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Hari Om

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GUIDELINES FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

It is important to know what an ideal system of physical culture should be, so that the value of yogasanas can be judged in the light of the ideal. An ideal system is that which requires the smallest amount of energy to be spent in order to secure the greatest amount of benefit. It can affect a maximum increase in the vital index, build up a healthy nervous system, ensure health for the excretory organs of the body, take care of the circulatory system, and also develop the muscular system. All these conditions are fulfilled by yogasanas.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

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

तपस्विभ्योऽधिको योगी ज्ञानिभ्योऽपि मतोधिकः । कर्मिभ्यश्चाधिको योगी तस्माद्योगी भवार्जुन ॥

Yoga

From Essence of Yoga, Swami Sivananda Saraswati



Yoga is the discipline of the mind, senses and physical body. Yoga helps in the coordination and control of the subtle forces within the body. Yoga brings in perfection, peace and everlasting happiness.

Yoga can help you in your business and in your daily life. You can have calmness of mind at all times by the practice of yoga. You can have restful sleep. You can have increased energy, vigour, vitality, longevity and a high standard of health. Yoga transmutes the animal nature into divine nature and raises you to the pinnacle of divine glory and splendour.

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

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

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

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

Yoga Techniques Applied to Autism Spectrum Disorder – (Part 1 of 3)

Silvia Edith Fernández, (Sadhana), Ciudad de Tolhuin, Provincia de Tierra del Fuego, Argentina

Summary

The present report is the result of the systematization of an experiment. This was carried out during six years with children diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The children were assisted with individual, frequent and systematic yoga meetings within an interdisciplinary context. The implemented sessions used principles and patterns defined in the work known as *Connected Integration Pattern*[®].

The objective was focused on unblocking the perceptive channels, specifically those involved in the vestibular, proprioceptive and touch systems, with the purpose of lowering or deleting the identified alterations and disorders in children with autism. This was the way to improve their communicational level, and therefore, their interaction with the environment. The results showed that the children who attended this program were able to reduce their anxiety levels, they understood and regulated emotional states and as a consequence, they improved their living standard and their interaction levels with each other. The conclusions are highly optimistic and open the door to a new knowledge.

Introduction

Cases of Pervasive Developmental Disorders (PDD) have increased by 700% in the last decades. In 1975, it was one child in every five thousand; in the year 2000, one in every 300 and seven years ago, one in every 150 was affected. The updated

statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in the United States indicate that nowadays, one in every 68 children is diagnosed with an Autism Spectrum Disorder. That implies an increase of 30% in just over three years. (1)

The statistics about Trastorno General del Desarrollo (TGD), general disorder of development, and autism in Argentina are neither clear nor updated, though most of the specialists consider that the local statistics are similar to those of the United States, where more boys are affected than girls by four to one.

The present work focuses on the communication skills of a child diagnosed with autism. Communication is a variation of useful behaviour, which is used within the structure of social interchanges, with the intention of transferring information, observations, inner states or changes in the immediate environment. It includes not only the verbal behaviour but also the non-verbal.

Regarding children with autism, social relationships represent an area where difficulties are shown; thus, it is not surprising to observe that their effective communication is significantly altered or disabled. Communication and social abilities are closely related.

The factors which determine the autism diagnosis make reference to sensory aspects, behaviour, social feedback, inflexibility and rigidity. All of them are directly or indirectly interwoven with the communicational aspects.

Communication is based on an individual's ability to differentiate between one's own existence and that of another individual. Without this differentiation there would be no need for communication. There is no need for communication without differentiation. Manifestation of expression through words and gestures comes later at a second stage. Since 1970, there have been various investigations of people with ASD, that register the impact on their development within their communicative and linguistic skills.

Nowadays, a focused and systematic intervention program is developed to deal with treatment for children with autism. This program focuses on communication and linguistic aims. This gap in the development of language contributes mainly to the sustained behaviours of social isolation, preventing or restricting other learning.

A working hypothesis will be settled within this background considering whether 'children diagnosed with autism will be able to perform at a communication level superior than the starting point, through specific and systematic practice of yoga specified techniques'.

It has already been mentioned that communication is essential regarding both its expressive and receptive levels. Recovering or rehabilitating a viable and functional way of communicating for a person with autism will enable a behaviour more in accordance with the environment, help reduce anxiety levels, and understand and control emotional states. Consequently, the living standard and the ability to live in society will be improved.

The aim of this study is to unblock the perceptive channels, specifically those involved in the vestibular, proprioceptive and touch systems, through yoga trainings, having as a purpose to diminish or eradicate alterations identified as dysfunctions in children with autism, to improve their communication level and their interaction with the environment. The intervention program is composed of the following aims to guide the task towards the different manifestations of communicative skills:

- Identify different alterations and dysfunctions.
- Detect channels that are affected.
- Apply yoga sessions using techniques that act in the noticed areas.
- Record the observations that result in the release of those channels.
- Analyze periodically the results with an interdisciplinary team.

Theoretical framework

The progress of technology applied to medical science and the need of specialization has reduced the understanding of the human being from the global perspective. By the overwhelming information, the need to standardize, to disaggregate, establish relationships and then generate principles, has taken man away from science. In this process, the possibility of understanding that in each person a huge quantity of factors come together that make him a unique and individual being is made difficult. Nevertheless, all this knowledge is valid in the hands of professionals who attempt to have a holistic vision of man.

This vision conceives the human being as an organism, a unit in development, who is much more than the sum of the parts and supports that the training must approach that totality. Thus, it is necessary to know the different dimensions of the person with whom the task is established as well: physical, physiological, emotional, mental, social and spiritual.

From this approach we delve further into a paradigm which supports a concept of complementarity based on the interconnectivity between all the parts in the universe.

Within the human body, different processes of communication happen in the same way as they happen among individuals and in societies. The body is contemplated as an ecosystem where the cells are its members. They organize themselves in cooperative groups named tissues, which associate and develop bigger functional groups, the organs. Organs unite in systems. There are a lot and varied sorts of communication at each of these levels. We can think of each cell as an individual, establishing a social life, and at the same time interacting with the environment, replying to impulses through permanent feedback and communication between all the members and the brain.

This network of interacting cells, communicating with each other is located in an aqueous medium. The human body is not mainly solid, but 80% is water enclosed inside membranes. Communication is produced through this way. The yoga

holistic physiology contemplates this communication as a supreme intelligence, a complete assessment of who the being is. The intercellular communication creates the experience of each physiology.

This is present in every aspect of the human being, in all dimensions. Yoga has an exhaustive knowledge of the different systems that communicate the internal and external physiology. Many of the hatha yoga sessions are related to the improvement of such communication. (8)

For example, the asanas, the series of poses, create pressures through the external physiology achieving communication with the internal physiology through more subtle and deeper processes. In this way, they join together and connect various systems. Each unique body part communicates with each of the other parts, not only through nerves but also through the connective tissue and chemical substances. In this paradigm, the connective tissues gain extreme importance. We can think about them as water bags created around the organs and when they relate to each other by pressure or other factors, information is transferred constantly from one section of the connective tissue to the following section. This connection reaches to an intercellular level. (8)

When dealing with the most subtle effects of yoga, we make reference to these interconnections and effects that reach the intercellular level. Each organ and each cell, as well as the nervous and the connective tissue connections, is bathed, swimming in a chemical ocean. (8)

The quantity of information received from the internal incentives is partially caused by these chemicals. The awareness we can have about these cells depends on the fluency of the means of communication. If there is a break in it, we lose the contact with a body area. (8) The most probable place where this communication is broken is around the joints, which are the areas that create segments.

