta* – ‘I am not the doer’. *Hari karta* – ‘the supreme consciousness is the doer’. *Hari karta hi kevalam* – ‘It is He only who performs through me’. It is a statement of total surrender of the karmas. It is saying, “Let Your will be done.”

When this kind of total surrender happens on the level of karma, without any identification of the ego, self, senses or expectations of gain, one experiences purity of mind, action, speech and thought. This state of purity ultimately takes one to unknown dimensions. This is the whole concept of perfection in karma yoga, as actions become pleasant. The idea of work or action is not normally pleasant, but when action becomes a joy and light, there is complete involvement and the difficulties are not felt along the way. Karma yoga is emphasized in the vedic, tantric and yogic traditions to overcome the difficulties in attitude, thought and action. According to these systems, one should not escape from life but escape into life. That is karma yoga.



Karma Yoga and Seva

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Karma yoga is done to overcome the selfish nature and seva is done to enhance the selfless nature. The action is the same but the orientation and intention of the action is different.

What is the definition of karma yoga? Sri Krishna says in the *Bhagavad Gita* (2:48):

*Yogasthah kuru karmaani sangam tyaktoaa dhananjaya;
Siddhyasiddhyoh samo bhootvaa samatoam yoga uchyat.*

Perform action, O Arjuna, being steadfast in yoga, abandoning attachment and balanced in success and failure. Evenness of mind is the highest yoga.

To maintain balance in success and failure is the highest yoga. Successes and failures are decided by one's interactions, performances and actions in life. Any action, anything that you do, if you can maintain your equipoise then it becomes karma yoga and it develops immunity from the effect of karma.

Whatever I do I do it always for the first time and the last time. Then it is clear, then it is finished and gone. It does not carry with me. That has to be the attitude and then karma yoga leads you to immunity from actions. As long as you are not immune to your actions karma yoga will always create more conflict and confusion in the mind. You have to become immune to that by changing your own attitude, and this takes you beyond the selfish personality.

Karma yoga is meant to develop immunity and a positive attitude. Karma yoga is meant to realize the importance and beauty of karma. There is no need to shun and avoid any kind of karma but to realize the beauty and necessity of every karma and to be totally into it creatively.

Seva enhances the selfless quality in life when you can overcome your own limitations. Seva is something that you do even at home, when you sacrifice your time, your sleep, your food to serve somebody. If your son or daughter is sick at night you will be totally aware and alert as to the needs and you may not even sleep that night. You will be beside the bed, observing your offspring.

That sacrifice is in seva. Sacrifice comes in seva when you believe that you are looking after your own. For others it is difficult to sacrifice but for oneself one can make the effort. That is the difference between karma yoga and seva.

– 5 October 2014, Ganga Darshan, Munger

Yoga of Service

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



A karma yogi who does all works in the form of worship of God in the beginning, who surrenders his body, mind, soul and all his actions as flowers or offerings at the lotus-feet of the Lord, who is ever absorbed in the Lord by constant thought of God, loses himself in God-consciousness by total

self-surrender. He gets absorbed in God. His will becomes one with the cosmic will. That is his last and advanced stage. He realizes that whatever is going on in the world is but the *lila* of the Lord or divine sporting. He realizes the truth of the utterances in the *Brahma Sutras: Lokavattu Lila Kaivalyam* – This world is nothing but divine play. He feels he is one with the Lord and is a partner in His *lila*. He lives for Him only. He lives in Him only. His thoughts and actions are now of God Himself. The veil has dropped. The sense of separateness has been totally annihilated. He now enjoys the divine *aisvarya*.

A doctor who works in the hospital should think that all patients are manifestations of the one Lord. He should think that this body is a moving temple of God and that the hospital is a big temple or Vrindavan or Ayodhya, He should think: “I am doing all my actions to please God, not to please my superiors.” He should think that God is the Inner Ruler, *antaryamin*, that He only manipulates all his organs from behind and that He is the wire-puller of his body. He should think that he only works to carry out the divine will in the grand plan or scheme of things. He should consecrate all his actions, good and bad at His Feet and say: *Om Tat Sat Krishnarpanamastu* or *Om Tat Sat Brahmarpanamastu* in the end, and at night when he retires to bed.

