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Hari Om

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GUIDELINES FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

To feel much for others and little of oneself, to restrain one's selfish nature, constitutes the perfection of human nature. No one in this world is perfectly independent. Everyone is in need of the assistance of others. Everyone is placed in society to receive and confer reciprocal help and mutual obligations. Food, clothes, health, protection from injuries, enjoyment of the comforts and pleasures of life – all these one owes to the assistance of others.

Therefore, one should be benevolent and a friend to humankind. A benevolent person rejoices in the happiness and prosperity of his neighbour and all people. One should not wait for extraordinary circumstances to do good actions but try to use ordinary situations.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

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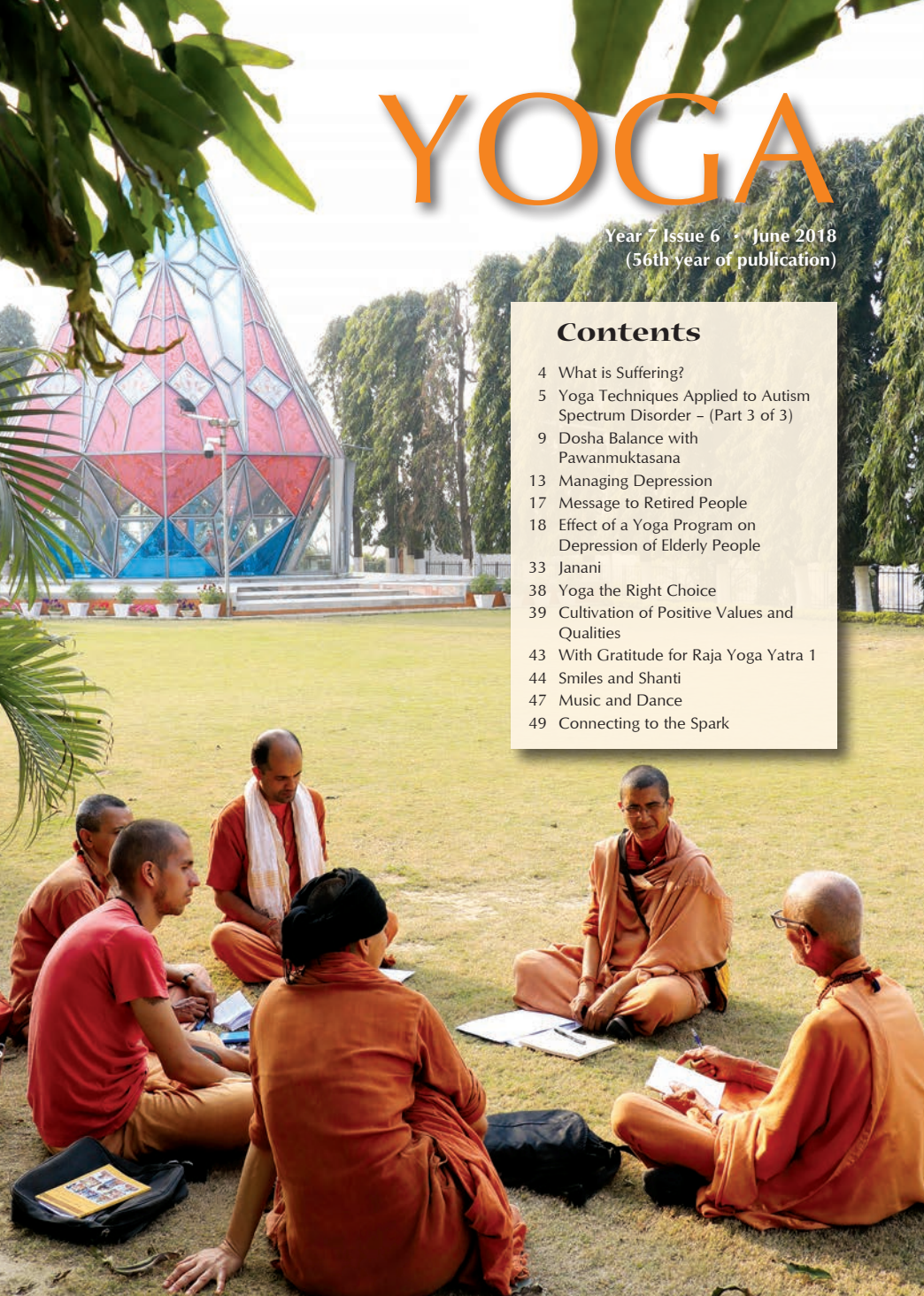
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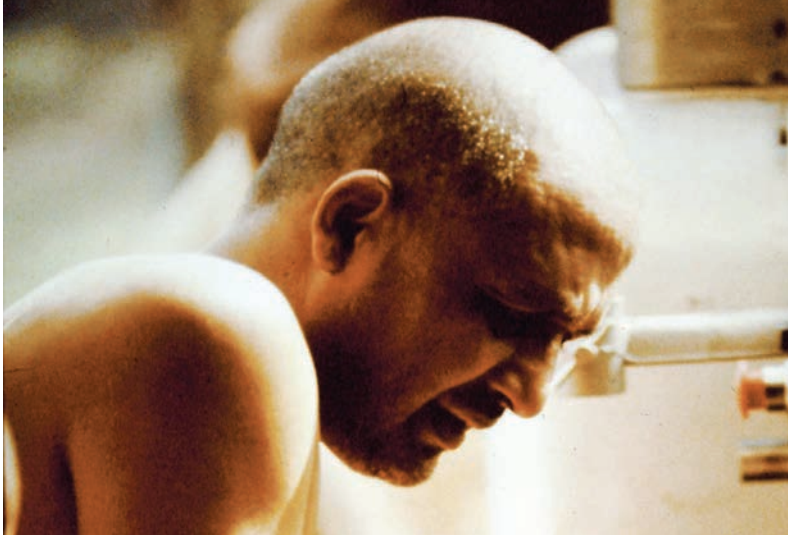


The Yogi is superior to the ascetic. He is deemed superior even to those versed in sacred lore. The Yogi is superior even to those who perform action with some motive. Therefore, Arjuna, do you become a Yogi. (*Bhagavad Gita VI:46*)

तपस्विभ्योऽधिको योगी ज्ञानिभ्योऽपि मतोधिकः । कर्मिभ्यश्चाधिको योगी तस्माद्योगी भवार्जुन ॥

What is Suffering?

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Suffering is a blessing in disguise. We are always afraid of suffering, and we do not want to suffer. However, suffering is a means of realizing and exterminating the negative karma. You should welcome it just as you welcome an operation when your appendix or any other organ is inflamed. There are people who do not like suffering; therefore they feel it more. There are those who enjoy suffering; thereby they are able to increase their tolerance and will.

Pain and suffering is a crucible into which Nature throws a man whenever She wants to make him a sublime superman. Do you realize how much Christ or Mahatma Gandhi had to suffer? Sri Rama spent fourteen years in exile. There were only thorns in his life; the pain of exile was only one of them.

So, if you suffer, you should always think that God is trying to awaken you from your stupor. You must know sorrow; it is a learning experience for you. Sorrow makes you learn.

Yoga Techniques Applied to Autism Spectrum Disorder — Part 3 of 3

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

Yoga techniques applied

Pawanmuktasana Parts 1, 2 and 3. Each series has its theoretical basis about the effects they generate in the body, the mind and the spirit. (9)

Conscious/abdominal breathing techniques and prana nigraha techniques promote and awaken different pranas inside the physical structure. (8)

Relaxing techniques: Relaxing poses needed so the child can balance any sensation of tiredness, reduce excessive muscle tensions due to poor posture or tensions. (9)

In the Connected Integration Pattern® three basic principles are articulated creating a dynamic that can't be omitted. It is not the addition of the three principles that constitutes the model, but the art of combining these concepts through the teacher's role, from his or her ability, knowledge and own evolution. The success in the practice of this model depends on the teacher's attitude, willingness, receptiveness, conscience and previous experience with the techniques.

For instance: For a child with communication level C and an established teacher-student relationship, pawanmuktasana 1 technique is used. This is carried out through the moulded program, paying constant attention to the child's breathing processes. The teacher joins to the child's rhythm, breathing with the child, allowing the child to follow the teacher's physical movements by a more subtle connection. In this way, an increase in the mirror neuron functions is allowed through both sensory and motor perceptions in a simultaneous way. (6)

The communication level achieved through this model surpasses the cognitive barrier which, in most cases, is the limit for the task with these children. The Mirror Neuron System is receptive to communication in varied levels, mainly in the subtlest ones. Therefore, the practice, the teacher's connection and empathy is of essential importance to detect and develop an appropriate response the moment the teacher notices the need of the child.

Experience evaluation

Children's modifications were recorded by means of different sources as the experience was implemented. The yoga practice replaced neither any ongoing therapy nor medication. Therefore, to recognize the program results, the modified behaviours in almost all the attended children were taken into account. The professional medical psychiatrist who monitored the experience expressed the following observations and its symptoms from the clinical point of view, "Bearing in mind as a referential framework the initial diagnosis of each child, the following aspects were observed in most of them:

- Decrease in the restricted interests
- Increase in the communicative intention
- Greater breadth in thinking flexibility
- Decrease of anxiety symptoms and motor concern
- Improvement of motor abilities from greater body awareness
- Greater breadth in the ability of detecting one's own anxiety or discomfort
- Development of acquired strategies to face this situation.

The following information, common to the majority of children, was collected through the interviews with parents:

- Beginning to be aware in the familiar group.
- Improvements in the interactions with others and enabling a socializing change
- Recognition of one's own emotions facing new situations and dealing with them; not abandoning either the activities or the relationship with one another

- Greater quietness which facilitates new learning abilities
- Enjoyment of some social interactions which were refused before
- Control of one's own behaviour, in some aspects.