The segmentation of the body allows movement and this happens when muscles are wrapped around a joint. If there is

an excess of tension in it, the intercommunication among the different parts of our body will be affected at different levels, impacting directly or indirectly on the quality of communication in all the stages. (8) The most important receivers of the nervous impulses that form part of the proprioceptive and vestibular system are located in this area of the joints.

The proprioceptive system is the sense that informs the organism of the positions of the muscles and integrates this relative information to the adjacent parts to the body scheme in this time and space. In this way, the person knows the position of his body without the necessity of touching or looking at himself.

The proprioception regulates the movement, direction and range. It allows reactions and automatic responses, and takes actions in the development of the body scheme and in its relationship with the space, sustaining the planned motor action. Balance control, coordination of both sides of the body, the maintenance of the alert level of the central nervous system and the influence in the emotional and behavioural development are other functions where it takes action with more autonomy.

It is integrated within different nervous system receivers. The skin receptors give information about the muscular condition and its movement. They contribute to the sense of position and to the characteristics of the movement, especially in the limbs where they are numerous.

Capsules and ligaments are structures that hold a series of receptors that activate them when they bear a burden exercised by the muscular tension. They detect the position and the movement of the implied joint. Their relevance is observed when these structures are damaged.

The Golgi sinewy organs are sensorial receptors located in the tendon and they measure the tension developed in the muscle. (4)

The vestibular system controls movement in the proper sense. It processes the information about gravity strength, the

relative position of the head in space and movement. It is in close relation with the proprioceptive and visual systems.

The sense of touch is responsible for the stimuli perceptions that include contact, pressure, temperature and pain. Its sensorial organ is the skin. Most of the sensations are perceived through the corpuscles which are the receptors located inside the connective tissue capsules and are distributed along the different skin layers. (3)

The Neuron Mirror System (NMS) plays an important role in the inner communication as well, which will allow the child's motor, mental and emotional development.

Morphologically, these specular neurons don't distinguish themselves from the other nerve cells, but through investigations it has been recognized that they fulfil a double function: on the one hand, as a motor function they participate actively when the individual is doing an action; on the other hand, as the empathetic function in which each neuron activates itself by observing the action performed by the other one. (10) A lot of work has been done since this discovery which has opened up possibilities that cut across the neurophysiology field. Actions, feelings and emotions of others can be made known through them. (7)

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Satsang

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



How do I come out of procrastination and sceptical thinking about many life choices? Is there a way to know what is right for me?

When you put off something, it is just a reaction, and therefore it is a trait of mind. It is a habit of mind. Overthinking has no role in this, laziness has no role in this. It is something that you can do and you find an excuse to put it off for later.

Swami Sivananda used to say, 'do it now'. There is also a saying in Hindi:

What you are going to do tomorrow, do it today.
What you are going to do today, do it now.

Any time the world can be destroyed, you can be destroyed, so why wait for later? This saying has been around for a long time, it is an old saying, which means that putting off is human nature. Put off for tomorrow what can be done today.

Whatever may be the reason, whatever may be the justification, this trait of mind has to be managed by creative karma yoga. Involvement is of two types: One type is you want to be involved, and therefore you put your head, heart and soul into that involvement. The other type of involvement is, 'Okay, I'll do it'. The head is not there, the heart is not there, the spirit is not there.

So, what we can call positive karma yoga is the involvement, and negative karma yoga is this second half-hearted involvement, 'Okay, I'll try'. There is always a like or an involvement associated with a karma, or a dislike, a dis-involvement associated with a karma.

Putting something off for later can be due to a mental condition, a mood or time – these are the variables that influence procrastination. However, the basic idea is that it is a trait of personality, it is a habit, something you are used to doing throughout your life. If you can change that behaviour by following the D.I.N. – Do It Now, then, very good

What is the difference between hope and desire?

Like day and night! Hope comes in when all desires are over. Hope comes in when all the expectations and desires are finished, then you hope that 'Let it happen'. As long as you have desire and you identify with desire there is no hope.

How does one let go of something such as a painful memory or experience?

There is a simple system called *pratipaksha bhavana*, to cultivate the opposite. When you look at yourself in the mirror, you look at one profile and you don't like it. You look at the other profile, you like it. Every day when you stand again in front of the mirror, do you see the bad profile or the good profile?

The bad profile you will always avoid, because you don't look right from that side. It is the good profile you like to see of yourself and show other people, which in your opinion is not so bad and ugly.

In the same manner we can answer the question: how does one let go of the painful memory? Think of a pleasant memory. Pleasant memories are many, painful memories are less. There are more moments of joy and happiness in life than moments of pain and suffering. However, you make that moment of pain and suffering into an everlasting moment by complaining about it, by thinking about it, by living in it, by living in the memory of it. If that is the mind-set, even God can't help, and don't expect any help from guru, or any advisor or friend.

If you are willing to let go of the negative and the depressive state which restricts and hampers your own happiness and creativity, then you should have the courage and the strength to bring forth a positive and happy memory, vision, perception, idea, thought, to replace that one which was bugging you. Replace that one which was pulling you down in the darkness. That is known as pratipaksha bhavana, cultivation of the opposite nature, behaviour, attitude or mood. Pratipaksha bhavana means anything that is negative is to be converted into something positive. Simple as that.

What is the relationship between kundalini awakening and samadhi? Is it necessary to awaken kundalini to experience samadhi?

Is it necessary to drink while you eat? You can combine food and drink, but you can also drink separately and eat separately. It is the same thing with kundalini and samadhi. Samadhi has nothing to do with kundalini and kundalini has nothing to do with samadhi, but if they both are there it is very high, double high.

Kundalini is awakening of shakti, and transmitting the gross shakti into spiritual shakti. Samadhi is enlightened consciousness. Energy and consciousness, they are not the

same. They have different functions, yet they can work together. Energy is described like a blind person who has the ability to walk but does not know, does not see or perceive. It does not have any intellectual connection or any logical connection. Consciousness is described as a lame man who cannot walk but has the eyes. So Shakti is a person without eyes but with legs, and Shiva consciousness is a person with eyes and no legs. So one is blind, one is lame.

Imagine they both want to come here for the satsang, how will they come? There is your answer. In the relationship of Shiva and Shakti, they help each other out.

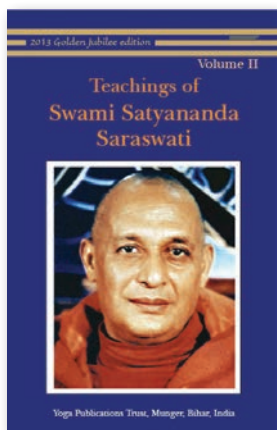
Samadhi is an experience of the transcendental nature of Shiva, consciousness, without the shakti component. Kundalini is an awareness of shakti awakening without the conscious component. They become one when Shakti and Shiva unite in sahasrara. That is the final illumination. Samadhi is a minor illumination, half, only consciousness, not energy. The union of Shiva and Shakti in sahasrara is the complete illumination.

