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Hari Om

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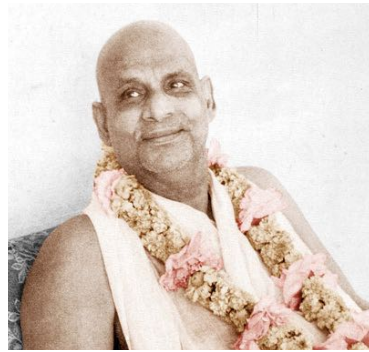
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GUIDELINES FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

Health is the state of equilibrium wherein the mind and the organs of the body work in harmony. One enjoys peace and happiness, and performs life's duties with comfort and ease. Health is that condition in which one has good digestion, good appetite, normal breathing and pulse, good quantity and quality of blood, strong nerves and a calm mind. A sound mind in a sound body, rosy cheeks, a shining face and sparkling eyes are signs of good health.

Health is a state in which one jumps, sings, smiles, laughs, whistles and moves hither and thither with joy and ecstasy. It is that condition in which one can think properly, speak properly and act with alacrity, nimbleness and vigilance. A life with good health is a blessing indeed.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

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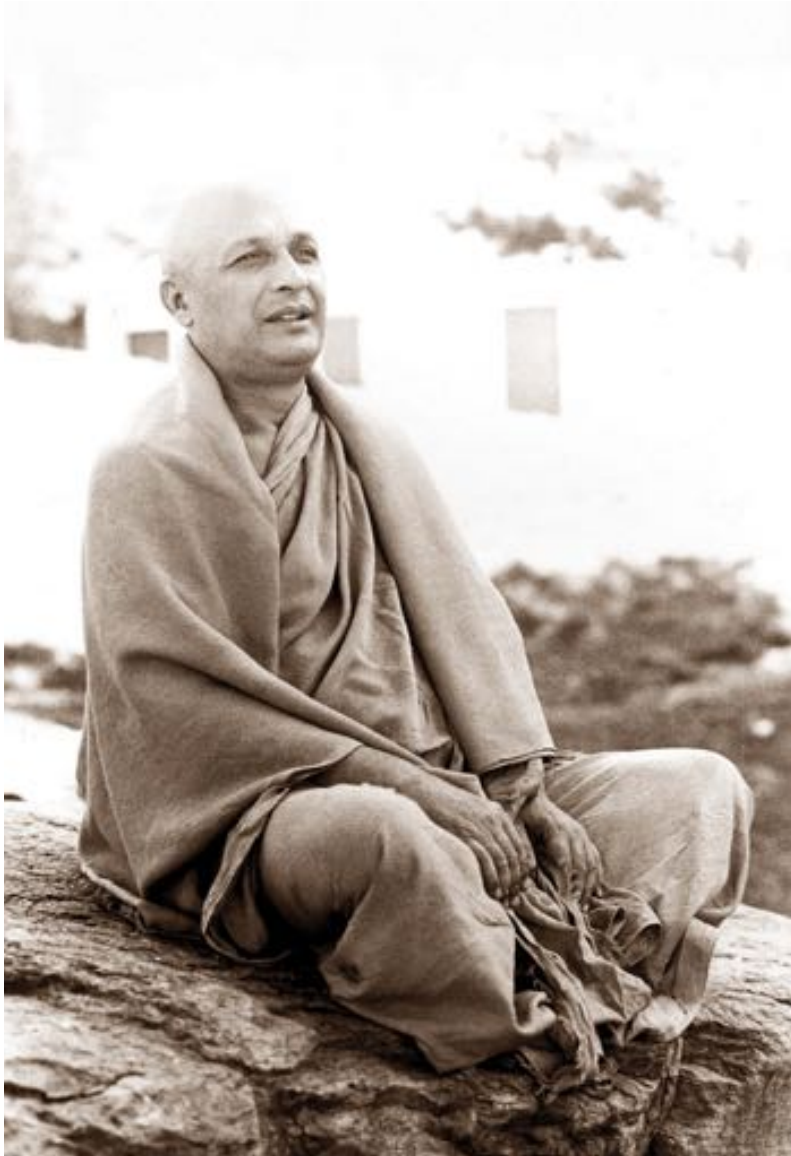
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The Yogi is superior to the ascetic. He is deemed superior even to those versed in sacred lore. The Yogi is superior even to those who perform action with some motive. Therefore, Arjuna, do you become a Yogi. (*Bhagavad Gita VI:46*)

तपस्विभ्योऽधिको योगी ज्ञानिभ्योऽपि मतोधिकः । कर्मिभ्यश्चाधिको योगी तस्माद्योगी भवार्जुन ॥

New Year's Message

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Cults can never be the worldwide culture. It is yoga which is going to be the future culture. We have made mistakes, and we are still persisting to make mistakes. The world can never be saved unless a complete process of reorientation of yogic culture is imparted to every man, woman and child. Otherwise, we can never change the world, the country or society.

In order to change society, it is necessary to rethink and restructure all of the social, moral, spiritual, and even political values. The present way of thinking, behaving and believing creates a total paradox between man's ideals and reality. As such, yoga has to be established in every city as an important part of its culture.

Yoga is an international culture. From the North Pole to the South Pole, from Japan to Beirut, you find God in English, Allah in Arabic, Bhagawan in Sanskrit, Karoul in Tamil. Every language has a different representation for the one God. The only spiritual science which is always one and the same is yoga.

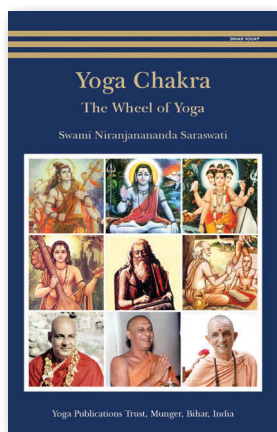
In every language, yoga is yoga, mantra is mantra. Similarly, there are thousands of terms in yoga and tantra, like kundalini, chakras, nadis, prana, guru, Shakti, Shiva for which there are no other words in any language. From this you understand how international in nature, how universal in character, how total in its influence yoga is. Whether you go to England, America, Spain, Germany, France or Russia you will find the same terms being used.

In religion, we use various terms to signify the same experience - one says emancipation, another self-realization, nirvana or kaivalya. This is the difference in religions, but the yogic culture is based on one term and one presentation of ideas, symbols and systems. Therefore, yoga is a universal culture. It represents the feelings, sentiments and ideals, not only of one nation, but of the whole world.

- 8 March 1981, Bhilai Silver Jubilee, India

Discovering the Mind

From Yoga Chakra: The Wheel of Yoga, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



The focus of Bihar Yoga is not only on asana in hatha yoga; it is on all aspects of hatha yoga. The emphasis is not the physical aspects only; there is more emphasis on the pranic, since the physical is a representation of the pranic condition. If you are sick physically, the pranas are depleted. In hatha yoga, the Satyananda Yoga tradition looks to balancing, awakening and activating prana with the use of yogasanas. Similarly, in raja yoga this tradition looks at the components of yama and niyama, along with pratyahara, dharana and dhyana; and the asana and pranayama are used as tools to internalize. There is a definite effort to discover one's mind, and that is where people find the biggest challenge, whether they be the modern sannyasins or yoga practitioners.

Swami Sivananda, Swami Satyananda and Bihar Yoga are clear that if you want happiness, completeness and wholeness in life, this mind has to be managed properly. Sri Swamiji says, "If you have a fight with your wife or children in your home, you can sleep in separate rooms and have a good night's sleep. However, if you fight with your mind, where will you put your mind? You can't put your mind in a separate room; it will sleep with you! It will wake with you! It will talk to you. It will create problems for you. It will keep you awake the whole night. So it is better to keep this mind happy. If this mind is happy, you can live your life in a happy manner."

In all the teachings of Sri Swamiji, he has placed emphasis on the mind. In all the teachings of Swami Sivananda, he has



placed emphasis on developing the positive qualities of the mind and eradicating the negative and restrictive qualities of the mind. That has been the teaching, for through the mind you can experience your awakened nature.

Understanding the real and the unreal

Many exponents of yoga say the experiences of the mind are unreal, whereas many exponents of yoga say the experiences of the mind are real. Who to believe? If the experiences of the mind are unreal, then even the idea of *shanti*, peace, that you experience in your mind is unreal. The happiness that you experience in your mind is unreal.

If all the experiences of the mind are real, then there is no negation of anything and there cannot be any change, as it is the same pattern of suffering, happiness, struggle, behaviour, expectation and desire. The patterns of behaviour, expectation, needs and desires do not change. In childhood you play with little toy cars. When you get some money you play with real cars and get a new car every six months or every year. When you are young you play with little dolls, little he-dolls and she-dolls, and when you grow up you play with bigger he-dolls and she-dolls. You also change them many times according

to your likes, fights and choices. Maybe you have lived a life like this, too.