The yoga teacher left a written and filmed account of the children's behavioural observations in the sessions, which show the modifications that were being captured. They express what the parents had manifested through the task and the link generated in each meeting:

- Safety
- Self-confidence
- Quietness at the time of new experiences
- Comfort with own body
- Movement control
- Environment perception
- Self-enjoyment manifestation.

Although the existence of a change in communication at a cellular level can't be proved due to the fact that there is no technology available up to now to do so, it can be observed in the children's behaviour and expressions. It can be assumed that the communication at a cellular level had been modified from the clinical point of view, the family dynamics and behaviours in the yoga training. It is essential to emphasize that the earned achievements by the children were sustained over time despite having had interrupted yoga sessions.

Conclusion

The performed experience concludes that the Connected Integration Pattern[®] is an efficient approach for children diagnosed with autism, and that it encourages their performance at an individual and social stage. The success of its implementation is based on three claims:

1. The accomplishment of a complete anamnesis, medical history, which will allow us to measure the child's knowledge from every aspect
2. Interdisciplinary work
3. Yoga teachers' training and experience.

These conditions guarantee that yoga meetings with children will be developed as they are described in the experience.

The core of the model is based on nexus without attachment, the pedagogical instrument and the yoga techniques described here. Therefore, the modification of any of them, implies its own dislocation.

The experience is centred on the unblocking of the communication channels with the purpose of recuperating and redeveloping a functional way to succeed in reducing their anxiety levels, and understanding and regulating different emotional states. As presented in the above report, those effects to the level of the children's behaviour were observed in all cases. Consequently, the success of the aim can be established.

The actual experience has made clear that the child with ASD can develop other levels of communication and learning, being benefited with the yoga practice and the application of the Connected Integration Pattern®.

Reflection

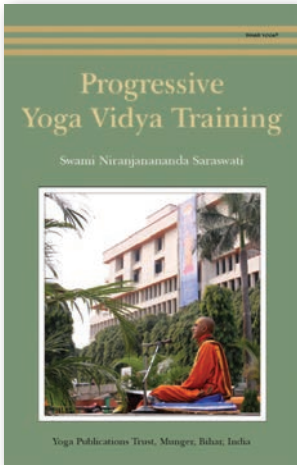
Bearing in mind that the pawanmuktasana series is defined in *Asana Pranayama Mudra Bandha* as "a group of asanas that eliminate the blocks that prevent the free flow of energy through body and mind" and having worked mainly with pranayama, it is possible to have fulfilled some kind of activation in udana. Although it is technically impossible to prove it, it is inferred from the results: a significant change in 100% of the cases, in the communicative behaviour of the treated children. New possibilities are opened to all children diagnosed with ASD.

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Dosha Balance with Pawanmuktasana

From Progressive Yoga Vidya Training, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

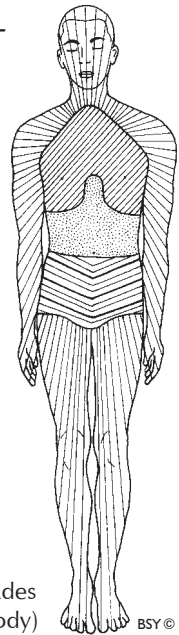
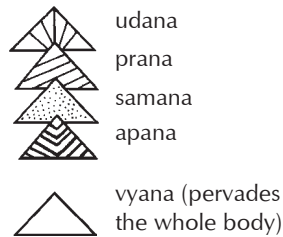


The practices of pawanmuktasana create a balance in the *doshas*, the humours, in the body. Pawanmuktasana part 1 primarily rectifies the imbalance of *vata*, wind; pawanmuktasana part 2 that of *pitta*, bile; and pawanmuktasana part 3 that of *kapha*, mucus.

Pancha prana and the doshas

To understand how the doshas go out of balance, you need to

look into the principle of *pancha prana*, the fivefold energies in the body. These five pranas: prana, apana, samana, udana and vyana, move in different directions. *Apana* is a downward moving force, *prana* is an upward moving force, *samana* is a sideways moving force, *udana* is the force in the arms and legs, and *vyana* is the all-pervasive force. In yoga practices, whether asana, pranayama or other practices, an attempt is made to bring prana and apana together, which means reversing the flow of apana to make it go up, and reversing the flow of



prana to make it go down. These are the two major pranas that interact in yogic practices.

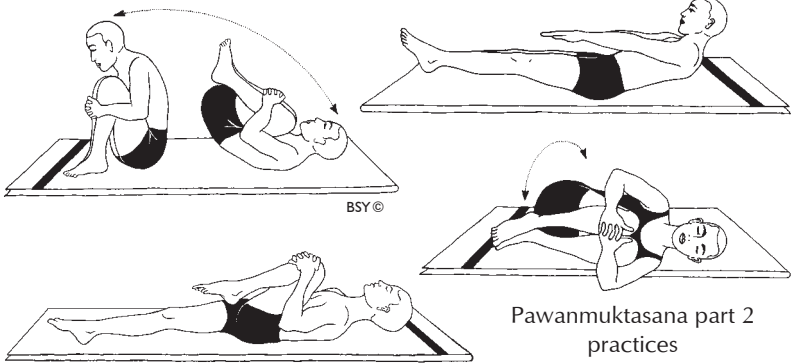
Excessive vata, in the form of gas, is produced when the imbalance is mainly in apana and partially in prana - it is eighty percent due to apana and twenty percent due to prana. A part of this excess vata is then distributed from samana to different parts of the body, causing aches in the joints.

Excess of pitta, bile, happens to people who eat without control. With this, samana goes out of balance. When there is anxiety, nervousness and tension, or when the mind is dissipated, people react in two different ways. There is an instinctive response at that time to try and contain the hyperactivity of the system, and many people do it by eating; whenever they are nervous or tense, they eat and eat. There is another group of people, the minority, who avoid food when they are tense; they cannot eat when they are under stress or pressure.

When you eat too much there is an over-production of digestive fluids, which continuously secrete into the stomach, giving birth to a bilious feeling. On the other hand, when you don't eat or eat too little, the bile builds up and there is a sensation of acidity in the stomach. Thus both conditions, overeating and undereating, create acidity.

Take the example of the toilet flush in the bathroom. If you push the flush forty times during the day, there is a greater possibility of wear and tear. If you flush four times a day, at regular intervals, the life of the flush is prolonged and there is less chance of wear and tear. The same happens with the stomach.

Whenever you eat, the same amount of digestive juices is secreted to assimilate the nutrients and remove the waste product. The stomach does not have a sensor to assess whether you are eating a handful of peanuts or a full meal of rice, dal and sabji, or a whole chicken. Every time some solid goes into the stomach, the digestive process begins and the juices are secreted. Whether you eat too little or too much, the same



quantity of juices is flooding your system to digest the meal. If there is continuous intake of food, then it is like a bath of bile in the stomach. If you eat too little or not at all, then also there is accumulation of bile in the stomach, as it will secrete on time as per the body clock, but it will not be used up.

Pawanmuktasana part 2 specifically deals with the functioning, maintenance and health of the digestive system as a whole. Digestion is such a beautiful and complex system which no scientist can ever create. The strength, the stamina and the energy to survive is received through nourishment, extracted by the digestive fires from the food that you eat, and the waste matter is put out. What a unique system! Each organ works independently and has a specific role to support life, yet the failure of any organ will lead to distress and eventually death.

The movements of pawanmuktasana part 2 ensure that muscle strength and health of the internal organs of the digestive system is maintained. Once that happens, there is better functioning of the digestive system, including the secretion of the digestive fluids and hormones of the endocrine glands.

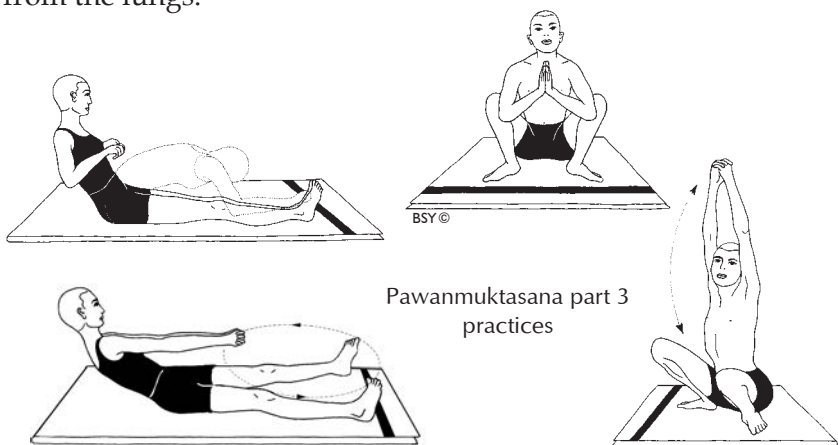
Importance of dietary regulation

To maintain a healthy digestive system, however, another effort has to be made in addition to pawanmuktasana: rectifying the eating habits. Pawanmuktasana part 2 combined

with proper eating habits is what will create a balanced pitta. Just doing the asanas and not changing the previous patterns of either overeating or undereating will not help in the long run. There can be some temporary relief, but the conditions will not change. There has to be dietary observation as well as conscious restriction. In the ashram, for example, the rule is to eat all meals between sunrise and sunset at specific times.

According to ayurveda, food must be consumed only between sunrise and sunset. The reason is that our nerves respond to sunlight; they are activated in daylight and become sluggish when it becomes dark. The energies of the sun activate the body. Therefore, ayurveda says, sunrise first then breakfast; before midday, lunch; and in the evening, not night, dinner. If you feel hungry at night, then have some liquid such as milk or a herbal infusion, but nothing that excites the body such as tea or coffee. These are habits that you need to cultivate. If you already follow them, then try to strengthen them. So pawanmuktasana part 2 along with better dietary habits will take you a long way.