– 8 December 2017, Ganga Darshan, Munger



The Nature of the Mind

From Teachings of Swami Satyananda Saraswati, Volume II



In order to discuss this subject fully, I would have to read you the whole of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*. It is better if you study the commentary I have written on it – *Four Chapters on Freedom*. The mind is an evolving matter and according to yoga, it has five stages. The unevolved mind is the first stage, the dissipating mind is the second, the oscillating mind is the third, the one-pointed mind is the fourth and the controlled mind is the fifth. Just as childhood, youth, middle age, and old age indicate the growth of the body, similarly, these five stages indicate the growth of the mind.

When the mind is under the sway of *tamas*, it is very dull and inert. When it is under *rajas*, it is oscillating, and when it is under both *tamas* and *rajas*, it is dissipated. On the other hand, when the mind is influenced by *sattwa*, it is completely controlled and when it is under the sway of *rajas* and *sattwa*, it is one-pointed. In other words, the concentrated mind is an effect of *rajas* and *sattwa*, the controlled mind is an effect of *sattwa*, the oscillating mind is an effect of *sattwa* and *rajas*, the dissipating mind is an effect of *tamas* and *rajas*, and the dull mind is an effect of *tamas*.

The three *gunas* – *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattwa*, belong to what we call *moola prakriti*, the primal nature. We are not talking about nature in manifestation, but nature in its primordial state. The mind is controlled by the natural processes; it is not independent of nature. Therefore, the three *gunas*, which are stages of *prakriti*, control the influxes of the mind. From time

to time the mind is subject to the interplay of the three gunas. When the nature is preponderant with rajas, there is creation and evolution. When there is tamas in nature, everything is static; there is no creation because creativity is an unmanifest condition.

The whole creation, the universe, is eternal, but at the same time thousands of creations, thousands of universes are being created and destroyed, and at the same time, there are millions of universes yet to be born. They are in the tamasic state. So, it is said, "There was no light, there was nothing; everything was static." That is called the tamasic state of the universe or of nature. From tamas, rajas evolves and when there is rajas there is creation and activity and there is permutation and combination. You can see it in every sphere; it is in the sphere of nature and the sphere of mind. Then it evolves to sattwa, the harmonious state of balance between tamas and rajas.

Now, the individual mind is subject to this law and this again can be related to kundalini. When kundalini is in mooladhara chakra, it is enwrapped in tamas, because it is not manifesting. When it begins to manifest, it will be in rajoguna, and when it reaches sahasrara chakra, the highest level of evolution, that is sattwa.



Throughout the original books on tantra and kundalini, one thing has been said, "The divinity is enwrapped in tamoguna; the light is enveloped by darkness." It is said in so many different ways – kundalini is sleeping, it is enwrapped by darkness, it is having the garment of tamoguna. What this means is that the higher intelligence or the great shakti in man is in unmanifest state; it is at the level of tamoguna. Tamoguna is not a bad thing. 'Tama' is a Sanskrit word which means darkness. What exactly does darkness mean? Darkness is where the objects cannot be distinguished. In absolute darkness there may be a table and a chair, a man and a woman and so many other things, but nothing can be distinguished. So tamoguna is a state where distinction cannot be made because there is no light and there is no manifestation.

Now, kundalini is in an unmanifest state. And what is kundalini? It is the point of evolution where the animal evolution has stopped. From where the animal evolution stops the evolution of kundalini takes place. There are chakras below mooladhara chakra and above sahasrara chakra. The chakras below mooladhara chakra belong to the animal incarnations. Let us not use the word animal, because when we hear that word, we think of four feet. We will call the chakras below mooladhara the non-mental chakras. Those chakras which are above sahasrara are the transcendental chakras.

When kundalini becomes free from the influence of tamas, it becomes involved with rajas. This engagement with rajas is called ascension, as at this stage, the kundalini makes its headway through sushumna to ajna chakra and finally to sahasrara. Mental evolution ends and begins at mooladhara chakra. You see, mental evolution is the last chapter of animal existence. When there is absolute evolution of the human mind, you have completed your animal cycle, then the human cycle begins with the awakening of a new mind whose seat is in mooladhara chakra.

Now, kundalini can be called the supermind, or you can say it is the human mind. The mind we have at present is



actually not the human mind; perhaps it is the culminating point of the animal mind. The human mind is associated with spiritual consciousness. Let me illustrate this simply. If you want to travel by cart, you can yoke a horse, a bull, a donkey or a husky dog to the cart. Or you can connect a steam engine, a diesel engine or a nuclear power engine to the cart. Just as the cart can be driven by different forms of energy, in the same way, man can travel through life with the animal mind, the supermind or with no mind.

When you drive this body with no mind, you are a junior god, an avatar or a son of God. When you drive this body with a supermind, you are a saint, an evolved human being or a *jivanmukta*. Such people are actually using the human mind. And when you drive this body with the lower mind, then you are a happy man, an unhappy man, a lucky man, an unlucky man, and sometimes a hopeless man. Because the mind which is driving this body has limited power, it has to depend on the five senses, and they are not absolute reliable. Sometimes they cooperate and sometimes they don't.

So, now I hope you have a very clear understanding of the three stages of mind – the lower mind, the higher mind and the state of mindlessness.

– September 1980, Chamarande, France

Teaching Yoga Nidra in a Homeless Shelter

Sannyasi Anandaropa, Vermont, USA

After moving back to Washington DC, I was looking for opportunities to “Serve, Love, Give” in a meaningful way through yoga. I had heard about an effective local non-profit in our neighbourhood serving only homeless women.

The targeted population includes but is not limited to, battered women, recovering drug abusers or alcoholics, mentally-ill patients or women with just plain bad economic luck, having lost employment which then spiralled into homelessness.

The shelter provides integrated services – from, not only short to long-term housing, but also ancillary support such as mental health counselling or job training. Basically, the clients can choose to attend various activities, i.e. Alcoholic Anonymous meetings, art and craft workshops, poetry writing groups, resume building exercise, health seminar, hatha yoga class, among others, in order to receive points to be eligible for housing.

I proposed to the volunteer coordinator an additional option – a yoga nidra class, for who else needs to relax more than a homeless person?

Though the local non-profit is affiliated with the Lutheran Church next door, which had donated the land and building, the management keeps its tone free of any religious overtone in order to avoid alienating a client of a different or no faith. Its mission aims to serve all homeless women in Washington DC regardless of age, race, religion, sexual orientation or gender identity.

With the coordinator, we agreed to call the class ‘Yoga Relaxation’ for simplicity and to emphasize the relaxation component. For the first six months, a small but diverse group of about five clients, varying in age, race and physical ability, would attend my weekly session.

One overarching characteristic they all had in common related to the issue with security. Basic math, homeless people usually feel unsafe. This vulnerable population is an easy target for predators, especially the women and children. Some client would come to class with what seemed like all their worldly possession. At first, I had suggested putting their belongings to one side of the room, but there were huge objections. These priceless items need to be near them. Some refused to remove their shoes - a valuable commodity when you live on the street. Some want to spread themselves out in the large room where we conduct class rather than on the closely neat rows of yoga mats I had prearranged. The clients wanted a sense of personal space, which is a simple luxury not available in a dormitory-like shelter.

