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Hari Om

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GUIDELINES FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

To find balance

Yoga becomes the destroyer of pain for him who is always moderate in eating and recreation (such as walking, etc.), who is moderate in exertion in actions, who is moderate in sleep and wakefulness.

—*Bhagavad Gita 6:17*

The student of yoga should always adopt the happy medium or the middle course. The nervous system is extremely sensitive. It responds even to slight changes and causes distraction of the mind.

It is therefore, necessary that one should lead a regulated and disciplined life. One should be moderate in food, sleep and recreation. Only then will one attain success in yoga which will destroy all sorts of pains and sorrows of this life.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*

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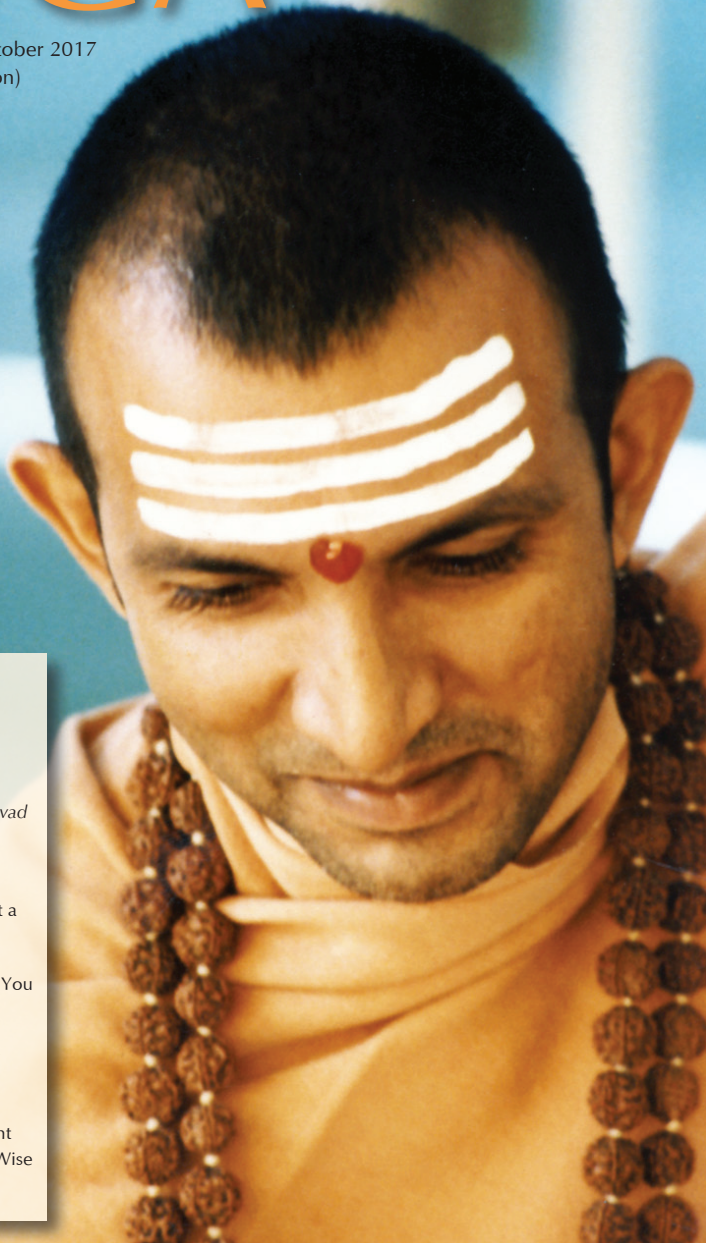
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Year 6 Issue 10 • October 2017
(55th year of publication)

Contents

- 4 Stairway to Heaven
- 5 Kriya Yoga
- 9 A Useful Tool
- 15 Kriya Yoga in the *Bhagavad Gita*
- 18 Ishwara Pranidhana
- 21 Jnana Yoga
- 24 Kriya Yoga: One Step at a Time
- 32 Brahma Sutras
- 35 To Discover the Best in You
- 39 Shubhechha – the First Foundation
- 42 Live Your Responsibility
- 43 Vedanta
- 45 The Greatest Sadhana
- 46 The Ashram Environment
- 49 A Jnani – Humble and Wise
- 52 Undo the Stitching

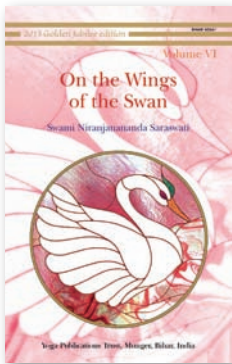


The Yogi is superior to the ascetic. He is deemed superior even to those versed in sacred lore. The Yogi is superior even to those who perform action with some motive. Therefore, Arjuna, do you become a Yogi. (*Bhagavad Gita VI:46*)

तपस्विभ्योऽधिको योगी ज्ञानिभ्योऽपि मतोधिकः । कर्मिभ्यश्चाधिको योगी तस्माद्योगी भवार्जुन ॥

Stairway to Heaven

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



Believe in yourself. Know that you have the strength, the ability, the courage and the will to transform yourself. The best way to reach this point is through silence, not through logic or intellect, or questions and discussion. So many books have been written, still people continue to ask questions.

The answers have been given in all the scriptures and by different masters and saints, still we ask for the reason: the why, when and how. We ask the same questions over and over again, even though we have been given the answers. Learn in silence about the mysteries of life by understanding and believing that you have the strength, the courage and the ability.

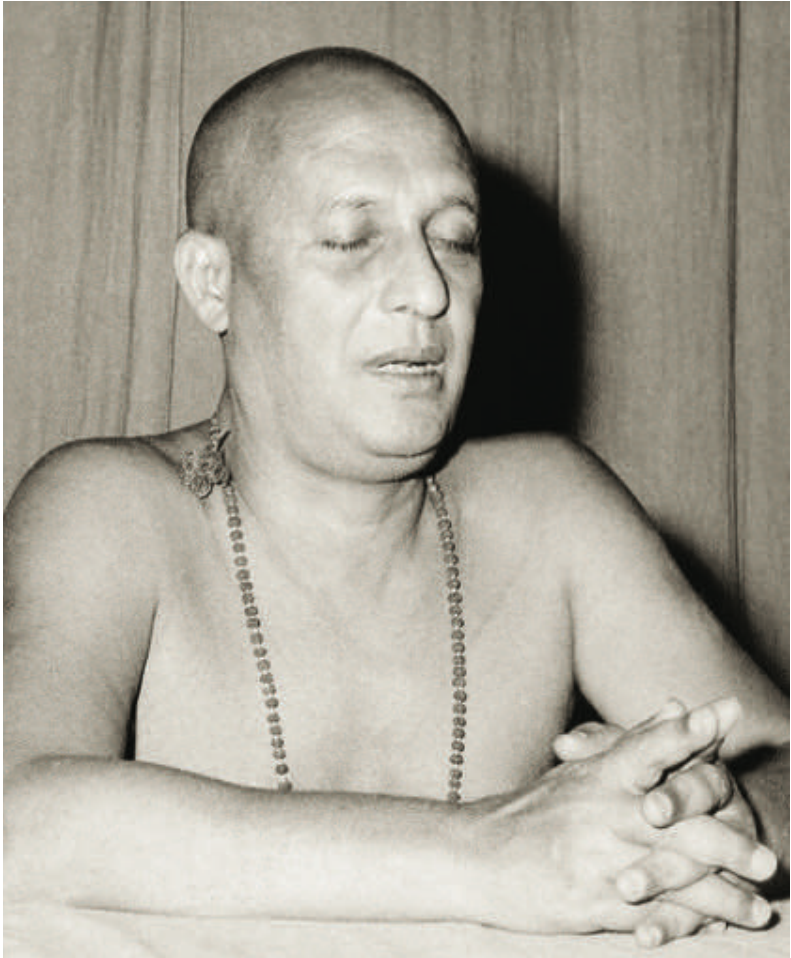
You can definitely make a barren piece of ground into a flowering garden. The method you can choose yourself. If water is not available nearby, you will have to dig a well or a channel from a nearby river. You know that you have to water the garden, so you will have to find your own method. You will have to find the means to procure the right seeds and protect them by providing whatever is necessary for their growth.

It becomes easy and simple if you believe in yourself and have will and sincerity. It is no use sitting down with your head in your hands, thinking, 'God, what shall I do with my patch of land? It is full of rocks and there is no water nearby.' That fatalistic attitude is the road to hell. That is the biggest obstacle one has to overcome. The attitude of faith is the stairway to heaven. Therefore, never be a fatalist. Always have faith in yourself.

– 13 December 2000, Ganga Darshan, Munger

Kriya Yoga

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Right from the beginning man has been confronted with so many dazzling experiences in his mind. From that time he has been trying to understand the rhythms of life, of the mind and of his inner experiences. He has seen various other creatures, birds and animals and has been comparing himself with their

states of mind. How does a man think? And why is there a difference in the states of mind and the experiences? Is mind a link in the great chain of evolution or is it something else?

In other words, has our present state of consciousness, any link with the past or future? Man has been confronted with many amazing events in the mind, like the psychic experiences. He has also experienced various states of mind from idiocy to dynamism, clairvoyance and intuition. What are all these states and why do we experience them?