This is *jnanagni* or the fire of wisdom or the fire of devotion that destroys the fruit of action, brings about emancipation. He should never even dream: “I have done such meritorious acts. I will get an exalted place in *svarga*, heaven, etc. I will be born in the next birth as a rich man.” By means of constant practice of this nature he will slowly get mental non-attachment towards work. A lady when she does her household duties should also entertain the above mental attitude. In this manner all actions can be spiritualized. All actions will become worship of God. A man can realize Godhead in whatever situation he may be placed in life, if only he works with this right mental attitude.

– printed in YOGA Vol. 9, No. 5, (May 1971)

Yoga with Syrian Refugees

Since January, with renewed inspiration from the 2016 Rikhiapeeth yajnas, I have been offering my seva in Bekaa valley, Lebanon, where 800,000 Syrian refugees live in informal camps. The work involves making tent-to-tent visits around the refugee settlements; packing and distributing stoves, mattresses, clothes, food and fuel to those in need; and teaching the children – mainly English, but also a bit of yoga.

Last week I launched yoga classes for a group of ten young refugee women, ranging in age from 13 to 45. It was wonderful to see them relax into the simple practices, let go of the tensions they hold in their shoulders and bellies, breathe a little deeper. In the chats after the classes, they tell me about their stress and insomnia and the muscle pains caused by the hard physical labour they do. Girls from the age of 12 have no access to schooling. Even the teenagers in the yoga group work back-breaking 13 hours planting and harvesting potatoes during the farming season; for this they get paid 4 dollars a day.

In our yoga session, the girls are focused and eager to learn, though sometimes one or another of the postures makes them giggle. The second time we meet, I ask if any of them would like to learn English in addition to yoga; all hands shoot up. One of the young women in the group was studying mechanical engineering in Syria, but has no way to continue her education here in Lebanon for lack of English skills. These girls and thousands of children and youngsters like them, all growing up in refugee camps, need training and opportunities. Otherwise they will be a lost generation.

Serve, love, give

Extreme circumstances bring out the worst in people – but also the best. Witnessing the generosity of those who themselves

have next to nothing has been one of the most poignant experiences here in Bekaa valley. I have been offered tea and even lunch in the tents of refugees with only one pair of flimsy shoes to their name. One man keeps a few chickens behind his shack and gives the eggs from his hens to neighbours when they fall ill. The same man grows roses, a thousand at a time in a tiny greenhouse, to make the world more beautiful.

– *Jignasu Mantramala, Finland*



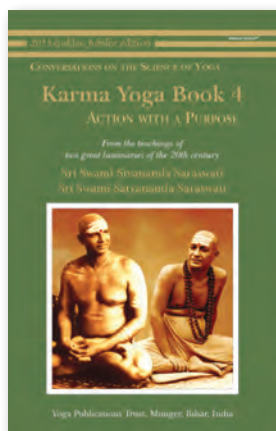
When I came to Rikhia in 1989, it was a desolate place. The people living in my neighbourhood had no hope for the future. Now the area is humming with life, and the conditions have improved remarkably.

The poor people of the world are a challenge to your spiritual life. Whether in Asia, Africa or elsewhere, people are suffering mentally, physically and economically. Thinking about others, especially the deprived, should be part of your life, abilities and resources.

–*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*

Essential and Important

From Conversations on the Science of Yoga – Karma Yoga Book 4:
Action with a Purpose



Why is karma yoga essential on the spiritual path?

Swami Niranjanananda: Karma yoga is the yoga of action or work. Its aim is to bring about integration, harmony and union through action. It is a yogic path that is open to everyone, for all have to work and perform various activities, whether physical or mental. In fact, it is most suitable for the modern activity-oriented world and is ideal for those who find it easier to do something

rather than nothing, which is everyone, for nobody can do absolutely nothing, it is impossible. There must always be some form of action, even if it is sleeping, daydreaming or trying to do nothing. Through karma yoga one can start to practise yoga twenty-four hours a day, using one's actions as a means to gain higher awareness.