In the preparation phase of yoga nidra, we are asked to close our eyes. For some this was difficult, probably a fear of losing control or the lack of trust. One regular client would stare at me throughout the whole session. Actually, her focus was quite one-pointed! Maybe it was better that she didn't close her eyes, not knowing her samskaras.

In yoga nidra the dictate is to practise in shavasana. For about half of the clients, lying on the floor posed either a physical challenge - back or neck pain - or a mental one, feeling exposed and vulnerable on the floor. Those adopted to practise in a sitting position on a chair. I made sure their feet were firmly planted on the ground. Also the instruction for the arms to be near the side of the body tends to be ignored. Most clients in shavasana would automatically cross their arms over their chest like a shield armour. A young lady in her 20s always had her teddy bear next to her mat. Given the characteristics of the clientele, special attention is required to create an environment where they feel relatively comfortable and safe even before the yoga nidra practice.

I keep the yoga nidra stages simple within the 45 minutes allotted: sankalpa, body rotation, breath awareness with backward counting, opposites and visualization. The shelter is

decorated with inspirational quotes or 'New Age' affirmations. As such, the clients are familiar with developing a sankalpa. By the time of body rotation, most are fast asleep; some snore quite loudly. Those who aren't snoring would fidget or shift consciously or unconsciously. In visualizations I knew to keep the images simple – sun, birds, flowers, etc. – to avoid any minefield triggering emotional or subconscious trauma. Similar with most yoga nidra practitioners who sleep, all would eventually awaken at the conclusion. I made sure to provide ample time for the externalization process. I did have one lady who would sleep so deeply that only after several minutes (!) of *Om* chanting could she be awakened.

Eventually the word got out that you are put to sleep in the 'Yoga Relaxation' class. Technically, clients don't receive credit for sleeping through an activity. But given the nature of the group and the effects of the yoga nidra practice, the clients are able to relax or sleep for 45 minutes or so, because they might not know where they will rest their head that night. The positive feedback comes with repeats who would return week after week. After two years of conducting the class at the shelter, my class size increased to about twenty clients per class.

As usual I get more out of the seva than what I put in, giving me the opportunity to observe my own assumptions about the homeless condition. I had to be flexible and adapt the teaching method while adhering to the basic tenets of yoga nidra. The clients tell me they look forward to coming to the class. They are so thankful. Given their predicament, I find their attitude humbling and noble. These ladies are my heroines.

As part of that mission, the management dictates all employees and volunteers to refer to the homeless women as 'clients' in order to emphasize we work for them. We are here to serve their needs. The label 'client' carries less baggage (pun intended) than 'homeless'.

Yoga Methods in Learning Foreign Languages

Sannyasi Darshananda, Sofia, Bulgaria

Yoga is a system of knowledge which gives a variety of methods for improving our learning abilities.

Learning requires a receptive mind, good memory and recalling capacity. A well-developed perceptive ability and a good amount of self-awareness should also be present. If we add clarity and concentration of mind, good imagination and creative power we get nearly all the qualities which one should possess in order to learn new things in life.

I observed from my experience in teaching English, before I started teaching yoga, that people who had the desire to learn a new language needed first of all to relax psychologically before the process of real learning started. They needed to open themselves for experimenting, imitating and acting.

The benefits of yoga

When we have different complexes in the personality, such as lack of self-confidence and lack of good communicative skills, narrow-mindedness or even sometimes negative samskaras in connection with a certain foreign language, then these appear as obstacles in the learning process. The person needs to be openminded and to enjoy studying. The deep psychological relaxation that the yoga practices give lays the perfect base for improving the ability to learn a foreign language or study any subject or science.

My personal experience with practising yoga is very positive regarding my ability to understand and learn. The asanas and pranayamas keep the physical body fit and healthy, they recharge the vital energy system which acts like a power station for the human body and mind to perform their functions and



activities. Relaxation practices melt the tensions at all the three levels: physical, mental and emotional. Then body and mind become flexible, calm and the person experiences contentment and joy as well as openness to perceive new information without pre-conditioning. Concentration and meditation practices increase the mental clarity and abilities like one-pointedness, memorizing, recalling. Experiencing all these effects myself and observing my mind becoming free from inhibitions and expanding its capacities in all directions in life, I experimented applying yoga methods and practices in teaching English as a foreign language for Bulgarians in Sofia, Bulgaria.

Wondrous yoga nidra - Construction of a class

I start class with a short introductory meditation and mantras. Secondly, we practise two to three asanas for refreshment after the long working day if the class is in the evening or for removing sleepiness if the class is in the morning. Sometimes we start repeating some texts or exercises immediately after the meditation while still with closed eyes to stir the memory for what was learnt in the previous class in the mind calmed by the meditation and the mantras.

Then exercising what has been learnt in the previous lesson and checking the homework in a fully wakeful state

of mind with open eyes follows. Next I ask the students to prepare for yoga nidra. The yoga nidra practice would start for beginners with instructions in their native language, in our case Bulgarian, then gradually I introduce more and more words in English, being repeated in Bulgarian as well, until nearly all the instructions are given in both languages, first English then Bulgarian and towards the end of the beginners classes the instructions are given only in English. There is one class for learning all the body parts and other most often used new words in the yoga nidra and meditation instructions.

Instead of the visualization stage in yoga nidra I read the new words and texts as well as some grammar rules, repeating everything twice plus a Bulgarian translation. Then the last stages of yoga nidra follow. After the students move their body and sit up with closed eyes, they stay with their eyes closed to repeat the new material they have just heard in yoga nidra. They are to repeat the words, phrases, sentences and rules after me, exercising the pronunciation as well as recalling whatever they heard during yoga nidra.

After that exercise they continue with roleplays, drills, reading and speaking activities normally done in a language learning class. We do asanas and breathing techniques whenever I observe tiredness or boredom based on intellectual fatigue. We complete our lesson with a short meditation, *Om* chanting and palming. Palming, eye exercises, pranayama and asana can be done at any time when the need is felt.

Yoga nidra relaxes and opens the mind to perceive new information, it helps to get rid of inhibitions in the personality which prevent people from freely expressing whatever little they know of a foreign language and communicating with others. People open more to imitate the pronunciation and way of expression of native speakers heard in the listening exercises and to absorb the English speaking of the teacher. When they repeat with closed eyes, they still keep the very receptive state of mind developed during yoga nidra but this time it is sure they are fully awake and hear each word.









Students also have to say the words and expressions they hear which gives them the experience of pronouncing and hearing their own voice while repeating. The sounds of the words pronounced by them themselves become deeply imprinted in the open subconscious mind made receptive to the maximum degree by the yoga nidra practised before that. Pronounced in the concentrated and perceptive state of mind the words act like the mantras through their sound vibration bypassing logic and intellect, working with the right hemisphere of the brain. This works well with middle-aged people who may not have exercised their learning abilities regularly and recently, and have forgotten to learn. Stiffness of the mind is removed.

People open more for communicating and expressing themselves generally as a psychological attitude. This enriches the students' personality in addition to learning a foreign language. Learning a foreign language requires developing communication skills, the abilities to express thoughts, ideas and emotions, self-confidence, positivity, optimism, enthusiasm, inspiration. All these are psychological and spiritual qualities. I notice that people who have an affinity towards music and mathematics find it easier to learn languages. This is connected with the left hemisphere of the brain. Hence good logic and intuition have to work in combination to build a good learning ability.