In his society man always found some individuals with brilliant minds, prophetic minds and others with limitations of mind. So naturally he wanted to know how to achieve a higher mind. Even today, if you hear about a good boxer, a good magician, a good actor or actress, or a beautiful woman you want to know how they became like that. In the same way, when man began to observe the different faculties, expressions and manifestations of a greater mind, naturally it occurred to him how to accomplish that.

Various definitions of the reasons for an evolved state of mind were given by numerous people in different countries. Some said that a divine being had been conceived therefore he obtained a fantastic mind. Another said, "No, a spirit has entered into him and the spirit is talking through him." Others said, "No, God has descended in him. God has emanated, and is speaking through him." Various definitions were expounded by the people from time to time but they definitely could not get the acceptance of the intellectuals and thinkers.

Tantra

From ancient times the people in India contemplated this subject: 'What is at the basis of man's evolution of consciousness?' For this purpose the sages and thinkers kept on exploring different explanations. It is in this tradition of exploration that they came across a certain set of practices known as tantric practices. They used the word tantra not in the context that we understand it today, but in a different context all together.

Many modern people believe that tantra is just a form of practices which involves the use of the five tattwas. These elements are reflections of the people's personality and culture. Actually, tantra just means two processes: expansion of mind and liberation of consciousness. So, the practice to expand the mind and consciousness is tantra. And the practices which ultimately lead to the release of the energy is also tantra.

Expansion of the mind means the capacity of the mind to experience beyond the limitations of the senses. Eyes can see the objects, ears can hear the sounds, these are called the sensory experiences. It is the mind which sees and hears. It is through the mind that all kinds of sensory perceptions are taking place. The eyes and the ears are the sensory mediums. For the sensorial experience, the mind is limited to experience within the capacity of the eyes and the ears. The mind however can experience what the eyes cannot see. If mind can experience what ears cannot hear, if you can smell something which is not there, if you can think something which is beyond the realm of logic, that is called the expanded experience of the mind.

This is one important aspect of tantra. Now, the expansion of mind clearly means experiencing something which senses are not able to provide. These experiences are in the form of yantras, mandalas and sounds. When you can hear, even without the sound being produced, that is expanded awareness. Now when this inner experience takes place irrespective of the senses, what happens later is that a greater experience begins to take place. This is called release or emancipation of energy, or awakening of kundalini.

Here again, the word emancipation should not be understood in the religious sense. Hindus call it *moksha*, Buddhists call it *nirvana* and Christians call it *salvation*. These are all religious terms. I am referring very clearly here to emancipation of energy in a purely scientific sense not in a religious sense. When you take matter and split it the energy is released. This liberated energy is explained in physics. You

take milk and churn it, the butter is released. I am trying to explain the exact meaning of the word emancipation.

To awaken harmony

At the root of matter is energy. Behind and at the base of all matter is energy. In fact matter is a gross manifestation of energy. Ultimately matter at one stage becomes energy at another stage; or energy at one point becomes matter at another point.

Now, a thought is matter, an experience is matter, it is a base and it has a basis. You have to go behind the thought. You have to go behind the experience and you have to go behind every experience of existence. What happens then? Gradually you keep on negating every experience. You say, 'Not this, not this, not this,' You keep on negating. And at the end what remains is nothing.

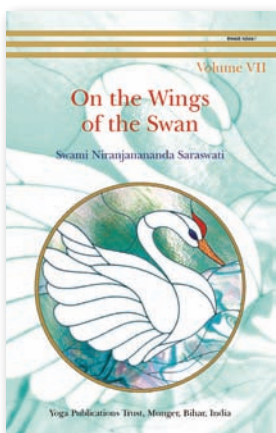
So, tantra means the expansion of mind and liberation of energy. Therefore in the practice of tantra a system known as kriya yoga evolved, and the practices of kriya yoga can be found in various tantric scriptures. The practices which you are learning here, are just a few of the thousands of kriya yoga practices. Even the practices of hatha yoga are supplementary to kriya yoga. Although hatha yoga is used now in east and west for purifying the body, the practices of hatha yoga have an ultimate and different objective.

Nor is therapy the purpose of hatha yoga. Therapy is a by-product of the hatha yoga practices. The main purpose of hatha yoga is to bring about a union of the two forces within the body. If there is no harmony between the prana and the mind, then the awakening of kundalini or of consciousness will not take place. Therefore, by the practice of asanas, mudras and bandhas in the kriya practices we can ultimately awaken a state of harmony within the body and accelerate the pace of evolution.

*– 13 December 1979, Munger
Satsang with Italian Kriya Yoga students*

A Useful Tool

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



How do the kriya yoga practices and techniques by themselves help us become better or stronger personalities? For example, our negativities will still have to be dealt with by other practices like japa, antar mouna, yoga nidra, the SWAN technique, karma yoga, satsang and so on.

First you have to understand the placement of kriya yoga in the scheme of yogas. Yoga begins with *hatha yoga*, the preparation and purification of the physical body and the pranas. Then it moves on into *raja yoga*, mind management; then on to *jnana yoga*, developing wisdom in life. Next is *bhakti yoga*, channelling the emotions, and then one comes to the higher yogas like kundalini yoga and kriya yoga. Therefore when you are learning kriya yoga it is because you have already gone through the processes of hatha and raja yoga, you have had a glimpse of jnana and bhakti yoga, and then at the end you come to kriya yoga.

Understand the correct sequence

The preparation of the nadis, senses and brain, and the detoxification of the body take place through hatha yoga. All the mental behaviours are adjusted through raja yoga, so that by the time you come to practise kriya yoga you do not have to worry about anything physical or mental, you can just focus on developing the experience of kriya yoga. This question is not properly put because the function of kriya yoga is not to make you a better personality or a better yogi, rather it is to



give you access to the layers of consciousness which you have not yet tapped or experienced: that is the psychic dimension of the human being.

You are aware of your body because it is something that is physical, visible, and can be touched, felt and experienced. After the body you become aware of the mind. You can have glimpses of the mind because of the thoughts that come up, the desires that come up, the different mental behaviours that manifest when you encounter the various mental expressions. You then realize that there is something beyond the body which you have called 'the mind'. Beyond the mind is another dimension of experience, and that is consciousness. None of you have experienced that consciousness until today; you have experienced the mind, but not consciousness. Even in the highest heights of samadhi you are pacifying and stilling the mind; there is no direct cognition of human consciousness.

Human consciousness is infinite. It is not confined to time and space; it is just a continuity of existence, a continuity of experience. With the practices of kriya yoga you are able to come to the point where you begin to access the dimension of consciousness. The energy, the strength, the force that you encounter in that dimension is utilized to improve the quality of life in this dimension. Therefore kriya yoga is a practice which stands by itself. It does not work with your personality or mental behaviour or attitudes, rather it brings about an awakening of the dormant centres of the personality.

Is kriya yoga not a process in which the chakras, the brain and human nature are being tinkered with in a manner that is both unnatural and uncalled for? Is it true that Sage Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras* do not refer to anything like kriya yoga and if so, what or who is the source of this technique called 'kriya yoga'?

First of all, Sage Patanjali was not an authority on kriya yoga. He was a simple sannyasin like us and his masters degree, his thesis or dissertation, was on raja yoga, not on kriya yoga, kundalini yoga, chakras, hatha yoga, mantra yoga or anything else. When you go to university for your masters degree you have to write a thesis, a dissertation. What do you do? Do you write the dissertation on every subject that you have studied in the university, or do you choose one topic and write on that? You choose one topic.

Sage Patanjali was a raja yogi. When Patanjali came to the Yoga University he was called to write a dissertation and his dissertation was on raja yoga. Yogi Swatmarama, the author of *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, was a hatha yogi. Like this, all the masters of the past have picked one topic of yoga and expanded on that. Therefore Patanjali's authority is on raja yoga and not on any other form of yoga, please remember that. He might have known the other yogas, he might have practised the other yogas, but his masters degree was received when he wrote the thesis of raja yoga. It was not necessary that Patanjali refer to kundalini or kriya yoga in the book that he was writing, just as if you are writing a thesis on math you do not refer to history, geography and biology because the thesis is on maths.

Creativity and sadhana

As far as kriya yoga is concerned, what do you mean by 'tinkering with chakras, brain and human nature'? In this world everything is subject to permutation and combination. You take earth, soil, and mix water to it; you knead it, you prepare it, you make clay, and then you make a pot. Why are you tinkering with soil in that manner, in an unnatural way? Why are you

mixing water and making soil into a pot? I mean, this logic should apply everywhere, not only with kriya yoga. In order to make paper you use the bark of the tree. Why? In order to make fabric or even a building you use so many different things and put them together. Remember that in this world everything, nature, all the elements and gunas, are subject to combinations and permutations. The combination of different things gives birth to a new entity, such as a pot.