In relation to the mind, what is reality and what is illusion? When you begin to think of yourself as a reality or illusion you miss the point. Swami Sivananda says: "Improve your present by learning from the past, and develop strength and hope for the future." You live in the present; your body, brain and mind are in the present. Yet your mind is always lost in the past, and your fears and insecurities are always about the future. You never enjoy the present, as you live in your memories of the past, are fearful of your future and ignore your present. In this situation any experience of the mind is false; it is unreal, as it does not ground you in the present condition and present reality. When you use the learning from the past to improve and excel in the present, and to be optimistic about the future, then that experience of the mind becomes real. This is how the tantras and the Upanishads describe the experience of the real and the unreal in life.

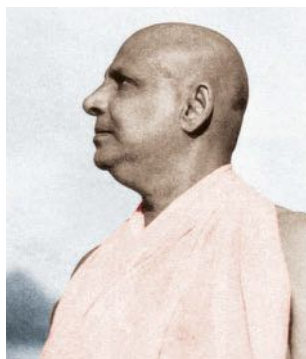
It is not a question of intellectual, philosophical analysis or understanding. It is simply a realization that when you use the learning from the past to excel in the present then that expression, that life, that state of being is the real you. Whatever you experience at that moment is real.



The Power of Attention

From the teachings of Swami Sivananda Saraswati

By constant practice, and ever-renewed effort of attention, a subject that in the beginning was dry and uninteresting, may become full of interest when you master it and learn its meaning and its issues. The power of concentrating your attention on the subject may become stronger.



When a great misfortune has befallen you, or when you pass in review a certain course of conduct in order to find the cause of failure, it may take possession of your mind to such a degree that no effort of the will can make you cease from thinking over it. An article has to be written, a book is in the process of preparation; the work is carried on even if there is loss of sleep, and you are unable to tear yourself away from it. The attention which began voluntarily has taken hold over the entire consciousness.

If you possess strong power of attention, anything that the mind receives will be deeply impressed. Only an attentive man can develop his will. A mixture of attention, application, and interest can work wonders. There is no doubt of this. A man of ordinary intellect with highly developed attention can turn out more work than a highly intellectual man who has poor attention. Failure in anything is mainly due to lack of attention. If you attend to one thing at a time, you will get profound knowledge of that subject in all its aspects.

The ordinary untrained man of the world generally attends to several things at a time. He allows many things to enter the gates of his mental factory. That is the reason why he has a clouded or turbid mind. There is no clarity of thought.



He cannot do the process of analysis and synthesis. He is bewildered. He cannot express his ideas clearly, whereas a disciplined man can attend to a subject exclusively for as long as he likes. He extracts full and detailed information about one subject or object and then takes up another. Attention is an important faculty of a yogi.

You cannot attend to two different objects at a time. Mind can do only one thing at a time. Because it moves with such a tremendous velocity backwards and forwards, you think that the mind can attend to several objects or things at a time. You can only see or hear at one time. You cannot see and hear at the same time, but this law is not applicable to a developed yogi. A developed yogi can do several things at a time because his will is not separate from the cosmic, all-powerful will.

Yoga and Care of the Self in the Promotion of Health

Alcione Cássia dos Santos Ramos/Sannyasi Gangadhara
Supervisor: Kênia Lara Silva

This research is being conducted in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, by the Federal University of Minas Gerais, in the field of Education and Health.

Acting as a yoga practitioner and teacher, I have gathered testimonies from many students about how yoga has positively influenced their physical, emotional, mental and spiritual health. Living with the universe of yoga in both India and Brazil has brought me many questions regarding the application of yoga in the contemporary world and reflections on how yoga, which is an ancient practice, can act as a health promoter and assist post-modern men to improve their quality of life and their health.

Interest in yoga has increased over the past two decades and in 2012 it was estimated that 20 million Americans were practising yoga and most of them with the goal of increasing health and maintaining fitness (BARTLETT et al., 2013).

The Yoga Health Foundation estimates more than 250 million practitioners worldwide. In the United States you can find yoga in cruises, resorts, senior centres, gyms, museums, hospitals, schools and also as a means for educational purposes to awaken creativity and calm professionals in their jobs, since yoga has become a symbol of serenity (BROAD, 2013).

In Brazil, the situation does not look very different. In the non-indexed literature there are articles and news about the practice of yoga in companies, gyms, schools, museums, hospitals and health and cultural centres. We also have yoga as a great business: along with the practice a trend of consumption of clothing, accessories, specialized magazines and special mats

to practise. Having travelled between Brazil and India several times, I was able to observe the evolution of this movement and especially the business correlation of yoga in India and Brazil.

According to Siegel (2010) since the creation of the “Traditional Knowledge Digital Library” (TKDL)¹ by the Indian government, 150 yoga postures have already been patented abroad and 134 of them have been patented in the United States. Marketing analysts identify yoga as part of an area known as Life Styles of Health And Sustainability (LOHA), where consumers of the upper middle class impart their economic power in shopping for organic and natural products (BROAD, 2013).

There seems to be a complex movement around yoga that nowadays involves health, education, paradigms, spirituality, lifestyle, individuation, subjectivities, collectivity and economic market. This movement arouses our attention, because with the increasing demand for this practice, its effects, precautions and benefits should not go unnoticed. This study questions how the intervention of this practice occurs in the process of education and health of the human being in contemporary times and in a scenario where politics, health, education, freedom and autonomy are intertwined.

Literature review

The health sciences are also interested in yoga. Many studies demonstrate the positive impacts of yoga on health as support in anxiety, depression, schizophrenia, increased wellbeing and quality of life in many chronic diseases, reduction of cellular activity in patients with early stage breast cancer and reduction of infection in patients with tuberculosis, HIV and arthritis (NAOROIBAM et al., 2016; GAISWINKLER et al., 2015; BARTLETT et al., 2013).

¹ Indian government-organized database of approximately thirty million pages containing archives on ayurvedic medicine, unani and siddha medicine. According to Siegel (2010), this database has the project of including 1,500 positions of yoga and one of its objectives is to organize or standardize yoga therapy.

Yoga and health are concepts that converge. In the conception of Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati (2005), yoga is an ancient system of philosophy, techniques and lifestyle that works the whole person: his physical wellbeing, the vitality, mind and emotions, wisdom, ethics and a healthy relationship with other people and the fulfilment of our spirituality. Health, from the perspective of Rabello (2010) is a category resulting from the interaction of man as a biological, social and spiritual being in the context of social organizations.

According to Barros et al. (2014), yoga is an Indian tradition that uses a set of psychophysical practices and in 2002 the World Health Organization (WHO) advised its use by national health systems in all member countries.

In the Brazilian health system, yoga found support for the institutionalization of the Integrative and Complementary Practices Policy (PNPIC) in the Unified Health System (SUS), in 2006 and in order 145 (of 13 January 2017) issued by the Ministry of Health that included yoga as a procedure within the organization of Integrative and Complementary Practices and as one of health promotion and prevention actions (BRAZIL, 2015, 2017). According to Luz (2003), Integrative and Complementary Practices (PICs) are appropriations of traditional knowledge and are based on a vital paradigm of the human being, which takes into account their physical, emotional, mental and spiritual integration, opposing the biomechanical paradigm that guides contemporary western medicine. They are approaches that have their own theories about the health-disease process, diagnosis and therapy and are called by the WHO traditional and complementary/alternative medicine (MT/CAM).

According to Lima (2012), the National Center for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCIH) distinguishes complementary terms when practices are used in conjunction with biomedicine practices, alternatives, when practices are used instead of biomedicine, and integrative when practices are used along with biomedicine based on scientific safety

assessments. In this context we can name yoga as a practice, complementary, alternative and integrative.

Bibliography review

For this study, a research was conducted in the Pubmed Database, which crosses the word 'yoga' with 'health promotion', 'yoga and education' and 'yoga and health education', and 340 articles were found. Most of them are in the United States of America and later in India.

As we find in most of these articles yoga more as a strand of yoga therapy than as an educational practice, we find, therefore, a gap with regard to yoga as an educational practice that promotes a health built on the subjectivity of its practitioners.

To extend the performance of yoga as an educational practice in health is to point out that health, understood in its holistic aspect, demands learning processes. In order for approaches of care in education and health to be truly meaningful for the subject, it is necessary to have an education process that is experienced and understood beyond a simple training imposed by behaviours and norms external to the subjective reality.

This study intends to show an education, transforming a personality and based on the subjectivity of the human being. For Larrosa (1995), some pedagogical practices include techniques that establish some type of relation of the subject with him/herself. They are constituted of practices oriented to the construction and the transformation of subjectivity, understanding this as the way in which the subject makes the experience of himself in a game of truth in which he/she is in relation with him/herself.

It is assumed that the educational role of yoga lies in the process of transformation of the subject and expansion of his/her consciousness, emphasizing the libertarian character of health promotion. Thus, the referential of education as an experience of self is adopted.



