

YOGA

Year 6 Issue 9

September 2017

Membership postage: Rs. 100



Bihar School of Yoga, Munger, Bihar, India



Hari Om

YOGA is compiled, composed and published by the sannyanin 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.

Editor: Swami Shaktimitrananda Saraswati

Assistant Editor: Swami Yogatirthananda Saraswati

YOGA is a monthly magazine. Late subscriptions include issues from January to December.

Published by Bihar School of Yoga, Ganga Darshan, Fort, Munger, Bihar - 811201.

Printed at Thomson Press India Ltd., Haryana - 121007

© Bihar School of Yoga 2017

Membership is held on a yearly basis. Please send your requests for application and all correspondence to:

Bihar School of Yoga
Ganga Darshan
Fort, Munger, 811201
Bihar, India

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

Total no. of pages: 58 (including cover pages)

Front cover: Sri Swami Sivananda

Plates: 1: Sri Swami Satyananda; 2: Swami Niranjanananda; 3: Swami Satyasangananda; 4: Swami Niranjan & Swami Satsangi



GUIDELINES FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

The way to happiness

There is no knowledge of the Self to the unsteady, and to the unsteady no meditation is possible; and to the unmeditative there can be no peace; and to the man who has no peace, how can there be happiness?

—*Bhagavad Gita 2:66*

The person who cannot fix his mind in meditation cannot have knowledge of the Self. The unsteady person cannot practise meditation and cannot have intense devotion to Self-knowledge nor burning longing for liberation. He who does not practise meditation cannot possess peace of mind.

Desire or thirsting for sense objects is the enemy of peace. There cannot be an iota or tinge of happiness for a person who is thirsting for sense objects. The mind will be ever restless and hankering for the objects.

—*Swami Sivananda Saraswati*

Published and printed by Swami Gyanbhikshu Saraswati on behalf of Bihar School of Yoga, Ganga Darshan, Fort, Munger - 811201, Bihar

Printed at Thomson Press India (Ltd), 18/35 Milestone, Delhi Mathura Rd., Faridabad, Haryana.

Owned by Bihar School of Yoga **Editor:** Swami Shaktimitrananda Saraswati

YOGA

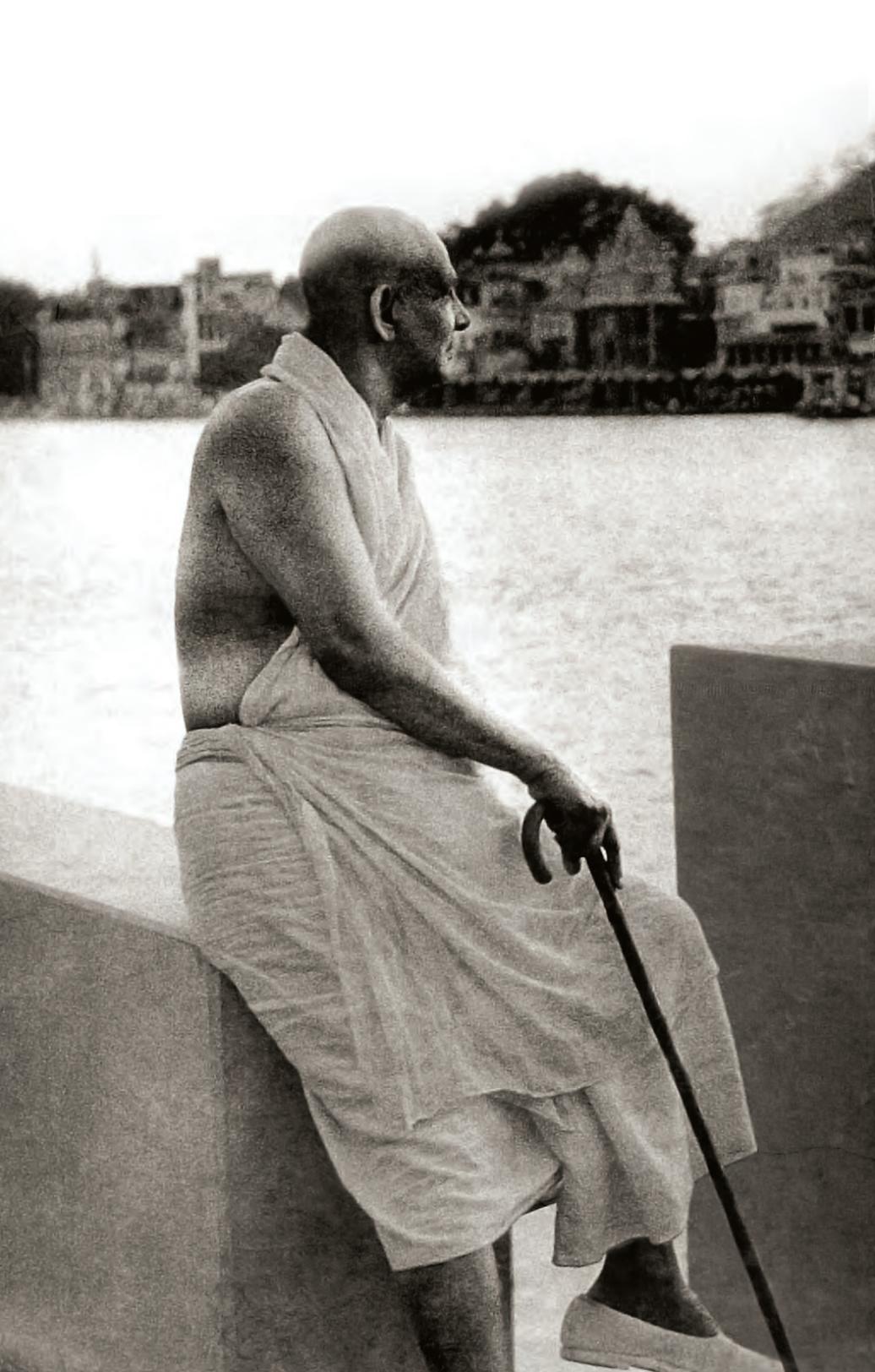
Year 6 Issue 9 • September 2017
(55th year of publication)

Contents

- | | | | |
|----|----------------------------|----|---|
| 5 | You, the Humble Individual | 33 | Swadhyaya and Santosha –
Niyama of Raja Yoga |
| 6 | The Purpose of Discipline | 36 | Self-Analysis |
| 10 | Nothing but Thoughts | 38 | Paramahamsaji's Gift |
| 14 | Pratyahara | 43 | Ishta Devata |
| 18 | The Mysterious Mind | 47 | Bhakti Yoga |
| 25 | Anger Management | 52 | Your Heart is Your Address |
| 31 | Concentration | | |

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 ॥



You, the Humble Individual

From the teachings of Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Blessed Immortal Self!

You have read many books and listened to many discourses. You have shown appreciation and interest in sacred scriptures. You have developed faith in the greatness and the glory of the sages and saints of ancient India. But do not forget that this is not enough. The world wants much more from you, you who have love for humanity, who wish for world peace and prosperity. What are you doing? Have you bestowed thought on that?

Do not feel that you are only an ordinary individual, one in millions. Do not think that unless you have cooperation from thousands and thousands all over the world, nothing of real importance will be done. No, you forget that every thought sent out by you - you, the humble individual that you think you are - every thought sent in the proper manner, with full trust in God, in pure unselfishness, has behind it the support of all well-wishers, embodied and disembodied. You do not know how many great well-wishers of the world are everywhere in spirit ready to give invisible help to selfless workers.

Every thought that you send out is a vibration which never perishes. It goes on vibrating in every particle of the universe and if your thoughts are noble, holy and forcible, they set in vibration every sympathetic mind. Unconsciously all people who are like you, take the thought you have projected and in accordance with the capacity that they have, they send out similar thoughts. The result is that without your knowledge of the consequences of your own work, you will be setting in motion great forces which will work together and put down the lowly and mean thoughts generated by the selfish and wicked.

The Purpose of Discipline

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Discipline is the least understood word in the world. The purpose of discipline is simply to be able to guide the expressions of the mind.

We know how the mind functions. We know that it becomes easily distracted, that it is subject to likes and dislikes, that it has very strong ideas, emotions, convictions and beliefs. We know that it is subject to the gunas – sattwa, rajas and tamas, and that when the mind is influenced only by its own behaviour, it functions

in a very erratic way, without clarity. The role of discipline is to condition the mind so that it is connected with positivity and creativity.

Normally we may wish to become positive and creative, but our mental conditioning does not allow it. There are too many distractions; there is a continual struggle with oneself. Disciplining ourselves means choosing to encourage and support our own inner peaceful nature, rather than the greedy acquired and acquisitive nature we habitually use in interactions.

Discipline can be defined as the ability to observe the mind and make it still. But to begin with, in order to become more sensitive so that we can perceive our mental behaviour and realize the nature of the mind, we have to follow disciplines that are imposed upon us from outside. Why? Because

eventually these disciplines create a conducive environment in our personality.

Mouna is a regular discipline in ashram life. *Mouna* has a very simple meaning – silence – but at first it is very difficult to practise. As long as the mind is not practising mouna, as long as it is continuing to chatter, we will be forced to chatter amongst ourselves also. But when the mind becomes relaxed and quiet, then mouna becomes natural, spontaneous and easy, and we begin to observe the restless nature of the mind from our own peaceful centre. That is one example of how an external, imposed condition can help to improve the quality of our self-perception and understanding, so that we can manage the mind.

How we take to such a discipline, whether it will help us or hamper us, and how far we progress on such a path, is up to us. But the purpose of all yogic discipline is to make us realize the nature, the attitudes and the behaviour of the mind. Being subject to the influences of the mind is the normal state of behaviour, but when we are able to direct the mind according to our wishes and choices, that is known as discipline, and it leads to the subtle disciplines of yoga.

Throughout our life we do as our mind demands, according to likes and dislikes, wisdom or ignorance, maturity or immaturity. But simply following the nature of the mind leads to distraction and dissipation. Those who have been able to control and guide the mind say that discipline is important in order to reclaim inner peace and contentment and to express creativity and wisdom.

From this perspective, discipline simply represents management of the mind. In Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*, the first sutra is *Atha yogah anushasanam*, meaning "Now, the subtle disciplines of yoga." This sutra gives the direction in which yoga moves to provide the ability to observe and direct the mind with wisdom, knowledge and understanding. Ultimately, discipline is an expression of harmonized emotions and attitudes in a balanced personality.

In order to create this condition we have to start by regulating the lifestyle and mental behaviour. We need to understand what is appropriate or inappropriate for our development and growth and for the environment in which we live. Then we can improve the expressions of our personality, our interactions and behaviour.