The significance of karma yoga is usually overlooked by newcomers to yoga, and even by people who have been practising other forms of yoga, such as raja yoga and hatha yoga, for many years. The regular practice of yoga techniques for a fixed time every day brings many benefits. However, one should try to practise yoga throughout the whole day, which is possible through karma yoga. Asanas, pranayama, meditation techniques and so on bring wonderful results, experiences and knowledge, but the inner experiences obtained during these practices must be related to everyday life.

Karma yoga can lead to exactly the same experiences as other forms of yoga. There is no doubt about this, but it is

difficult for most people to appreciate this point as other paths of yoga seem more 'yogic'. There is a tendency to think that work cannot possibly be yoga, and of course mere work is not yoga. Karma yoga implies something far greater and more profound than work. It implies selfless, concentrated action with awareness.

Karma yoga is an important technique for growth and progress along the spiritual path. It helps to bring peace and equanimity into one's life. In itself, it leads directly to higher awareness and knowledge, even though these experiences bear little relation to the actual work being carried out. It is the inner experience that is important, and this cannot be conveyed by words.

Swami Satyananda, like his guru Swami Sivananda, affirms and emphasizes the importance of karma yoga in order to know the experience of meditation. He proclaims, "A person should do one task at a time. Total absorption in any work will gradually train the mind to forget its usual fickleness and unsteadiness. If one plunges into the work at hand with undivided keenness and attention, one will derive great help in meditation."



The motto of karma yoga is to give, give and give. The prevailing motto in the world is the opposite, namely to take, take and take more. It is this latter attitude that prevents progress in spiritual life and the experience of meditation. All the great spiritual teachers throughout history preached that all actions and thoughts that are motivated by personal gain should be reduced and eventually eliminated. Of course, this takes time and cannot be done overnight, yet it is absolutely necessary if one is to eliminate the power of the ego, the obstacle or the veil which prevents the influx of higher consciousness.

Why is karma yoga important for every yoga practitioner?

Swami Niranjanananda: Yoga has always been considered as a series of practices to be done away from the situations of normal social life: in a classroom environment or in a retreat in the company of 'spiritual beings'. People have thought that if they practise a yoga technique, they will achieve a certain result. This thinking has made people believe that yoga is a mechanical process leading to self-awareness. It is necessary for the aspirant to move away from this way of thinking and make yoga a part of the natural expression. Only then can yoga become a process leading to self-realization.

If a person practises yoga as a technique to feel good, he will definitely feel good for a little while. If yoga is practised in order to relax, one will definitely relax. If yoga is practised to connect with oneself internally, that will also become possible. But whatever the attainment may be, it will be momentary, a transitory phase. When one has to confront life's realities, tensions and frustrations again, the effect of yoga will take a back seat.

It should be understood, therefore, that the real experience of yoga happens through karma yoga. Even if a person practises hatha yoga, raja yoga, kundalini or kriya yoga, he will have to combine it with karma yoga in order to have a rich experience of the process. Hatha yoga, raja yoga, kundalini yoga and kriya yoga are yoga practices, whereas karma yoga

and bhakti yoga are states of mind achieved through yoga practices. If one looks at karma yoga in this manner, it becomes a much more intensive process than raja yoga. Karma yoga is not just hard physical work, like sweeping the grounds. It is the yoga of adjusting the mind to the circumstances in which one is involved. With acceptance of a situation, the responses become different.

Raja yoga involves alertness and awareness during the practice, but karma yoga is not a one-hour yoga practice; it involves awareness of the mind twenty-four hours a day, every day of the year. The balance, harmony and non-reactive state of the mind have to be maintained and then the action becomes karma yoga, whether one is sitting quietly in a chair in meditation or is involved in dynamic work. The practice of karma yoga gives one the understanding of objectivity. Later on, this understanding which one gains outside is transferred into the mind, so that the practice of meditation gives better results.