For Foucault, the experience of self enables a process of subjectivities, that is, a process by which we transform ourselves from individual into a moral subject, in which the person learns and perceives himself/herself (VEIGA NETO, 2016).

One of the action plans of yoga is in the expansion of consciousness. Limited consciousness is the product of a conditioned world where the individual does not have autonomy and repeats a way of thinking and expressing himself that does not belong to the construction coming from his personal experience. For us, the educational experience is a means capable of bringing meaning to the events of life through a process of subjectivities. As a practice, yoga is a manifest experience in the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual plane, capable of enlarging our consciousness.

This expansion of consciousness that yoga proposes is related to the process of self-knowledge, transformation and autonomy of the human being in relation to the socio-historical and political context in which he lives. It brings us the possibility of differentiating ourselves from a hegemonic culture and acting as active and reflective subjects capable of effective transformations for a better life with us, with others and with the society in which we live, evidencing a broader sense of health. For Jung, 'consciousness is always

consciousness of myself'; to become aware of myself, I must be able to distinguish myself from others; only when there is such a distinction can a relationship appear' (JUNG, 2002, p.195).

To educate in health is to broaden the subject's awareness of relationships with himself and the world and this interferes with his health. Work, relationships, city life, economics, politics, availability of food and water, responsible care, being ethical and kind with ourselves are key determinants of health.

For yoga, health care is a means to the goal of realization of the human being. According to Tesser (2009), in the perspective of health promotion, this aspect is observed in the incentive of a process of personal transformation and fulfilment as individual trajectory and harmony of the person with the world and with others.

However, a problem is presented here. In contemporary times, the physical aspect of yoga is overly highlighted to the point where it is confused with a mere physical exercise, capable of producing a physical body shaped by a hegemonic and alienating aesthetic of the subject.

In this context, control over the bodies has constant vigilance and a capillary power over health in an image of a body that is always beautiful and young (RAMIRO, 2015), rather than 'health' lived in the subjectivity of the users.

Ferreira Neto (2010) points out that, according to Foucault, from the Greek culture we find attempts to improve living conditions in a set of 'self-practices' to be observed by the man of the polis, based on philosophy and medicine. Both in the culture of care of the self as exposed by Foucault and in the vedic context, philosophy and spirituality were part of the same practice. For Foucault, by spirituality is understood the practices by which the subject modifies himself to have access to the truth (CASTRO, 2014). In this understanding, the relation of body and self-care involves the body in a body-soul unit, which must be understood in an integral way (BOLSONI, 2012).

In view of this, we are concerned about yoga as a practice invested by public health policies: if on the one hand yoga can contemplate a greater number of users with possibilities of greater care and new ways of dealing with the health of the human being, then on the other hand, it can also serve the reductionist logic of the body and biomedicine, which are tied to late capitalism.

Facing these reflections, we bring our questions: Has yoga, at present, preserved its transformative and educational essence? What do practitioners learn about yoga in relation to health? Is there evidence that such learning goes beyond the physical dimension of health and reaches the mental, emotional, spiritual and social realm? This is intended to investigate the learning of self-care of yoga practitioners.

For Foucault (2005) medicine is a knowledge-power that focuses on the body, population and biological processes producing disciplinary and regulatory effects. For the author, this power was entrusted with both body and life. In a limiting perspective, health promotion aims at a unification of behaviours, unwinding individuals from their capacity to take care of themselves (FRANCO et al., 2011). In a liberating perspective, effective changes in the promotion of individual health require an educational process of transformation of habits and behaviours from a process of subjectivity. In the perspective of learning to care for oneself through yoga, subjectivity is understood as “heterogeneous practices and processes through which human beings come to relate to themselves and to others as subjects of a certain type” (PARAÍSO, 2012, pp. 30).

From the above we have a field of contradictions: yoga originated in India and in the pre-classical and classical period was constituted within a context of practices aimed at liberating a conditioned existence. Assimilated by modernity it has become transcultural. In later capitalism, it seems to serve as the object of alienation and consumption of a particular social class. On the other hand, yoga is part of a set of non-hegemonic

health practices. Those who assimilate the practices of yoga can become agents of opposition to a dominant way of life. Therefore, it is intended to investigate yoga as part of a health model that now repeats, sometimes reinventing life based on subjectivities capable of positively interfering with health.

Methodology

For this study we opted for the qualitative research of an exploratory and descriptive nature and chose as a theoretical-methodological reference the post-structuralism. The investigations that adopt this referential are more concerned in describing and problematizing processes that produce certain knowledge in a context of certain power networks. These theoretical approaches point out that language, culture, truth and power are inseparable (MEYER, 2012).

It is understood that this study questions hegemonic ways of health promotion and approaches the subjectivity in capturing the perception of what the subjects learn in relation to health and care of self.

For this research the city of Belo Horizonte, Brazil, was chosen as the location and the Association of Employees of the City Hall of Belo Horizonte (ASSEMP). The data collection was carried out from March to May of 2017 in the form of a descriptive observation of the yoga classes and a narrative interview with the practitioners of yoga. Fifteen practitioners of both sexes, aged between 20 and 74, were interviewed. The narrative interview is a qualitative research method with specific characteristics. It is a type of interview less imposed and therefore more valid from the perspective of the informant (BAUER; JOVCHLOVITCH, 2002).

The narrative interviews were recorded and later transcribed and the reports are in the analysis phase of the discourse, evidencing yoga as a mediating practice of self-care that sometimes presents itself as a personal transformation, self-knowledge, an opportunity for reflection, care for the other and now as superficial attitudes of caring for the body. In the

discourses of practitioners, health is understood as a process of integration of body, mind and spirit. Practitioners integrate spirituality into their conceptions of health: “If people are well physically and spiritually, we can get a little more relaxed, if we can take care of ourselves, we will have a better health.” (E4 – interview code) “Health is so important that it relies on the body, mind and spirit.” (E1 – interview code))

Final considerations

Yoga is now in a field of health promotion forces where the health of individuals can be controlled by normative and hegemonic lifestyle practices or by liberating practices. Our challenge is to preserve it as an educational practice capable of teaching practitioners to care for themselves through a relationship with themselves, as an ethical option in postmodernity. This study will be finalized in March 2018.

For more information and the complete bibliography, please contact:

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First-Hand Yogic Experience in Parkinson's Disease

Sannyasi Prashantmurti, Pune, India

There are three types of information-sharing for any project or undertaking: first, the proposed project; second, work-in-progress; and third, result declaration of the project.

I decided to publish this article based on the second type of information-sharing: work-in-progress. This is a project on 'Yogic management of Parkinson's disease'. Through the practices of yoga, very inspiring and motivating results are being observed.

I met Mr Sisodia and saw his eagerness to start yoga. His strong willingness gave a clear indication that the right time had come to move towards improvement of his health and happiness through yoga which is one of the main outcomes of yogic practices.

We organized to meet at his house where he shared his problem: he had been diagnosed with a mild form of Parkinson's disease in 2014. He told me that he would be in India for one month or so. Finally, we decided that he would go through the yogic practices for at least the next two months.

With the permission of Mr Sisodia, I planned to publish this article with date-wise information and feedback received by him, from the day we started yoga. I am including my observations as well so that by going through the date-wise feedback and observations one can see that slowly and gradually positive and uplifting aspects are being re-organized and re-established in his life which was disturbed due to the disease.

3 April 2017 - On the first day, when he started the practices due to the tremors of his body, I was unsure of the time he

may take to settle down. When he sat down, his hands were shaking and the head shook while lying down.

7 April 2017 – I observed that after performing asanas, when he laid in shavasana for relaxation, the head shook but then after a while the head became steady, which gave me a glimpse of hope.

11 April 2017 – In class, Mr Sisodia gave the feedback that he had slept well for the past few nights.

17 April 2017 – During yoga nidra which he did after asanas, I observed a very clear and positive change in Mr Sisodia – he had almost no tremor of the head. During and after pranayama practices his hands were steady.

18 April 2017 – Mr Sisodia gave the feedback that previously he had to take medication every 3 to 4 hours in order to relax his muscles, but today he extended up to 5 hours. I suggested that when he starts feeling stiffness in the body the next time, instead of taking immediate medicine to relax the muscles, he should try to do relaxation in the lying position which he knew well by this time.

24 April 2017 – When I reached his residence for the class, I saw Mr Sisodia lying on the floor. He said that he was experiencing the stiffness, so was trying to do relaxation instead of taking medicine. Without making any change in the position, I told him to start the breathing techniques: abdominal breathing, thoracic and clavicular breathing and yogic breathing. Then I gave him yoga nidra, followed by a few asanas and pranayama practices.

After the yoga session, when I asked him how he was feeling, he said, “Good, but if I walk a little bit then I can figure it out more clearly.” I asked him to take his time and walk. So, he went for a short walk and said he was feeling better than normal.

I was happy to hear this. The job of medicines was now being done by the yogic practices which relax the muscles consciously.