How is discipline important for success in life?

If you want to succeed in life, you have to gear your personality to excel in your situation or environment. If you want to create good music on a stringed instrument, it is necessary to tune the strings first. If you want to get good sound from a drum, you have to tighten it. If you want to excel in life, you have to focus yourself to achieve your purpose. That effort is discipline.

Subtle discipline is not something which is imposed from outside. External imposition gives a routine, not discipline. Daily routine and discipline are two different things. Discipline expresses itself in the way you think – how you think, what you think, whether it is negative or positive, right or wrong, detrimental or constructive. It is expressed in what you say and how you say it. It is expressed in actions, in behaviour, in all the dimensions of life.

The aim of discipline is to lead you to *sanyam*, where discipline and self-restraint become balanced and spontaneous. Discipline and *sanyam* are the beginning and the fulfilment of the same principle. *Sanyam* starts with discipline, especially the effort to guide your moods and expressions so they are positive, creative and constructive.

A simple example is when you have to live and work with other people. Each person may have the same aim and focus, but still there is conflict, differences of interest and disagreements. What is the priority here? The vision we have in common or the personal relationships which can flare up and subside in a moment? Usually, the personal interaction takes priority and that momentary flare up can make us dislike or hate the other person, not for a short while but for a long

time. It takes precedence over our shared aims and vision and continues to affect our behaviour.

If each one of us beats our own drum and blows our own trumpet without any thought for rhythm and harmony, what kind of ruckus will we create? But if we play in tune with each other, we will create a very beautiful and powerful symphony. The creation of this symphony is the aim of discipline – in thought, in attitude, in behaviour, in belief, in action, in participation, in being happy, optimistic and dynamic. These are the symphonies of life.

For example, if you break the rules while you are staying in the ashram, it makes no difference to the ashram environment, because no one person makes the ashram environment. However, the environment can make a difference to you. If you disregard the rules, it means you are not utilizing your time as training. It really shows, not a disregard for the rules, but a disregard for yourself, a lack of conviction and faith in yourself. It is caused because you lack the perception to realize the nature of the process. So who is the loser?

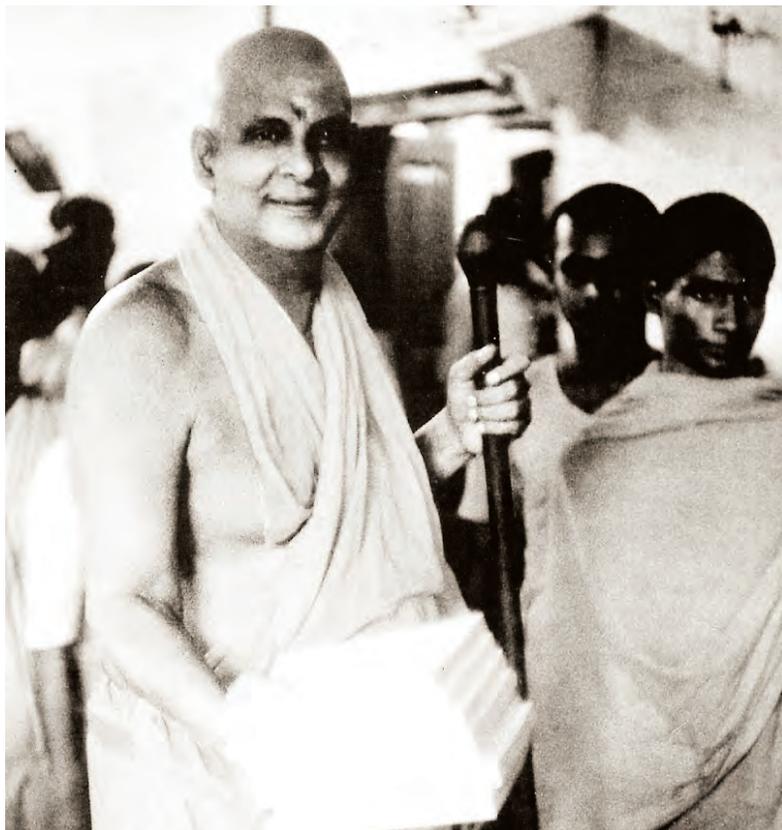
If this lack of self-perception remains, you will not be successful, no matter where you are or what you do, because you lack faith in your own mental strength. But you have that strength, so why lack the faith? The moment you start believing in yourself, you will see a great transformation come over your life. Believe in yourself, believe in what you do. Believe in what you stand for if you want to be happy and successful in life.

However you may want to explain it, every expression of personality and behaviour, when disciplined, becomes more simple, constructive and beautiful. Disregarding the concept of *sanyam* or self-restraint represents weak willpower, an unclear mind and lack of inner strength. When you have *sanyam*, you are free, you experience joy, happiness and expansiveness, and other people are uplifted.

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

Nothing but Thoughts

From Thought Power, Swami Sivananda Saraswati



Thoughts and character

Man is not a creature of circumstances. His thoughts are the architects of his circumstances. A man of character builds a life out of circumstances. He steadily perseveres and plods. He does not look back. He marches forward bravely. He is not afraid of obstacles. He never frets and fumes. He never gets discouraged and disappointed. He is full of vigour, energy, vim and vitality. He is ever zealous and enthusiastic.

Thoughts are the bricks with which character is built. Character is not born. It is formed. Determination to build definite character in life is needed. This must be followed up with persistent striving.

Build your character; you can shape your life. Character is power. It is influence; it makes friends. It draws patronage and support. It creates friends and funds. It opens a sure and easy way to wealth, honour, success and happiness. Character is the determining factor in victory and defeat, success and failure, and in all the issues of life. A man of good character enjoys life herein and hereafter.

Small kind acts, small courtesies, small consideration, small benevolence, habitually practised in your social interactions give a greater charm to your character than great platform lectures, discourses, oration and exhibition of talents.

Strong character is formed by strong and noble thinking. A good character is the fruition of personal exertion. It is the result of one's own endeavours.

It is not wealth or power nor is it mere intellect that governs the world. It is moral character associated with moral excellence that really rules the entire universe.

Nothing in this world – wealth, name, fame, victory – is worth a fig or a straw, without character. Character must stand behind and back up everything, and character is built by your thoughts.

Thoughts, peace and strength

Fewer the desires, lesser the thoughts. Become absolutely desireless. The wheel of mind will stop entirely. If you reduce your wants, if you do not try to fulfil your desires, if you try to eradicate your desires one by one, your thoughts will diminish in frequency and length. The number of thoughts also per minute will diminish.

Fewer the thoughts, greater the peace. Remember this always. A wealthy man who is engaged in speculation in a big city and who has a large number of thoughts has a restless

mind in spite of his comforts, whereas a sadhu who lives in a cave of the Himalayas and who is practising thought-control is very happy in spite of his poverty.

Fewer the thoughts, greater the mental strength and concentration. Suppose that the average number of thoughts that pass through your brain within one hour is one hundred. If you succeed in reducing it, by constant practice of concentration and meditation, to ninety, you have gained ten per cent of the power of concentration of mind.

Every thought that is reduced adds strength and peace to the mind. Reduction of even one thought will give mental strength and peace of mind. You may not be able to feel this in the beginning as you do not possess a subtle intellect, but there is a spiritual thermometer inside to register the reduction of even a single thought. If you reduce one thought, the mental strength that you have gained by this reduction will help you to reduce the second thought easily.

Some thought-seeds

True knowledge is spiritual consciousness. It is awareness of one's real nature. Knowledge means right discernment or correct evaluation, wisdom and a perfect understanding of oneself and of others. Right thought results in right action and right life.

Beauty is essentially spiritual. Real beauty lies in one's heart. It is in one's character. Beauty dwells in purity. Beauty shines in virtues. Love is a refined, innate sense of oneness with the entire creation. Love is self-denial, selflessness.

Love is sacredness of heart. Love is unrestrained goodwill, mercy, compassion and tolerance. Love is absence of sensuality. The body is not everything. There is something which is vitally important, which dwells in the body. It is the spirit of man. Though identical with the cosmic spirit, it is individualized by the karmas of the individual soul. The body passes away; the spirit lives. The individuality of the spirit is there as long as the body lasts; then it ought to return back to and dissolve

itself in its original source, unless of course, it is drawn back by its associated karmas into another embodiment in order to reap them.

Everything passes away. Nothing ever is to accompany man except his karmas, when the body is cast off. Hence as long as man lives, he should live amicably, with love and goodwill towards all, hurting no one in any manner, coveting no worldly riches, with more of kindness and mental charity, forgiveness and tolerance, with detachment to mundane objects, and dissociation of the ego from one's actions, while taking care to acquire no new karmas as one works out the already accomplished ones.

With a little of contentment, discrimination, devotion to God and self-surrender to His will, with a little of detachment and non-expectation of anything from anyone, with an attitude of prayerfulness and abiding by the dictates of one's conscience with unshakable faith in one's spiritual principles and code of conduct, and evaluation, life becomes easier, worthier and happier.

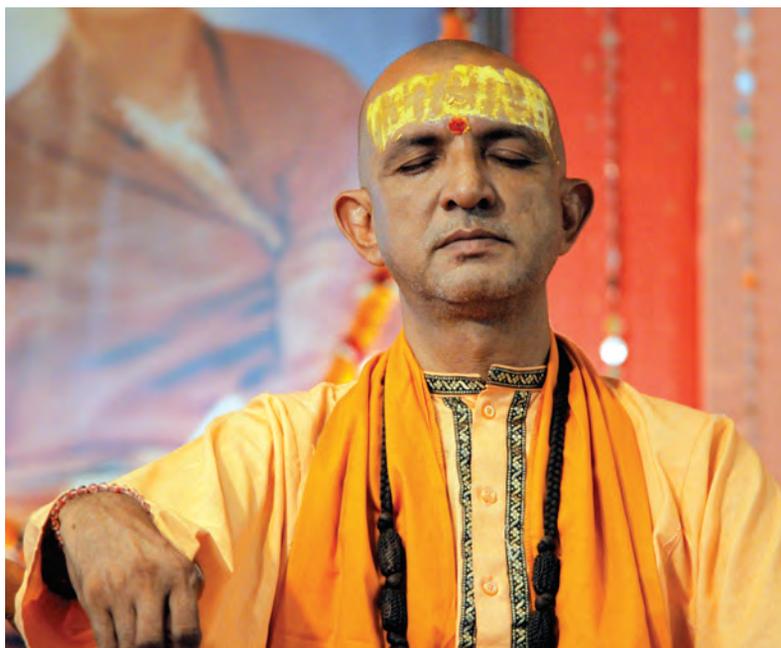
If you have difficulties, you should look to the cause first. The real trouble lies in ignoring the cause. If the cause is remedied, difficulties become less, or rather accidental. The world is a great school where people are given ample opportunities to mend and mould themselves into better individuals.