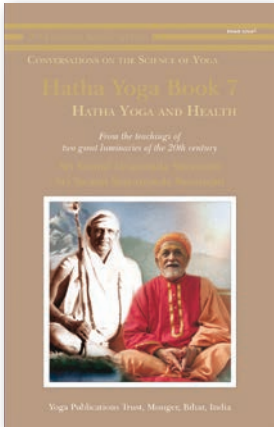
Pawanmuktasana part 3 primarily rectifies kapha imbalance. Several practices in this series predominantly affect the upper part of the trunk and create movement in the cardiovascular and respiratory systems, helping to clear the excess mucus from the lungs.



Managing Depression

From Conversations on the Science of Yoga – Hatha Yoga Book 7,
Hatha Yoga and Health

How can yoga help manage depression?



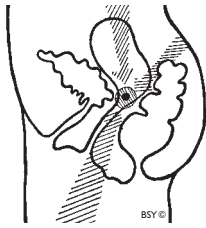
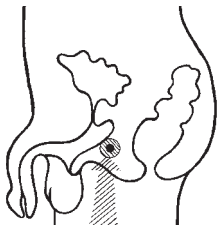
Swami Satyananda: There are 72,000 main channels which conduct the pranic energy and the mental energy throughout the body and feed their system. If there is any imbalance in the nervous systems and in these nadi channels, it is experienced by the person in the form of nervous breakdown, nervous depression.

Nervous depression is a vague expression. These nervous systems are directed by the ida and pingala nadis.

Ida is the source of mental energy and pingala is the source of pranic energy. Nervous depression could be on the plane of pranic energy. Before yogic treatment is undertaken one has to analyze which type of depression it is. If the nervous depression is in the realm of the nadis that conduct mental energy, raja yoga must be practised. If the depression is due to imbalance in the pranic channels, one has to practise pranayama.

Some general suggestions for practices can be made, but a program should be given according to each individual. The first practice that is important for people suffering from nervous system imbalance is *siddhasana*, the accomplished pose. Siddhasana is an important posture for people suffering from nervous depression, particularly for yogis.

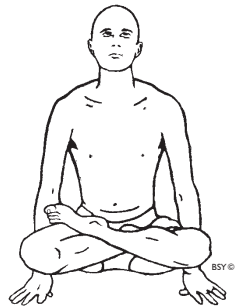
The next practice is moola bandha. Moola bandha is contraction of the perineum. The centre located between the urinary and excretory outlets is known as *mooladhara chakra*,



at the coccygeal plexus, or perineum. At the same time as moola bandha is practised, *jalandhara bandha*, the chin lock, is performed. When *jalandhara bandha* is practised the breath must be held according to the ratio used in one's pranayama practice.

Moola bandha can be learned gradually by practising *ashwini mudra*, contraction and expansion of the rectum and coccyx. When this has been achieved, moola bandha can be tried. Once moola bandha is mastered, go onto the next practice, which is most important. It is known as *tadan kriya*.

Tadan means beating. *Tadan kriya* is one of the practices of tantra; it is one of the practices of kriya yoga. First one sits in *padmasana*, the lotus posture. In that position, the body is raised on the two palms and the buttocks are slowly beaten on the floor. These are two important practices for nervous depression.



How can yoga help in the management of depression and nervous breakdown?

Swami Satyananda: First, there is nervous depression, and when it is not taken care of, there is nervous breakdown. Nervous breakdown means that the nervous system refuses to function.

In yoga there are two nervous systems; one is called *ida*, the other is called *pingala*. In modern science they are called the parasympathetic and sympathetic nervous systems. These nervous systems act as shock absorbers. Each and every sense experience passes through these nervous systems. If the sense experience is normal, these nervous systems act normally. If, however, the sense experiences are explosive, the nervous

system receives shocks. Therefore in yoga, nervous depression and nervous breakdown are considered to be two different illnesses.

The symptoms of nervous depression are: the body is weak, it sweats a lot, horripilation takes place from time to time, the skin burns, one cannot stand for very long, and the mind keeps thinking all the time. One sees only negativity everywhere, only inauspiciousness. These symptoms indicate nervous depression.

At this time one should practise the hatha yoga shatkarmas. A few of these are purificatory, and a few are relaxing. A combination of these practices will avert nervous depression.

When nervous breakdown takes place, things are entirely different. There is difficulty with the coronary system, there is no appetite, the fear of death is always in the mind, and no light can be seen anywhere in life. Nothing works, even psychiatric treatment does not work. If it works at all, it works through drugs.

At this time, it is best to retire to a place which is spiritually charged. Seclusion must be avoided, loneliness must be avoided, but crowds should also be avoided. Always be in the company of people who are spiritual. In India the tradition is very simple. When someone is undergoing a nervous breakdown they are sent to the ashram to live for some time. The diet is corrected, the methods of daily living are corrected, and at the same time practices of yoga are given, like yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, dharana and dhyana.

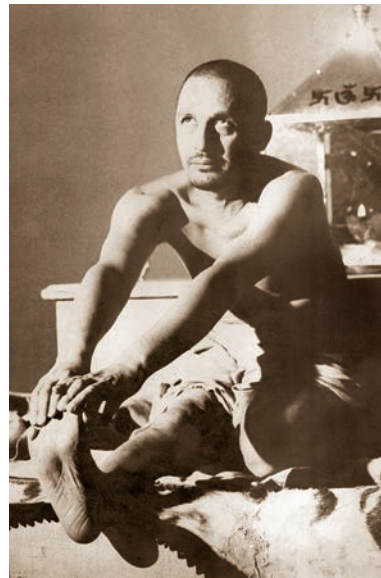
What is the effect of maha mudra on depression?

Swami Satyananda: Many people who were heading towards suicide, suffering from manias, or on the verge of a nervous breakdown have been helped by the kriya known as *maha mudra*, the great posture. This one kriya, maha mudra, brought about a tremendous change in their psychological makeup. Why is this? Maha mudra is very simple and it only takes seven to nine minutes to perform, although it has to

be done perfectly, systematically, according to the instructions of the teacher. This kriya is a way, a panacea, a remedy for everyone. Suicidal tendencies, manias, psychological and psychosomatic ailments are international in nature, so an international system is needed to eliminate them. That international system is yoga, and it is in this light that yoga is brought to you.

In many cases of chronic depression, of constitutional and habitual depression, there is no better way than maha mudra. One person who had decided to commit suicide, happened to inform me of what he was intending to do, and wanted me to tell him what he should do because he wanted to die. I said, "One way is to shoot yourself, the second way is to take some drastic drug, and the third way I will teach you, so come tomorrow morning." And of course, he lives even today; he told me that he had been thinking of committing suicide for over five years but was not sure which way to do it.

After the practice of maha mudra, he overcame this state of utter depression on a permanent basis. This does not mean that maha mudra is only meant as an anti-depression method, because maha mudra is intended to awaken the higher mind. I am referring to depression because depression is a disease which everyone suffers from at some period of life. Some suffer during youth, others suffer in middle age, and before death most people suffer from depression. Therefore, it is necessary for all of us to know how depression is an important part of our personality and how it should be dealt with in order to have a better standard of experience.



Message to Retired People

From Easy Steps to Yoga, Swami Sivananda Saraswati

After retiring from service you should live for one or two months in Prayag or Rishikesh or in a solitary place on the banks of the Narmada, the Ganga or Yamuna where you can get satsang of mahatmas. You should live alone. If you do not know how to cook your food, and if you can afford you can have a cook. Then only you can destroy *moha* or attachment for your wife and children. Then only you can have good concentration and solid spiritual practice.



You can return back to your home. Live now in a solitary place that is situated a mile away from your house. Construct a small kutir. Ask your people to send the food to your place. Sometimes you can take your food in your house. Then again come back to the banks of the Ganga. By so doing you and your family people will be used to separation. They will not get any shock.

Eventually you can stay in seclusion for any number of years without any difficulty. Do not write any letters to anybody when you are in seclusion. Spend the pension in charity. Plunge yourself in japa, meditation, kirtan and pranayama. Draw a daily routine and stick to it tenaciously.

O, old man! What is the use of getting a human body if you do not use even the last portion of your life in divine contemplation, bhajan or worship? It is very difficult to get a human body again. Wake up from the slumber of ignorance. Start this practice at once. Rejoice in Sat-Chit-Ananda Atman. Realize the Self and be free in this very birth!

Effect of a Yoga Program on Depression of Elderly People

Yordanka Aleksandrova, Anya Doncheva, Lyudmila Chervenkova, National Sports Academy 'Vasil Levski', Sofia, Studentski Grad, Department of Kinesitherapy and Rehabilitation

Summary

Purpose of research of the study is the impact of a three-month program of yoga exercises performed in seating position on a standard chair with a backrest and armrests on depression in elderly people with an inactive lifestyle.

Methods

Thirteen people, aged 69–89 (12 women and one man, 79.8 years average age) permanently living in a retirement home have been investigated. They have been asked to do some yoga exercises for three months, three times per week (amount 39 yoga classes), 30 minutes per class. Before starting and after ending the yoga program they were examined by the Geriatric Depression Scale of Sheikh & Yesavage (1986).

Results

The results show a statistically significant reduction of depression by Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS) in the subjects we studied.

Conclusion

The quarterly program of yoga exercises significantly reduced the level of depression among the elderly people we studied.

Key words: yoga, depression, elderly people.