Similarly, the human body and human life are endowed with great possibilities and potentials which remain untapped and unknown until today. Because they are untapped and unknown, some people believe that a natural process should take place in their awakening. If you are waiting for a natural process to take place, you will have to wait maybe millions of years, but if you are keen to explore and discover the possibilities and potentials that are inherent, then you begin the journey by opening the door and stepping out of the house, and the process of sadhana is that. There is a statement in the *Yoga Sutras* about sadhana (1:14)- *Sa tu dirghakala nairantaryasatkarasevito dridhabhumih* - “Any practice done for an extended period of time, in a continuous manner, without breaks and with faith, prepares the ground for sowing the right seeds.”

Know your own house

This is the concept of sadhana, and kriya yoga is a sadhana, preparing the ground and discovering what is contained in the house in which you live. After all, when you have an apartment, when you have a house, you know everything that is in the house; which room has the bed, where you keep your food items, where you keep your money, where you keep your clothes and other items. That house is known to you; if you need a spoon you know where it is, if you need a book or a writing pad you know where it is, if you need to sleep, you know where to go. Do you know the same thing about your body and mind and spirit, the house in which you have

lived for so many years? Do you know what is inside? No. Regarding the body, you know that you have the senses and that you have this body. Regarding the mind, there is a vague understanding, but beyond that there is no other concept of what you have inside waiting to come out, waiting to flower.

In the desert all you see is yellow sand, but when the rain comes, suddenly the desert blooms with flowers. When the right environment comes, the entire desert can become a field of flowers. Just by looking at the yellow sand one cannot say that there is an absence of plants and flowers in the desert; the conditions have to be right and then the flowers will grow. In the same manner, look at yourself. Right now everything is barren; yellow sand inside the heart, yellow sand inside the mind, yellow sand in the personality. However, create the right conditions, let there be rain, and you will see the flowering in your heart and mind. Everything happens because of two things coming together, one thing by itself is insufficient. Soil cannot become a pot by itself; it needs water to become a pot.

Then transcend the limitations

Similarly, you have a perception or an understanding of yourself that is more focused in the dimension of the body, and an understanding of your mind that is mainly focused in the dimension of your likes, dislikes, ambitions, desires and expectations, but nothing beyond that. This is a very restricted awareness and understanding of your own nature and of your own life. With this restricted awareness and understanding of yourself you function in this world. However, all the spiritual traditions, as well as the religious traditions of the past, have spoken of a possibility of transcending the material consciousness. Transcending the material consciousness is an effort, no doubt, and to establish oneself in spiritual consciousness is also an effort, because it is a conditioning of existence. In yoga we use the term *Brahmi vritti*, meaning a mental modification which is divine, transcendental.

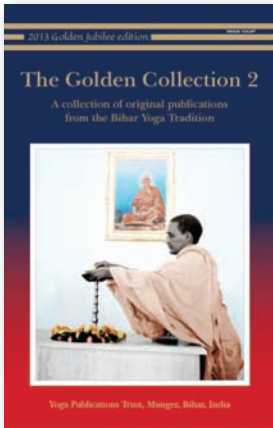
In the *Yoga Sutras*, Patanjali is talking about the definition of yoga as *Chitta vritti nirodhah* (1:2), stopping the patterns of mind, these patterns and behaviours of mind which are external. Through this you are giving birth to a new vritti, a new conditioning known as *Brahmi vritti*, the transcendental conditioning of mind that takes you through your spiritual journey. Therefore 'tinkering' is not the right word to use for kriya yoga. It is a combination, permutation and transformation of the different faculties and qualities that are inherent within you which have to be brought to the surface of existence. For that purpose, kriya yoga is a useful tool.

– 29 September 2007



Kriya Yoga in the *Bhagavad Gita*

From The Golden Collection 2, Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Nowadays, it has become very common for people to give talks on the *Bhagavad Gita*, but as these speakers have borrowed their ideas from various books, their knowledge is mostly academic and, quite often, inaccurate. If you have to undertake a long and complicated rail journey you must consult a railway guide, and you cannot, of course, afford to refer to an inaccurate guide. The same applies to commentaries on the *Bhagavad Gita*. After all, the *Bhagavad Gita* is our guide, our Book of Knowledge, for the tortuous journey through life; and misleading talks or commentaries can lead you nowhere.

There are excellent commentaries on the *Bhagavad Gita* by various learned men down the ages, but each one of them wrote purely from the standpoint of the school of thought he represented. These writers, as a rule, have remained silent on the yoga techniques described in the *Bhagavad Gita*. However, I must say that Saint Jnaneshwar, and, in modern times, the followers of Sri Yukteshwar have written to some extent on this aspect of the *Bhagavad Gita*. As traditionally the guru instructs his disciple in kriya yoga by word of mouth only, we can easily understand why the great commentators have maintained a veil of secrecy over this subject when it occurs in the *Bhagavad Gita*.

In deference to our tradition, I, too, cannot speak very openly on the actual technique of kriya yoga, although a good

number of those present here have already been initiated in it. Suffice it to say that it is a very advanced and powerful technique which both householders and sannyasis can practise.

Patanjali has defined kriya yoga as consisting of 'tapas, swadhyaya and Ishwara pranidhana', but I can assure those of you who have read this aphorism, that the real meaning of these words is quite different from what they have understood. *Tapas* here does not mean penance, *swadhyaya* does not mean the study of scriptures, nor do the words *Ishwara pranidhana* mean total surrender to God in the commonly accepted sense of this term. As you advance in practice, their real meaning will become clear to you.

There are cryptic sentences in the Bible to suggest that Jesus Christ was familiar with kriya yoga. There were occasions when he 'went to heaven' to contact his Father. And when he 'returned to earth', he would tell his followers that he went 'by a ladder, first with eyes open and then with eyes closed'. Clearly, this refers to kriya yoga. Kabir, too, has sung of kriya yoga in mystical language. In recent times, Lahiri Mahasaya, followed by Sri Yukteshwar, Paramahansa Yogananda and the present Daya Mata have kept up the tradition of kriya yoga.

There is a widespread belief that you attain yogic powers only after you have mastered the art of meditation culminating in absolute concentration. I can say from experience that this theory is not correct. In my early life I, too, believed in this theory in order to attain the laya condition of mind and body. I knew that out of the numerous *chakras*, psychic centres, in the body, a few were very important, and one nerve, in particular, acted as a channel for awakening the yoga shakti, the kundalini, within us. I also believed at that time that the laya condition of body and mind was a sine qua non to make any progress in this direction.

Now I know that although getting into the laya condition is very good for householders for relief from their worldly tensions, but for attainment of yoga shakti it is not absolutely necessary. The mind may wander when in meditation, but it

should retain awareness of the yogic chakra concerned. People believe that without absolute concentration one cannot get samadhi. But this is not so.

There is an important chakra in us, when it is 'touched' samadhi occurs. The state of samadhi is somewhat similar to the unconsciousness of a drunkard or an epileptic whose eyes are open but the mind is vacant. We cannot say that their minds had become totally concentrated before they fell into that state of unconsciousness. The prana and apana yoga is the yoga of consciousness. Prana here does not mean the physical prana. Prana and apana are the two streams of consciousness. Prana flows down and apana flows up. These have to be united. Continuity is to be created in the same way as you keep the sacrificial fire going by throwing oblations, *samidha*, into it. This is kriya yoga.

The *jivatma-paramatma yoga*, uniting the individual soul with the Cosmic Spirit, is different. It is the yoga of the scriptures and has nothing to do with kriya yoga. Real sadhakas whether householders or sannyasis who wish to advance on the spiritual path should put implicit faith in the teaching of the guru even if it differs from scriptural teaching. The guru speaks from personal knowledge, and as far as scriptures are concerned, sadhakas are not always competent to understand their hidden, esoteric meaning. In the *Bhagavad Gita* all the different systems of yoga are mentioned, but I have specifically told you about kriya yoga because commentators are always silent about it.

The *Bhagavad Gita* can lead you to liberation, but only the guru can show you how. If you take the *Bhagavad Gita* merely as a book of moral precepts for right or wrong action, then the *Bhagavad Gita* loses much of its importance, because there are many other books available which teach you the science of success.

– 4 November 1964, Munger

Speech given on the occasion of the All-India Yoga Convention

Ishwara Pranidhana

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Ishwara pranidhana means believing. I am only using the word 'believing'. I am not using the words 'believing in God' or 'believing in oneself'. Many people think of 'ishwara' as indication to Godhood. Many people think of 'ishwara' as representing the state of God-realization. Many people think of *ishwara pranidhana* as belief in God. But *ishwara pranidhana* in yoga – does

it mean believing in the God that we visualize in our own mind?

To begin with, there is no concept of God in yoga. There is no Rama, there is no Shiva, there is no Krishna, there is nobody in yoga. In fact, yoga is considered to be a godless philosophy, because there is no mention of God. There is only the term *ishwara*, meaning something that does not change. That is the literal meaning of the word *ishwara* – something that does not change, something that does not alter, something that is permanent, without change. This idea represents the highest existence not evoking the image of Rama or Krishna or Devi or Guru, no. *Ishwara* evokes the image of that which is transcendental: beyond thought, beyond speech, beyond mind, beyond the senses, pure, supreme, unidentifiable, unexpressible, yet the container of all. And that does not change.