No one is born perfect. There are possibilities for everyone to improve oneself. Trials and difficulties ought to make one a better individual rather than create complexes and constrict the mind and heart. Take shelter in great and noble thoughts, and obtain perfection.

Guru's grace is always with the disciple, unreserved and unconditioned. It depends, however, on the self-discipline, faith and purity of the disciple whether to make use of this grace or not. Guru resides in the hearts of his disciples. Some are aware of this and some are not. The living presence of the Guru within is the best asset of the disciple.

Pratyahara

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



According to yoga it is important to keep the body healthy, free from disorder, free from toxins and free from excretory matter. Similarly, for a healthy mind it is important to be free from tension, worry and depression. The method given in raja yoga is the practice of pratyahara. Pratyahara is extremely vital for letting go of stress.

The meaning of pratyahara is to become aware of oneself. Right now you are not aware of what is happening within you, the actions and reactions going on in the mind. You are unaware of the thoughts that are coming, the sensations that are produced. In the state of pratyahara, which in raja yoga comes after asana and pranayama, you develop awareness of yourself.

Yoga nidra

The process of developing pratyahara starts with yoga nidra. As anyone who has practised yoga nidra knows, it is one of the practices of relaxation, done lying down. In this practice one does not have to do anything; one just lies down on the floor, the way one lies down to sleep, and follows the instructions of the teacher. The teacher takes the awareness to different parts of the body and makes one conscious of its states.

Through yoga nidra, one brings the body, the nervous system and the internal organs to a state of relaxation. When the body attains a state of relaxation, it has an effect on the mind, as the mind and the body are integrated. The mind is subtle and the body is gross. Everyone experiences the body because it can be perceived by the senses. The experience of the mind only takes place through thoughts, desires, wishes and ambitions. The body is tangible and therefore visible, whereas the mind can be experienced, but is intangible. One can know the experience of the mind by looking at the thoughts which are coming, the emotions which are arising, the desires which are springing up: that is the mind. So, it can be said that experiences come from the mind.

When the body attains a relaxed state, the mind is influenced by the body. Its extroverted tendency reduces, and it becomes internalized. Once the mind becomes internalized, it achieves relaxation.

Someone once came to me and said that he had been unable to sleep for the past two years. Even if he took a sleeping pill, one pill was not enough. He had to take two or three pills to fall sleep. When he did not take a pill he would toss and turn all night in his bed. He asked for a remedy.

I told him that I would not talk of a cure as it did not depend on me or on yoga: "The remedy depends on your wish. If you do the practices of yoga in a proper manner then their benefits will surely be seen." Saying this much, I made him do only yoga nidra for one week. On the fourth day he slept in yoga nidra. He slept there in the classroom for three hours. When

he woke, he saw that the teacher had left the classroom. He woke up in a daze. He came running directly to me and held my feet, with great happiness on his face. He said, "Swamiji, today I slept." I asked him how he came to know that he had slept. He said that he knew by looking at his watch and by the absence of the teacher from the classroom.

I am just giving an example that when you consciously and with awareness de-stress the body and remove tension, the mind becomes internalized. Once the mind becomes internalized, it attains a state of relaxation. This is the state of pratyahara, and the first practice of pratyahara is yoga nidra.

Pranayama

The second important practice for people whose life is full of tension is pranayama. What should one do if stress is making it hard to sleep and, as a result, it is also difficult to stay alert and awake?

You are travelling in a vehicle. Your eyes are open; let them be open. Become aware of your breath. When you breathe in through your nostrils, sense a slight coolness. When you breathe out, sense the warmth in your nostrils. Focus your awareness on the feeling of coolness and warmth which you are experiencing. When you breathe in repeat the mantra *So*; when you exhale repeat the mantra *Ham*. *Soham, Soham, Soham* is the mantra of the breath. This is not a religious mantra; this is the mantra of the breath. Kabirdas said:

*Aisa jaap japo man layee,
Soham Soham surta gaayee,
Chhah sau sahasa ikison jaap,
Anahad upje aapahin aap.*

Absorb your mind in japa in such a way that your memory and mind ever sings *Soham, Soham*. The daily japa of twenty-one thousand and six hundred mantras produces spontaneously *anahad nada*, the unstruck sound, the unlimited sound, the divine sound.

When your mind focuses on the breath, spontaneously the breath starts singing *Soham, Soham*. *Soham soham surta* means 'the breath starts singing *Soham, Soham, Soham*'. Even in a moving vehicle, with the eyes open, if you focus on the breath and do japa of the *Soham* mantra for five minutes, your mental tensions will go away and clarity will come. Your judgment and decisions will be sound. The only condition is to manage the mind; and the method to manage the mind is the breath and *Soham* mantra.

– 26 July 2014, Swabhoomi Rangamanch, Kolkata, India



The Mysterious Mind

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

Most people are unfamiliar with the mind and do not understand its language or behaviour. Although the mind is an inseparable part of our being, our knowledge of it is very limited. We are continually happy or unhappy, desirous or frustrated, loving or hating, thinking, dreaming or sleeping. But all of these are beyond our control. If we stop thinking, it is because we can't think anymore, and if we think too much it is because we cannot stop. We are happy, not because we choose to be, but because the emotion arises due to the fulfilment of some desire or condition.

The behaviour and reactions of the mind are not under our control. We have been living with the mind, yet we are totally unfamiliar with it. It is like two friends, who have no common basis of understanding, living together in the same room. One is deaf and the other is dumb. There is total lack of synchronization, total absence of participation. One prepares lunch and dinner and whatever he cooks, the other has to eat. He may not like spaghetti or hot, spicy food, but he has to eat it, because that is what has been cooked for him.

Why is it like this?

People are ignorant of many things. Whatever we are taught in the schools is inadequate. When we learn something it is not for practical purposes but in order to get through an examination. So there are many fundamental things which we do not know. Similarly, we do not know about the mind.

Yoga is a science which teaches you about the mind through practical experiences. It is unnecessary to tell you what the mind is; you have to experience it yourself. I can explain to you what sweetness is, but until you have tasted it, you can never really understand. Once you have had the experience of

sweetness, you know it, and I don't have to explain. Likewise, the mind has to be practically experienced.

The unseen mind

The great thinkers say that the mind of a man is like a subterranean volcano. A little can be seen, but the rest is below the surface. We know many of the mental manifestations such as anger, happiness, unhappiness, greed, passion, emotion, worry, fear, anxiety. These are only the upper part of the volcano which we can see. If I get angry, I can experience it. If something happens to my wife or children, I have certain melancholy feelings. I feel and I know. This is the perceptible



mind that can be seen, but it is beyond our control. When you are full of frustration, you do not know how to get rid of it because the root is in the unseen mind.

The psychologists call this unseen region the subconscious and unconscious mind. Yoga calls it the astral and causal mind. When you practise yoga, you are able to see this subterranean area of the mind. If someone goes crazy or blows up, that is the subterranean mind coming to the surface. Just as smoke comes from fire, all the mental manifestations emerge from the subterranean base. Anger can be felt in the brain; fear can be felt in the heart, but both emanate from the same place. Dreams, visions, doubts, prejudices, all come from the same base. It is therefore necessary for every man to go deep into the base of the mind.

Developing the seer

How do you get to the base of the mind? One way is to follow a pattern of thought, right back to the source. But this is very difficult, because while you are following the pattern of thought, you become part of it. Once you become part of it, you are completely lost. If your mind is jumping about and you try to follow the thoughts, it is very difficult. After some time, what often happens is that you begin to fantasize the whole process.

In yoga, the path of following thoughts is not considered to be easy, because for most people, the thinking and the thinker are inseparable. In order to practise this successfully, you must first be able to separate the thinking and the thinker, and then you should separate the thinking and the thinker and the thought. There are definitely three factors combined.

The thinking, the thinker and the thought are the three components of the mind. When these are assembled, the process of thinking and feeling takes place. When a thought is in your mind, there is a thinker, and a process of thinking. But in yoga we have a fourth component – the seer. So in yoga we have thinking, thinker, thought and the seer of it all.

Yoga really begins when you are able to add this fourth component to the whole thinking process. The seer is a spectator. As you are the spectator of a grand race or a viewer of the TV, in the same way, you have to develop within you a spectator of the whole triple process. You do not have to create the seer. The faculty of witnessing what is happening in the mind is already there in a very subtle form.

That is the differentiating quality of human beings; otherwise, we are merely animals. Animals walk on four legs; we walk on two. Animals react to different situations and we also do. Animals, eat, sleep and live in the body and we also do. Animals have insecurity and we also do. Animals love and perform the sexual act and we also do. The only thing that makes the homo sapiens different from the animals is that faculty of knowing.

I am talking to you; I know I am talking to you, and I know that I know I am talking to you. You are listening to me; you know you are listening to me, and you know that you know you are listening to me. This is called the faculty of the seer. This faculty of the seer in time and space is man's special heritage. As man evolves, he develops this faculty. When you lose this faculty, and many people do, you become as ignorant as the animals, living an animal life in an animal body. This faculty of the seer is developed through the process of meditation by which the whole mind is transformed. We no longer say, 'thinking, thought and thinker'; we say, 'meditation, meditator and object of meditation'. I am the seer of this triple function that is taking place in meditation. With this faculty I am able to connect past, present and future and maintain a time-space continuum.

The source of creation

Mind is much subtler than an atom, molecule or electron. Mind is definitely the subtlest of all the energies that man has discovered so far. You know about the subtler states of matter which are discussed in physics, but mind is subtler than any kind of matter that we have conceived of, measured or analyzed in science.

According to yoga, this mind is connected to the time-space continuum. Time, space and object are qualities of the mind. The time-space-object continuum is the whole existence, and these three are manifestations of the mind. If you can disintegrate the mind, totally withdraw it, then time, space and object do not exist. This is taught in modern physics also.

Religions say that God is the creator, but what is this creation? Is it made out of mud or stone, flesh or bone? The leading scientists of our time have given a definite conclusion that the creation of time and space is a manifestation of mind. Once the mind is withdrawn, there is nothing.