In Samkhya philosophy it is said that human beings possess five senses and five organs of actions. The five senses represent the input of information. The five organs of action are the output. In learning a foreign language, we use mainly two of the senses – seeing and hearing. In the process of learning we use and develop these two into the skill of reading, listening and understanding. The organ of action we use is speech. In a language class with yoga methods we become very aware how we use these three, especially speech. We learn to refine our requirements of what input we allow in life – what we read and listen to – is it positive and nice or gross and negative. What do we produce with our speech in the space around?

We become aware that we change the environment with what we produce by the act of speech and furthermore by the act of thinking. So we learn how to refine our speech.

More than just a language

The experience with my students has been very positive. Let me share about one person who was generally very shy and had difficulty in communication, low self-confidence, bad memory and pronunciation and couldn't understand grammar rules. After several classes during which she used to be tense even during yoga nidra, she fell asleep for the first time during the practice. When students sat up to repeat with closed eyes and then read the new text she succeeded to read correctly the whole sentence for the first time. That was an amazing experience for her, me and all the students showing the effects of the yoga methods in developing the learning abilities. All students, some more gradually, others more quickly develop with time the ability to pronounce the new words correctly as well as to read and understand the new material right after it has been introduced during the yoga nidra and the meditation learning exercise.

A language lesson conducted through the yogic methods does not make the students mentally tired by making only intellectual efforts. It contains enough relaxation and energizing practices to keep students focused, motivated, inspired to learn and develop. Students learn a lot about themselves, about their habits in talking and communicating. They develop self-awareness, self-confidence and contentment, and improve their self-expression, creativity and imagination. They enrich their life with new roles – that of a learner, communicator and many other roles which they may play in class. As they advance more and more with the language we start studying yoga texts which turns the class into a philosophy discussion where we all share thoughts, ideas and views about the yoga practices, psychology and life. I feel deep contentment being part of this process!

A close-up profile of a man with a shaved head, looking out towards the ocean. He is wearing an orange garment. The background is a soft-focus view of the sea and sky.

The Waves of the Mind

The waves of the mind,
The waves of the mind,
Ceaseless and endless, living in time.
Does the beach curse the waves beginning and end?
Nothing outside, only within,
You cannot see now, you can only see then.

Grasp not you thoughts, let the river flow on,
The waters there now, soon will be gone.
If words have no truth, then thoughts are but lies,
And whatever lives today, tomorrow soon dies.
The rest roots in self, if self is the mind,
The treasure you seek, thought will not find.

The waves of the mind, the waves of the mind;
Just beyond the roar of the sea of time,
I hear something . . . I hear something calling.

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Clean and Unclean Mind



Never allow an unclean thought to enter your mind. If it does enter your mind, drive it out at once. Purify your mind so that an impure thought may not be able to gain entrance. Strengthen your resolve.

— *Swami Sivananda Saraswati*

When your mind is clouded, when you are in utter confusion, then you cannot find the right answer, but when your mind is cleared and purified by meditation, then you can see your real face in the clean mirror. When the mind is broken, knowledge is mutilated. True knowledge depends upon purity of mind.

Yoga is the broom that makes a clean sweep of one's inside rubbish.

— *Swami Satyananda Saraswati*

What is a clean mind and what is an unclean mind? The unclean mind is the negative mind. The clean mind is the positive mind. The unclean mind is the hopeless mind. The clean mind is the hopeful mind. The unclean mind is the tamasic, the pessimistic mind, and the clean mind is sattvic and optimistic.

It is like night and day. Day is totally the opposite to night. The clean mind is totally the opposite to what our normal mind is. Our mind is not positive. This can be noticed and observed by the first reaction that you have to anything. It is always a reaction of doubt, negation, questioning, but it is never of happiness and joy. When the first behaviour of the mind is doubt, questioning and avoidance, how can that mind be called sattwic? How can that mind be called positive?

One person wakes up in the morning and says, "Oh, today the day is very beautiful, I woke up laughing this morning, so everything is happy." Then there are people who wake up grouchy and for them the whole day is grouchy.

It is this mind, this behaviour and expression of the mind which has to be changed into positive, optimistic, hopeful, joyful, and that is where your effort has to be. Try to keep yourself happy - not with a plastic smile on the face. Be really happy, not just show-piece happy. Be really happy where you know that there is no problem in you, and you can experience, you can express that freedom, happiness and joy.

– Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati
9 December 2017, Ganga Darshan, Munger



Yoga and Multiple Sclerosis

Álvaro Pedrana (Sannyasi Antardhyana), Uruguay

It is always very stimulating to see the progress of people who practise this noble discipline of yoga. Most of them come of their own initiative and others because of a medical prescription.

In some people, there is a combination of the two options, they suffer from some illness and have the option to practise yoga as a way to face a new style of life. This is the case for those diagnosed with multiple sclerosis. The possibility of associating with persons who have multiple sclerosis gives them the opportunity to know what yoga is and how it can help.

This association is called EMUR (Esclerosis Multiple Uruguay) and is functioning on the 7th floor of 'Torre de los Profesionales' (Tower of Professionals). In that place, there is a professional support group for those diagnosed with MS. In the 'Hospital de Clínicas' (Hospital of Clinics) is a special area dedicated to research and treatment of this illness.

MS is a neurological illness whose cause is not known yet. It is inflammatory, demyelinating, neurodegenerative of chronic development, and probably degenerative affecting the nervous system. The effects and symptoms are different in each person. The most frequent ones are: optical neuritis, double and blurred vision, sensory motor disorders, loss of balance, loss of coordination and concentration, difficulties in controlling sphincter muscles, and fatigue. Those symptoms come in the form of thrusts or bouts, and remissions. In relation to yoga, the group I am teaching is regular and constant in their practices. They have a special tenacity and interest to know more and they practise every day what they have learned. We can see their enthusiasm by the questions they ask, we can see that they practise during the week,

something that is essential. Therefore, I ask them to tell me how yoga contributes to their daily lives. Here are some of the concepts they share.

Testimonies

Everybody, with no exception, mentioned in the first place the benefits of pranayama to face situations such as: physical pain, a medical test like a tomography, an exam at university, changes in blood pressure, overcoming distress, and resting properly. No doubt, to know how to breathe and how to apply that knowledge when it is needed, is one of the keys for one's welfare and good management of situations.

The physical exercises, even if they seem simple and boring, are very important because, combined with the appropriate breathing, give you a good relaxation. They lead you to find inner peace and from there you advance to self-knowledge. It leads you in a subtle and sustained way to change the vision of how to live your life. You start to respect yourself.

You recognize the needs, not only physical or material. The best is that you start doing what you have to do. The combination of practices can have many benefits, even the possibility to glimpse situations anticipating certain events. Although, at first that can be disconcerting, or totally new, it is possible to learn how to overcome difficult situations, taking some precautions and correcting behaviours.

Through meditation you see the bond strengthen with yourself and with others, a new relationship with yourself and with others arises. The practice of the suggested mantras or the participation in havan, help you to get calmer and give you a certain internal openness. A state of 'peace and happiness' arises, without knowing why.