Ishwara and nashwara

In the Vedas they have defined *ishwara*, the eternal principle, as *Kham*. *Kham* means space. Space is the container of every planet and all the galaxies, right? Star systems, universes, we do not know how big space is. What is our understanding of space? Whatever is seen through the telescopes.

We live in the Milky Way galaxy. This Milky Way galaxy stretches, from one end to the other, two hundred light years. But from Earth, with our latest equipment, we have only been able to monitor the area of it up to forty light years distance, not beyond, and that is just one galaxy. Like that, how many billions and trillions of galaxies are there, how far apart are they? Yet all are contained in space.

The Vedas say that the nature of the supreme is that of space, which is the container of everything, and that is *ishwara*. The galaxies may change, humans may be destroyed, life forms may be created and destroyed, galaxies can destroy each other, everything can collapse into itself, again creation can take place, but space is eternal, permanent, and never changes; it is the container. The Vedas say *ishwara* is that unchanging, undying reality.

The opposite of *ishwara* is *nashwara*, the transformable, the changeable – we are all that, we change. Every six hours we have a different body. Our healthy cells divide every five to six hours. Our cancerous cells mutate and divide every minute. Right? So if you look at the cellular structure also, where there is balance and health, there is regulation, division every six hours, and where there is illness and imbalance, there is rapid production. If you look at the atomic structure: our body, though it seems solid, is space, concentrated space. If you look at your own body through a super microscope, what will you see? The space between the atoms, the space between the nucleus of the atoms, but when you come out you see this concentrated, solid body. So space is a very peculiar thing; from the perspective of tantra, from the perspective of the Vedas, from the perspective of the Upanishads, from the perspective of the spiritual philosophies which developed in Asia.

The yogic belief

When we say *ishwara pranidhana* in yoga, we are not saying believe in God, we are saying believe, realize that there is an unchanging eternal principle, beyond name and form and idea.

It is spatial, devoid of every influence of karma, free from every kind of bondage. That eternal principle, you have to have a belief in it, because you are a part of it. The soul within you is a part of that eternal principle. Just as water in a cup, although contained in a small cup is part of the greater body of water. If you pour that cup of water into any body of water, it will become one; you won't be able to differentiate – but you can again, in a cup, take out a cupful of water.

Many times people ask, "How many souls there are in the world! From where are all these overpopulated souls coming?" Well, it is an opportunity for souls to realize themselves and their true essence as ishvara, which is beyond the realm of bondage, while experiencing the realm of bondage here, where everything is nashwara.

Therefore I said ishvara pranidhana only means believing. It does not mean believing in some image of God that we have conjured up due to our conditioning. It is believing in that pure and transcendental self of which you are a part – *ishwara anshu jiva avinashi*. And that is ishvara.

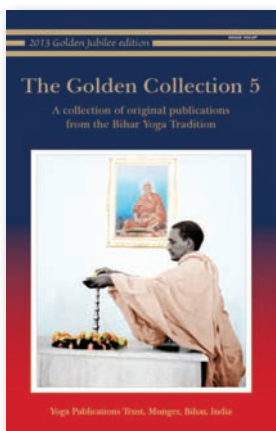
So ishvara pranidhana is an objective awareness of our own inner spiritual nature and identification with that inner spiritual nature: adhering to that identification and expressing that higher nature. When you are fearful, when you are under stress and anxiety, when you are under pain and suffering, that is *samsara pranidhana*; you identify with the world. In the state of *samsara pranidhana* there is no ishvara; when there is ishvara pranidhana then there is no *samsara pranidhana*, for you disassociate from that which is temporary and transient. When you disassociate from that which is temporary and transient and maintain your awareness of the luminosity and purity within yourself, that is ishvara pranidhana.

– 17 August 2014, Ganga Darshan, Munger



Jnana Yoga

From The Golden Collection 5, Swami Satyananda Saraswati
(Extract)



Jnana means knowledge. This knowledge refers to the knowledge of the higher being through a method which is not empirical but which is transcendental. Let me tell you first of all, knowledge is empirical and transcendental both. Empirical knowledge is through the source of books, teachers and gurus, and with the help of the mind. The transcendental knowledge is an unfoldment of what is already in man, or what is already in me. This jnana yoga refers to that process of attainment of knowledge in which you follow the path of reflection and contemplation.

In karma yoga there is a constant redefinition, in bhakti yoga it is constant ecstasy, love and surrender, in raja yoga it is meditation on one point whereas in jnana yoga it is contemplation on a subject, on a topic, on a series of thoughts. It is not merely the subject of God or consciousness; jnana yoga aims at realizing the basic problem within yourself, without depending on any external agency. In bhakti yoga you have so many aids, you sing the Lords name, get into ecstasy, singing the name on the rosary, go on pilgrimages, go to saints and sages, temples, chapels and churches and so on, in raja yoga you have to practise asanas, pranayama, withdrawal of mind, concentration on some form or some symbol, in karma yoga you have to do something outside, in jnana yoga you have just to sit down quietly, and meditate on just a few things, not many.

The first principle of jnana yoga is that the Supreme Being or the Supreme Consciousness is homogeneous. It is not finite, it is not broken into pieces, it is not subject to changes, it is one whole and that is called infinite. It includes everything. This Supreme Being is the originator of consciousness. This is the first thing they attempt to understand, and on this they meditate.

Second thing, the question comes then what is that Supreme Being? On this second point they meditate. They contemplate on 'I and the Supreme Being are identical'. Now, the problem comes. How can I be identical with the Supreme Being? Because the Supreme Being is without faults, is without sin, is without decay, is without death and mortality whereas I am subject to all these things. The third thing, this problem has to be worked out. This 'I' which is supposed to be identical with the Supreme Being, is not the 'I' which refers to this body and this name.

This 'I' is the pure 'I' which transcends all physical barriers. This body is not 'I', definitely because this body is subject to disease, decay and death. It is never the same. Then this mind is also not 'I' which is identical with the Supreme Being because mind is also subject to changes. It is never consistent and everybody knows it, it fluctuates. The Supreme Being, the Supreme Consciousness does not fluctuate. It is always calm and quiet and like a great and vast ocean. So mind cannot be this 'I'. Then what about the senses? Senses cannot be the 'I' because the qualities of the senses and the quality of the 'I' which is identical with the Supreme Being do not tally with each other.

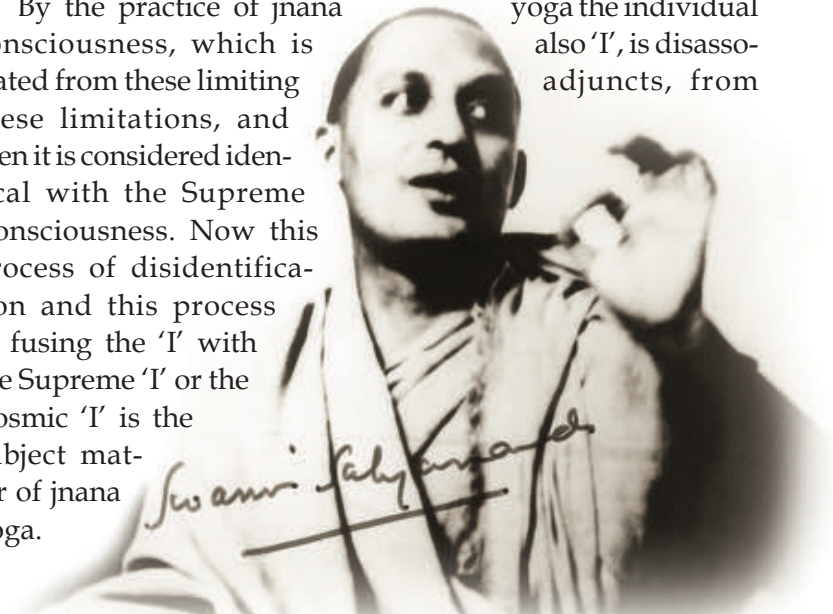
Now, therefore, the qualities of the Supreme Being should be superimposed on the 'I'. This 'I' should have the same attributes which the Supreme Consciousness has. At the same time, we see the difference between this 'I' and the body and the 'I' and the mind and the 'I' and the senses, and the 'I' and everything else that this existence means to me, I find a complete difference so I begin to say, "I am not the mind, I am not the prana, I am not the senses, I am not the intellect, I am

not the subconscious, I am not the body, I am not the customs, I am not the habits, I am not the tradition, I am not death, I am not birth." I am trying to separate this 'I' from its so-called associations. All these associations which I am talking about are superimpositions on the 'I' somehow or the other. This 'I' which is so infinite, this 'I' which is so immortal, this 'I', which is so great and pure and which is not a part but is the Supreme Consciousness has come to be associated with these friends that belong to the lower nature, and which belong to the realm of prakriti.

Now, through the process of jnana yoga we are trying to understand completely and correctly the difference between the 'I' which is the real 'I' and the 'I' which is the adulterated and misunderstood 'I'. If you ask, "Who are you?" I answer, "I am a man or I am a girl." Here the 'I' is identified with a body of a man or a woman. If you ask, "Who are you?" I always answer, "I am an Indian or an Irish or I am an American." Now I identify the 'I' with these things, the nationality. I am intelligent, I am clever, so here the 'I' is misunderstood.