Few people understand the power of the mind. You can create anything by the mind, good or bad. Everything exists on



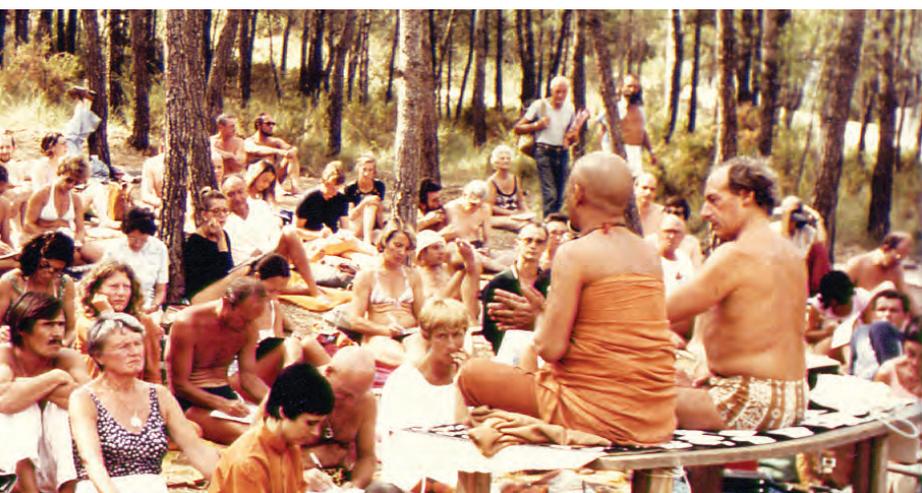
account of the mind. Mind is more powerful than the body. We don't understand it, because our science is based on matter. It seems that mind is a thinking machine, but this is not so. It is a force, an energy. By this mind we knowingly or unknowingly create disaster for ourselves. All our sufferings are due to the mind.

In physics, the scientists have clearly stated that both matter and energy are creations of the mind. Time and space are both spanned by the mind. The time-space-object continuum is created by the mind, just as we make a candle out of wax. The wax is the candle and when it melts, there is no candle. In the same way, the mind is extending itself.

Taming the mind

In physics, Vedanta, yoga and tantra, we read that time, space, and object are qualities of the mind. Just as this nose is one of my organs, the ears and eyes are other organs, but if I die, everything dies. So, these three - time, space and object - are the different manifestations of the mind. If you withdraw the mind, then everything is withdrawn.

You can live for a certain period beyond this creation. If you develop this art, you can transcend time, space, and object.



By transcending the mind, you can attain samadhi, the highest state in evolution, the acme of human life. But the problem is how to withdraw the mind. Modern science has accepted this, but it has not shown us how to manage the mind, nor has religion. The only science that has shown us the way is yoga and tantra. The purpose of yoga is to raise the mind, and for this, meditation is one of the greatest systems.

Meditation is dhyana yoga. It is not the yoga of unconsciousness; it is the yoga of complete consciousness of all that is happening within you. First you develop the awareness of the seer and become a witness of the thoughts. When this awareness is developed and the mind is completely withdrawn, then it is time to focus the awareness on an object like a flame, star, point, sound, idea, experience or mantra. Then you need to develop the total awareness of that object. When this happens, you will spontaneously enter that state of meditation. Go on meditating and transform the gross mind into subtle mind. Then transform the subtle mind into causal mind, to such an extent that the cosmic mind is drawn to a point. This is *bindu*, the nucleus of creation.

If this process does not take place, take the help of other forms of yoga, because they all prepare you for developing this

faculty. But don't expect it to be easy. The mind is the greatest force and in order to tame and harness this wild stallion, you must be ready to travel a lot.

First you must realize that the mind is a creative force. A thought is an expression of creation and you don't know it. You think a thought and something happens somewhere. Therefore, man's unhappiness, physical illness, intellectual limitations, emotional breakdowns and lack of many other faculties in his life can all be attributed to incorrect handling of the mind. In order to handle the mind, we must first develop the faculty of the seer. Unless we do this, we can never manage the mind.

Know thyself

Everyone should understand that meditation is a very important practice. There are various practices which you can learn according to your capacity. It is therefore important to encourage yoga and meditation seminars for beginners and old students alike. As we organize courses and you come to hear of them, please pass on the information so that many more people can take advantage of these opportunities. If you can put a few people in touch with yoga, you are doing them a great service, because man must know his own self. Without this, he cannot extricate himself from the tragedies of life. Happiness is within and that one has to know by practical experience.

Though man has tried everything, he has failed to secure happiness so far. Man has been following a mirage, a world of delusion. He should realize the world within, the happiness which is non-material does not depend on the object. There is a greater happiness which is homogenous and absolute, and that is the self, beyond the mind.

– 28 August 1979, *Satyanandashram, Barcelona, Spain*
Printed in YOGA, Vol. 18, No 8 (August 1980)

Anger Management

From Conquest of Anger, Swami Sivananda Saraswati

If an aspirant has controlled anger, half of his sadhana is over. Control of anger means control of passion also. Control of anger is really control of mind. He who has controlled anger cannot do any wrong or negative action. He is always just.

It is very difficult to say when a man will be thrown into a fit of fury. All of a sudden he gets an irresistible fit of anger over trifling matters. When anger assumes a grave form, it becomes difficult to control. It should therefore, be controlled when it is in the form of a small ripple in the subconscious mind. One should watch one's mind very, very cautiously. Whenever there is the least symptom or indication of light irritability, then and there it must be nipped. Then it becomes very easy to control anger. Be careful and vigilant and watch the ripple, then only you are a sage.

Whenever there is a little irritability, stop all conversation and observe *mouna*, silence. Practise *mouna* daily for one or two hours to help in controlling anger. Always try to speak sweet soft words. The words must be soft and the arguments hard; but if the reverse is the case it will lead to discord and disharmony. There is a sharp sword in every tongue.

If you find it difficult to control anger, leave the place at once and take a brisk walk. Drink some cold water immediately. This cools down the body and mind. Chant *Om* loudly like



a lion for ten minutes and then chant *Om Shanti* mentally or verbally for five minutes. Think of the picture of your *Ishta*, your chosen deity. Pray. Repeat your mantra for ten minutes. Gradually the anger will vanish.

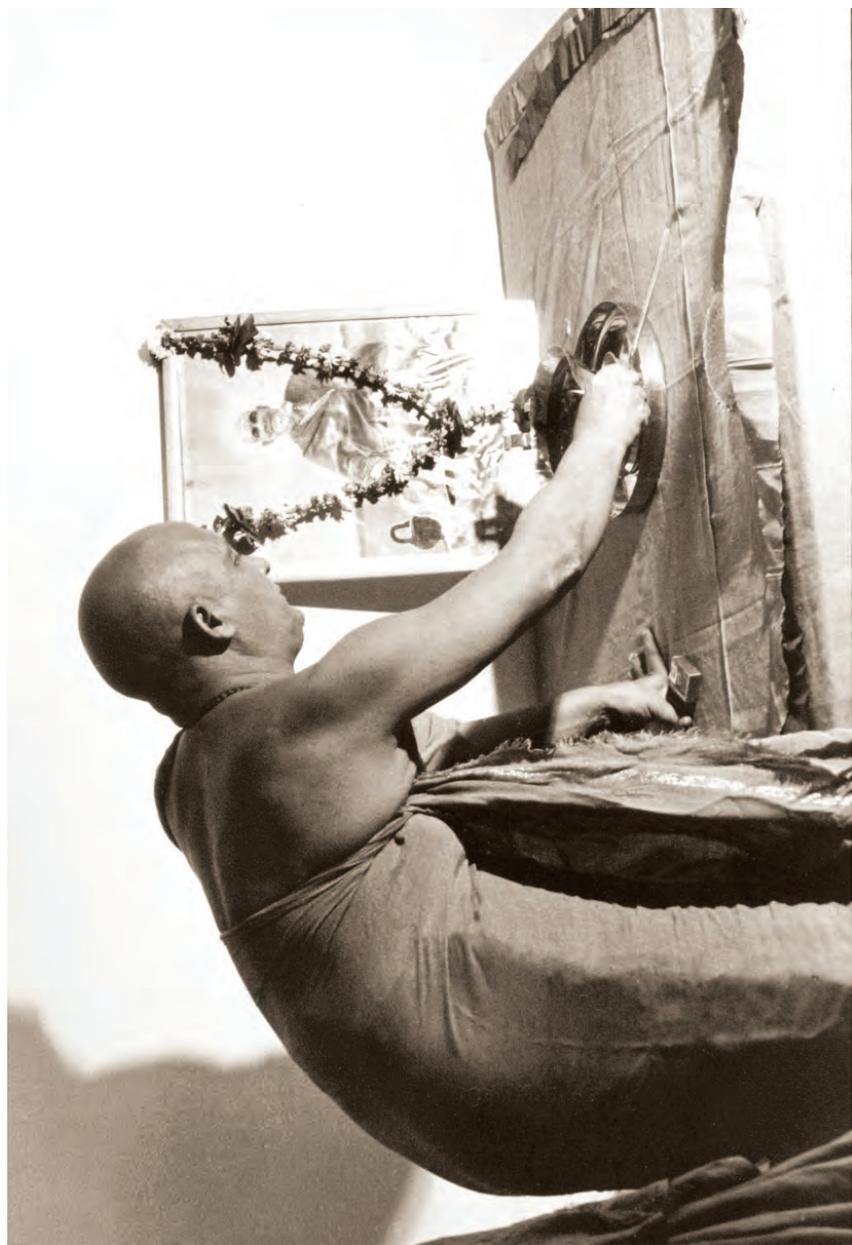
Find out the real cause of your anger and try to eradicate it. If a man abuses you and calls you names, you become furious at once. Your blood becomes hot. Why do you feel offended when he calls you 'a dog' or 'a donkey'? Have you grown four legs and a tail like a dog? Why do you get excited over little things? Enquire: What is this abuse? Is it not mere vibration in the ether? Am I body or atman? No one can injure atman. The atman of the abuser and the abused is one. Do I really gain anything by retaliating? I waste my energy. I hurt the feeling of another man. I disturb and pollute the thought world. I do real harm to the world by sending a current of hatred. This world is unreal. I will live here for a short time only. Let me bear this insult. Let me excuse him. I will develop inner mental strength and power of the endurance.

You can thus very effectively eradicate the feelings of anger. A time will come when you will not be irritated even a bit by harsh words, abuse and insults of this kind. You will not pay the least heed if a man says that such and such a man has said bad words against you. You will simply laugh the whole matter away. An irritable man is very weak and has no mental strength. You must try to remain cool even in the most provocative conditions.