Even if you live with significant limitations, and you must practise in a wheelchair, you can make great achievements with simple practices. You come to understand that life is not limited to this vehicle, the physical body, which sometimes reaches its limits. Complete healing may not always be possible but you can heal the inner aspects linked to the psychic, the emotional and the spiritual. Arriving at that healing, we can understand and overcome hard and even traumatic experiences.

Discovering the multidimensional being

Among those questioned there was no lack of people who highlighted the importance of recognizing their feelings, accept them and from there achieve greater tranquillity to see life with a new perspective and with a different connection between mind and body.

One person told me his experience about the claim of his labour rights, something that, if he had not developed his inner strength he would not have achieved. As his petition didn't have any reply, nor support, he decided to let it go. Some days later, he had an interview for a new job. It was highly positive. One of the very positive points in his favour, that he highlighted, was his practice of yoga. Only those who take their practice seriously and commit themselves can move ahead and achieve unexpected changes.

Maybe this is the greatest achievement for a yoga practitioner: to understand that we are spiritual beings living a human and material experience. This interior being, not always known, is the key for our understanding, even if we are afraid to face what we have inside.

Yoga suggests that you develop a new awareness of life and recognize yourself as being a multidimensional person, subtle, strong and powerful, with great spiritual values that you need to know and awaken

I thank those who have contributed to this article and continue to encourage me.

My Experience of Chanting Sundarkand

Swami Maitreyi Saraswati, Colombia



For many years Sundarkand has been chanted in the ashram every full moon, and since February 2015 Sundarkand has been chanted daily each morning between 10.30 and 11.30 for positivity and wellbeing. A small group of four residents have the duty to do the chanting and the duty is on rotation among the residents so that different people have the opportunity to chant.

In 2016 during my three-months stay in the ashram I was also given the opportunity to be part of the chanting groups. I could experience the positive effect on both the people who were chanting but also for everyone else and the environment. This year, in 2017, I have also been given the duty to chant

Sundarkand in the ashram and I am writing this because I want to express my gratitude to God and Guru for giving me this opportunity. It has given me certain experiences and insights that I think may inspire you to either chant Sundarkand or play the recording wherever you are in the world for your own benefit and for the positivity and wellbeing of those around you and the environment which is in great need of your help and support at the moment.

I always leave the chanting feeling happy, light, energized and charged with positivity. If there has been something in my mind that has been bothering me before the chanting it has completely disappeared. The chanting can vary greatly; sometimes it flows like a stream and there is no effort, it can go very fast but it is effortless and relaxed; sometimes you feel you have to make an effort and try to keep the rhythm and speed and keep everybody together, so there is a lot of effort and you feel a bit tense and tired afterwards. It is like the difference between sitting in a boat and flowing with the stream or rowing the boat.

Lessons learnt

I have thought about what makes the difference. The chanting flows when the whole group is completely in tune with each other, when no one is the leader or the follower, when everybody listens to each other and tuning voice, speed and rhythm with that of the others and when everyone is in tune and flows with the chanting itself. Sometimes it is the feeling of being like five horses moving together and some other force is holding the reins. Or like the birds moving together in the sky, carried by the force of the wind. It is a good lesson in surrendering to the force and power of the chanting.

It is also a good lesson to apply in your daily life. In life it is the same, when you are able to move together, tune in with each other, support and help each other, then the positive force emerges and you naturally become balanced, happy and relaxed without effort.

There is another lesson I have learnt from the chanting. I thought about the practice of SWAN; how we can use our strengths to overcome our weaknesses. This applies not only to ourselves but also to our interactions. While working together we can join our strengths to become stronger together and to help each other overcome weaknesses. In the chanting one person may have a good pronunciation but is not good at keeping the rhythm, another person doesn't have good pronunciation but has a good sense of rhythm and keeping the pace, a third will have a strong voice – in becoming one we all add our strengths and learn from each other.

Sundarkand represents the victory of the higher mind and the positive forces over the lower and negative tendencies. The force of the chanting itself induces positivity and wellbeing. You come out of the chanting with an empty mind and a heart filled with peace and happiness. You automatically connect with the positivity and beauty within you and within the people around you despite the differences you might have had or felt before.

It is all there: the perfection of Sri Rama, the purity of Sita, the strength of Hanuman, and the faith and surrender of Lakshmana. So simple and beautiful! Jaya Sri Rama!



Yogic Lifestyle and the Role of Ashram

Swami Prembhava Saraswati



You cannot learn yoga in a classroom, you can learn asana, pranayama, and some yoga philosophy, but to really learn and live yoga, you must spend time in a yoga ashram. What we have tried to do this weekend is to create an ashram environment here.

Three disciplines

We have asked you to keep mouna in the evening and during meals. Mouna is a very important aspect of yogic life. We spend 80 percent of our lives talking, the voice is talking, the mind is talking, other people are talking. It does not stop, humans are worse than parrots, the chattering just goes on and on. Through the practice of mouna we can start to observe ourselves in thought, word and action, and find peace and quiet inside. Only then can we communicate with nature.

The purpose of mouna during meals is to become aware when we eat. We eat too much, we eat too much at the wrong

times, and we eat many things which are not good for body and mind. In yogic life we eat at specific times of the day, based on the ayurvedic principle that the digestion is like fire, like the sun, and the main meal of the day should be had at midday when the sun is high in the sky. The sun is the fire of the earth. Dinner is also taken before sundown. Probably 80 percent of all common diseases are caused by people eating dinner late at night, and sleeping with a full digestive system. Ashram training means that meals are taken during the daylight hours, after sunrise and before the sun sets, which leads to a healthy digestive system and healthy body and mind.

Routine is another important aspect of yogic lifestyle. Swami Niranjan gave a message to all of you: *Make the effort to see the sunrise every day.* I am sure there are many levels to this message. Perhaps the first point is that the sunrise is such a beautiful time of the day. In Sanskrit it is called *Brahmamuhurta*, the time of the gods. The energy of the atmosphere is charged with the rising sun. It is a time of inspiration, of a new beginning, of a new day.

If you wake early to witness the morning sun then you can get so much done in the day. By 8 am you have had your bath, done your sadhana, had breakfast, cleaned the kitchen and are ready to start your day's work! You train yourself to overcome, the tamasic, sleepy, lazy nature.

Once you train yourself to wake to the sun each day it becomes a natural biorhythm for your body.

Sleep is very important, and to sleep well, if possible six to eight hours. This allows the body and mind to relax and recharge properly. Sleeping and eating on time is the key to good health. It is very simple, but in today's society it is difficult, and for that reason many people are sick and stressed. They have stopped living with the natural biorhythms of nature and their own body. The effort has to be made in your own daily routine, as much as possible, to live a disciplined life. The choice is yours, whether to live yogically in regard to meals, routine and sleep or not.

Karma yoga

Another aspect of yoga that can really only be imbibed within the ashram is karma yoga. The ashram is based on karma yoga. The residents who live in the ashram, practise karma yoga every moment of their lives. It is a life of service to the yogic mission.

It is through karma yoga that we get to meet ourselves. We try to perform karma yoga without selfish intention and with the understanding – I am doing it for something else it is not for me, but ultimately it is I who is the one who receives the blessings and the training.

This morning it was nice to see everyone doing their karma yoga. Some of you carried two huge bags of plastics and rubbish which they had removed from the roads and gardens here at the property. That intention of doing karma yoga for the sake of doing karma yoga takes us out of our selfish sense of our ego.