By the practice of jnana consciousness, which is dissociated from these limiting these limitations, and then it is considered identical with the Supreme Consciousness. Now this process of disidentification and this process of fusing the 'I' with the Supreme 'I' or the Cosmic 'I' is the subject matter of jnana yoga.

yoga the individual also 'I', is disassociated, from



Kriya Yoga: One Step at a Time

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



When people come to yoga they want to learn everything immediately, but a considerate yoga teacher doesn't teach everything immediately. It has been our experience that many people have learnt different yogas, including kriya yoga, then because of lack of perfection have reached a point from which they cannot progress. So we have decided to teach the kriyas in stages, allowing people time to perfect or fully experience each stage.

Even if you study the traditional aspect of the kriyas, you will find that the practices have been divided into three

groups: pratyahara kriyas, dharana kriyas and dhyana kriyas. It is advisable that you perfect the pratyahara kriyas and the dharana kriyas before attempting to move on to the advanced dhyana kriyas.

After all, what is kriya yoga? Kriya yoga is not a group of practices which leads to an instantaneous awakening of the pranas and an instantaneous awakening of kundalini. No. In kriya yoga you will find combinations of asana, pranayama, concentration and visualization. If it was up to us we would not be teaching the kriyas to anyone at all. We teach under compulsion because there are many practitioners of yoga who attain a certain level and need a push to go further in the practices.

The subtle dimensions of personality

In kriya yoga where many different components are combined, the result of awakening is experienced in the physical body, in the psychic body and in the pranic body. These are the three main bodies which are activated, awakened and stimulated in kriya practice. Yoga says that there are five different dimensions or *koshas* in the human body: *annamaya* kosha, the physical body or the body of matter; *pranamaya* kosha, the body of energy; *manomaya* kosha, the body of mind or mental experiences; *vijnanamaya* kosha, the body of cognitive faculties; *anandamaya* kosha, the body of bliss.

The physical practices of hatha yoga, asana and pranayama, influence and alter the performance of annamaya kosha. If we go deeper into the practices of mudra and bandha we find that pranayama kosha is stimulated. Then if we go deeper into the practices of raja yoga, pratyahara and dharana, we will find that manomaya kosha is activated. Vijnanamaya kosha is activated by the practices of dhyana.

In kriya yoga where we combine asanas, breath awareness, breath control, visualizations and willpower, we are approaching four different dimensions of our personality, excluding anandamaya kosha, at the same time. The awakening of the

subtle dimensions of personality is not easy to handle. We can't handle the fear, anger, frustration and depression that we experience every day, yet we still want to go deep into our consciousness, and think that we can handle the psychic changes that take place.

I think this is a great human misconception. If we can handle our anger, fear, frustration, jealousy and hatred, then we are ready for kriya yoga, otherwise not. When we don't have the ability to channel and direct the mental and emotional forces which govern our life, how can we handle and direct the psychic awakening of which we have absolutely no concept right now?

The need for guidance

We not only have to learn and practise the kriyas but at the same time we have to be aware of how to handle the situations which come up with either prana or chakra awakening. When the chakras are awakened, when the consciousness is purified, when the instincts are manageable and under control, then at that time kundalini awakens.

Kundalini is the transcendental force. Kundalini is not prana; prana is an aspect of kundalini. Kundalini is not consciousness, although the power of kundalini can change and alter the structure of consciousness. Kundalini is the transcendental force which awakens only after the physical and mental energies are purified, only after, as Paramahamsaji used to say, the dross of the mind has been removed. When the energy is pure and the consciousness is pure then the transcendental energy and consciousness, in the form of kundalini, manifest in the life of a sadhaka.

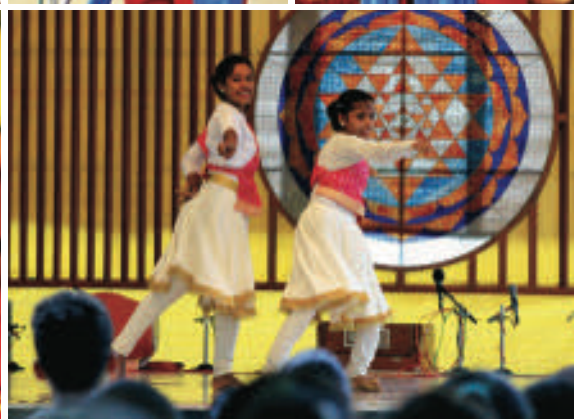
Therefore, you should be happy that you are being given the opportunity to move stage by stage, step by step.

Fast evolution

Kriya yoga is not a system by which you can evolve faster and quicker. It will give you an opportunity to experience yourself









with a different vision and viewpoint, but you will have to continue working with karmas and samskaras.

I feel that those people who have gone through and perfected the practices of hatha yoga and raja yoga, and who have in the course of their lives overcome the basic samskaras and karmas of life with the practices of jnana yoga, karma yoga, bhakti yoga and dhyana yoga will have better results when they practise kriya yoga. If however you begin to practise kriya yoga without having gone through the initial stages of purification, things will be stirred up even more and you will have to face your samskaras and karmas in the form of happiness, joy, depression, crying and frustration, sometimes with a very open feeling, sometimes in a very closed way.

You will have to face the mind stuff. As the consciousness changes, you have to handle both the good and the bad, the positive and the negative. In this process you are dealing with your own samskaras and karmas which bind you to the earthly plane. You definitely cannot bypass the samskaras and karmas unless you are an exceptional and extraordinary person.

The most important thing is your commitment to the practice of the kriyas. Swami Sivananda used to say, and still says through me, "One ounce of practice is better than tons of theory." There is a statement in the *Yoga Sutras* that a practice which is done regularly, for an extended period of time, and with faith, prepares the ground for higher realization. There are three concepts here. Regularity, without a break; for an extended period of time, allowing the practice to purify, harmonize and balance the inner structure of the personality; and faith, the conviction that eventually we will experience the result of the practice.

– December 1994, *Ganga Darshan, Munger*
(Extracts) Printed in *YOGA Vol.7, Issue 1 (January 1996)*

Brahma Sutras

From Brahma Sutras, Swami Sivananda Saraswati



Chapter 1 *Samanvaya Adhyaya*, Section 1 *Jijnasadhikaranam*,
Topic 1: The enquiry into Brahman and its prerequisites, Verse
1 (1:1:1:1):

Athato Brahmajijnasa.

Now, therefore, the enquiry into Brahman.

Atha: now, then, afterwards; *Atah*: therefore; *Brahma-jijnasa*:
a desire for the knowledge of Brahman (the enquiry into the
real nature of Brahman).

Sutra literally means a string. It serves the purpose of stringing together the flowers of the Vedanta passages. The word 'atha' is not used to introduce a new subject that is going to be taken up. The enquirer should be endowed with certain spiritual requisites or qualifications. Then only the enquiry is possible. *Atha*, after the attainment of certain preliminary qualifications such as the four means of salvation:

1. *Nitya-anitya-vastu-viveka*, discrimination between the eternal and the non-eternal);
2. *Ihamutra-arthaphala-bhoga-viraga*, indifference to the enjoyment in this life or in heaven, and of the fruits of one's actions;
3. *Shatsampat*, sixfold virtues (*sama*, control of mind, *dama*, control of the external senses, *uparati*, cessation from worldly enjoyments or not thinking of the objects of the senses or discontinuance of religious ceremonies, *titiksha*, endurance of pleasure and pain, heat and cold, *shraddha*, faith in the words of the preceptor and of the Upanishads and *samadhana*, deep concentration);
4. *Mumukshutva*, desire for liberation.

Only those who have got an earnest desire for the knowledge of Brahman only are fit for the study of Vedanta philosophy or the *Brahma Sutras*. Even without possessing the knowledge of *karmakanda*, which deals with religious ceremonies or sacrifices, a desire for attaining the knowledge of Brahman will arise direct from the study of the shrutis. The enquiry of Brahman does not depend on the performance of any acts.

You must know and realize the eternal Brahman. Then only you will attain eternal bliss, freedom, perfection and immortality. You must have certain preliminary qualifications for your search. Why should you enquire about Brahman? Because the fruits obtained by sacrifices etc., are ephemeral, whereas the knowledge of Brahman is eternal. Life on this earth and the life in heaven which you will attain on account of your virtuous deeds are transient. If you know Brahman, you will enjoy everlasting bliss and immortality. That is the reason why you must start the quest of Brahman or the Truth or the Ultimate Reality.

A time comes when a person becomes indifferent to karmas. He knows that karmas cannot give him everlasting, unalloyed happiness which is not mixed with pain, sorrow and fear. Therefore, naturally a desire arises in him for the knowledge

of Brahman or the all-pervading, eternal soul which is above karmas, which is the source of eternal happiness.

Charvakas or *Lokayatikas*, followers of the materialistic philosophy, think that the body is the soul. Some think that the senses are the soul. Some others think that the mind is the soul. Some think that the intellect is the soul. Some think that the soul is a mere momentary idea. Some think that nothing exists in reality. Some think that there is a soul which is different from the body which is both agent and enjoyer of the fruits of action. Others hold that he is not a doer but is only an enjoyer. Some think that the individual soul is a part of the Supreme Soul. Vedantins maintain that the individual soul is identical with the Supreme Soul.