Preface

The world population is ageing: practically every country in the world is experiencing an increase in the number and proportion of older people in its population. The ageing of the population, including growing share of elderly people in the population, is about to become one of the largest and most significant social transformations of the twenty-first century. Globally, the number of old people is growing faster than the number of people in any other age group. The number of people in the world who are 60 and above, is expected to grow by 56% between 2015 and 2030 (16).

The ageing process is most advanced in high-income countries. By 2030, adults are expected to be more than 25% of the population in Europe and North America (16). The statistics at present show that the Republic of Bulgaria has an ageing population (4).

Elderly population in many developing countries today is growing significantly faster than in the developed countries in the past. Consequently, today, developing countries need to adapt much more quickly to the elderly population and use the experience of countries that have developed much earlier (16).

Diseases among elderly people have generally increased during the time (9). Depression is usually seen among old people. However, doctors tend to underestimate or ignore the presence of these symptoms and do not accept them as part of the normal ageing process (7). The prevalence of depressive symptoms in the general population is lowest in the middle age, and then increases in late mature years and reach the highest level in adults over 80 (13). Depression could be seen approximately twice more often among women than men.

During ageing, experiences of depressive nature can be conditioned by a number of factors: social, material, medical, or individual. In some cases, the changes and vulnerability to economic or health status of the elderly are the reason for lasting anxiety and uncertainty that are experienced as depressive states or manifest themselves as depressive

illnesses. In other cases, the individual model to deal with specific circumstances and events adversely affects the development of depression (2).

Common chronic illnesses during late age associated with loss of function also lead to serious adverse psychosocial consequences, thus contributing to the origin of depressive disorders (2).

Depression is a mental disorder that is characterized by a depressed (lowered) mood and lack of interest, joy and pleasure. The depressed (lowered) mood is expressed in sadness, misery, hopelessness. There are other symptoms of depression that are in line with depressed mood and lack of interest (3).

Depression can be described as major or minor, depending on the number of symptoms (five and more in the major depression and less than five in the minor depression). Also depression may be of different types, depending on the type of symptoms. Besides the two mandatory symptoms, as additional symptoms depression may reduce appetite and decrease body weight, can cause insomnia, slow down motor activity, decrease concentration, memory disturbance and decrease energy. Low self-esteem, thoughts of mistakes that require punishment, lack of desire to continue life, suicidal thoughts, etc. could also be included in the group of depression symptoms (3).

In 2005, there were 68 retirement homes for elderly people in Bulgaria, where about 4,600 persons were accommodated (1). During the years old people become increasingly inactive physically (12). It is important to offer to these people appropriate and effective group psychophysical exercises and practices that at the same time have no undesirable additional effects and improve psychophysical health and/or social wellbeing.

Current depression treatment strategies are not effective enough for many people, and patients have a number of concerns about existing treatments (18). On the one hand,

the results of eight meta-analyses show that physical exercise has a moderate to large anti-depressant effect. Exercise, of course, is not the only and universal solution to the growing problem with depression and this type of treatment will not be appropriate for all depressed people. On the other hand, this limitation is equally important for traditional treatments of depression. This means that neither medication nor psychotherapy is appropriate for all (11).

It is also necessary to test non-pharmacological methods to improve the mental health of old people, which promote interaction between the mind and the body without additional effects (7). Yoga is one of these non-medication methods which adapted to respective age and condition can be used to reduce depressive symptoms in the elderly. Hatha yoga can be an attractive alternative for mild depression or a good complement to current depression treatment strategies (18).

Purpose of the study

This study is to determine the impact of a three-month yoga exercises program performed in seated position on a standard chair with a backrest and armrests on depression in elderly people with an inactive lifestyle.

Hypothesis

We assume that a three-month practice of a session of yoga exercises will reduce depression in elderly people permanently living in retirement homes.

Persons surveyed

The study includes 13 elderly people (12 women and 1 man) aged 69–89 year (average age 79.8 years) living in the retirement home 'Longevity', Sofia, Bulgaria. The persons have not practised yoga until the present study. Criteria for including people in the study: they have to live permanently in this home, to have desire for participation in yoga classes, to be able to understand instructions of the yoga teacher, and not to have

chronic illnesses that make participation in the survey contraindicative (this has been confirmed by a doctor from the retirement home 'Longevity'). Regarding the need to use a walking aid, the people surveyed are classified as follows: 4 people with independent gait, 6 people using a walking stick and 3 people moving with a walking frame. The investigated persons have several different diseases, which were treated according to the current medical practice and are listed in Table 1.

Table 1. Diseases of investigated persons

Disease	Number of persons
Arthrosis (gonarthrosis and/or coxarthrosis, spondyloarthrosis etc.)	9
Hypertension	7
Diabetes	3
Ankylosis	1
Chronic arterial insufficiency of the limbs	1
Ischaemic heart disease	1
Stomach ulcer	1
Lumbar radiculitis	1
Gout	1

Research shows that there is an increased risk of deep depression in people with one or more chronic diseases. Also, people with chronic diseases such as diabetes and arthrosis have an increased risk of developing a major depression compared to the general population (14). It has been found that among the elderly Americans (≥ 65 years), depressive symptoms are an independent risk factor for the development of ischaemic heart disease and death for any reason. Among investigated people with the highest average level of depression, the risk of ischaemic heart disease increased by 40% and the risk of death by 60% compared to those with the lowest average scores (5).

Some of the persons included in this study have chronic diseases that are associated with a higher risk of depression. The level of depression for tested persons prior to the application of the yoga exercise program is described in Table 2.

Table 2. Starting GDS-15 level for tested persons.

	GDS-15 results	Number of persons	Percent
Normal/standard	0-4	3	23%
Average level of depression	5-9	7	54%
High level of depression	10-15	3	23%

In the above table it can be seen that before starting the yoga program, for 23% of the group tested normal (no depression), 54% have an average depression level and 23% had a high depression level.

Organization of the survey

The study was conducted on the territory of the Retirement home 'Longevity' starting on 15th January and ending on 15th April 2017 (3 months). Three times weekly (Monday, Wednesday and Friday) 30-minute group exercises including yoga exercises appropriate for this age group were held during this period. Altogether 39 classes were conducted, with 11 of the participants attending 100% and the other two attending 95% of the classes. There were no dropouts during the study.

During the study, participants did not take anti-depressant medications. They shared that they were glad to attend classes, because they like it very much. They also like to meet with the teachers, as outsiders, who bring to them new useful information and activities. We assume that communication in the group and with teachers has also influenced their mental state.

Characteristics of applied yoga exercises

The series of exercises performed by the participants in the study were appropriate to their physical and mental capabilities, the illnesses they had and the basic requirements for conducting a group procedure with this group of people. The participants were motivated to be more active. During the exercises precise, complete and comprehensible instructions were given. The exercises were arranged starting with the easier and gradually followed by the more difficult ones. An individual approach was always applied when the exercises were done.

The research is based on practices from the first group of the pawanmuktasana series – the anti-rheumatic group (6). All exercises were performed from an initial seated position on a chair. During the class, movements were made up to 5 times for each type of movement for each joint. The goal for each participant was to perform the movement in the largest possible painless manner for each joint.

Yoga exercises included appropriate coordinated exercises for upper limbs, including physiological movements (such as folding, unfolding and rotation) with fingers, elbows, shoulder joints, toes, ankles, knee joint, and cervical spine. Typical in the performance of the exercises was the very slow speed of their performance, with the exercises executed at a very slow speed. The speed of movement is the one that can be used to fold and unfold the fingers for 15 seconds. This slow speed is encouraged by Satyananda Yoga as it enhances awareness and better control over execution.

In connection with the well-known positive effect of breathing exercises on the psyche we specify that as part of the program of yoga exercises we applied a kind of breathing technique, which took into consideration the possibilities and physical condition of the persons under study and also according to the teacher's assessment.

This type of breathing is part of the practice kriya pranayama. Its description is as follows: Inhalation is very slow – as

much as possible for the practitioner. Once inhalation is done, one must swallow and then allow the air to come out of the lung by itself, very slowly. It should not be driven out by the diaphragm. The air must go so slowly that if one places the index finger near the nostrils, one will feel only the warmth, but not the movement of the air. The rule is that the duration of breathing in and breathing out is the same, but it may not be strictly observed because we believe that this is achieved by itself when the body is cleaner and the lungs begin to use a greater part of their volume. Practitioners focus their attention on the area of the entrance of the nostrils, and watch the air as it moves in and out at that point. Inhalation and exhalation is only through the nose. The mouth is closed. The position of the body is comfortable, seated on a chair. The back is as straight as possible for the body.

Three to five inhalations and exhalations have been done after the completion of the yoga exercises for one particular joint or at most for two joints for both limbs. For example: finger and wrist exercises – then follows breath awareness; practices in the elbows and shoulder joints – breath awareness; ankles and knees – breath awareness; practices in the neck – breathing.

Instrumentarium of the study

Immediately before and after the mentioned three-month intervention, a Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS-15) of Sheikh & Yesavage, 1986 (17) was implemented with a Bulgarian translation of Mehandjiyska, 2014 (2). The enquiry consists of 15 questions to which the persons respond with “yes” or “no”. Normal state is estimated if the sum of the points in the replies is 0 to 4 points. Depression is estimated when there are more than 5 points. Scores of 5 to 9 are defined as average depression, and if it is 10 to 15 the depression is at a high level and, respectively, markedly depressed (2; 6).

Other researches carried out with this scale find it reliable for groups of elderly people with physical illnesses and also to those with dementia (2).

Statistic process

The statistical processing of the results was carried out with a specialized statistical program – SPSS.19. Confidence Interval (CI) was determined to be 95%. The normality of the distribution of the primary data from the first and second tests was determined by the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The distribution of the volume of movement of almost all variables was normal in both studies.