We have to work with people who we may not personally like, people from all different cultures from around the world, and speaking different languages. We learn about ourselves and how to improve ourselves. Sometimes we may do the same karma yoga day after day, and through that process we learn to do it better and better and thereby become better people. We learn so many different skills and there is no limit to what you can do within the ashram through karma yoga. Whether it is writing books, editing, kitchen, gardening, administration, cleaning and sweeping, it purifies the mind. You realize there is nothing you cannot do and there is no attachment to it. You say to yourself, “I can clean this whole building and work away. It is not mine. I have done it for someone else, and that is breaking my ego.”

These are the aspects of ashram life that we imbibe while living in the ashram, whether we stay one week, one month or years, and this awareness becomes who we are, and that is yoga.

– 28 July 2017, Raquira, Colombia

Impressions – Yoga Lifestyle Experience



November 2017 to January 2018

What a special course the Yoga Lifestyle Experience has been. Insightful, inspiring, heart opening, challenging, are just some of the impressions from the past few months. Being part of a small group of individuals and working together as one unit, was a great experience as it taught many lessons, not to see myself as separate, but in others, to adapt, adjust, accommodate, and to develop qualities like patience and compassion. To develop the sense of 'we' and drop the 'I'.

– Jignasu Devanshi, Australia

I want to express my deepest gratitude for the abundance of opportunities to learn, understand and experience more aspects of yoga, life and myself.

The more difficult and hard work were the lessons of life outside the class room. Being with the same people day in and day out gave me the feeling of a mirror I had to look at every day, seeing my actions, reactions, traits and behaviours. Sometimes it became so intense that I took every chance to

escape from that. Sometimes I took the chance and picked up an issue and could bring about a change. The practices of antar mouna, the review of the day, spiritual diary, pratipaksha bhavana, SWAN, meditation as well as the yamas of danti and adweshta were most helpful in that process. Still it remains a challenge to take the difficulties and obstacles as opportunities, in fact as 'a gift to learn and to grow'. The change of perspective is the final step and the most important and that experience I take with me.

– *Jignasu Suryamitra, Germany*

What I have learned during the YLE course is that life teaches us lessons. Of course you can skip a lesson, but the lesson will come back until you have learned it. Yoga gives me the tools to be aware of the lessons and to find a creative and positive way to learn them.

The learning process can sometimes be very difficult, but if I apply the yogic techniques I have learned as a sadhana, I know there will be progress. May the gods and guru give me the strength to learn all the lessons that cross my way.

– *Oliver Freiermuth, Switzerland*

Mainly I have learnt to share a little bit more and be more tolerant, and that includes myself.

I have learnt to sit in sukhasana for many hours a day as well as the squatting posture and to feel comfortable wearing a dhoti! I have developed more empathy and my ability to listen. I have learnt to communicate a bit better in English.

I am so thankful for the several weeks, having learnt from all the teachers, the community and I feel a great honour of being before Swamiji and nourish myself with his wisdom.

My intentions are to keep a daily mantra sadhana in the morning and have a deeper understanding of antar mouna and antar darshan. I am going to keep developing spiritual diary and the SWAN. I will see life and work through the karma yoga lenses. I will show a little bit more interest in house

cleaning! I will cultivate being more generous and open with my emotions.

On the whole, I take with me a samskara of positivity and hope which I intend to develop.

– David Mijanos Ramos, Spain

My major discovery during this course was that I can truly see myself in others and use it as a tool to make my life more beautiful. I was blessed to realize that every person I meet is an inspiration. This understanding was deepened by my daily practice of the spiritual diary, the review of the day and the mantra chanting. Now I'm glad to say that my classmates were wonderful teachers. By sharing these months with them I was able to observe deep and previously unknown layers of my personality. This enabled me



to connect with the positive in me and them. I thank them for showing me how to be a channel of devotion, kindness, friendliness, tolerance, perseverance, compassion, open-mindedness and commitment. Above all I thank Swamiji for creating this course, sharing the yoga vidya with us, and most importantly planting the seed of positivity in my heart.

– Daniela Camargo, Colombia

I learnt a different consideration in the 'use' of time, that makes me more effective, letting me know that I really 'can'.

Doing my best, in the conditions in which I found myself, without running from one side to the other but keeping the peace and the necessary perspective.

Awareness is like a revelation for me, and may be the word that 'makes the difference'.

Finally, after 80 days I am doing my mantra sadhana still in bed, chanting and pooja, seva, Sundarakand, afternoon class, ceremonies, evening programs, and mantras at night before going to sleep, I can say that I'm at the point of being a new person.

– *Adrian Alejandro Sansalone, Argentina*

The pooja every morning is for me an exciting experience, power and emotion. The satsangs with Swamiji are a treasure that cannot be replaced with anything else. They are joy and richness for my soul.

Karma yoga is a healthy and useful method that gives me an opportunity to witness my reactions, to discover my weak and strong sides, it is a game in which we all are winners. The mantras have influenced my body very strongly like cleansing rain.

With all my love I would like to thank you for the opportunity to be part of this special class. Thank you Swamiji, for the patience and the commitment to teach us.

– *Antoaneta Dimitrova, Bulgaria*

At this moment I am very thankful, happy and peaceful. The YLE at Ganga Darshan was a pleasure for me. I found a full spectrum of yoga, and I feel it is a good way to bring more spirituality into my life, satisfaction and happiness.

– *Gabriele Pietzho, Germany*

When I come through the hollowed gates of Ganga Darshan at night time, I too was completely in the dark about the amazing depth and the truer meaning of 'yoga'.

Given me the chance to observe my mind
Allowing positivity to reign
Noticing my strengths and weaknesses
Gratitude for this unique opportunity
Appreciating the sacredness of life from macro to micro



Divinity exists in each of us
devotion and its importance
directing my mind
Attention to my sankalpa and sadhana each morning
Reawakening my head, heart and hands
Stripping away distractions to deepen my spiritual journey
Humbling on so many levels
Alert to my truer nature and calling
Never ending journey - never to be forgotten

I have realized that value of simplicity, the rich benefits of silence both internal and external. I have learnt to do my very best in every task and to remain detached from the outcome.

I have learnt to enjoy cleaning and being more organized. I have learnt that I must take responsibility for myself, my decisions, my state of mind, my attitude. I have learnt from my classmates that as humans we are complex, multifaceted beings. Most important it is to focus on the positive, rather than wasting time looking at the negatives.