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Sri Krishna told Arjuna that karma yoga is the most misunderstood yoga. People associate it only with action and the right attitude during performance, but that is not the essence of karma yoga. Karma yoga is the ability to adjust to situations and circumstances with a positive, dynamic and optimistic frame of mind. It is being able to observe, analyze, channel and control the reactions, the whims of the emotions, the acceptance or rejection of ideas, and maintain inner balance all the way through.

The aspirant needs to look at karma yoga and bhakti yoga as states of mind which have to be achieved, rather than as practices which have to be perfected. In this way, whatever one attains is for a lifetime. It must become part of one's nature, character and expression, part of one's life in total.

Some people have the idea that karma yoga has no relevance in their lives, that it is only hard work. Some think that karma yoga is only service to guru, God or humanity. Some think of karma yoga as selfless service or selfless action.

None of these definitions represents the real spirit of karma yoga, as karma is an integral part of one's personality and life. Karma has been translated as 'action' or as 'cause and effect', but these definitions are incomplete. The whole of life is karma; a person without karma does not exist.

If a spiritual aspirant practises true yoga at all in his life, it is karma yoga. Karma yoga is not going to the fields and working until blood and sweat run; that is only one aspect. The true spirit of karma yoga means that every action, whether physical, social or intellectual, is analyzed. This includes the thoughts, the analytical and the critical processes of the mind, the emotional feelings of anger, frustration, depression, anxiety, hatred and greed, as well as the spiritual experiences of harmony and attuning with the self. Everything is observed, experienced and transcended.

The spirit of karma yoga is total involvement in the fulfilment of commitments, obligations, duties and dharma. If yoga can be seen as a life process, every action will become part of karma yoga, every understanding will be part of jnana yoga, every feeling will be a part of bhakti yoga, every effort one makes will be part of raja yoga and every experience one may have will become part of dhyana yoga.





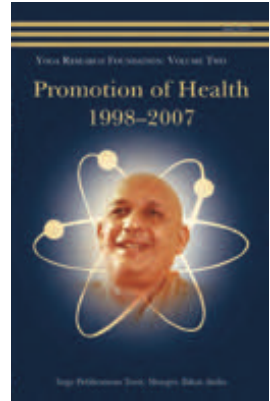
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Yoga Research Foundation


181 pp, soft cover, ISBN: 978-93-84753-54-2

Volume Two of Yoga Research Publications presents research carried out on the effects of Satyananda Yoga for physical conditions of Type II diabetes mellitus, high blood pressure and asthma. Swami Sivananda, Sri Swami Satyananda and Swami Niranjanananda share their insight into the cause of these specific conditions and the possibility of managing them through yoga. The importance of a yogic lifestyle is emphasized and a yoga capsule for each condition is proposed as a practical discipline for one's day-to-day life.



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Websites

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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.

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Bihar School of Yoga is happy to announce that the *YOGA* and *YOGAVIDYA* magazines are now available online at:

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Avahan Online

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



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Yoga Peeth Events & Yoga Vidya Training 2017

Oct 1-30	* Progressive Yoga Vidya Training (English)
Oct 2-Jan 28	* Yogic Studies, 4 months (English)
Oct 16-20	* Kriya Yoga – Module 1 (English)
Oct 16-20	* Kriya Yoga – Module 2 & Tattwa Shuddhi (English)
Nov 4-10	* Hatha Yoga – Module 1: Shatkarma Intensive (English)
Nov 4-10	* Hatha Yoga – Module 2: Asana Pranayama Intensive (English)
Nov 1-Jan 30 2018	* Yoga Lifestyle Experience (for overseas participants)
Dec 11-15	Yoga Chakra Series (English)
Dec 18-23	* Raja Yoga – Module 1: Asana Pranayama Intensive (English)
Dec 18-23	* Raja Yoga – Module 2: Pratyahara Intensive (English)
Dec 25	Swami Satyananda's Birthday
Every Saturday	Mahamrityunjaya Havan
Every Ekadashi	Bhagavad Gita Path
Every Poornima	Sundarkand Path
Every 5th & 6th	Guru Bhakti Yoga
Every 12th	Akhanda Path of Ramacharitamanas

* Indicates training for overseas participants

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

For more information on the above events contact:

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