Results

Statistic results according to the Geriatric Depression Scale (GDS-15) are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. GDS-15 statistic results

	n	I test		II test		Difference	α
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD		
Experimental group	13	6.54	3.73	4.38	2.87	-2.16	0.009

t-test for comparison of dependent samples; decrease in the average shows an improvement

The results show a statistically significant reduction in the Geriatric Depression Scale on the depression level of the tested people. The true difference between the two studies has a high probability – the significance level named with α is less than 0.01, which corresponds to a guarantee probability $P = 99\%$, this means under 1% chance for error in this case.

At the end of the three-month study the average level of depression decreased by 2.16 points. Also, in the second test the highest score was 9 points and this indicates that there were not any persons with a high depression score in the group. Average test values measured before and after the yoga program are shown in Figure 1.

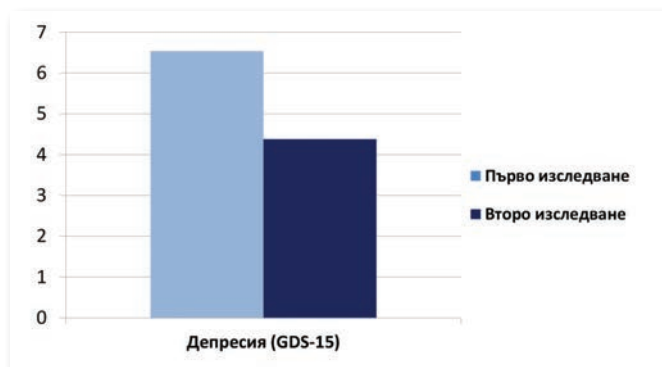








Figure 1. Average level of depression according to the Geriatric Scale of Depression (Depression GDS-15)



Light blue: first research; dark blue: second research.

Discussion

We found a statistically significant decrease of depression after the implementation of the three-month yoga program. The average of the result on the GDS-15 scale decreased by 2.16 points. In the scientific literature (19) a clinically meaningful difference is indicated if it is 1.2 points or more according to the Geriatric Depression Scale. The average points of improvement in our investigations is above this value and indicates that improvement obtained is not only statistically significant, but also clinically significant for that research.

As the study does not have a control group, it can be assumed that there is another factor of influence such as the change of the seasons (winter to spring) and the prolongation of the lighter part of the day that affects the depression of the subjects. But a large four-year research of persons over 85 years of age indicates a lack of significant seasonal changes in GDS data (10). Within each of the four years of observation (people of age 85–88 years) and throughout the period of study, there was no significant relationship between the GDS score and the one-month amount of daytime, daylight, or rain. The authors conclude that estimates of the influence of seasonality on mood reported in the literature may be overestimated or there is a

remarkable difference between the young and the most elderly people in this respect (10). Among the persons surveyed by us, 4 people (30.7%) are aged 85–89 years old, and the rest are below this age. Therefore, we assume that they do not have the seasonal mood changes, which gives us reason to believe that the results obtained in our research are due to the yoga classes.

There are a number of modern studies that show that physical exercises are effective in reducing depressive symptoms. According to Josefsson, Lindwall and Archer (11), physical exercises can be recommended for people with mild and moderate depression who are inclined, motivated, and physically healthy enough to get involved in such a program. A more recent meta-analysis (15) shows that physical exercises have a significant and great anti-depressive effect for people with depression.

Our present study shows a significant reduction in depressive symptoms by yoga exercises program three times a week for three months and is consistent with other similar studies. A study with non-institutionalized individuals over 60 years of age in the experimental (n=62) or control group (n=66) found a decrease in depression in both the third and sixth month of a special yoga program ('silver yoga') three times per week (70 minutes) for six months (7).

The same program applied to people living in homes for elderly people shows a reduction in depressive symptoms and sleep improvement after six months of application (8).

Conclusion

Our three-month program of yoga exercises has significantly reduced the level of depression in the elderly people living in the retirement home.

We do recommend carrying out a larger research in Bulgaria about the influence on the mental state and in particular on depression by yoga exercises suitable for the elderly.

For complete bibliography contact: Mrs Yordanka Aleksandrova, e-mail: yordana007@gmail.com

Janani

Swami Prembhava Saraswati



Yoga ecology is not a new science, it is as old as yoga, as old as the earth, it is a wisdom known for generations. Swami Niranjanananda is reviving and teaching these yogic practices as we need them now more than any time before. There is no point in talking of self-realization and meditation if there is no clean water and air. The indigenous people of the planet have always known this, whether it is the aboriginal people of Australia, the Indians of South and North America or the vedic traditions of India, they all understand our connection to nature.

The yoga ecology practices come from the vedic tradition and they are designed to reconnect to and communicate with nature.

The first step in yoga ecology is to live a yogic lifestyle which is an ecological lifestyle. When I first left India Swami

Niranjan gave me one message to tell everybody; and it was something very simple, "Tell everyone to make the effort to see the sunrise every day." This is the basic teaching of yogic lifestyle. There is nothing complicated about it; in fact, it is the simplest lifestyle. Rise early, eat properly, sleep properly and live with less. To rise with the sun tunes the body into the natural biorhythms of nature. It makes the most of every day and keeps the body and mind healthy and balanced.

Our tradition

Our tradition and the teaching of Swami Sivananda are also very simple. His main teaching was – Be good, Do good, Be kind, Be compassionate. He also gave this beautiful advice to all aspirants:

Smile with the flowers and the green grass, play with the birds and the deer, shake hands with the ferns and twigs and talk to the rainbow, wind, stars and sun, converse with the running brooks and waves of the sea, develop friendship with all your neighbours, the dogs, cats, cows, trees and flowers, then you will have a wide and perfect life.

Swami Sivananda taught an integral yoga and encouraged people to live the divine life. At the time he was living in Rishikesh there was World War 1 and World War 2. He saw the suffering of people and made yoga accessible to everybody. He encouraged people around the world to practise yoga for the health of body and mind through a balanced yoga practice for head, heart and hands.

He encouraged his sannyasins to travel the world over teaching yoga. One of his sannyasins, our guru Swami Satyananda, was given the mandate to spread yoga 'from door to door and shore to shore' and for twenty years Swami Satyananda taught yoga across the globe. He showed people that yoga was something for everybody and he encouraged the teachings of head, heart and hands.



Swami Satyananda inspired people to spend time in the yoga ashram to experience the whole yogic life, to experience hatha yoga, karma yoga, bhakti yoga, the full wheel of yoga.

Swami Satyananda also gave us the science of yajna which he said was vital for the ecological systems of the earth. Now yoga has definitely spread 'from door to door and shore to shore' so much so that we have the International Day of Yoga. Yoga has become a household name but if you ask anyone what yoga is today, they will tell you it is stretching and doing strange body postures. Yoga has become a purely physical exercise. There is hot yoga, cold yoga, dog yoga, surf yoga; you will find any kind of yoga.

Swami Niranjan has now begun the 2nd Chapter of Bihar School of Yoga and he said it is time for us who are serious in our yoga practice to deepen our understanding of yoga. Yoga must become a sadhana and a lifestyle. You cannot learn yoga in a classroom, you can learn asana, pranayama, meditation and philosophy in the classroom but to really live yoga, you have to make yoga a lifestyle. The best place to do that is in a yoga ashram. If you spend one week, one year, five years or twenty years, only then will you realize what is yoga. Then you can take the light of yoga out into society which is what people need now more than anything.

Yoga lifestyle

People believe 'having more stuff is going to make me happy'. The world is ruled by consumerism and economic growth. All the consumer products come from the resources of the planet and when we are finished with it where do we throw it? Back to the earth. In a million years, there will be a layer of plastic on the earth and we will be remembered as the plastic era.

A yogic life is a simple life. We don't need so much and our houses don't need to be cluttered. If you come to the ashram you will see that it is very plain and simple. This keeps the mind sattvic and clear, and you are free of all your material accumulation. Yet still, we attract stuff, it seems to be the nature of human beings. Maybe tonight you can go home and clear out some of your excess stuff and you will find that as you clean the environment around you the internal environment is also cleansed.

This is where yoga takes the environmental movement further: we can recycle our things, switch off the lights, turn off the tap and save electricity and water, and we have to do those things. But we have to go one step further and purify the environment within us, the microcosm. The five elements – earth, water, fire, air and ether – support our very life. In yoga we have the tattwas within us, and the purification of the external and the internal tattwas has to happen at the same time. We cannot sit back and complain about the state of the environment if there is no effort to purify ourselves.

As the mind is purified the environment around us naturally follows, and this process happens as soon as people start practising yoga. Yoga by its very nature increases our awareness and connects us to the environment around us. Otherwise how can we be aware of the environment if we are forever on our mobile phones and stuck in the spiral of the mind that just spins around and around all day long. Simple asana and pranayama increase our level of awareness to make us aware of the world around us.

As we practise yogasana we will explore the animal postures and the tree pose. People may think that it is for children only. The yogis, however, lived with nature and they studied nature. The yogasana by their very design connect us to a particular form of nature. It is only our obsession with our bodies, the alignment of the spine, digestion and menstrual problems, which is limiting us from experiencing the full effect and purpose of the asana.

In all aspects of our life we have forgotten we are the earth and are totally interconnected and dependent upon the earth. Even in our yoga practice we have forgotten that.

Pranayama encourages us to breathe properly but we have forgotten where the breath comes from as the rainforests are being cut down at an acre a minute. These are the lungs of the planet and provide us with the air to breathe. As soon as people start practising pranayama they realize the importance of clean air and breath.