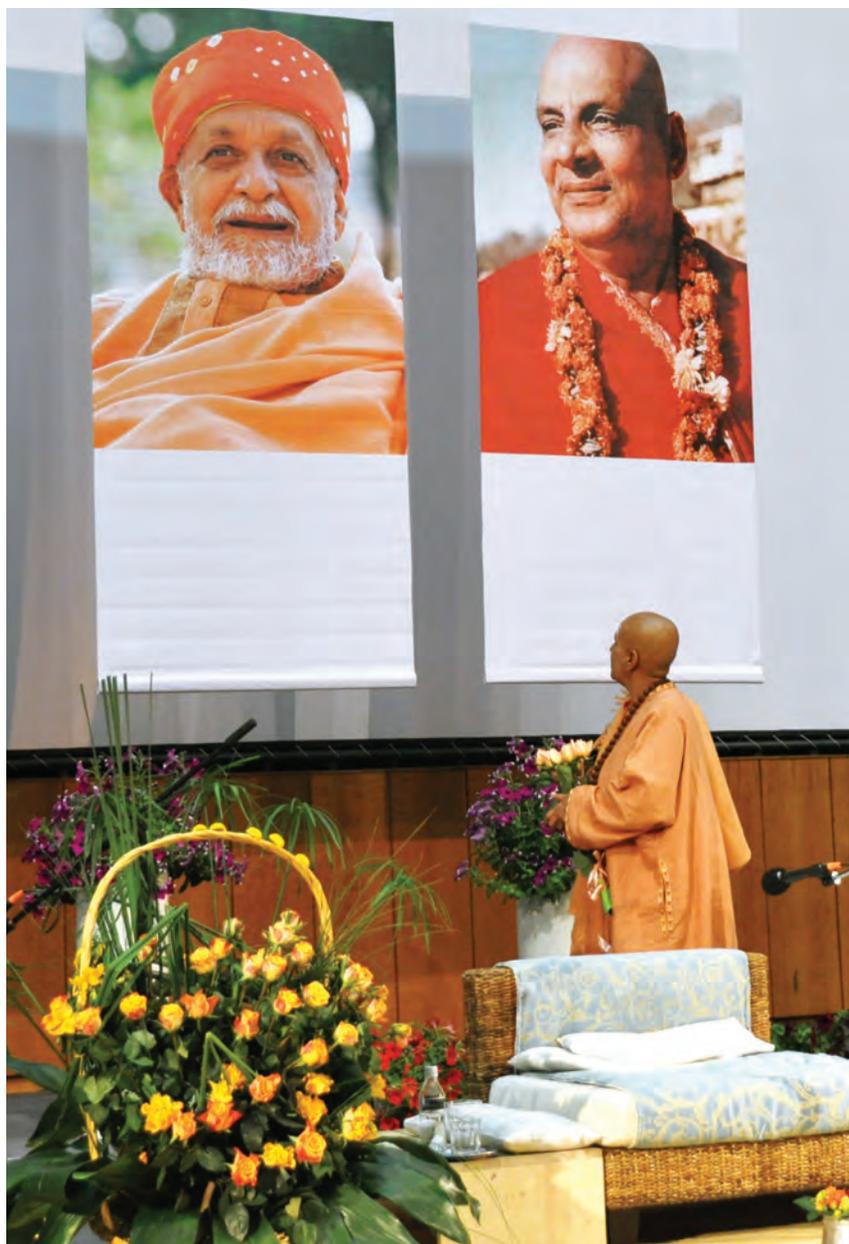
Boomerang

Anger acts as a boomerang
Because it injures the man
Who becomes angry.
It comes back to the angry man
And does harm to him.
Therefore control anger
By kshama, love, enquiry and service.





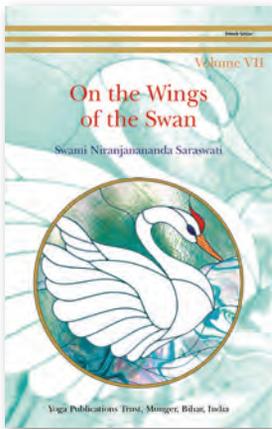






Concentration

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



What is the meaning of concentration? What is the meaning of being one-pointed? You have to define that first. If you are asked to look at something, and then you are asked, "What are you seeing?" what answer is expected? The answer that is expected is: "I'm seeing what you told me to see." However, if you do not give this answer and you give something else, what does this mean? It means that you are not focused.

That happened to the disciples of Guru Dronacharya. He placed a clay bird on top of a branch and told his archery students to shoot at the eye of the bird. That was the instruction, 'You have to shoot at the eye of the bird'. Then he called one of them, gave him the bow and arrow and asked, "What do you see?" The student said, "I see the tree, I see the branch, I see the leaves, I see the flowers, I see the fruits, I see the birds, I see . . ." That was not the answer that Dronacharya was expecting. He said, "You have failed. Get out." Very clearly, that student had not listened to what he was saying, but was making up his own collection of images around the image that Dronacharya had specified. Only Arjuna said, "I see nothing but the eye." He could see everything, but his mind was only looking at the eye. He gave the right answer and Dronacharya said, "You are the winner." There is no need even to shoot the arrow; when the answer is right. Also, if the answer is wrong, there is no need to shoot the arrow.

The point is that concentration means an unwavering mind. Imagine that you are sitting on one side of the road, and in

a shop on the opposite side there is some item that you are looking at. You are totally focused on that item. People cross by, cars and rickshaws go by, animals go by and you see them, but do you acknowledge them? No, because your attention is on the object that you desire. You see all these things passing, but there is no conscious acknowledgment of them. Later on, if somebody asks you, "Did you see that thing crossing there?" you will answer, "No. I wasn't looking there, I was focusing on something." That is one level of concentration. If you are aware of everything that is happening, that is not concentration, because then you are not aware of the actual thing on which you need to concentrate; you are not focused or one-pointed.

Concentration means holding the area of attention fixed in your mind despite all the distractions or movements around it. That is what you are told to do in each and every type of meditation as well. Even in mantra meditation, when the mind fluctuates, you bring it back and you hold it on the mantra. It will go again, so you bring it back and hold it there. The instructions do not say that you should look at this thing and look at that thing, one after the other. No. You bring the focus back again and again until only that awareness remains and all else dissolves. You focus yourself on the object of desire, and the same state is reflected inside in meditation.

– 9 April 2007, Ganga Darshan, Munger



Swadhyaya and Santosha – Niyama of Raja Yoga

SWADHYAYA

Swadhyaya means living wisdom, self-study, self-analysis, self-awareness, self-modification, study of the scriptures. It is necessary to understand your own nature. Swadhyaya means spiritual self-education, contemplation and application of the scriptures or sacred texts of your chosen path.

Swadhyaya is awareness and knowledge of how to apply what you already know in your life. It means practical application of the wisdom that you have acquired.

Self-analysis, self-observation, self-understanding begin by putting together the jigsaw puzzle of your life and learning to differentiate between strengths and weaknesses, between ambitions and needs. Swadhyaya gives an in-depth understanding of your nature and what qualities make you respond in a particular manner.

Sometimes the weaknesses are so overpowering that you have low self-esteem: confusion and doubts creep in. Sometimes the strengths are overwhelming, and you become overconfident, arrogant and rash. So many things can happen in each stage, and understanding this is known as swadhyaya.

Swadhyaya is a natural expression of a spiritual-minded person. Socrates, the Greek philosopher, said, "Know thyself." It was also inscribed on the Apollo temple in Delphi. To know oneself is the birthright and the foremost duty of a person.

Practice 1

Take up any book on any philosophy, whether it is Samkhya, Vedanta, Tantra, Christianity or Islam. It may be the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Bible*, *Koran*, *Yoga Vasishtha* or *Srimad Bhagavatam*. Take one page each day, read and study. Think about what you have

read, contemplate and try to understand. Let the information sink in and become part of you. Try to implement the wisdom of the lines you have studied.

Practice 2

The following practices can be used: SWAN meditation, Review of the Day (recollecting the events of the day), keeping a spiritual diary, antar mouna, meditation.

Outcome

Being established in wisdom, *jnana*, understanding.

SANTOSHA

Santosha means contentment, the feeling of fulfilment. It is one of the most difficult niyamas to apply. Santosha means to be happy with what we are, where we are, and what we have. Santosha is letting go of desires.

Discontentment means that you are always unhappy no matter what you do. You are always discontent either with yourself, other people, society or the world. There is a Russian saying: 'Everywhere is good where I am not'.

The mind is restless because of greed, wants, desires. 'Greed is a fire that consumes a man slowly, and contentment is a powerful means of extinguishing it.'

Vedanta teaches that there are four guards to the domain of liberation: peace, contentment, satsang and self-enquiry. In India you can see a beggar in the streets hungry and unwell but his attitude is: 'This is God's plan for me today, I didn't have any food. I hope tomorrow will be different'.

Whenever you find yourself in unpleasant circumstances, find something positive and uplifting and do not complain. There is an old Sufi saying: 'Either you complain or you want God. If you want God you do not complain.'

If you can be where you are and accept things as they are, in that personal adjustment with the environment, with the

conditions, states, different forms of behaviour, mentalities, attitudes and actions, you experience a deep feeling of santosha. It is acceptance of life as it is. It is also one of the practices of bhakti yoga, according to the nine stages described by Sri Rama.

In santosha, raja and bhakti yoga interlink. When you truly surrender to the will of God as in bhakti yoga, you no longer hanker for your own choices in life and you are content with whatever God chooses for you. Every complaint would be a denial of God's existence and presence in your life, and a bhakta will never do that.

Practice

Do not judge the outer circumstances. Do not complain. Accept. Practise santosha especially while doing karma yoga.

Outcome

Peace and happiness.

– Swami Omgyanam, Serbia



Self-Analysis

From Essence of Yoga, Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Daily self-analysis or self-examination is an indispensable requisite. Then alone can you remove your defects and can grow rapidly in spirituality. A gardener watches the young plants very carefully. He removes the weeds daily. He puts a strong fence around them. He waters them at the proper time. Then alone they grow beautifully and yield fruits quickly.