Different schools of philosophy hold different views. Therefore, it is necessary to examine the truth of things very carefully. Knowledge of Brahman destroys *avidya* or ignorance which is the root of all evil, or the seed of this formidable *samsara* or worldly life. Hence you must entertain the desire of knowing Brahman. Knowledge of Brahman leads to the attainment of the final emancipation. Hence an enquiry about Brahman through the study of the shrutis which treat of Brahman is worthwhile and should be undertaken.



To Discover the Best in You

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Are you a standalone product or do you belong to a lineage? The answer is that you are not a standalone product. You belong to a lineage. You may know your father. You may know your grandfather. Very few people may have seen their great grandfather, and nobody has seen their great-great grandfather. You being here is a continuity of a genetic transfer through many, many, many generations. I stopped my genetic transfer when I took sannyasa. I am the last of my father and grandfather and great-great-great . . . since infinity. I am the last one.

Just because I have not seen my great-great-great-great grandfather, do I say that he did not exist? If I say that he did not exist then I will be absolutely wrong, because if he did not exist, then by logic I should also not exist. I am because of my *purvaj*, my ancestors. I don't know who my ancestors were. They may have been saints, thieves, robbers, cut-throats, or rishis. I don't know who they were but I know that I am here today because of them although I have never seen them.

Religion and philosophy

The same goes for God. Just as your genes started somewhere, in the same manner life started somewhere. Life started in God. Not in the form of God that is depicted by people and religions as *sakara*, manifest. It started with God, as *nirakara*, formless, attributeless. When there was no creation, when there was no universe, there was the potential. According to science the potential became manifest with the Big Bang. The journey of science begins from the Big Bang onwards, where the material components were created. Prior to the existence of the material, elemental components, when everything was in a big cosmic soup, some power was holding that soup together. That power

has been identified in the Indian theories as Ishwar. *Ishwara* represents the energy which was there before and the energy that will be thereafter; the energy that was there yesterday and the energy that will be there tomorrow.

The material creation is known as *nashwara* – something that was not there yesterday, and something which will not be there tomorrow. It will change. The unchangeable energy is identified as Ishwara and the changeable materials are identified as *nashwara*. When creation happens it spreads in all directions. What was contained in me is not there anymore, it is spreading outside, it becomes *nashwara*, something which will decay, change and be destroyed.

These two ideas have become the foundation for the development of Indian philosophies. Every age has a philosophy. Not understanding the aspiration of the philosophy but taking philosophy for being what it is as is, makes it a religion. Philosophies evolve, religions don't, because they hold on to an idea which is fixed. Religions take birth from philosophies. Religions represent the *karmakanda*, the active part of the philosophy, and the philosophy represents the *jnanakanda*, the knowing aspect. If I know that this is how it should be it is *jnana*, but if I convert that into action and other people see it in a different light they will say it is my religion.

When you look after your son and daughter, provide them with food, clothes and comfort, then that is acceptable. However, if you run around your little image of a deity and think of the deity as your beloved and organize things nicely around it, then that is not considered to be taking care and having concern. It is taken as a religious act. The same actions for your children are considered as taking care and being concerned and not as a religious act. Although the action is the same, one will become religious and the other will become caring due to the identification in the mind.

You believe that sons and daughters are your own and you believe that God is something outside. Philosophy says that God is inside but you don't believe in that. You say God

is outside and thereby, you follow the religious path, not the philosophical path. Where is the imbalance here? Not in religion, but in your understanding of religion. People who are non-believers are people who do not understand what the philosophical and religious thoughts are. Their disbelief is only an intellectual disbelief.

Scientists believe

Agnostics have to be diagnosed. There is something fundamentally wrong in their understanding. When you are awake you say this is science – I can see everything. When you don't dream but when you are in deep sleep, what is that? At that moment you are with God. You do not know that because there is no awareness of it. People who block their internal experiences and awareness are called agnostics, and diagnoses have to take place to identify why the block is there. Proper medication has to be given to remove that block and to again connect with the full experiences of the human mind and consciousness.

A scientist can only think of the senses and brain but as a spiritual person you have to think of mind and consciousness. For scientists consciousness is just a play of neurons in the brain, but for spiritual people consciousness is the everlasting and the eternal truth, and we are just a fleeting experience in that ocean of consciousness.

Science is never going to give you the answer about God. It cannot. Even the experiment which they did in Belgium to discover the God-gene was done with belief. The scientists who are doing that experiment believe. The actual scientists of the world believe that there is a gene in us which is called the God-gene, the original gene from which we have all come. Once that gene is discovered you will know the connection and the existence between the Divine and us.

In the building blocks of life the first block would be that gene. The founding block would be that. It has to be discovered and scientists are trying to do that. If they do, it will change

your views because today no science is able to prove that there is a God-gene.

The human mind can be rational and it can be irrational. Some scientists see spiritual people as being irrational and some spiritual people look at scientists as being irrational. Science is in its infancy. It is like a four-year old child and spirituality is the ancient rishi with a beard. If you put both side by side the young child of four year and the rishi of five thousand years, their understanding, experience, reflections, thoughts and ideas will be different. They will never match.

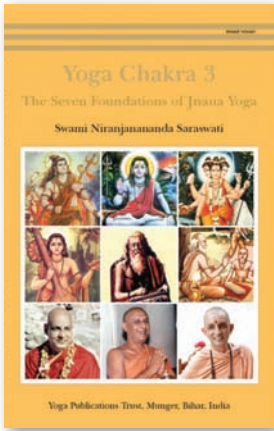
In the book by Sri Swami Satyananda, *Sure Ways to Self Realization* the spiritual traditions from different cultures and religions are clearly defined. It shows the connection between all civilizations and their attempt to discover the best in themselves. Well, God represents the best in each and every one of us.

– 22 May 2016, Ganga Darshan, Munger



Shubhechha – the First Foundation

From Yoga Chakra 3, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



The first *bhumika*, foundation, of jnana yoga is shubechha. *Shubechha* means positive intention or desire and this positive intention is the outcome of recognizing a condition which you want to change, to alter and make better. For example, you have an awareness of physical health and bad health worries you instantly and propels you to treat it so that it can be rectified. In the same way, one has to have an understanding of what is the general health of mind, and any pimple, rash or boil that comes up in the mind has to be treated.

Three attributes of shubhechha

Shubhechha is the awareness and recognition of a condition that is developing and is going to deteriorate your peace and happiness, and must therefore be dealt with instantly. That intention to not allow the negative to set in and disturb your health, and to make the effort to ensure that it is not affecting you, is the first *bhumika* of jnana yoga. In this *bhumika* the intention is to remain positive all the time. Secondly, there has to be intensity in that desire to remain positive at all times, there has to be *shakti* in that *sankalpa* to remain positive.

The third point is that the desire is not just to know, but to change and apply the change. You have to understand the change and apply the change. If you get a rash, you get the medicine and then apply it. You don't just hold the medicine

in your hands knowing 'it is good for my rash'. Knowing is not enough. You have to apply the medication on the rash. The 'desire' here is not just to know the change but to live the change, to apply the change.

In order to live and apply the change, seriousness, sincerity and commitment have to come in. Without these three you cannot do it, you cannot remain positive. You will fall back in the trap of the negative. Therefore you can live a change when you have understood and imbibed the knowledge, the *vidya*.

When the *vidya* becomes part of you and it is a natural expression then you can live it, but if it is not a part of you, today you will do it under compulsion, but tomorrow it won't be your natural behaviour. For example, today you do your asana class under my supervision, under compulsion, but if it is left to you, you may not do many of those asanas as they are strenuous. Or instead of doing them ten or twenty-five times, you will say, 'Today I will do it only five times', as in your free time your mind is guiding you, and there is no discipline in that.

You have to live the *vidya*, you have to identify with it. You have to identify with the change and the idea in order to make it naturally applicable. If you cannot identify with it then it will not be naturally applicable, it will be an imposed application. An imposed application will never survive more than a few days in your life, but natural application remains a part and parcel of your life till the very end.

The sankalpa of shubhechha

The sankalpa of the shubhechha, the first foundation, is not just saying, 'May I change for the better.' It is not just thinking, 'I will change for the better.' It is the resolve: 'May I understand the teaching so it can become a part of me.' That whole connection from self-oriented awareness to knowledge awareness, *vidya* awareness, has to come in. When you say, 'I want to feel better', you connect with yourself and your needs, and you know that 'the moment I feel better I will stop'. So the 'I' has to be overcome. Instead the connection has to be: 'May

I understand the teachings so that they become a part of me, a part of my expression.' Now your focus is on understanding and imbibing the teachings and making them a part of you.

In that process you will become better no doubt, but then you have to allow the time. You cannot plant a seed today and take it out every day to see if it is sprouting or not asking, "Why has it not sprouted, it has been there for one week now?" How can it sprout when you are taking it out every day? Why don't you just leave it there and let nature do its work? When the time is ripe the seed will sprout. In the same manner, you have to protect your positive intention and let nature do the work. The problem is you don't protect your positive intentions, and animals eat it up, or you don't allow nature to do its work, you try to do the work instead of nature. That is where failure happens.