If we practised the yama and niyama we would not be in the mental, emotional, social and environmental mess we are now, but nobody has been practising real yoga. As we forge into the 2nd Chapter of yoga we need to establish yoga as a sadhana and live yoga as a lifestyle which will help us to reconnect and communicate with nature.

– 12 August 2017, Villa Garcia, Montevideo, Uruguay



Yoga the Right Choice

Tanya Boicheva, Bulgaria

With the practice of yoga, I began to know myself better and to trust my intuition. Yoga helps me to accept myself and other people as they are without judging. I do not always succeed, but I try. Yoga gave me the belief that everything that happens in my life is for my own good. I am not so stressed anymore and I take things much more calmly. I am rarely worried and insecure.

By nature, I am not very flexible, but yoga has made me much more so – I am even surprised at how well I am doing when performing asanas – and that gives me self-esteem. I have problems with blood pressure and I have to take pills. Yoga helps me despite this to feel complete. Yoga taught me to breathe properly as if my chest is open. This is an unparalleled pleasure especially in the mountains! I also have narrowing of the spinal canal in the neck area. Sometimes I had severe pains. Yoga saved me from this. It helped me so much to feel good and not to think so much of the bad diagnosis. I feel my spine much more steady – the muscles have become stronger and my body posture is better.

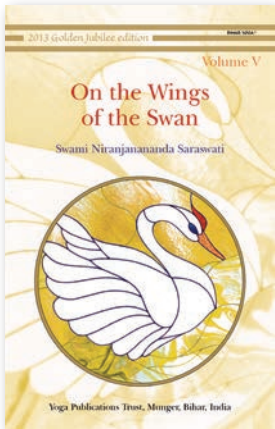
Yoga has gradually changed my way of life. I already eat in a healthier way, I participate in sports more often and I accept life as an invaluable gift from God. Yoga teaches me love, awareness, humility, tranquillity, gratitude and peace. Yoga for me is a way of life, purity of mind and body, gratitude to everything, harmony and transformation.

I know I've chosen the right way for me to live.



Cultivation of Positive Values and Qualities

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



If people want opportunities and chances in life, they can use different methods to cultivate positive qualities and values. For example, people who find it easy to become aware of their shortcomings in behaviour or thought may work on their opposites to develop positive attitudes and thoughts. Whenever one becomes aware of something negative, an attempt can be made to conquer that tendency in such a manner that it becomes an opportunity to develop positive attitudes. When there is anger, one tries to establish the opposite of anger. This requires a moment to moment observation of what is happening in the form of responses and reactions to different mental states, and to external situations or conditions which trigger the mental states. This is a good method, but it requires preliminary work on developing awareness, and it means a good line of communication with a teacher or guru is required.

Positive qualities

The first step is to develop awareness of what one is doing. One needs to chalk out one's weaknesses before they can be worked on. One needs to find out what triggers negativity within and what upsets one's balance. One's basic needs must be discovered, what is lacking in a situation and what is needed to make life more harmonious. It may sometimes be necessary

to change the environment so that there is an inner and outer shift. Finally, without being egotistical, one needs to discover what one has to offer.

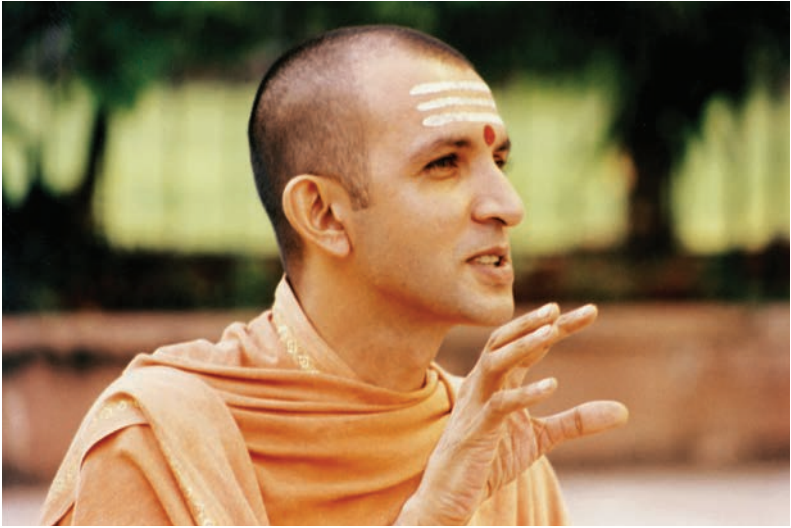
Everyone is trying to build up positive qualities in some way or the other, consciously or unconsciously. People are trying to figure out where they stand in this world. What are the values they are supposed to follow, as written in various scriptures? How can they follow them without becoming too orthodox and restricted? All the definitions of consciousness show that self-pity and similar traits which are developed due to weakness are not supposed to be part of one's consciousness. Therefore, one should try to understand how matter or the gross body is working and how consciousness works. Positive qualities and values can be built up by trying to understand what consciousness is. This method involves figuring out what is generated from inside and whether it is applicable for one's development and growth or not.

Yoga states which positive qualities must be activated. Rather than chasing a fantasy, from the beginning one should identify different qualities in relation to one's nature, behaviour and attitude. There are certain aspects of one's nature which cannot be changed overnight. If people try to change themselves without first recognizing their personality, they go through a personality crisis. By superimposing a discipline or an idea on one's performance, behaviour or mentality, which may not necessarily be compatible but sounds attractive, one cannot acquire a positive quality or value. Yoga applies the formula: first self-recognition and then self-transformation.

Meditative approach

The first approach is meditation. It includes relaxation, awareness, and willpower or the will to change.

Relaxation: The nature, mind or personality of everyone is in a state of tension, alertness and activity. If one looks at a drawing of a wave pattern, one can see the ascent and descent of that particular wave. If one considers this wave to represent



the state of mind, whatever one's responses, projections and reactions are to a situation, they will always happen when the mind is at its peak. When the mind is at its lowest ebb and one is exposed to the same situation, one says, "Why bother? What have I got to do with it?" Although one is exposed to the same situation, at one point there is involvement and at another point there is no involvement.

Everyone has the ability to find a solution, but why does one only take an interest sometimes? This happens because of the mental peaks. Relaxation implies that the normal levels of tensions and activities of the mind can be managed in such a way that one is not subject to mental highs and lows so there is no block in one's approach. In the state of relaxation there is no restriction or limitation in one's assessment of the situation and the self-created barriers are lowered. When tensions are lowered, free play is given to one's ability to analyze and reflect upon what has happened, and to come to a correct judgement or decision.

Awareness: Awareness implies that one knows what has to change. Awareness implies one has an idea of what is the right method for one's involvement or participation, and that

one is able to use past experiences to manage or transform a particular condition or situation. Awareness is the link with buddhi and as one develops greater awareness, the buddhi dimension is accessed more and more.

Willpower: Willpower is maintaining conviction, adhering to the right situation and proper context and having faith and belief in it. If one distrusts a process, it is not going to have any effect. If one can trust or believe in the process, the mind becomes compatible with the process and it can be changed.

There is a statement in the *Yoga Sutras* (1:14) which has been repeated in relation to one's practice:

Sa tu deerghakaala nairantaryasatkaarasevito dridhabhoomih.

Sadhana becomes firmly grounded by being continued for a long time, with reverence, without interruption.

This statement is simple. In order to reach a point of perfection, one needs to follow the process for a long period, *deerghakaala*. One needs to be regular. Regularity implies continuous awareness. If continuous awareness is not there, regularity is not there. *Satkaara*, faith, refers to willpower. Willpower is not an intellectual conviction, believing in something rigidly to achieve something. Willpower is the entire personality being in tune with one's aspirations, with what one is doing and believes in. When there is harmony between personality and aspiration, all kinds of blockages are easily removed and one achieves the target without any problem. Willpower is tuning the mind to an idea, an action, a belief which motivates one to achieve the aim one has set for oneself.

These three components become part of meditation and help one to adopt different values and qualities. The more the awareness and ability to relax and adjust to different situations increase, the more one is able to fine-tune one's personality, and the less conflict is encountered.

– August–September 1998, Ganga Darshan, Munger

With Gratitude for Raja Yoga Yatra 1

Swami Divyaprema, France



The week has been rich in practices and experiences, the dimensions of raja yoga make us familiar with the different aspects of the practice – yamas, niyamas, pratyahara, the four levels of consciousness. We learn to become more aware of ourselves and our surrounding.

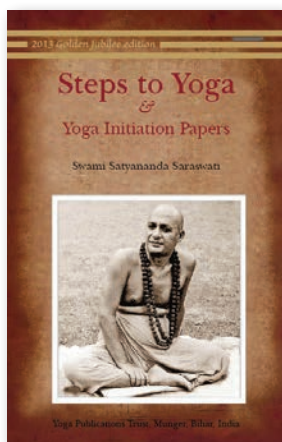
We need to make constant effort and feel concerned. It is our responsibility to cultivate our motivation. We must be conscious of the urgency there is in this patriarchal and warrior world to balance ida and pingala, to clear the pratyayas so that we can fill our minds and our behaviour in life with positivity.

Swamiji, thank you for the positivity you teach us. You are the best example and you give us the strength needed to change ourselves.

Ganga Darshan is smiling, beaming with happiness and a great sense of brotherhood exists here. May the traditional yoga of BSY fill the planet and become the culture of today.

Smiles and Shanti

From Steps to Yoga & Yoga Initiation Papers, Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Letters to Swami Satyabratana

29 September 1956, Katrasgarh

I love this life. I care to make this existence better. I wish to make this body hale and hearty, this mind quiet and peaceful. I love men more than they love stone gods. The more I mix with people, the more I have begun to love them. Love is a greater force than the law of religion. If water cannot cool your body, or food appease your hunger, love can do that.