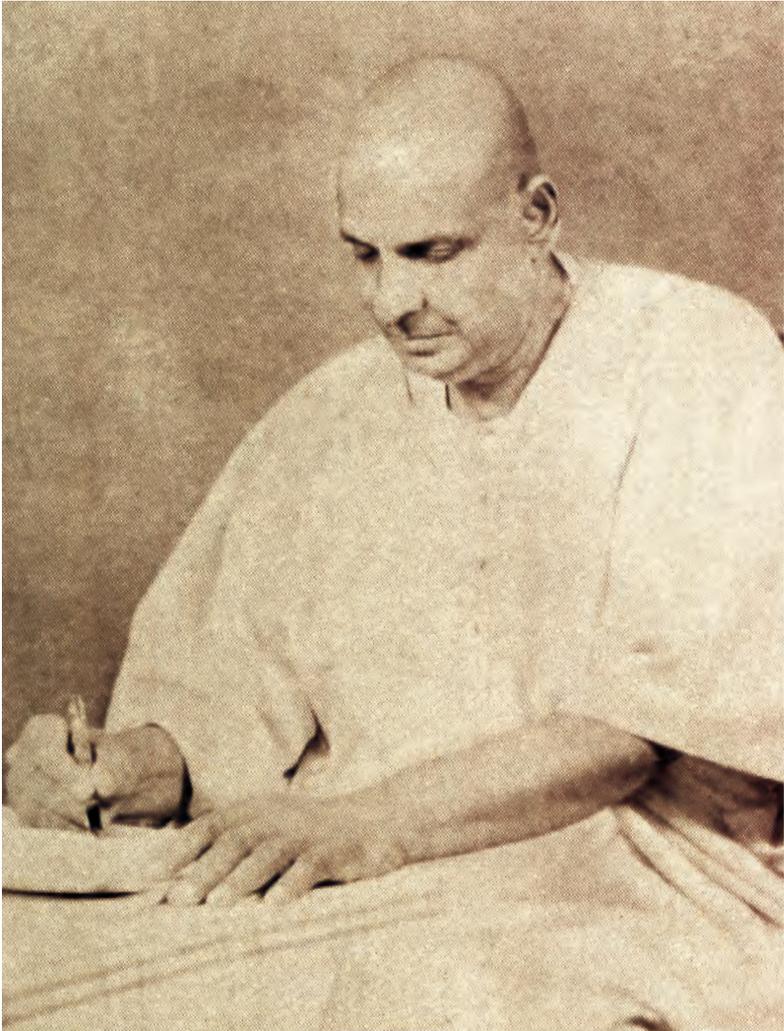
Even so, you should find out your defects through daily introspection and self-analysis and then eradicate them through suitable methods. If one method fails, you must adopt a combined method. If prayer fails, you should take recourse to satsang or association with the wise, pranayama, meditation, dietetic regulation, enquiry. You should destroy not only big waves of pride, hypocrisy, passion, anger, that manifest on the surface of the conscious mind but also their subtle impressions which lurk in the corners of the subconscious mind. Then only are you perfectly safe.

These subtle impressions are very dangerous. They lurk like thieves and attack you when you are napping, when you are not vigilant, when your dispassion wanes, when you slacken a bit your daily spiritual practice, and when you are provoked. If these defects do not manifest even under extreme provocation on several occasions, even when you are not practising daily introspection and self-analysis, you can rest assured that the subtle impressions also are obliterated. Now you are safe.

The practice of introspection and self-analysis demands patience, perseverance, leech-like tenacity, application, iron will, iron determination, subtle intellect, courage. But you will gain a fruit of incalculable value. The precious fruit is immortality, Supreme Peace and Infinite Bliss. You will have to pay a heavy price for this. Therefore, you should not murmur when you do daily practice. You should apply your full mind,

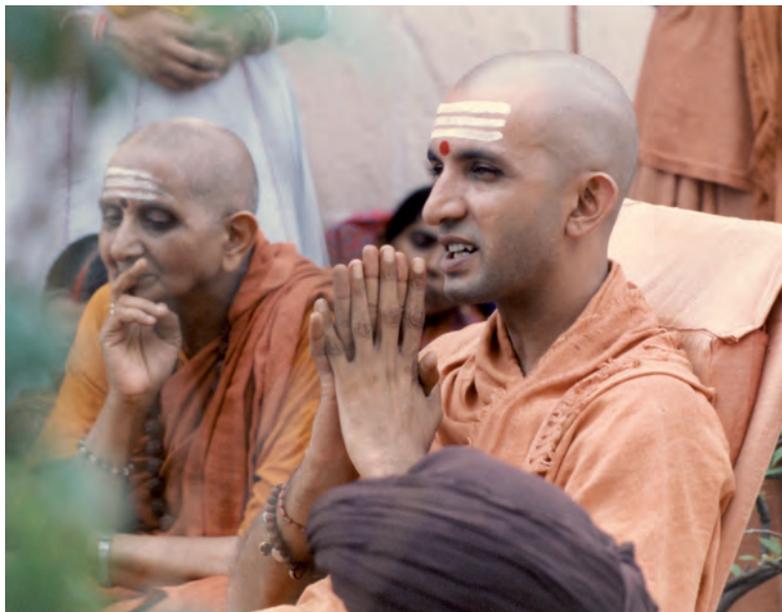
heart, intellect and soul to spiritual practice. Then only rapid success is possible.

Keep a daily spiritual diary and practise self-analysis or self-examination at night. Note down how many good actions you have done; what mistakes you have committed during the course of the day. In the morning resolve: "I will not yield to anger today. I will speak truth today."



Paramahamsaji's Gift

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



When Paramahamsaji left the ashram in 1988 and went into seclusion, many people who had known him had very strong head trips. What will happen to us? Who will guide us? To whom can we give our feelings of love and affection? There was a general feeling of abandonment. Some people felt betrayed. Some people even returned their geru dhotis and malas, saying that if Swami Satyananda was not a guru any more, they were not disciples any more. At that time they were looking at the superficial, external aspect of a person who had a greater role and mission to fulfil in life.

People are very self-centred and sometimes it is difficult to make them understand. Even during the yajna parikrama, people would come and say to me, "I want to speak to you for a minute. My brother has a hernia. What can I do for it?" All

these things make me feel that people's problems, fears and hang-ups take the prominent place in their lives and they fail to see the beauty and goodness that life has to offer.

As a sadhaka, as a spiritual aspirant, as a sannyasin, as an initiate, one must try to develop another kind of attitude, another kind of vision in relation to one's life and in relation to one's personal connection with a higher reality. Today we can all appreciate that Paramahamsaji has not retired; rather he has become more active, more dynamic on a different plane or level. He is offering us much more than we could have ever expected. Therefore, the fears that people had are unfounded.

Udhava's lesson

There is a very beautiful story from Krishna's life. When he left Vrindavan and went to Mathura, after he had grown up and played with all the gopis, he was declared a prince because he was the son of the heir to the throne of Mathura. Because of his duties he could not go back to his friends or to the village where he had grown up. But he could feel the emotions which his foster parents and former playmates were having and those feelings would come to him in the form of waves. So he called one of his closest friends, Udhava, and said, "Please go to Vrindavan and Gokul where the people are pining for me. Explain to them that right now it is not possible for me to come."

A beautiful discussion took place between Krishna and Udhava. Udhava was considered to be one of the greatest jnanis of that age. He was also arrogant about his knowledge. He would talk to Krishna and identify with Krishna but without form; in place of the physical form he would always see a light. When Krishna told him that the gopis were attached to the physical form, Udhava could not understand. He said, "Why are they attached to your physical form? I will show them the way to identify with your formless aspect so that they can experience *shanti*, peace. If they identify with your physical form then they are identifying with *maya*, illusion. Because of

maya they are experiencing *prem*, love, but that love is causing them a lot of pain and suffering.”

Udhava took a sankalpa to make everyone understand the nature of Krishna’s formless divinity. But when he reached Vrindavan no one was willing to listen to him; they were all pining for the return of Krishna, for his touch, for his physical presence. They said to Udhava, “You might be the biggest jnani, but you have not yet experienced love and, therefore, your knowledge is not complete. If you experience love and if you experience the suffering, the pain and the yearning that comes with love, then you will know what we are feeling.” Udhava had not experienced that love for God, so all his wisdom and knowledge was halved. He got the message that knowledge itself is not enough.

Towards atmabhava

Jnana is a dry subject. The intellect, *buddhi*, is used, but not the emotion, the feeling, *bhavana*, *bhakti*. I have told you this story to emphasize the idea that along with knowledge, understanding and wisdom, there has to be an appreciation of feelings and love. These feelings and love have to be directed. Our love is at present what Swami Sivananda called prostitute’s love. There are different forms of love and as human beings what we experience is a love which flirts with one object of pleasure then another. Swami Sivananda has used a very strong word but the flirtatious nature of our mind has to be contained. The ability to control the mind, which the *Yoga Sutras* calls ‘*chitta vritti nirodhah*’, must be attained by every person. It is like the brake in a car. How often you use the brake depends on the situation and circumstances, but alertness and awareness have to be maintained; the brakes must not fail in an emergency. The safety feature allows us to train and guide our inner experiences, feelings, intelligence and emotions in a direction through which we experience completeness and wholeness.

Just because you shed tears when you sit in front of a saint is not an indication of your inner bhakti. Just because your heart

melts when you see somebody is not an indication of your love. Just because your heart throbs and you feel attracted and attached to somebody is not an indication of your true feeling for that person. Love has to be understood in a different way. When we feel love for somebody or something we want to possess it. I like something, I want to have it. I love somebody, I want to possess that person. That is very superficial. Some people call it conditioned love; Swami Sivananda called it prostitute's love. We are only expressing that to satisfy the vacuum that is already within us. We want to fill in the gap, the void that we are feeling inside and all our effort is directed towards this fulfilment.

We are searching all the time. Even with gurus, not to speak of friends and family members, we develop an expectation so that we can have a place to go and change the mental environment. Sometimes we experience joy and security. We come with an inspiration and later on we become dependent on that feeling, obsessed with that situation. We have to curb this tendency. Krishna never went back to Vrindavan or to Gokul. He left his flute behind and never played it again. But there was no difference between Krishna who was far away and the gopis who were living in Vrindavan and Gokul. They were always united. They led their lives with their husbands, children and household duties, but in spirit they were one with Krishna. Even in sleep they were thinking about Krishna. That is mind identification.

This mind identification is one of the greatest assets that a



human being can have. But there is a pitfall. When we feel that we are identifying with somebody who represents a quality, a state of perfection, then arrogance also comes in. I am a true devotee, a true bhakta and I can identify. The feeling of being superior to other people is arrogance which leads one further away from God. It happened to Udhava. He was so arrogant about his wisdom and knowledge, thinking that he could see the real form of God, that he missed totally the experience of pure bhakti and love. In the life of a sadhaka, pure love and bhakti also have to manifest at one point or another, even if it is on the death bed. It is bound to manifest. You may be far away from bhakti, you may not recognize or give space to the feeling of inner love. But it will come, even if only for a moment, and that moment will be the richest and most fulfilling one of your life.

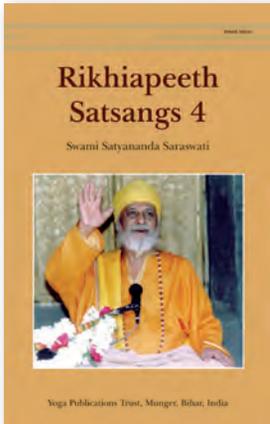
The sadhana and the guidance that Paramahamsaji is giving us through his personal example is: see the divinity in everything. Do not think of God as something far away from yourselves. Do not be afraid of God; rather, try to understand that nature, that life force which is inherent in each and everyone. The absence of that life force is death. In the same way, God is present in each and every aspect of creation. God is not formless. Maybe one of the attributes of God is formlessness, but definitely God has form. Each one of us is a symbol of that form.