28 April 2017 – A similar situation was repeated on this day. When he was feeling stiffness in the body, he waited for the yoga session instead of taking medicine. After almost the same set of practices, he said, “FEELING NORMAL.” This day’s feedback proved that yoga was working on his Parkinson’s disease.

29 April 2017 – He told me that he had extended the intake of medicine to one hour for relaxing the muscles, which in itself is a big achievement as Parkinson’s is said to be a stubborn disorder. He also told me that he was now able to lie down flat on the back for sleeping which had not been possible before.

These are the feedbacks and observations for the month of April 2017 which show clear progress. The important aspect in this progressive phase of Mr Sisodia is his sincerity and regularity of practising yoga. Without his sincere efforts, such progress may not have taken place.

The objective of this article is to create awareness of how yoga helps in all aspects of the life, whether there is some health issue, or we want to experience a higher state by enhancing skill and excellence. Whatever the case may be, management of body, mind and emotions is necessary and yoga harmonizes them perfectly.

Another objective is to reach out to the needy people who are losing hope due to Parkinson’s disease or any kind of neurological disorder. I want to say, “Don’t lose hope. The results are very positive if you learn yoga properly and do it with sincerity and regularity. You just need to exercise your willpower to come under the shelter of yoga. Pray to God to give inspiration, motivation and strength to start yoga today itself. Why wait for tomorrow!”

Here are the practices which Mr Sisodia is doing:

Asanas

Pawanmuktasana part 1, utthanpadasana, supta udarakarshan-asana, pada sanchalanasana, chakra padasana, tadasana, tiryak tadasana, kati chakrasana, marjari asana, saral bhujangasana, bhujangasana, ardha shalabhasana, advasana.

Pranayamas

Abdominal breathing, thoracic breathing, thoracic and clavi-cular breathing, yogic breathing, nadi shodhana pranayama, bhramari pranayama, ujjayi pranayama.

Relaxation

Shavasana, yoga nidra.

Meditation

Trataka.

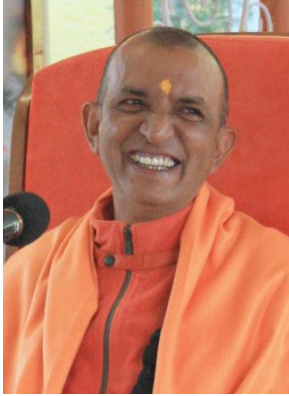
Mantra chanting

- Gayatri Mantra x 11, Mahamrityunjaya Mantra x 11, 32 names of Durga x 3 (the 3 mantras daily on waking in the morning);
- Mahamrityunjaya Mantra x 108 every Saturday;
- Aditya Hridayam Path x 3 times every morning.



The Rope of Happiness

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Imagine there is a well and in order to take out water from the well you have to use a rope and a bucket. The same rope which is thrown in the well with the bucket is pulled out again with the bucket. When it is thrown in the bucket is empty and when it is pulled out the bucket is filled with water. The most important thing is not the bucket, nor the water but the rope which is used to bring the water out.

The same principle has to be applied in life as well. You consider the bucket, thinking that the bigger the bucket I have the more water I can bring out, but you don't have the rope. So, when you throw the bucket in the water it just sinks, and you can't pull it out.

The rope is the rope of happiness. One extreme of the rope is *manahprasad*, the outer, external happiness, and the other extreme of the rope is *ananda*, the spiritual bliss. It is that rope which is used to move the bucket up and down. The bucket is the container, which is the mind.

Therefore, the way to manage the mind, the way to control the mind, the way to guide the mind is through happiness. When you are happy then the mind is easily manageable and when you are unhappy the mind is definitely not manageable.

So remember: The rope is the rope of happiness. The bucket is the mind. The water which you are pulling from deep down the well is the experience of the inner self, which you bring out and which you bring up.

– 30 October 2016, Ganga Darshan, Munger

Janani

Swami Prembhava Saraswati

Now, perhaps more than at any time in the history of the human race, we are going to need a lot of strength. It was just in June this year that the brilliant scientist Stephen Hawking made a release to the scientific community and to the media. According to him we have a maximum of 200 years until we have to look for another planet to call home.

He said due to our population growth, the level of consumption and pollution, the amount of junk we have thrown into the rivers, the oceans and the atmosphere, and the amount of degradation we have done to the forests we don't have much time left on the earth. This was a strong warning for everybody. We have to make a change to our lifestyles and to live with awareness and connection to the earth. For this reason, as part of the Second Chapter of BSY, Swami Niranjanananda is now teaching the practice and philosophy of yoga ecology.

An unhealthy world

Yoga ecology is not a new science or branch of yoga, it is yoga, and it is as old as humans have walked this earth. The basis of yoga ecology is that we are interconnected and totally dependent on the elements that surround us, the *tattwas*.

In yoga we don't only look at the external environment. The five *tattwas* are a part of our body, mind and character. If we are serious about yoga and our practice, then purification has to be internal and external.

The five *tattwas* are earth, water, fire, air and ether, and our bodies are composed of the very same *tattwas*. We can only survive without air for a maximum of three minutes, after that the body shuts down. Yet the air we breathe now is polluted and we are becoming sick.

One in five children in the USA have asthma, and people don't even recognize that it might be a sign that something is wrong. In my childhood, it was rare for any child to have asthma. Today in classrooms it is common to see many children with inhalers for asthma. These children should be 'the canary in the coal mine' warning us to make dramatic changes to our situation – but we don't.

In most cities around the world you cannot drink the water from the taps anymore; it is too polluted with the wastes of our society. People wonder why different diseases such as cancer are increasing in society, when it should be so obvious that we are polluting ourselves. We think we are a very intelligent species but there is not another species on the planet that would pollute their own water or food.

Realize the connection

As soon as people start to practise yoga, simple asana or pranayama, there will be a change in their awareness and they will be more aware of their environment. If you call yourself a yogi, then you will be aware of your environment. You may even call yourself a greenie and have compost and recycling bins. Who has a compost? Who recycles their plastic and paper? Not many! This should be a part of our daily lives. Every single one of us is responsible and has to change their lifestyle to a simple life with minimum impact on the earth ecosystems.

This morning some of us went for a walk on the beach and we were walking amongst plastic! It was scattered over the entire beach and people were walking their dogs amongst the plastic. I didn't see one person bend down and pick up any of that rubbish, for nobody is willing to take responsibility. I don't know where all that plastic has come from, maybe it is from Uruguay, but more than likely it has washed up on the beach, maybe from Australia, Africa, Europe; it just depends on the currents of the ocean. We are all connected. We are connected by the air we breathe, the water we drink, and the food we eat. Nature and Mother Earth don't put boundaries









like we humans do. Countries, borders and fences mean very little to her.

The first step in yoga ecology is to realize we are all connected and what we do to the earth we do to ourselves. That is a teaching that the indigenous people around the world have known for thousands of years, whether it is the Australian aborigines, the North American Indians, the Mayans, or the people of vedic times. Modern society has forgotten that connection and we are suffering.



Change of attitude

Now science and the environmentalists are coming back to that same understanding of interconnectedness that the indigenous people have known for generations. When I was studying environmental science twenty years ago, the environmentalists were predicting climate change and global warming. They said if we didn't start to cut down on carbon emissions we would face serious consequences globally. The Kyoto Protocol was created to reduce carbon emissions and many other positive actions took place. There has been some change but not enough. Today the environmentalists are saying they have failed. They have not been able to change the human mentality and people are still driven by consumerism, power, position and economics.

Swami Niranjanananda says that the environmental degradation we are experiencing now is due to our decadent and materialistic lifestyles. If we want to see the earth for the generations in the future, then we have to shift from the

material dimension to the spiritual dimension and find a balance between the two.

He says we have borrowed this earth from the future generations – your children and your children’s children and your children’s, children’s, children. It is our responsibility to return the earth back to them in a better state than we have lived with.

As individuals we have to make the effort in our daily lives to change our whole awareness and understanding of our place on the earth. That is the path of yoga ecology. To reconnect with nature, we have to understand our total dependence and connection with nature and tune into the divinity of mother nature in the world around us. To do this we have to change our daily routine and awareness.

Yoga ecology and yoga lifestyle go hand in hand. Yoga lifestyle is an ecological lifestyle. You cannot learn yoga lifestyle in a classroom. You cannot go to a yoga class on a Thursday night and then live the rest of your life in your normal sloppy, plastic way. Yoga has to become your way of living, your way of understanding and relating to the world around you – starting with asana, pranayama and meditation practice. The practices of yoga connect us to *prakriti*, nature, by their very design, because the yogis lived within nature and observed the world around them. They learnt from the birds, the trees, the animals, the bees and they designed the practices we use today.

For happiness and peace

When you did *titali asana*, the butterfly posture, the looks on your faces were beautiful, there were sweet little smiles on all faces, and I could see butterflies moving everywhere and definitely with that awareness the legs were moving up and down freely, there was no tension in the hips.