When this sankalpa to understand the knowledge and make it a part of your own expression becomes the driving force in your life, then you begin to develop an understanding of your dharma and how you can live it. Then linear education becomes redundant. You no longer say this will follow that. The expression now is an artistic expression, not a linear, logical continuation of knowledge or understanding. You are not creating encyclopaedias of information in the mind, you are living the information. To come to this state, there has to be strength in your sankalpa. How do you strengthen your sankalpa?

In order to give compost to the seed, to strengthen the sankalpa which you have planted, you need to do two things: have association with good people who support, inspire and encourage you, and come to spiritual centres where you can reconnect with the teachings from time to time. Reconnect with the teachings, become inspired and go back with a strong positive motivation to continue your connection with and exploration of the vidya. This is the shubhechha aspect of jnana yoga, the first foundation.

– 2 November 2015, Ganga Darshan, Munger

Live Your Responsibility

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



People look for rights to facilitate their life. They say, “This is my right. This is what I will do. This is what I want to do.” Everybody has rights in that manner. However, living by fulfilling one’s rights will not lead one anywhere, for rights generally lead to discussions, debates and confusion. Is anyone happy living their rights? No. One cannot be happy when one wants one’s rights to be fulfilled.

People who live for their rights are the most negative people. They are looking for ways to avoid their participation in life. They are demanding rights from those who are involved in responsibilities. The happiest people are the people who live their responsibilities.

– 12 June 2016, Ganga Darshan, Munger

Vedanta

From Essence of Yoga, Swami Sivananda Saraswati

The term Veda is derived from the Sanskrit root *vid*, 'to know'. *Anta* means 'end'. Thus *Vedanta* literally signifies 'end of wisdom'. Philosophy is called Vedanta because it explains what that end is and how to achieve it. Vedanta is the religion of the Vedas or the Upanishads. It is the only universal, eternal religion. It is the essence of the teachings of the shrutis.

Vedanta is that bold philosophy which teaches unity of life or oneness of consciousness. It is that supreme philosophy which boldly proclaims, with emphasis and force, that this little *jiva* or human being is identical with the Supreme Soul or the Eternal. It is that sublime philosophy which elevates the mind at once to the magnificent heights of Brahmanhood, divine splendour and glory, which makes you absolutely fearless, which destroys all barriers that separate man from man, and which brings concord, unruffled peace and harmony to the suffering humanity at large. It is the only philosophy that can really unite, on the basis of the one common Self in all, a Hindu and a Mohammedan, a Catholic and a Protestant, a Vaishnavite and a Shaivite, an Irishman and an Englishman, a European and an American, on a common platform, and in the core of their hearts also. It is the only philosophy that, when properly understood and practised, can put a definite stop to the world war, dissensions, splits, communal fights, skirmishes, that exist in different nations and communities.

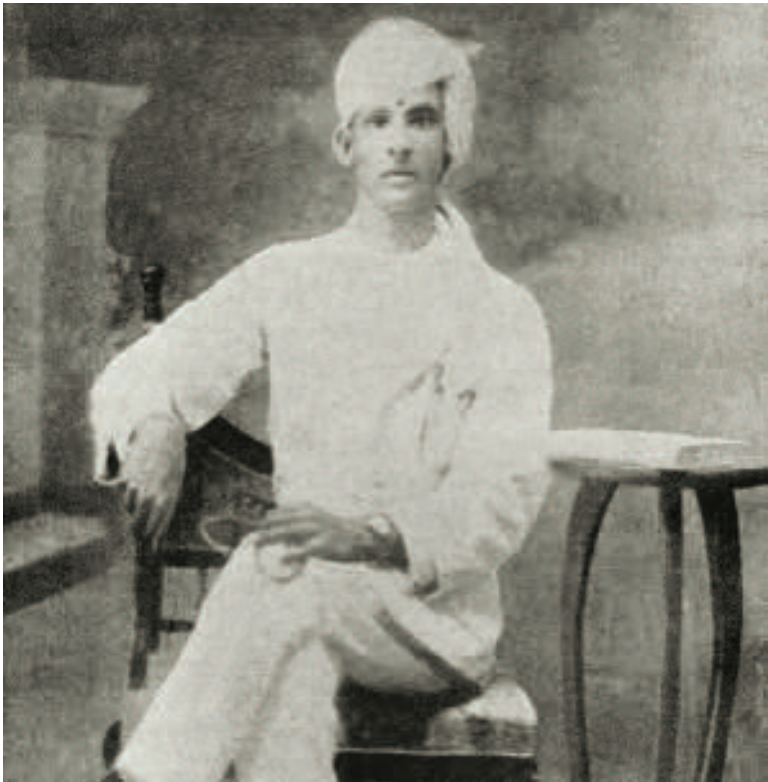
Vedanta is a magnetic healing balm for the wounded and afflicted in the dreadful battlefield of this dire *samsara*. It is the divine collyrium which removes the cataract of ignorance and gives a new inner eye of intuition or wisdom. It is the direct royal road to the domain of unalloyed felicity and the Supreme Abode of Immortality and Eternal Bliss. It eradicates ignorance – the root-cause of human sufferings – puts an end

to the ever-revolving wheel of births and deaths and confers immortality, infinite knowledge and bliss. It gives hope to the hopeless, power to the powerless, vigour to the vigourless and joy to the joyless.

Vedanta speaks of one atma or Brahman which is beginningless, endless, timeless, spaceless, immortal, self-luminous, indivisible and all-pervading, who is sat-chit-ananda.

Vedanta gives freedom for all. It embraces or includes one and all. Vedanta is neither theory nor dry philosophy for contention and argumentation. It is actual life of perennial bliss in Brahman or truth. Equip yourself with four means. Enquire, "Who am I?" Meditate on Brahman. Know "Thou art That."

Oh aspirants bold! Say, *Om Tat Sat; Om-Sat-Chit-Ananda-roopa, Shivoham, Shivoham; Sat-Chit-Ananda-Svaroopoham.*



The Greatest Sadhana

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



How we can remain calm and balanced in painful and adverse situations?

The only way to remain calm and tranquil in most adverse situations is through wisdom. Wisdom is applied knowledge, applied understanding. When you apply your knowledge, it manifests as wisdom. Through wisdom you can observe the areas of your mind, emotions and feelings which give you the experience of pain or pleasure.

It takes a long time to develop this kind of wisdom, but ultimately, when you are able to understand a situation by applying your wisdom, you can overcome pain and suffering and maintain your equanimity, your tranquillity and your balance. This is one of the greatest sadhanas that a person can have in life.

– Printed in YOGA Vol. 4, Issue 11 (November 2005)

The Ashram Environment

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



An ashram has a definite role to play in every person's life. Of course, the whole thing depends on your attitude. You may have a cantankerous attitude towards the ashram, towards the people and towards everything. Or you may have a very jolly attitude while in the ashram towards everyone and everything. You may have an attitude of inspiration, or even one of dejection. These are personal approaches, but these personal feelings do not in any way affect or alter the purpose and direction of the ashram.

An ashram provides us with something which is not, I would say, easily available in society. I am not saying that the ashram is aloof from society, the ashram is definitely a part of society, but it represents a specialized institution or organization, a place of training and learning which specializes in something specific and definite.

What is this specialization? It is a training ground where we can learn to re-train our entire being – personality, body –

everything. Why? With what purpose? To gain a deeper experience of our own actions, interactions and creativity.

If we look very carefully at what we have experienced from the time of our birth until now, it has been nothing but an urge to attain status in life: name and recognition, and we have been facing the ever-recurring experiences of pain and pleasure, dissatisfaction and satisfaction. These have been the main activities in our life. However, in the ashram we learn how to stand back from these daily occurrences and try to develop a balanced, harmonious, positive and creative attitude through discipline, which is an integral part of the ashram environment.

Discipline here does not mean following a specific routine or schedule, but finding ways and means of controlling the dissipation and distraction of the senses: the *karmendriyas*, organs of action, and the *jnanendriyas*, organs of perception, and directing and guiding the activities of the mind. This is known as discipline.

Striving for sanyam

For this discipline every external aid can be utilized. Do not just confine yoga to the classroom environment. Do not confine it to asana and pranayama only, but exert every effort to make it a part of your life and not be swayed by the normal destructive tendencies of the senses and the mind.

What are these natural and destructive tendencies? Gossip is one of them. Criticism is one of them. (These are the practical things I am talking about now.) Talking negatively is another. Thinking negatively is also one. You can make your own list. A feeling of hatred, anger or jealousy is yet another of them. Discipline eventually leads us to *sanyam*, restraint, restraint of the senses and of the mind. Then one becomes a yogi.

This must be imbibed from the ashram environment. Yoga should not be confined to the ashram environment in the spirit of learning something worthwhile for life. If you are studying, if you are writing or reading in your room in solitude or in the

library, then let that be a part of jnana yoga. If you are sitting in kirtan and satsang, let that be a part of your surrender and bhakti yoga. If you are working for yourself or cleaning or sweeping, with ambition or without ambition, let that be part of your continued effort and part of karma yoga. In this way you can definitely make every moment of life a yogic moment. It is this spirit, this concept, this idea, this way of thinking and living which is to be imbibed from the ashram environment.