The recognition of that nature in each and everyone is a sadhana, a guideline being given to us by Paramahamsaji. It is not only a recognition but also a feeling of oneness with other beings, identifying with the suffering and also the happiness of other people. Of course, this is tough but a way has to be found. This was the gift which each one of us received during the yajna. Let everyone take a sankalpa to preserve this gift from Paramahamsaji for times to come.

*– 4 December 1995, Ganga Darshan, Munger
Printed in YOGA, Vol. 7, Issue 1 (March 1996)*

Ishta Devata

From Rikhiapeeth Satsangs 4, Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Knowledge about the ishta is spontaneous and easy; it happens by itself. Mirabai did not have to look for her ishta. When she was a little girl, a sadhu came to visit her father and stayed in the palace. He had a statue of Sri Krishna with him that Mira spontaneously accepted. She never felt anything other than acceptance: *Mero to Giridhara Gopala doosaro na koi* - "To me, only Krishna is dear, and no one else." Why did she not go towards Rama or Shiva?

Understand first what is meant by ishta. *Ishta* means 'desired', that which I desire mentally is ishta. In the same vein, a desired person is an ishta person or a desired god is an *ishta devata*. The one you desire is your ishta. You should know what you wish for. How would anyone else know? If you want many things, if you want Rama, but you also want Krishna, and you also wish for Devi, then it is difficult to fix the ishta. I faced this problem, too. Since childhood, Sri Rama has naturally been my ishta. Later, I joined a Shaiva community - after all, sannyasins are all Shaiva - and what mantra did I receive? That of Shiva! Now who is my ishta? I thought to myself, 'I will keep Sri Rama as my ishta, but my ishta mantra will be panchakshari.' So, my ishta mantra and my ishta devata are different. This is no loss to me, but a profit.

Here, *ishta devata* means that devata through whom you are trying to reach God. Ishta devata is that ladder by which you are trying to reach the roof; it is the road by which you are trying to reach your goal. Which road you take is something that each person must decide for themselves. Guru only gives

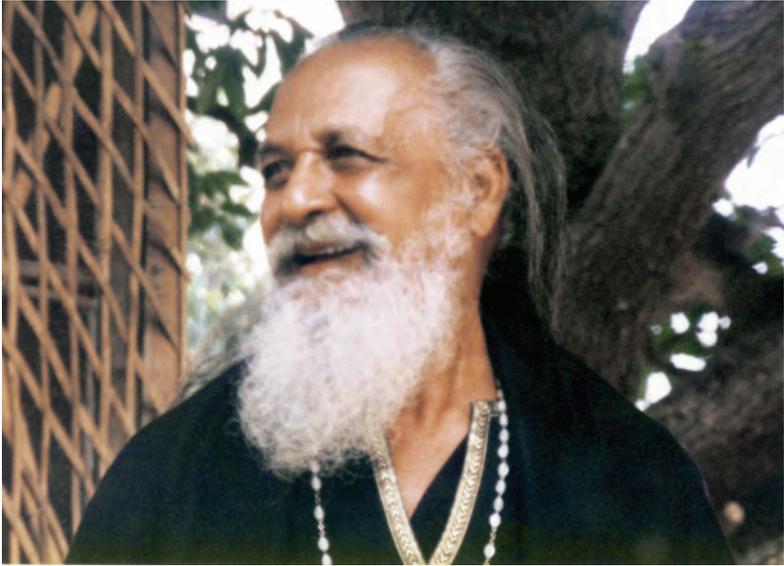
you a mantra. He does not tell you of your ishta. Guru will not tell you to worship Shiva, Rama or Devi. No, he only gives mantra. The mantra may be *Om Namah Shivaya*, *Sri Rama*, *Namo Narayana* or *Hrim Krim*, it can be anything.

Ishta mantra is the name and ishta devata is the form. Name and form are the two appellations of God. A form is necessary in choosing an ishta. Which is the form that appeals to you, and what is your relationship with it? Is it a relationship of lover and beloved like Mirabai, a master-servant relationship like Hanuman, a mother and son relationship like Yashoda, or a friendship like Radha and Krishna? These are only examples that I am giving you. You have to see the relationship you have. Ishta mantra and devata can be the same or different.

It is only a form

There are no two Gods. Yes, the form of God that is chosen may be different. You have chosen to believe in one form, I have chosen to believe in another, and somebody else has chosen yet another form. In our minds and brains there can be different portraits of God. Just as the light of the sun appears to be red through red glass, blue through blue glass, yellow through yellow glass, green through green glass and white through white glass, the fact is that the sun is none of these. Similarly, there is a different picture or form of God in every person's mind: *Jaki rahi bhavana jaisi, prabhu murata tina dekhi taisi* – "As is one's sentiment, so is one's perception of the form of divinity."

When God incarnates, He takes some form. Whenever God has granted someone a vision of Himself, it has been in some form. Whenever a rishi has written a song of praise, it has been of some particular form and figure. This does not mean that God is many. You made rabadi from milk, I made peda and she made rasagulla, but the milk is the same. The forms of milk are many. The clothes that you are wearing all come from cotton. Many things have come out of cotton, a kurta, trousers, a sari or a bedspread, but the cotton remains cotton.



Similarly, God is not many; He is one. Rama and Shiva are both one. Meditate on Rama and repeat the mantra *Om Namah Shivaya*; there is no conflict between the two. The stories may have differences, Shiva lives in Kailash while Rama lives in Ayodhya; however, when you are meditating on the truth, there should not be confusion of this kind.

Shiva and Rama

I believed in Sri Rama because I was born into the same clan as Sri Rama. I was born into the Ikshvaku clan, and Sri Rama was worshipped in our home. Shiva was also worshipped, and in Kumaon it is common practice to worship Devi. In Almora, Garhwal and Nainital all the people are worshippers of Devi. All of Uttarakhand worships Devi, and it is said that She took birth there as an avatara. As I was born into a kshatriya family of the Ikshvaku clan, I naturally liked the bow-bearing Sri Rama. Since childhood he has captivated me. He always carried a bow and arrow, and was a symbol of courage and bravery. To all, he was the model of beauty and decorum, an example of appropriate behaviour. However, I came into Shiva's

community. I liked Shiva too and then I came to understand that they are admirers of each other. Shiva praises Rama and Rama prays to Shiva. No problem!

For Sita's wedding, which is going to happen here this year, a picture of Shiva and Parvati will be painted on the back wall of the wedding pandal. People will think, 'Oh, how has Shiva come to be at a Vaishnava wedding?' Actually, it is very important for Shiva to be present at the wedding of Sita and Rama. Shiva has even said to Sri Rama, "Whenever you are married, I will certainly be there." It is even written in the Puranas that he had attended the wedding of Rama.

Do not become confused about ishta devata and mantra. Whatever form of God appeals to you, make it your own. Eat whatever sweet you like. After all, they are both made from milk; it does not matter. It is okay to repeat the mantra of Rama and worship the same form. Also, it is not essential that the form is worshipped; worship of only the name may be done. It has been emphasized in the *Ramacharitamanas* that the repetition of the name of Rama alone is enough, whether you worship the form of Shiva or Rama.

– 24 October 1997



Bhakti Yoga

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Bhakti yoga is the only yoga in which you transcend the last barrier of your life which separates you from your God. That barrier is *ahamkara*, self-identity. Just as hatha yoga is good for body and prana, raja yoga is good for the mind and mental expressions, bhakti yoga is a yoga which softens the ego. The ego is hard in everybody, like a hard potato. When a potato is hard, when ego is hard, nothing much can be done. You boil the potato, you make it soft. The more you boil, the softer it becomes, and the softer it is, the tastier it becomes. The hard potato can become potato mash, with some nice butter and everything thrown into it.

How can this potato be made soft? Only by boiling in water, not by putting it in the sun, not by putting it in the microwave. To make a potato soft, there is only one way— boiling water. To make the ego soft there is only one way – bhakti. The softer your ego becomes, the more natural, the more spontaneous you become in life, you become less hypocritical and put on less masks on a day-to-day basis, and that is the power of bhakti. People associate bhakti with emotion, but remember that emotions are expressions of your ego.

Your birth

Visualize this story: You are not yet born. In the depth of space, somewhere in the universe, somebody calls you and says, “Listen you have to pack and go. You have to go to Earth and take birth there, so you pack your luggage.” So in the remote corner of space, in the dark, you go and find your bag, put your basic necessities in your bag, and you come to God and say, “I’m ready to travel.” God says, “Okay, take this flight. This shuttle will go to the womb of that person. You get off there and that is your station.” So you take the cosmic shuttle,

the shuttle drops you in the womb of somebody, with your baggage, and you take a physical birth.

When you are born, what is born with you? Body is born with you, senses come with you as part of the body, mind and spirit come in. Five senses, one mind – they are the companions of spirit. They are the agents of spirit through which spirit functions in this world, and therefore it is said that karmas come back.

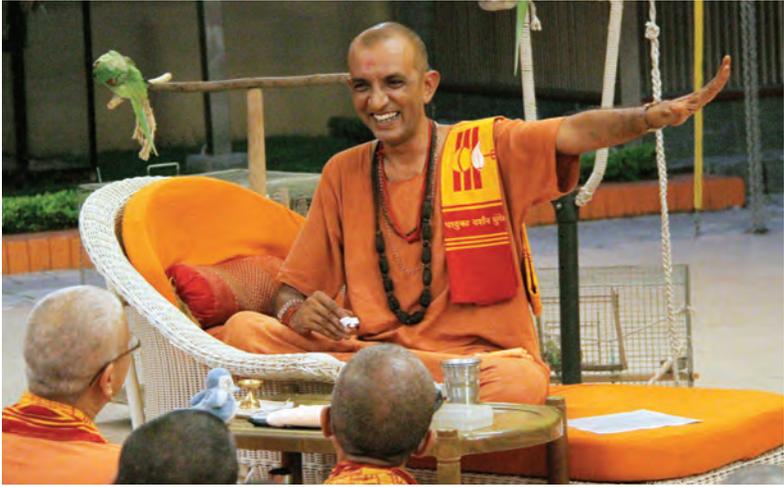
It is not the spirit which brings them. It is the mind, the individual mind, the ego, which brings the individual karmas. If it is only spirit coming into this life then there is no karma, but when mind comes in with spirit, there is a karma of the past which continues in this life. When mind comes in, it comes with certain six habits: *kama*, passion, self-gratification; *krodha*, anger, self-abuse; *lobha*, greed, wanting to possess and acquire for oneself; *moha*, self-identification, infatuation; *mada*, arrogance, and *matsarya*, jealousies and envies.