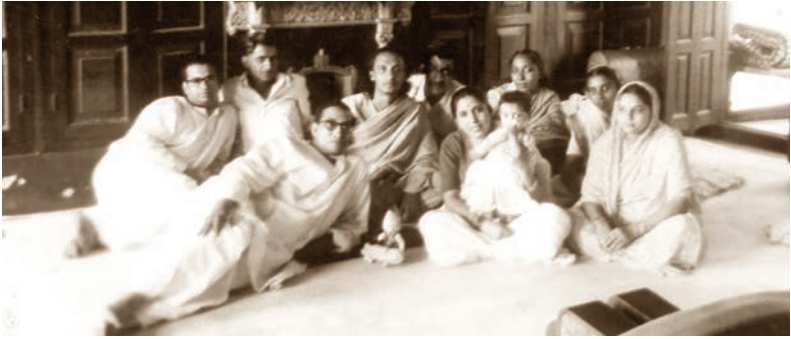
28 December 1956, Fort Munger

Even those who hated spiritual life, but suffered physically, come to me and still come to get themselves yogically trained. You know what I do with them? I regulate their life itself. You see, I am bent upon reaching a 'way of life' – dharma I mean.

2 July 1957, Raipur

Practise asanas, and side by side you can practise pranayama. You will have good appetite, cheerfulness, strength, courage, vigour, vitality and good concentration of mind.





Letters to Swami Dharmashakti

The great storehouse of knowledge and energy resides within you. Nature wants to express that knowledge in various forms.

If you want to hear the voice of inner knowledge then you have to shut the doors of the external senses and turn within.

9 March 1957, Shiva Bhavan, Bhagalpur

Reduce thinking, increase remembrance and stop worrying.

14 March 1957, Munger

I want to base the method of sadhana on pure spirituality and will endeavour to keep it absolutely free from politics, money and society.

9 December 1958, Burhanpur

Life, yes, worldly life is a cage of hope and despair, and spiritual life is a joyful playground. We get hurt, we win, we lose and we still laugh gleefully.

7 January 1959, Raipur (Rewa)

This is a real prayer. For a sadhaka every day is a new year, new lessons of life, a festival of new steps and new resolutions.

9 January 1960, Bombay

Yoga is another name for a well-regulated life and experience of God, self-knowledge.

Letters to Vishwaprem

20 April 1957, Bhagalpur

The first step to spiritual life is to keep the mind ever busy. Every work is sadhana if done with concentration.

1 May 1957, Delhi

Conflicts, struggles, worries, anxieties and passions should be calmed down by the virtues of love, sincerity and faith.

2 August 1957, Raipur (Rewa)

Your self is noble and great. You inherit truth and purity. You have in you infinite capacities. You just have to assert what you are.

Waste not a single moment in laziness, brooding, dreaming, worrying and weeping. Become an incarnation of joy and happiness.

21 September 1957, Mathura

You must become an incarnation of perceptible smiles and imperceptible shanti.



Music and Dance

From Realization Through Music, Music As Yoga, Swami Sivananda Saraswati



One can attain the Lord's darshan through singing kirtan and songs. There are various ways to God-realization, bhakti yoga, raja yoga and other yogas, but the easiest, cheapest, quickest, safest and surest way to attain God-realization is sankirtan yoga. Just as a deer is entrapped by music, so also the mind, which is as restless and wandering as the deer, is steadied by the music and made to dissolve in Brahman. By the singing of kirtan and songs in praise of the Lord, the mind melts and becomes one with the Lord. Therefore, let us also pray to the Lord, sing His kirtan and attain God-realization this very second.

God-realization is not difficult. It is easy for those who are engaged in uttering his name, singing his praise and meditating on his feet, and who have surrendered themselves to the Lord.

The path of devotion is the easiest and the surest of all the ways for attaining emancipation. The science of music goes hand in hand with bhakti yoga.

Sangeeta or music is the fountain-source of all our being. It has an emotional appeal to the inner aspiration of humanity. Inanimate objects are also moved by music, there is even music of the planets. All of the arts aspire towards the condition of music. Through music, the soul learns harmony and rhythm, as well as an even disposition to justice. Rhythm and harmony find their way into the secret notches of the soul and keep it entirely oblivious to the outside world in sublime peace.



A devotee sings bhajan and forgets everything and submerges himself in the divine name. When a sincere devotee sings, there is a harmonious blending essence, feeling and creation, of *rasa*, *bhava* and *rachana* in his songs just as there is form, colour and fragrance in the rose.

Nritya or dance which accompanies a kirtan is an inseparable, sacred movement of the various limbs of the body in accordance with the inner divine bhava. *Nritya* in itself is a divine science. The Adi Gurus of this celestial dance are Lord Shiva, Krishna and Mother Kali.

Nritya is an external manifestation induced in bhaktas by the thrill of ecstasy from within and helps the devotees to merge themselves in the Lord.

Connecting to the Spark

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Mind has three different natures – tamasic, rajasic and sattwic. The sattwic nature is the simple one, the pure, the clear one. The ambitions and the selfishness, *swartha*, belong to the tamasic mind. The motivation and drive for the *swartha*, selfish acquirements, belong to the rajasic mind. We all live between 75 percent tamasic 25 percent rajasic, yet we lead ourselves to believe that we live rajasic 75 percent and tamasic 25 percent. No, it is the other way around.

What is the heaviest element on Earth? The earth itself. Not air, not water, not fire. So what is the heaviest element in mind? The tamasic mind: the craving mind, the desirous mind, the ambitious mind, the greedy mind, the self-oriented mind which says 'I want,' 'I like.' In Vedanta wherever 'I' appears, it is considered to be the tamasic mind. Whenever 'He' appears, in Vedanta, that is considered to be the sattvic mind; the awareness of 'He' has to be in sattwa, not in tamas.

Application and motivation

In tamas, people manipulate even God and guru. They use them as stepping stones to achieve their own gains and aims. Once they achieve their goals and aims, then even God has no relevance in life. This is a clear indication that the most pious thing in life which humanity has aspired to experience, is used as a stepping stone for own personal gains. I am talking of God and guru, both. This is the quality of the tamasic mind.

The question is, how far has one progressed in life? You can spend twenty years. You can spend forty years and your whole lifetime, yet it is not the lifetime or time that matters. It is how much you have walked the path during the time which was available to you. This applies to everybody in life also children. When they study, how much time do they apply to their studies? The more they apply, the more hold they have over the subject. The less they apply, the less hold they have over the subject. Simple as that.

It is the application of time and adherence to the intention which is important for each and every one of us at every stage in life. For a child, moving on to the next class is the intention of studies, not learning the subject, and that is all right too. In order to go to the next class, the child has to study the subject and pass the term. If the child fails the term, they go back to the same class, however intention is always to move on to the next stage.

Does that apply only to studentship in life? Or in the other ashramas as well? Not only in the brahmacharya ashrama,

but also in *grihastha ashrama*, the householder life, the life of responsibility and commitment. It should apply in the *vanaprastha* life, the life of post-retirement. How do we apply ourselves, our skills, our time, our mind? It should apply in the sannyasa life.

How can we overcome the baggage of the tamasic manas that holds back the peace and the harmony that yogis and spiritual traditions talk about? We are not able to experience it despite being involved and teaching it for some time. The fault is in our application of it. Even as teachers, how many people apply the principles of the teaching to their own life? One should reflect on that. This gives clarity of mind, this gives focus and purpose to life. This gives motivation to walk the path.

Types of aspirants

One has to find security within oneself. One cannot find security and comfort with the help of other people. The real security and comfort in life comes when you are connected to the inner person, not the people around you. That inner person, that inner awareness has to come to a spiritual aspirant. Sri Swami Satyananda has said in one of his letters published in the *Yoga Initiation Papers* that there are two kinds of aspirants: one are sadhakas, and one are the needy ones, the experimental ones. They come for a special purpose, and when the purpose is over their participation is complete. The person who comes with a purpose, whether it be health, mind, emotion, devotion or even sadhana, they don't progress very far, because they are unable to let go of their ambitions. People who come with the intention of sadhana are definitely able to go a certain distance, but then external pulls of the distorted conditions of mind, like attraction-repulsion, love-hate – the opposites, again, try to pull you to their level. Many sadhakas succumb to that attraction and they fall back to the tamasic mind. Very few people are able to complete the journey to the sattvic mind.

When I read this letter, I said to myself, 'What everybody is facing today, Paramahamsaji was speaking of in 1956 and

1957.' The nature of the mind does not change. Sometimes it can be more distracted and dissipated; at other times it will be less distracted and dissipated, yet the stillness will never be there. If it becomes still, then that is the apex of yoga. What you experience as stillness for a few seconds, a few moments in your practice of meditation is nothing but a temporary, momentary disconnection. That's all. The mind is not strong enough to hold that state. If you try to hold the state forcefully, you become a lunatic, for the actions are all forced. It is obvious that you are pretending to be something you are not.

The spark

Once somebody asked Ramakrishna Paramahansa, "I want to be self-realized. You can give me that realization. Help me now. You are capable, qualified, competent. Put your hand on my head and give me the glimpse of God." Sri Ramakrishna looked up to the sky and said, "It is nearly evening. It is time for my bath. You come to the bathing place and we can talk there." Saying this, Ramakrishna got up and went to his bathing place in the river Ganga. He went waist-deep in the water. The man standing outside said, "You're not talking to me. I want to have darshan. I want to be self-realized." So Ramakrishna said to him, "Come in, stand beside me and then we can talk." The man came waist-deep into the water, Ramakrishna Paramahansa jumped on his back and put his head under water.