It is, therefore, necessary that you know the importance of the place to which you have come. It is neither a 'five star' nor a 'no star' ashram. It is not an ashram which is 'big' or 'small'. It is an ashram which tries to infuse certain ideals into the environment for you to absorb. If you are able to absorb that, well and good; if not, then you are the loser.

Indriya sanyam, control or restraint of the senses, and *man sanyam*, control or restraint of the mind, are important aspects of ashram life. They apply to everyone who enters through the gate, whether they are coming here for the first time or whether they have been living here for twenty years.

– 2 August 1994, *Ganga Darshan, Munger,*
Teachers' Training Course
Printed in YOGA Vol. 5, Issue 6 (November 1994)



A Jnani – Humble and Wise

From May I Answer That, Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Swamiji, while you always associate saintliness with humility, why are you so fond of being photographed?

The force behind the system of visual education which psychologists today acclaim as infinitely superior to textbook education will be apparent if you reflect over a very common phenomenon. Leave on your table in the study a few good books, a few pictorials and a few photographs. Let your children, your friends, come into the study. What do they pick up first? The books? No. The photographs first, and then, the pictorials.

It is not entirely without reason that the old women in South India prevented their grandchildren from being photographed, saying, "Your lustre will be taken away by the photograph." It is true that your lustre is transferred to the photograph. To your friends and relatives, to your near and dear ones, your photograph is alive, aglow with your lustre. Therefore, to a devotee, a picture of the Lord, and to a disciple, a picture of the Guru, is a Living Presence. It is necessary for meditations.

Why are there so many photographs, you may ask. Different people want different photographs, in different poses, with different backgrounds. I have to satisfy all of them. A photograph of mine taken twenty years ago may look more youthful and may be better technically than the photograph taken today; but the aspirant who has seen me for the first time today insists that he should have a photograph of me as I am today and does not accept another taken twenty years ago, however nice it may be. And then, people want to be photographed with me; these photographs act as mementos of their visits and inspire the visitors.

Refusing to be photographed is subtle egoism. It is timidity or fear of criticism in the garb of humility. If you have right discrimination, you will at once understand.



Why should a great saint like you, who has renounced everything, put on an overcoat in winter?

A saint or a sannyasin will not sleep on thorns, eat mud and stones, walk on his head and break through walls. His body, too, is subject to hunger and thirst, heat and cold, etc., and an overcoat is only a vertical blanket in bits and stitched in a convenient way to cover the body against cold without hampering the movement of the limbs for service. A blanket is a horizontal piece. I do not attach more importance or value to the coat.

After all, why should you look at the outer garb? Try to perceive the inner man, his thoughts, his ideas and his virtues. Not the external details. Only a real saint can understand another saint.

It is not a body besmeared with ashes or a flowing beard or matted locks that determine a saint. Why should you attach

much importance to this overcoat of mine? To indulge in dress by way of luxury is certainly not justified. But, for bare necessities, the body must be provided with proper dress and food.

Why are you fond of publicity? You talk of selfless service so much; and yet, we find you working for name and fame!

Firstly, I am not working for name and fame. When a person does selfless service, fame comes to him, though he does not want it. You found it so in the case of Mahatma Gandhiji's life also. Only selfless persons know how to utilize even that fame for doing more selfless service to a greater number of persons.

Secondly, it is through publicity that I come into contact with more and more seekers after truth. It is the publicity that enables more and more people to offer me opportunities to serve them. When people glorify me, they glorify only sannyasa, they glorify a divine life of sadhana. And if by bringing this to the notice of others, they too can be inspired to lead the divine life and practise sadhana for attaining Self-realization, I do not neglect it. As you know, lives of great men remind you that you can make your life sublime.

Thirdly, the man who runs after name and fame would not do menial service, would not mix freely with everybody, would not cut jokes and make people laugh in his presence, he would keep himself 'far above' the common run of mankind, compel the awe and reverence of the people, and by artificially dwelling on high philosophical themes alone during his conversations, would endeavour to impress on those who meet him that he is far above all of them. I like to mix with all and to make everybody feel that I am one with all. I take intense delight in doing every kind of service to everybody. I am full of educative humour; even a young boy can cut jokes with me.

Please come here and spend some time in the ashram. You will change your opinion

Undo the Stitching

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Seeing spirits or other images is not hard for children as their mind is not conditioned by the external environment, cultural or social impositions. Different cultures and religions block certain expressions of human nature.

Clear evidence is seen in the Eastern and Western religious beliefs. In the West people don't believe in reincarnation due to the religious and cultural background. In the East people believe in reincarnation due to cultural and religious background. Culture and religion play an important part in shaping human nature, character, belief and understanding.

The children who are not conditioned to such beliefs or limitations of mind, are able to experience many things. I have seen spirits in my childhood. I have seen demons in my childhood. I knew that what I was seeing was the spirit, what I was seeing was the demon or the angel. As a child you might have many times seen or experienced something because there is no covering blocking the psychic awareness.

As we grow old and the different social, cultural, religious conditionings set in in our life we become more extrovert, and our perception of internal realizations go to the background. Many times they remain hidden there as other conditions, thoughts, ideas are covering that experience.

Making a shirt

This is an indication of two things: One, that when we are born, the human consciousness is not conditioned and has a far reach in seeing and experiencing other things which are not visible to a grown up, conditioned human being. This is actually a play of consciousness, not of the individual.

When you take a piece of fabric and scissors and cut the fabric into the shape of a shirt, then the original quality of the fabric is gone. It was plain, white, eight foot by four foot long, now it has been cut, it has been sewn and it has been given a shape. Although the fabric is there, now it is enclosed, sewn from all sides, whereas in the original condition the fabric was wide open.

That is the state of human consciousness. When we are born our consciousness is like a big sheet, but later on our family, our friends, our society start cutting the sheet and making the sheet into clothes which we begin to wear. That becomes our nature, personality, character; it becomes our life.

Balancing the inner and outer

This is the state of consciousness. Psychic experiences come when all the knots in the consciousness, all the sewing has been cut. When you cut the sewing and again you spread the fabric out it becomes open and wide, then that is the consciousness which is spiritual and not confined and contained.

Everybody has that psychic faculty, we do not lose it; we just forget about it, we become too distracted. When an opportunity comes in our life and we begin some practices like meditation or yoga, the psychic impressions which are there are again brought to the surface.

Many times in meditation you feel, you recognize something that had happened to you in your childhood. A memory comes, 'I have seen that, I had forgotten about it'. That memory is an indication that awareness is again coming back to the forefront. Then psychological changes happen, the knots of the head are released, the cloth is again spread and you are aware of your own psychic dimension.

It is not something that one loses but it is something that goes to the background due to imposition of the many other ideas, thoughts and traits. In the course of time, with continued practice of meditation and other sadhana, again that psychic awareness is activated.

When the psychic awareness is activated the awareness of the inner world gradually increases while awareness of the external world is gradually reduced. There is a balance between the internal and the outer worlds. Those who are able to maintain this balance between the internal and the outer become the saints, become the sages, become the enlightened beings.

– 6 November 2016, Ganga Darshan, Munger



STOP PRESS

YOGA AND YOGAVIDYA PRASAD

In 2013 Bihar School of Yoga celebrated its Golden Jubilee, which culminated in the World Yoga Convention in October of 2013. This historic event marked the successful completion of 50 years of service, dedicated to the one mandate, to take yoga from shore to shore and door to door. Achieved over a 50-year period with the help of yoga aspirants and well-wishers all over the world, a yogic renaissance has taken place.

The World Yoga Convention also heralded the beginning of the second chapter of Bihar School of Yoga. The hallmark of this second chapter is a new vision, which serves to both revive and uphold the yoga vidya in the tradition of Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda for the benefit of future generations.

As one of the aspirations of the second chapter, Bihar School of Yoga is offering the YOGA and YOGAVIDYA magazines as prasad with the blessings and good wishes of the spiritual parampara. As society moves into the digital era, to facilitate the dissemination of yoga vidya, both YOGA and YOGAVIDYA are available as a downloadable pdf copy and also as a free app for both Android and IOS users.

To access YOGA online:

<http://www.biharyoga.net/bihar-school-of-yoga/yoga-magazines/>

To access YOGAVIDYA online:

<http://www.biharyoga.net/bihar-school-of-yoga/yogavidya/>

For IOS users both the YOGA and YOGAVIDYA magazines available as downloadable app:<https://itunes.apple.com/us/developer/bihar-school-of-yoga/id1134424786>

For Android users the YOGA magazines are available as downloadable app:

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=net.biharyoga.yogapeeth.app.emag.android.yoga>

For Android users the YOGAVIDYA magazines are available as downloadable app:

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=net.biharyoga.yogapeeth.app.emag.android.yogavidya>

To access the online encyclopaedia of YOGA and search the archive:

<http://www.yogamag.net/archives.shtml>



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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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Website: www.biharyoga.net

✉ A self-addressed, stamped envelope must be sent along with enquiries to ensure a response to your request