Becoming humble

In hatha yoga, in asana and pranayama, you master your body, but that does not change anything qualitatively in your life. In raja yoga you find a little bit of peace and balance and de-stress yourself, and you are a better person to deal with your life situations, but nothing more than that.

To bring out the power of the positive qualities, you have to follow the path of bhakti yoga, because bhakti yoga becomes the antidote to crush Hydra, who has six heads: kama, krodha, lobha, moha, mada, matsarya. Once the Hydra is killed, the ego becomes humble, and with humility, the positive aspects of life flower. That is bhakti. The flowering of the positive qualities of life is bhakti.

Devotion is one aspect of bhakti. Just as an arm is one part of your body, it is not your body, the eyes are only part of your body, they don't represent your whole body. In the same way, devotion is only one aspect of bhakti, it is not the whole bhakti. The goal of bhakti is to attain humility by overcoming



the negative traits of our nature and cultivating the positive. One practice of bhakti yoga is the cultivation of the positive understanding, awareness and attitude through pratipaksha bhavana.

The understanding of this pratipaksha bhavana comes with the first stage of bhakti, which is satsang. The first stage of bhakti is thinking about the unusual thing. You think about usual things at home, so what can be unusual? Something which is not your usual way of thinking. The unusual way of thinking is different to the social, familial, professional and personal, and you move beyond anything that is yours into a selfless area. When you are able to leave your selfish boundaries, at first you may not even cross your line but you can put your head over the line, even that is enough in bhakti. You don't have to cross the line, you can just put your head over the line. The moment you put your head over the line you will become humble. The ego is finished.

Triggers of emotion

The ego is the cause giving birth to detrimental behaviour in life. When there is detrimental behaviour in life, bhakti cannot be perfected. It is not that you say, "I am practising bhakti and

I am positive, clear and proper,” and then as you leave your room you start fighting with somebody. No. It is an awareness which you have to hold.

My guru Sri Swami Satyananda used to tell us that just as a crystal ball has no colour and reflects those colours on which it is placed, similarly our emotions don't have any colour. They take on a colour according to situations, events and circumstances. If you see a child, there is a natural feeling of affection. If you see a bag of money lying on the ground there is a natural feeling of greed. If you see your lover there is a natural feeling of passion and desire. If you see your adversary there is a natural feeling of adversity.

Emotions are triggered when your senses come in contact with a sense object. However, if there is *pratyahara*, then where will the emotions be triggered from? Not through the senses. At that time, the condition of your emotion is going to be unadulterated, pure, and that emotion has to be now focused on a positive idea, thought or belief, which uplifts and elevates you, and which brings joy, peace and contentment.

Need for satsang

Three points have been given to identify bhakti. *Satyam* – that which is always truthful. *Shivam* – that which is always auspicious. *Sundaram* – that which is always beautiful. Cultivate these three attitudes in your mind and you will become a bhakta.

In order to cultivate these three conditions of mind, you have to move through the nine stages of bhakti yoga, in which the first is satsang. *Satsang* means what is happening now: becoming aware of something different to the usual, the normal, and making the effort to experience it. The change of thought process begins with satsang and until and unless there is satsang there is no change of thought process.

Books do not give satsang. You have read about yoga in books, but when you come here you find that many of the understandings and opinions presented are different to what is

written in the books. That is satsang. It gives an understanding of something beyond the conditioned perception. It makes you aware of another possibility. And when you become aware of the other possibility and you make the effort, then satsang has become the first step in attaining this transformation in yourself.

Become a happy friend to all

The second quality is to always have a positive and pious attitude and a happy disposition in life. The Niranjana Challenge is, 'Can you remain happy for one day without getting any blue mood?' Just try to be happy from morning to night, from the time you wake up until the time you go to bed. Maintain one state of happiness. Avoid and shun all disagreements, aggressions, envies and jealousies. Just hold onto one feeling of happiness.

Even if you scream at somebody, be happy inside. Even when you are screaming at somebody, you are smiling and not really frowning, for the moment you frown you change your mood. Can you be angry in a state of happiness? Can you be efficient in the state of happiness? Can you be pleasant by maintaining that state of happiness? If you can do it for one day, you win the Niranjana Challenge.

It is the channelling of emotion away from the experiences and expressions of hatred, anger, arrogance, jealousy, passion and infatuation that leads to finding peace and luminosity within. The disconnection of the emotions from the world is bhakti yoga. When the negative association of emotions with the world lessens and positive association develops – that is bhakti yoga.

In the *Bhagavad Gita* (12:13), Sri Krishna defines bhakti yoga not as devotion, but as a state where there is no duality. There is the feeling of oneness, *adveshata sarvabhootaanaam*. There is no feeling of others being strangers; you are a friend to everyone – this was the statement of Sri Krishna.

– 17 August 2014, Ganga Darshan, Munger

Your Heart is Your Address

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



An encounter with God is not a remote possibility; it is a reality but the fine-tuning of life has to happen. We are unable to do that at present.

The effect and influence of the yugas also plays a major role. The environment, education and samskaras that we imbibe and are growing up with are MacDonalds, Coca Cola and fast food. There are many media diversions, and the whole world is becoming like an entertainment place. For example, there are more visitors from all over the world to Disneyland and Disneyworld than to any other place in the world. In fifteen to twenty years time the whole world will become a big entertainment centre. It is already becoming that.

With this kind of mentality, will we be able to rise spiritually? Each one of us has to answer this question. One thing

is definite, with the appropriate living it does become possible to commune with God as is seen in the lives of saints and the enlightened beings of our age. The classical example is Paramahansa Ramakrishna, talking to Mother every day.

Ramakrishna Paramahansa

According to Ramakrishna Paramahansa, the way to commune with God is to give God your address. There is a story from his life. Somebody once asked him, "You commune with Mother everyday why don't you ask her to give me darshan?" So Thakur said, "All right I will tell mother to give you darshan but you have to provide the right address." So the man took some paper and pen and wrote down his address and gave it to Thakur Ramakrishna. Ramakrishna looked at that piece of paper and said, "Sorry, this is not your address. Give me *your* address." So the man wrote the address of his work office and gave it to Thakur. He looked at it and he said, "No, this is your office address; it is not *your* address." The man was stumped. He said, "What do you mean?" Thakur said, "I want *your* address. What you have given me is the address of your family and friends, where you live in your body but *your* address is inside you. If you can give me your address then I will ask Mother to come and visit you. As long as you cannot give me your address, don't even think about it." This incident indicates that you have to open your heart and stop the search through your mind.

There is another story. One day an old lady came out of her house and started to search her surroundings for something. A man who was walking along saw this old lady searching for something and said, "Can I help you to search for what you have lost?" The lady said, "Yes, you can help me. I have lost my needle." So the man also started to search for the lost needle and while searching he asked, "Where did you lose it?" The woman replied, "I lost it inside my house, but it is absolutely pitch dark in there, therefore, I am searching for the needle out in the daylight."

Look in the right place

Everybody says God is inside us but we never search inside, we always search outside as it is too dark inside. It is also said that God resides in the purity of heart but all our searching for Him is through the mind, not through the heart. Our entire search is based on equations and calculations. This book says this, and that book says something else, and third book says something else again. We continually use the mind.

How will we ever come to the realization that the divine strength or the transformative transcendental energy is within us if we are looking in the wrong place? We are just like the woman who is searching for the needle outside the house and not inside where she lost it. We are searching for God outside, through the mind. We are not looking at the inner room, in the heart, where we have been told God lives.

In every religion, culture and tradition the realized beings have said that the transformative experience, the transcendental energy, is in the heart. Despite hearing this so many times we are all searching for him or her out there.

To realize God the purity of heart, *shuddha bhavana*, is important, and not *ashuddha bhavana*, impure sentiments. Impure sentiments arise due to association with the material world. Shuddha bhavana arises when we are able to remove ourselves from the conflicting experiences of the material world and direct and channel our effort and energy to cultivate pure sentiments.

It is said that God is love. Love is not a mental behaviour; it is a behaviour of the heart. It is said God lives in compassion. Compassion is not a mental behaviour; it is an expression of the heart. It is said God is with those people who are selfless. Selfish people who desire for themselves are using the mind, whereas selfless people who have no expectation or desire have opened the doors of their heart and the divine light is seen shining.

– 20 September 2009, Ganga Darshan, Munger



Padma Bhushan to Yoga

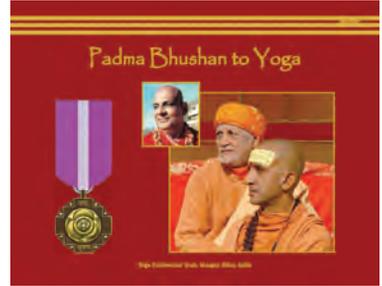
80 pp, soft cover, ISBN: 978-93-84753-33-7

A memory of the bestowal of Padma Bhushan honours for yoga upon Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati.

The story of the Padma Bhushan award is a dedication to Swami Niranjan: the person, the yogi, the child, the master, for his achievements and the inspiration he has kindled in all those who have come into contact with him.

However, Swamiji said, "The recognition has been given to the work, which was inspired by Swami Sivananda and by Swami Satyananda. We have simply continued in their footsteps . . . Definitely it does not belong to an individual, but to everyone who has worked for yoga."

A special new publication



Yoga Publications Trust, Garuda Vishnu, PO Ganga Darshan, Fort, Munger, Bihar 811 201, India, Tel: +91-06344-222430 , 06344-228603, 09304799615 • Fax: 91+6344+220169

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



Websites

www.biharyoga.net

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

YOGA & YOGAVIDYA Online

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

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



YOGA and YOGAVIDYA magazines are also now available as a free app for IOS devices. The app can be downloaded from:

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/developer/bihar-school-of-yoga/id1134424786>

The app is being offered by Bihar School of Yoga as prasad for all yoga aspirants.

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.



- Registered with the Department of Post, India
Under No. HR/FBD/297/16-18
Office of posting: BPC Faridabad
Date of posting: 1st-7th of every month
- Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers, India
Under No. BIHENG/2002/6305

issn 0972-5717

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:

Bihar School of Yoga, Ganga Darshan, Fort, Munger, Bihar 811201, India

Tel: +91-06344-222430, 06344-228603, Fax: +91-06344-220169

Website: www.biharyoga.net

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