When we perform pranayama like *bhramari*, the bumble bee breath, it is a natural sound and vibration within the brain, which bring about deep relaxation, unlike the sounds of cars and mobile phones beeping. Different sounds affect the mind



in a different way, and if the mind is agitated with different sounds how can we possibly tune into nature and feel the divinity in nature?

To communicate with nature, the mind must be quiet and still, only then will we hear the beauty of the wind, the song of the birds, and the sound of the ocean. This is what brings us happiness. If you really connect with nature then you are never alone, you are always happy. But we have removed ourselves so much from nature that it is very difficult to find peace and happiness.

In yoga ecology we perform the asana and pranayama practices with a different awareness. Yoga practice does not have to be about my body, my muscles, my digestive system. I am relaxing my body and mind so that I affect the world around me in a positive way. After you all performed these practices anyone who had entered this room would have experienced the peace and quiet within this room. By simply practising yoga you affect your environment around you. You affect everyone who comes in contact with you because a happy and peaceful person makes other people happy and peaceful. It is that simple.

– 13 August 2017, Satyananda Darshan, Uruguay

Integration of Yoga and Individual Psychotherapy – Two Case Histories

Sannyasi Shantachittam, Italy

The application of the science of yoga in clinical and therapeutic settings of psychology and psychotherapy has gained an increasingly large diffusion over the past years, thanks to many studies and related articles with scientific validity which appeared in the most important contemporary reviews of the field.

In the west, courses of mindfulness have slowly become a wanted asset in training psychotherapists, despite the difficulties and resistances of some theorists and transmitters of mindfulness in accepting that, the most part of the practices and techniques of this 'young' discipline, definitely come from the millenary science of yoga. In recent times, it has become more frequent to get in touch with psychotherapists and teachers of mindfulness than with psychotherapists and teachers of yoga.

The situation is gradually changing within the clinical panorama which sees an increasing number of psychologists and psychotherapists undertake training in yoga, with the aim to integrate and enrich their therapeutic profession.

After a consistent and continuous training in the Satyananda Yoga method, I have had in recent years the possibility to verify personally the potential of applying Satyananda Yoga to individual psychotherapies and to verify in patients the benefits over short, medium and long periods, both from the point of view of the psychic-mental wellbeing and in relation to the increase of self-awareness and perception of the patients' inner world. I found that they could improve the ability to relate to the external world and to cope with the experiences, even adverse, of life in general.

In order to give evidence, I will illustrate two clinical case histories whose therapeutic paths began several years ago, and have had a consistent evolution with the recent insertion of yoga techniques.

Tommaso

Tommaso was adopted a few weeks after his birth in Ecuador by an Italian couple from north Italy. He grew up in a well-to-do context, showing, since childhood difficulties in interpersonal relationships, recurrent emotional states of shame and inadequacy, feelings of exclusion and lack of belonging.

The parents, mother seen by Tommaso as anxious and judgemental and father not very present, seem to have limited the thrusts of autonomy and exploration of the world of the son. He managed to get a degree in computer science after a long period at university and lastly found work in a digital programming firm.

The symptomatology of Tommaso goes back to the first adult age and was characterized by the prevalence of anxiety episodes which sometimes lead to panic attacks, significantly improved after some months of individual psychotherapy.

In recent years, phobic and depressive symptoms arose after the father's death, due to the difficulty to mourn. The weekly psychotherapy was progressively and gradually integrated with practices of Satyananda Yoga, in particular:

1. Pawanmuktasana 1 series and 'grounding' asana (e.g. tadasana)
2. Techniques of breathing; from the simple observation and awareness of breath to nadi shodhana pranayama, ujjayi pranayama, bhramari pranayama.
3. Techniques of relaxation, such as yoga nidra.
4. Practices of antar mouna 1, 2, 3.
5. Exercises of yama and niyama and application of the method SWAN by Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati.

During the talks, some theoretical-psychological concepts linked to the discipline of yoga have been introduced. They have helped Tommaso in considering the possibility to enlarge his mental horizon towards new and less schematic points of view regarding the surrounding world.

Since a couple of years, the regular practice of yoga nidra supported by audio-cd done by himself in his private home, has become a strength on the path of treatment. With higher frequency in therapy, Tommaso reports how, thanks to the integrated path, he can see the difficulties and problems as something to be faced and surmountable. They are no longer overwhelming obstacles. The increased feeling of trust in his capacities and the greater acceptance of the unpredictability of existence, allow him, without being too scared, to tolerate that things happen the way they must happen. Besides he reports to need less external stimuli to feel alive and vital.

During the last months, thoughts connected to death, to the fear of dying, and the feeling of vacuum, often present during therapy, have been faced in the practice of antar mouna.

During one practice of antar mouna 1 and 2, the patient refers to the appearance of a series of visualizations that go from those related to the image of the father in hospital on his death-bed, to the visualizations of a child alone, abandoned, surrounded by hands whose contact seems unpleasant because without heat. All this gives him the possibility to express the pain linked to the vacuum of the early separation from his natural mother and to give, at last, frame and meaning to the recent and deep discomfort coming from thoughts about death; despite images and contents potentially 'dangerous', during the practice Tommaso can actually maintain the attitude of the witness, *drashta*.

During the following psychotherapy session, it has been supposed how the emerged contents were associated to the first neonatal experiences in the clinic, when the very early detachment from the maternal contact, which provoked deadly feelings, was replaced by a varied nurturing - probably perceived as cold and alien - by medical and nurse staff.

In the following days, he refers to a decrease in thoughts related to death and vacuum and a general improvement of his psycho-emotional state.

The psychotherapeutic path is going on, alternating classic sessions sustained by the SWAN method and sessions in which the interview with the patient immediately follows the yogic practice, in particular antar mouna 1, 2 and 3 with the intention to approach the next level of antar mouna 4.

Romina

The second case is that one of Romina, a woman of about 38, who began the therapy three years ago, with certain discontinuity and an interruption of about one year, until the beginning of the yoga-psychotherapy integration. Some techniques of Bihar Yoga have been gradually inserted. Her quick learning was favoured by her previous experience of yoga practice, though with a different method. It has been possible to achieve quickly some improvement in the continuity and the constancy of attendance of weekly/fortnightly sessions.

Romina showed a dependent personality, following the sudden and traumatic death of her husband, when their little daughter was only a few months old. She had developed a post-traumatic stress disorder, accompanied by deflected mood, apathy, lack of desire to live, retreat from the world, feelings of profound distrust of herself and of the possibility to find a way out, and an ineluctable sensation to be victim of an adverse fate.

The duty to take care of the baby has always been considered by Romina with an excessive sense of responsibility and a consequent feeling of inadequacy related to the perception of being an 'unfit mother'.

Episodes of depersonalization – the perception of the body as stranger – episodes of binge and self-injury characterized Romina's symptomatology at the beginning and in the first phase of the psychotherapeutic pathway.

Considering the patient's previous knowledge of yoga, the insertion of the techniques of Bihar Yoga in therapy consisted

of a gradual sequence of asana from the pawanmuktasana series a, some pranayama (particularly kapalbhati, considering the frequent migraines suffered by the patient), relaxing techniques, yoga nidra, and the practices of antar mouna until the third level.

Also in this case, the application of SWAN practice and gradual exercises on yama and niyama are still a basic aspect of Romina's therapy.

The practice of yoga nidra helped in contacting the emotional core linked to the drama of the sudden death of her husband and in bringing to the surface the sensations and the experiences blocked and 'frozen' for years, such as the deep pain due to his absence, furthermore she could express the rage. This is a part of the interview: ". . . During the practice I was cold and then I was cold all week long, as if I were frozen. Now I feel angry. First I was flattened, now I am very reactive."

The other yoga techniques have also helped to unlock the emotional world which had been kept so long coerced and unexpressed. A strong sadness accompanied by sudden weeping episodes, and the anger reactions, sufficiently contained, are taking the place of acts of self-injury, the affective numbness and the psychosomatic symptomatology (fever, migraines, body cooling) which had been invalidating her for some years.

In the last period, subsequent to the practices of antar mouna, Romina could understand how the feeling of considering herself a victim of an adverse fate is due to a magic construct, linked to the conviction to have to pay for the sins of previous lives, "It seems like a continuous punishment. It's as if life is punishing me for something . . . as if I had to pay for something I've done in previous lives . . ."

From here the patient developed a deeper awareness and the possibility to question such feelings and beliefs, trying to put into place some concrete choices that make her feel more active and more of a decision-maker in her own life.