Due to lack of air, the person definitely was desperate and he was making every kind of effort, forceful effort, big effort, tremendous effort, to throw Ramakrishna off his back, to surface again, to breathe and to leave the madman behind. Ultimately after a few desperate moments, he was successful. Once out of the river he started abusing Ramakrishna, "You nearly drowned me!" So Ramakrishna Paramahansa asked him, "When your head was under water, what did you feel?" The man looked at him and said, "What do you mean, 'What did I feel?' Of course, I had no breath. I was gasping for breath. I wanted air, and you

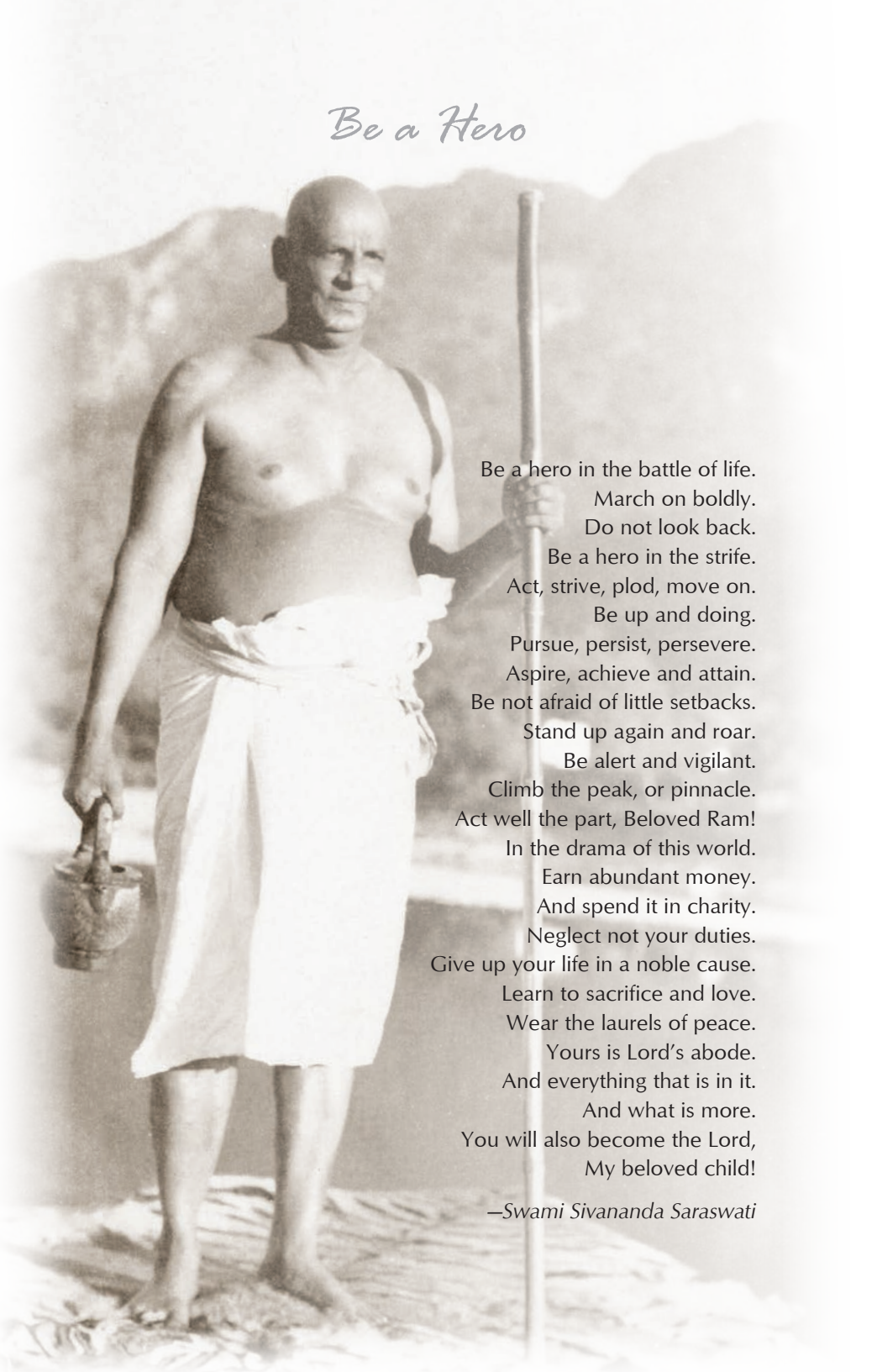
were pressing me down, so my whole power, my whole shakti, went into throwing you off my back.” Ramakrishna said, “If you have the same intensity for darshan, and you have the same aversion of the world like you had of the water when you were drowning, then God-realization is possible.”

If the aim is peace and harmony, then spiritual awareness is another aim. First there has to be peace and harmony, only then can you, as the next stage, take up the challenge of cultivating spiritual awareness. How can one cultivate spiritual awareness if there is no peace and harmony? How can one cultivate spiritual awareness if there is only distraction, dissipation and ambition in one’s mind? Can Patanjali help at that time? No. Can your knowledge help you at that time? It hasn’t and it does not. So what helps you at that time? Your conviction, your sincere commitment and connection. That connection need not be physical. It has to be the connection with your intention, which was the first spark in your life. Place and people come later, but the spark is first.

– 25 October 2017, Ganga Darshan, Munger



Be a Hero



Be a hero in the battle of life.
March on boldly.
Do not look back.
Be a hero in the strife.
Act, strive, plod, move on.
Be up and doing.
Pursue, persist, persevere.
Aspire, achieve and attain.
Be not afraid of little setbacks.
Stand up again and roar.
Be alert and vigilant.
Climb the peak, or pinnacle.
Act well the part, Beloved Ram!
In the drama of this world.
Earn abundant money.
And spend it in charity.
Neglect not your duties.
Give up your life in a noble cause.
Learn to sacrifice and love.
Wear the laurels of peace.
Yours is Lord's abode.
And everything that is in it.
And what is more.
You will also become the Lord,
My beloved child!

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

YOGA AND YOGAVIDYA PRASAD

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

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

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

To access YOGA online:

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

To access YOGAVIDYA online:

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

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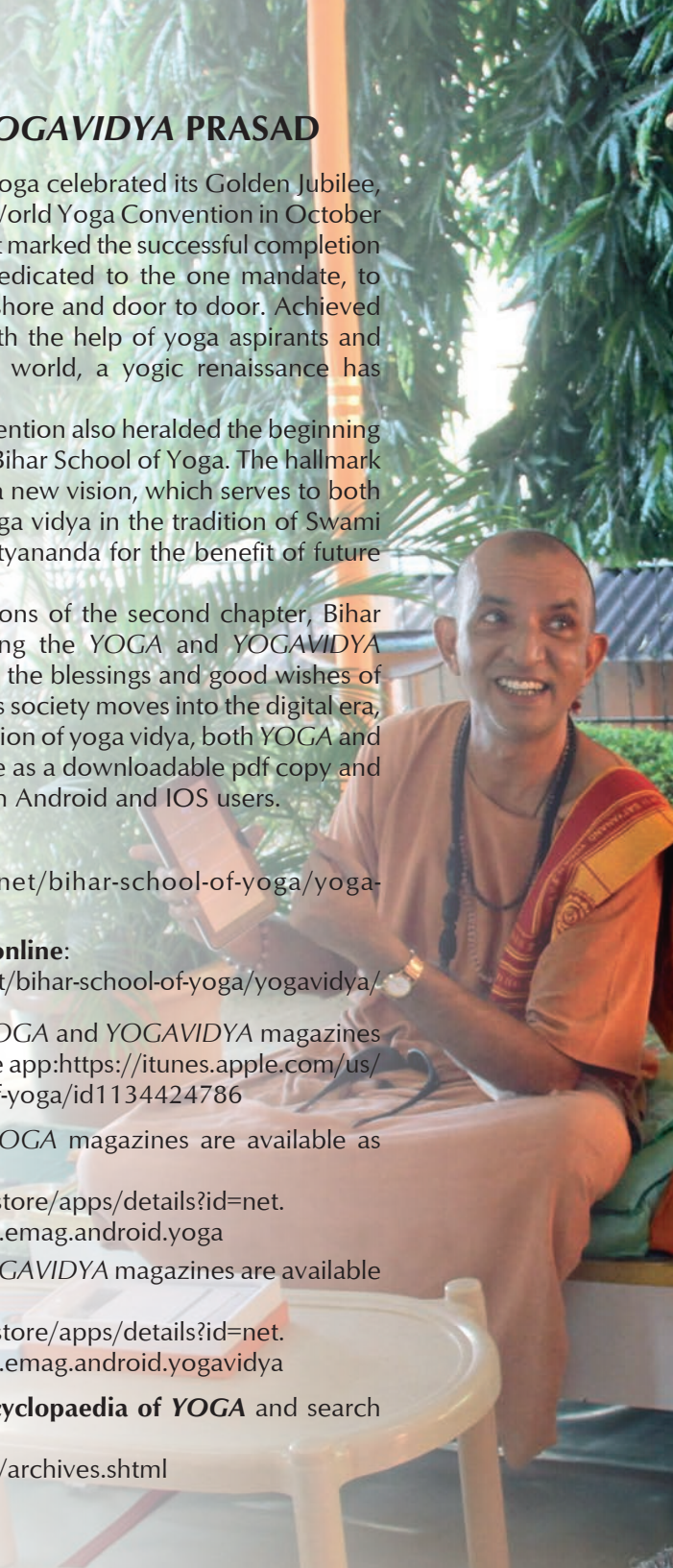
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Yoga Peeth Events & Yoga Vidya Training 2018

<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