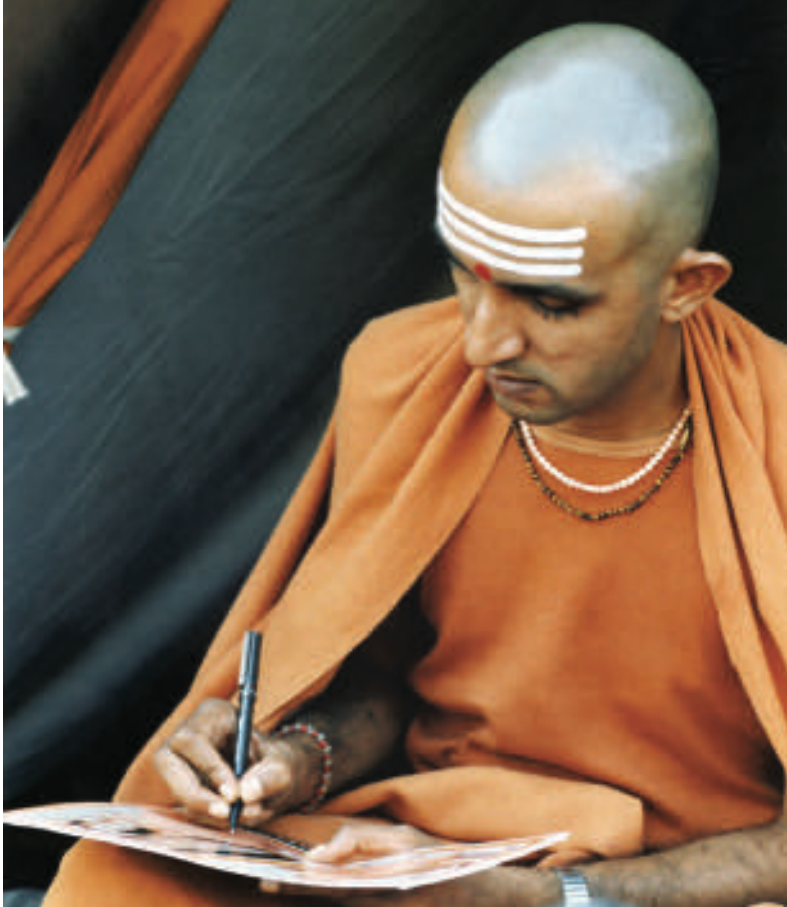
I have learnt a lot from the wisdom and wit of Swami Niranjana.

Finally, I've learnt that this course is challenging on many levels and that my greatest learnings probably happened at the toughest times. It is with huge gratitude and love that I offer my thanks.

– Maeve McGovern, Ireland

The Ashram

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Today people come to the ashram with one aim, one ambition. It is not a clear, sattvic aim; it is an ambition to realize or to become something or to have an opportunity to express their nature and creativity. We have to think clearly about what we want to achieve in life. If we have ambitions for power then sannyasa life is definitely not going to work out. If we have

other types of ambitions, such as meditating for twenty-four hours a day or doing sadhana whenever we please, then that is also not going to work out, because it is not the ashram's direction to fulfil people's ambitions.

Develop immunity

The ashram is a place where opportunities are provided to develop immunity from the negative tendencies in life. That is my firm belief and conviction. In order to attain this immunity from the negative, tamasic and rajasic environment, one has to be very clear headed. Not everyone who wears geru is a perfect being; sometimes people who wear geru tend to misuse the trust of the guru, the institution and the mission. Geru is only the beginning of a process which continues on and on for life; it is not an end. I don't become a saint by wearing geru; rather geru represents a trust which my guru has placed in me, hoping that one day I will have the ability to fulfil that trust, to fulfil that mission which he has given me.

The vision of an ashram is immunity. The vision of a sannyasin is transcendence through immunity. In order to develop this awareness, however, we have to discover what we need to do in life. There is no doubt that in the ashram personal ambitions play a strong role because they come out here. But if we have awareness then we can learn how to handle and channel whatever negativity is appearing. We come to an ashram with a desire to become, to attain or to realize something. Then later we may find that the people with whom we are living are often worse than us. Although you are wearing yellow, you may feel that you are better than a person who is wearing geru and has been in the ashram for forty years.

We have to consider the limitations, the ambitions and egos of everyone, and at the same time we have to provide each one with an opportunity for expression. That is the job of the teacher, and it is difficult because often there is also dependency on the teacher. When the teacher provides a

person with an outlet through which to express their nature, other people often react and due to their limitations create some crisis or problems or difficulties for that person. The guru or teacher has to manage to keep everyone happy while they may be fighting among themselves.

Discovering the spirit of the ashram

An ashram environment provides many opportunities. If you are aware of them then hopefully you won't get rusty and mouldy, because you learn to take every day as a new day of your life and not as a continuation of the past. Looking back at my sannyasa life, I feel that I have not utilized my full ability or strength. There is so much more that I could do or could have done, but I don't feel rusty or mouldy. Whereas for some people spending one day in an ashram can be like one year and they become extremely negative about the whole situation. These are the realities of life. But when I look at my own life, I feel that in all these years I have gone through a process of learning and I am still learning and I will continue to learn, because I am aware of the opportunities an ashram can provide me with.

First, the ashram provides the opportunity to observe one's interactions with people – whether I react to you positively or negatively and how I can handle that reaction to create inner harmony. Second, how I can maintain my clear-headedness, a clear train of thought and not succumb to negativity from other people. Third, what can I do to support and help other people in whatever they are doing. Fourth, what are the ways by which I can develop immunity from the effects of karmas, of ambitions and ego.

The ashram can provide many, many opportunities in life to those who want them. It is only a matter of discovering the spirit of the ashram and one can do this only when one is in tune with and feels a part of the environment.

– 3 December 1994, printed in YOGA Vol. 7, Issue 4 (July 1996)

Rapid Growth of the Mission

From Autobiography of Swami Sivananda



I started the Divine Life Society in 1936 for the spiritual uplift of mankind. I trained many sincere students in yoga. For their quick spiritual evolution, I introduced the morning common prayer classes with group asana class. To the local poor people and thousands of pilgrims I gave medical aid by starting a free dispensary. Experts were sent to various centres to deliver lectures on bhakti, yoga and Vedanta.

A small temple was erected for prayers and worship. When a large number of students came for training, boarding and lodging facilities had to be provided for all the students and visitors; and thus Sivananda Ashram came into being.

The Yoga Vedanta Forest University came into existence when regular classes began to be conducted on all branches



of yoga. To help the students all over the world, the University Press was established for printing necessary works on the practical side and half a dozen periodicals, with a number of machines to do the work automatically. The small dispensary grew into a big Sivananda Medical Organisation, with a General Hospital and a building of its own.

Though the Divine Life Society continues to be the central organization, to fulfil the various functions that have developed to carry out organized work, many other institutions had to come into existence.

Now the ashram, a very big spiritual colony, looks like a huge factory with the wonderful, indescribable peace of the Himalayas. Spiritual aspirants who come to the ashram and stay there for months or for years, find that there is scope for spiritual progress both as workers in the different institutions of the ashram and as silent meditators in the temple precincts or in the jungle retreats of the neighbourhood, and each chooses his line according to his own bent of mind.

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 prasada 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 2018

<i>Apr 8-14</i>	Hatha Yoga Yatra 1 & 2
<i>Apr 22-28</i>	Hatha Yoga Yatra 3
<i>Aug 6-11</i>	Kriya Yoga Yatra 1 Kriya Yoga Yatra 2 & Tattwa Shuddhi
<i>Aug 20-25</i>	Kriya Yoga Yatra 3 & Tattwa Shuddhi 2
<i>Sep 17-23</i>	Raja Yoga Yatra 1, 2, 3
<i>Dec 25</i>	Swami Satyananda's Birthday
<i>Every Saturday</i>	Mahamrityunjaya Havan
<i>Every Ekadashi</i>	Bhagavad Gita Path
<i>Every Poornima</i>	Sundarkand Path
<i>Every 5th & 6th</i>	Guru Bhakti Yoga
<i>Every 12th</i>	Akhanda Path of Ramacharitamanas

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