Summing up

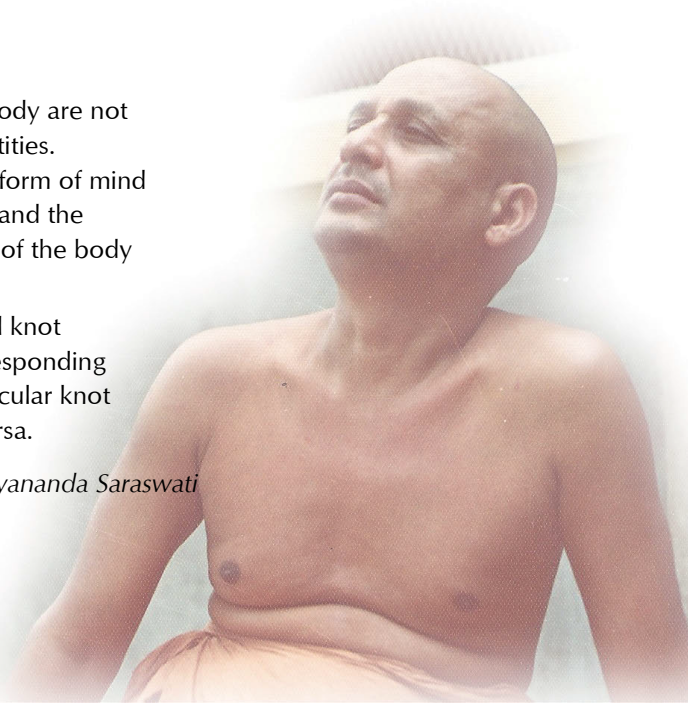
The exposure of these two clinical cases represents a really infinitesimal part of the work that must, and can still be carried out in this direction.

There are many common points between yoga and modern psychotherapy, but there is a fundamental aspect which psychology has not taken into account so far and that is the spiritual aspect.

In the first half of 20th century, enormous merit goes to the great Swiss psychiatrist and psychoanalyst, Carl Gustav Jung, for having introduced in psychoanalysis questions of vital importance linked to the soul, the spiritual evolution of the person and the community. I think that for any psychoanalyst, the deep knowledge of Jung's complete works, constitutes a fundamental '*trait d'union*' or link between yoga and psychology.

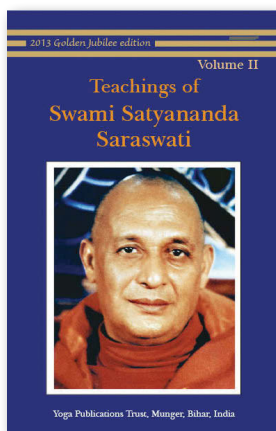
Mind and body are not
separate entities.
The absurd form of mind
is the body and the
subtle form of the body
is mind . . .
Each mental knot
has its corresponding
physic, muscular knot
and vice versa.

—Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Guilt and Psychoanalysis

From Teachings of Swami Satyananda Saraswati, Volume II

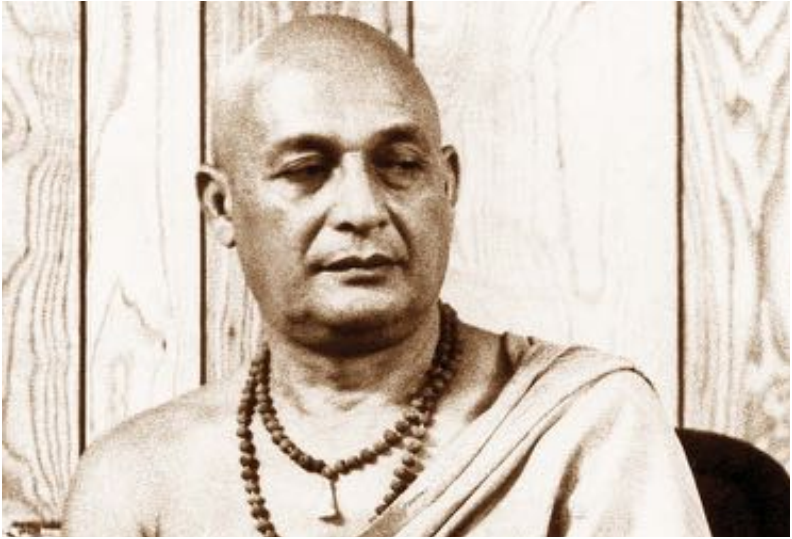


Guilt is one of the most natural qualities of life. It is one of the characteristics of the mind, and if this particular aspect of man's personality were to be eradicated, then the balance in emotional life would be lost completely. Man survives by guilt and man's mind evolves through guilt. Therefore, one should not try to overcome one's guilt directly. However, there is a stage in life when one can be free of guilt and there will not be any hindrance to one's mental or emotional evolution and one's state of balance will not be disturbed.

There are various qualities of guilt. One type of guilt arises when you do not follow the social-religious system. If you ignore either your wife, mother, child or any other relative you are living with, then you will start feeling guilty because your social-religious system has taught that you must take care of your relatives.

There is another very powerful form of guilt which everybody experiences at some point in their life. It is concerned with the fact that you are not leading a spiritual life. If you never go to church or the temple, and if you have never tried to establish communication with God and you don't practise anything spiritual, there is bound to be a period when you will experience guilt. Now, this guilt is not bad. It has been created by nature in order to make you evolve. Without this guilt, people would die without doing anything spiritual.

Therefore, whenever these social-religious complexes creep into your mind, you should try to analyze the whole thing through the process of antar mouna. In this practice you do



not direct, control or create the order of the thought processes. You are an impartial witness throughout the practice. When you are impartial you can analyze the causes of guilt. In many cases you will find that the guilt is very deep-rooted and is due to faulty education by your parents.

In my opinion, and of course I am an Indian, I think parents are responsible for this unnecessary guilt. Therefore, the individual ego falls into rebellion just to get out of the guilt. However, one can never overcome guilt unless one has transformed the quality of one's mind, and this cannot be done overnight. It must be done in stages.

You take a little cotton, transform it into thread and then again into a piece of cloth. Then you dye the cloth, and by cutting and stitching it, you transform the cloth into a shirt, dress, coat or whatever. The substance is still cotton, but it has undergone various stages of transformation. Just as the transformation has only occurred in the state and not in the substance, in the same way, through the practices of yoga, you can transform your state of mind without disturbing the mind.

– 1 May 1980, Satyanandashram Paris, France

Psychoanalysis

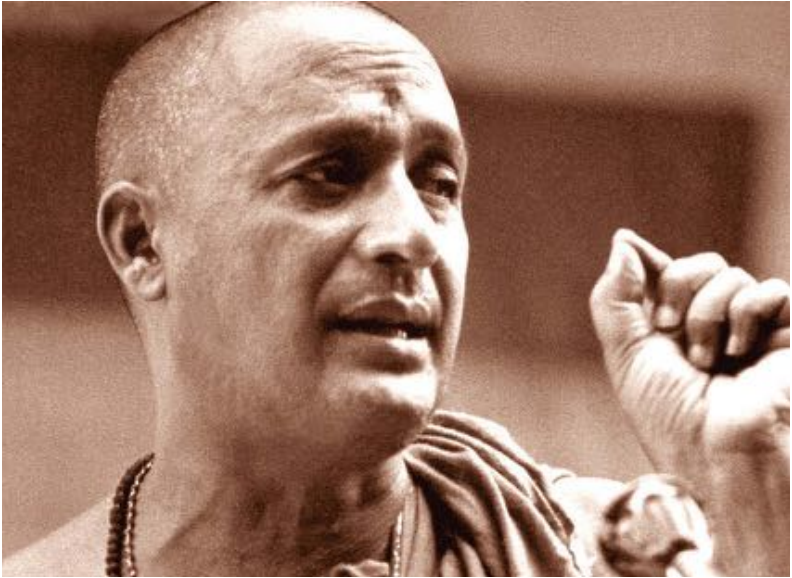
Psychoanalysis is a young science which has in fact given some sort of direction to our modern culture, particularly in places where people have no time to analyze themselves. We are so busy with our external lives and our own selves that we have no time to think about the actions and reactions that are triggered by our thought processes. Therefore, the science of psychoanalysis has brought to us awareness of a process which we call cause and effect.

Every thought which comes to my mind is an effect. It has a remote cause as well as a close cause. And a thought that comes to my mind is not just an accident or a chance. Therefore, we have to analyze the chain of cause and effect. Now, this chain is not found on the upper surface of the mind. Its currents are mostly subterranean. A fear complex may not be due to an apparent cause, it may be inherent in a certain experience from childhood or a previous birth. So my present mental behaviour is not dependent on immediate factors. Its cause has to be located on the subterranean level. Because of this, modern psychoanalysis has its limitations, but at the same time, as I have already said, it has given direction to the people of our culture.

In the science of tantra, there is a system of auto-psychoanalysis. The different deities, gods and goddesses you find in tantra are something like chemical stimulants. Let me explain this point. In order to analyze a thought, you have to go to its cause. Now, the basic cause has to be stimulated, and to do this, something must be substantiated. So these symbols are utilized to stimulate the deeper subterranean levels.

Those of you who have studied chemistry will understand me better. In order to analyze a matter, you expose it to certain chemical conditions. This is a very common formula. In the same way, if you want to analyze your thoughts, you must adopt a similar procedure.

The psychic contents of an individual cannot be directly apprehended because in most cases our thoughts are distortions.



This means that a thought which comes to you does not really represent your psyche. For example, you love your child, but sometimes you are very strict with him. Do you see what I mean? Your thought does not necessarily represent your psychic contents. So, just by witnessing a thought, you cannot say what its psychic content is. Therefore, a thought has to be processed through a symbol.

The symbols used in tantra are yantras, mandalas and the different deities and divinities. When a thought is cast into these patterns, then psychic expression takes place. Therefore, in the science of psychoanalysis, there is a considerable amount of material through which we can do a lot of work. But where psychoanalysis ends, there yoga begins.

Therefore, in our modern countries where psychoanalysis has been in use for a long time, we have come to a point of culmination. From there yoga is carrying on the work. So let us accept the importance of psychoanalysis.

*– 7 September 1980,
Transmission Seminar held in Chamarande, France*

Improving the Quality of Life for Blind People

Sannyasi Radha, Bulgaria

In November 2016 I started a seva project in a home for blind people situated in Sofia, Bulgaria. The project included activities such as conducting one weekly yoga class, taking the residents for a walk, visiting cultural events.

Although yoga is popular and well accepted in Bulgaria, the staff of the home was very suspicious at the beginning. They even tried to convince me that nothing can be done for the residents of the home, because they were very demanding, negative and did not want to make any personal effort for anything. The blind residents would spend their days only eating, sleeping, arguing, complaining and even fighting with each other, including physical fights. I asked them to let me try without having any expectations.

Short, simple, practical

We started with the pawanmuktasana 1 series sitting on a chair, some breath awareness, mechanics of breath and abdominal breathing for the first three months. From the fourth month some standing asanas were introduced together with PM1 and nadi shodhana the first stages up to alternative nostril breathing ratio 1:1. It took a good amount of time until the trust between us was established and the students agreed to move to a yoga mat where some of the practices of PM 2 and 3 were introduced together with yoga nidra.

Every class included a short talk on the benefits of the practices, yoga of attitude, awareness, and SWAN analysis. Following the example of Swami Niranjanananda, I tried to keep everything short, simple, practical and understandable.

We also had a short relaxation practice for the staff every Monday straight after their operative meeting.

There are 18 to 20 people living in the home, between the age of 20 to 93. Of this group only four were attending the classes. The others were sitting outside the hall frowning and speaking negatively about politics. Every time I would go there I would stop, introduce myself, as they cannot see who is coming, and I would ask them how they felt. Then I would try to change their negative focus into a positive one by telling them jokes or inspiring stories. Despite the fact that only four are serious in the classes and others are only speaking and listening to some inspiring stories a miracle happened in only three months' time.

The results so far

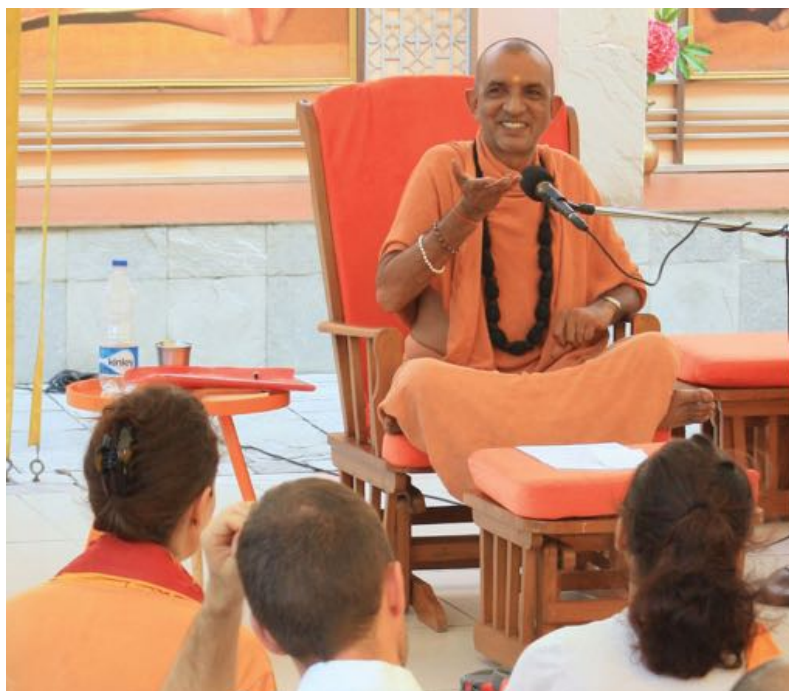
The atmosphere in the home changed. Fights and quarrels stopped completely. All the residents including the most negative ones started to smile and greet the others. The health of those practising yoga improved significantly. The most negative man in the home who used to shout and even beat others became the most regular student. He shared with us that yoga was the first thing he met after he became blind that gave him real meaning and understanding of life. His attitude towards the other residents and the staff was completely changed only in three months.

The regular visits to the ashram in Munger, participation in the programs with Swami Niranjan and the establishment of regular sadhana gave me the strength and the willpower to overcome the initial difficulties and to keep on with this project with the faith that every person's life can be changed and become more positive, creative and meaningful.



Pratipaksha Bhavana

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Usually I am so carried away by the negative thoughts, that when they come the thought of trying pratipaksha bhavana does not appear at all. What to do?

Pratipaksha bhavana is a teaching of Swami Sivananda. Whenever there are negative feelings or negative or bad thoughts, instead of continuing to think about it or brood over it you develop instantly a positive thought to replace the negative thought. That is called *pratipaksha bhavana*, cultivation of the opposite thought.

The negative thought is to be replaced by a good thought, bad feeling is to be replaced by good feeling, bad performance is to be replaced by good performance. Therefore, the journey

from the restrictive and negative to the expansive and positive is known as pratipaksha bhavana.

When a negative thought comes to the mind and you become aware of it, then instead of trying to follow the trail of that thought into deeper negativity, you put on the brake and cultivate a positive thought to replace the negative one. This is possible when there is awareness. Your question reflects that you are not aware of your responses and therefore you are not able to do pratipaksha bhavana. If you were aware of your responses then this situation would not happen.

Use the hand of awareness

Therefore, cultivate awareness of your responses rather than worrying about not being able to do it because you lost track. Rather than trying to practise pratipaksha bhavana, don't worry about it, don't practise it, but initially cultivate that aspect of your life that will help you practise pratipaksha bhavana.

Things are simple but people make it complicated. There is a plate of food in front of you and you ask how to eat. You eat with your hand and mouth. If you ask how to eat the food it means that you have had no experience in eating food. Instead of watching the plate, you have to see your hand and use your hand. The food is not important; the hand is important. The food is in front of you, but you need to use your hand. What is more important in the eating process? Food or hand? The answer is – hand.

Similarly in pratipaksha bhavana it is not necessary for you to instantly change your negative into positive. You can't do it. You have not been able to, because you were looking at the plate not at the hand. The application of the hand, using your hand, is awareness. If you can become aware of your mental response by cultivating the faculty of awareness, then the pratipaksha bhavana becomes easy. It is as simple as that.

– 25 September 2016, Ganga Darshan, Munger

The 'Non-Cult' Culture

Swami Yogamaya Saraswati



In recent times there has been a lot of discussion about cults in the media and the word has been thrown around to express a variety of views. It must be clarified for all concerned that the idea of 'cult' does not exist in India. There is no corresponding word for it in Sanskrit or Hindi. The closest word that is used is *sampradaya*, which can be loosely translated as sect. The use of the language in this way indicates that the idea has never been part of the Indian mindset. Therefore, when someone says that 'Indian spirituality has thrived on cults', it indicates an incorrect understanding of the spiritual traditions of India.

What Indian spirituality has thrived on is the wisdom of those who, through their intense inner exploration, developed a deep understanding of human life and its relationship with the universe. These were people who wrote the Vedas, the Upanishads and other systems of philosophy and practice.

What they realized and wrote did not die with them, however. They imparted their wisdom to other seekers who came after them, who expanded on it, passed it down further, and what was created was an unbroken chain of knowledge and understanding, which continues up to the present day.

The one who gave the knowledge came to be known as *guru*, 'the dispeller of darkness', and the one who received the knowledge came to be known as *shishya*, 'the one who learns'. The guru-disciple tradition became the pillar of the spiritual lifestyle in this part of the world, not only in India but in all of South-East Asia. Due to its inherent nature, where the guru can open up the doors that will lead the shishya beyond his or her limitations into a wider vision, the relationship has been held sacred and treated with the highest reverence.

In the guru-disciple tradition, the teachings that are given are in accordance with the level of mastery of the guru and the readiness of the seeker. Adept gurus impart the highest knowledge that they have realized only to the most capable disciples who can assimilate it, and to other seekers they give knowledge according to individual needs and understanding. This is what lends a certain secrecy or mystery to spiritual knowledge. The knowledge that has not yet been received is perceived as secret, but once one receives it one realizes why it had been withheld.

It might make for an interesting anthropological study as to why this tradition has been an integral part of the Asian society but has not achieved such prominence in western society. It may be surmised that the essential quality that is needed in the guru-disciple connection is the ability to say, "I do not know enough, you know better, so make me an instrument of your higher wisdom." This is called surrender of the ego. Such acceptance and acknowledgement of another, in fact, formed the bedrock of the vedic civilization, even in the larger framework of society and environment.

Living in harmony with others and nature was the principle the ancients abided by, which required accepting and placing



the whole above one. Possibly in a place like Asia where nature was plentiful and survival was relatively easy, this attitude was easier to imbibe. However, in the western civilization, which developed by overcoming harsh climatic conditions and on the principle of survival of the fittest, personal ambition and projection become naturally prominent and gave rise to a state of mind that is contrary to the attitude that developed in India.

Due to the above approach, a unique strand of philosophy came to existence in the east: merger of monotheism and polytheism. From the very beginning, the belief that overrode every other belief was that the Source is one. The ancient vedics called this Source *hiranyagarbha*, the later Vedantins called it Brahman, the Shaivas called it Sadashiva, and so on. In one of the oldest and most inspiring verses of the Rig Veda, the *Hiranyagarbha Sukta*, this One Source behind every facet of creation is eulogized (v.1):

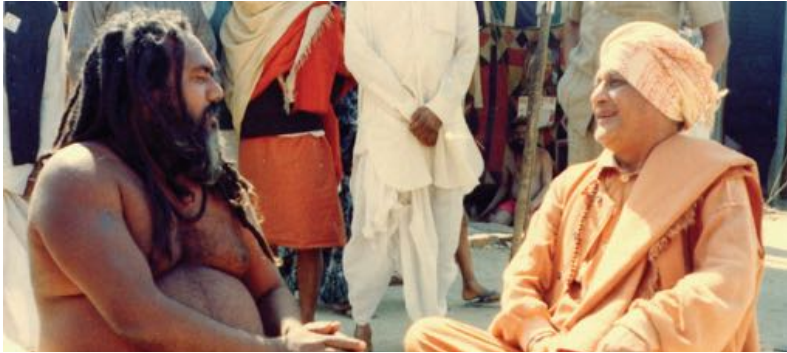
हिरण्यगर्भः समवर्तताग्रे भूतस्य जातः पतिरेकासीत् ।
स दाधार पृथिवीं द्यामुतेमाँ कस्मै देवाय हविषा विधेम ॥

In the beginning was the Divinity in His splendour, manifested as the sole Lord of land, skies, water, space and that beneath and He upheld the earth and the heavens. Who is the deity we shall worship with our offerings?

Other seers said: *Ekobrahman, dwityonasti* - "There is only one Brahman, and no other." Yet, it was this very belief in One, this very 'monotheism', that allowed room for many, and resulted in the subsequent 'polytheism'. If the One Source was behind everything, then everything was worship-worthy as an aspect of That. The wind and waters were pervaded by divinity and worshipped as Varuna, the earth was pervaded by divinity and worshipped as Bhū Devi, the sun was pervaded by divinity and worshipped as Surya. Similarly, every individual who had realized that Truth was considered the same as the Truth. Such a one was an avatara, descended from That, and became worship-worthy too, whether in the form of Rama, Krishna, Buddha or Jesus.

The original wisdom of the ancestors allowed room for every stream of thought, every path to reach the end of the journey. This inclusive perspective, unique to Indian spirituality, continued through the ages, and as a result India has come to have '33 million gods and goddesses', and an equally large number of schools and paths. People followed the course that suited their temperament or which was predominant in the environment they lived in, whether family or society, yet in the backdrop the One Reality always existed. This is what resulted in a social milieu of religious tolerance. In the same family, the father could be a Shaiva, the mother an ardent believer of Gauri, the daughter a fan of Krishna, and the son an atheist. An example close to us is of Sri Swami Satyananda, whose mother was a Gandhian, father an Arya Samaji, sister a Catholic nun, and brother married to a Muslim. Indeed, the Indian mindset never faced any contradiction in recognizing Buddha as an avatara or Jesus as an enlightened one. Even in circumstances where the sects fought for differences, the prominent spiritual figures were able to bring them back together; all it required was a reminder of what was already a part of their genetic makeup: the ability to see the One in many.

Adi Shankaracharya resolved the differences between Shaivites and Vaishnavites through the simple act of installing



a Vaishnava priest in a Shaiva temple. Tulsidas adopted a similar approach and called Rama and Shiva each other's aradhyayas. The Lingayat Shaivites became a warrior sect around the 13th century but could not hold their sway and were assimilated back into the mainstream of Shaivism. There are many such examples.

This is not to state that there haven't been differences within society in the Indian system. The important point to understand, however, is that the differences did not arise due to religious ideology. The main factor behind social disparity was the misuse of the caste system. If we think about it, even when the brahmin did not allow the shudra to enter the temple of Rama, he would not say that 'My Rama is different from your Rama'.

In comparison, the individualistic approach of the West lent itself to religious acceptance of one versus unacceptance of another. This gave rise to a specific kind of monotheism, where belief in one meant rejection of others. The masters, whether Jesus or Mohammed, realized the Whole, but their realization did not become an attitude of the masses. The belief system that grew there was focused on one God or one messiah, and anything else was pagan or kafir. This tendency to label that which is different and to base one's beliefs on definitions - definitive notions - became an ingrained part of the western psyche. Terms such as monotheism and polytheism are also only labels created by the western way of thinking that exaggerate the differences. In fact, if we go back to the way of thinking of

the vedic seers, we find that ultimately, labelling anything went against their grain. Form was only a way to reach the formless, and therefore they proclaimed, *Neti Neti* - "Not this, not this", as in the final analysis, definitions limit the limitless.

It was this width of perspective that led hordes of seekers to travel to the East. Once material prosperity had reached its zenith in the West, the 'new generation' rejected the values that were on offer and sought the elusive 'something else'. Unfortunately, there were many among them whose search was sincere but who were hampered by the psyche they had inherited. The eastern perspectives seemed attractive but to integrate it with their inherent patterns of mind was a challenge. It was inevitable that rejection would follow and so would the associated pain, anger, and sadly, name-calling. The rare ones who saw through the mirage of their own mind, of course, became extraordinary people.

Undoubtedly not all who claimed to be masters in the eastern part of the world had reached the highest level of awareness either, nor was every path devoid of irregularities, and many of the spiritual groups did develop into an image of what the West calls 'cult'. As is human nature, there will always be those who will use an idea as an opportunity to develop its counterfeit to derive personal benefit. In addition, many who started on an idealistic note could not maintain the ideal as the whirlwinds of the world caught them and threw them hither and thither.

An important phenomenon that also inevitably took place was that many seekers, irrespective of nationality, reached only a certain distance in the journey and then their own limitations overpowered them and they were unable to go further. Emotions such as fear, insecurity, or desire can become such a block for a seeker that it becomes impossible to see beyond it. In philosophical terms, it may be said that it is one's karma to go only so far in this lifetime and one will cover the next lap in another lifetime, for evolution is a continuous process. Nevertheless, what happens in reality is that many blame the master, the institution or the philosophy itself for

the predicament they find themselves in, and ironically, create 'cults' of hatred.

This continues to happen. As is human nature, when one experiences a lack of fulfilment, hurt or anger, one must find an external source to blame it on. To have the inner strength and the will where one can acknowledge one's own limitations, find their source within, then work through them to gradually free oneself from these, takes a rare seeker; and those who have that calibre do not have the need to indulge in casting aspersions on another. They are able to experience even an imperfect person, an imperfect path, an imperfect place, an imperfect time, as an opportunity to learn, grow and attain perfection.

This has been the attitude prescribed and practised by the ones who reached the end of the journey in Indian history, and therefore the notion of cult could never find root here. Instead, the guru was always treated with utmost respect and the spiritual journey considered a sacred pilgrimage. People and paths have come and gone, but what has sustained here is *sanatana dharma*, the eternal religion, based on the non-changing principles that carry a person closer to the experience of truth, auspiciousness and beauty, *Satyam, Shivam and Sundaram*.





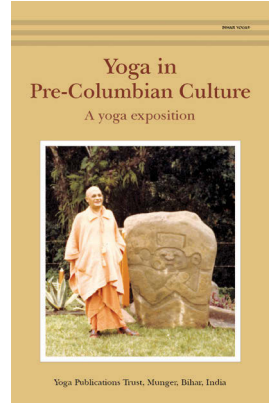
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<i>Jan 22</i>	Basant Panchami Celebrations/ Bihar School of Yoga Foundation Day
<i>Feb 22-Jun 10</i>	Yogic Studies Course, 4 months (Hindi)
<i>Feb 14</i>	Bal Yoga Diwas, Children's Yoga Day
<i>Apr 8-14</i>	Hatha Yoga Yatra 1 & 2
<i>Apr 22-28</i>	Hatha 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
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