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Hari Om

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GUIDELINES FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

If there is mental fatigue in students due to too much strain and study, if there is mental fatigue in merchants on account of business worries, if there is fatigue in officers on account of overwork, they should take proper rest at once. Rest is necessary. They should go to the hills or the seaside for a change. They should do pranayama and take a light, wholesome, nutritious diet. They should do japa and kirtan vigorously and practise easy asanas.

One's life must be well regulated and disciplined. *Samyama*, restraint, must be practised in all things. Excess of any kind should be avoided. Stick to the happy, golden medium.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

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Contents

- 4 A Psychological Law and Spiritual Development
- 5 Yoga Techniques Applied to Autism Spectrum Disorder – (Part 2 of 3)
- 11 Yoga – Not Therapy
- 13 Evolutionary Role of Karma
- 17 Benefits of Yoga in Fibromyalgia Patients
- 23 Impressions Yogic Studies 2017–2018 (English)
- 26 Healing Power of Yoga
- 31 Relaxation
- 35 From Stress to Relaxation
- 44 Trees – the Essence of Prithvi
- 47 The Story of My Wrist
- 49 Bhakti and Bhakti Yoga
- 53 A Happy Blend



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 ॥

A Psychological Law and Spiritual Development

Swami Sivananda Saraswati



The nature of the mind is such that it becomes that which it intensely thinks of. Thus if you think of the vices and defects of another person, your mind will be charged with these vices and defects at least for the time being.

The person who knows this psychological law will never indulge in censuring others or in finding fault in the conduct of others. One will see only the good in others and will always praise others. This practice enables one to grow in concentration, yoga and spirituality.

Yoga Techniques Applied to Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) (Part 2 of 3)

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

It is necessary to include in the present work, diagnostic criteria used nowadays to identify a person with autism. For that reason, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 5[®] (DSM5), is used and applied in most countries and specifies the following:

AUTISM SPECTRUM DISORDERS, CRITERIA AND DIAGNOSIS

A. Persistent gaps in social communication and social interaction through many contexts, expressed in the following present or past symptoms:

1. Gaps in socio-emotional reciprocity; behaviour ranges that show for example, unusual social approaches and problems in maintaining the normal feedback flow in conversations; a reduced disposition to share interests, emotions and esteem due to a failure to begin social interaction or answer it.
2. Gaps in non-verbal communication behaviour used in social interaction, behaviour ranges that go from showing the difficulty with integrating verbal and non-verbal communication behaviours to anomalies in the visual contact and body language, or deficiencies in the understanding and use of gestures to a total failure of emotional expressiveness of non-verbal communication.
3. Gaps in developing, maintaining and understanding relationships, a behaviour range that goes from difficulties in adjusting adequately to different social contexts to

difficulties in sharing fiction games or making friends and up to an apparent lack of interest in people.

Specify the present severity: Severity bases itself on the social and communicative alteration and on repeated and restricted behavioural patterns.

B. Repeated and restricted behavioural patterns, activities and interests that express themselves in at least two of the following present or past symptoms:

1. Motor movements, object use, stereotyped or repeated language. Examples: simple stereotyped motor movements to line up objects, to twirl objects, to echo what people say, idiosyncratic phrases.
2. Emphasis in equality, inflexible adhesion to routines or ritualized verbal or non-verbal behaviour patterns. Examples: extreme discomfort to little changes, transition difficulties, rigid thinking patterns, ritual to greet, the need to follow the same way or eat the same food.
3. Highly restricted and obsessive interests that are unusual for their intensity or aim. Examples: excessive devotion or concern for unusual objects, circumscribed and justified interests.
4. Hyper or hyposensorial activity or unusual interest in environmental sensorial aspects. Examples: apparent indifference to pain/temperature, adverse response to sounds or specific textures, to smell or to touch objects in excess, fascination for lights or objects that spin.

C. Symptoms must be present in the early period of development.

D. Symptoms which cause significant clinical disorders to a social or occupational level or in other important areas of current performance.

E. Disorders which are not better explained by the presence of an intellectual disability, intellectual developmental disorder,

or a global delay in development. The intellectual disability and the autism spectrum disorder frequently go together. Social communication must fall far below the expectations in accordance with the general level of development, to make a simultaneous diagnosis of the autism spectrum disorder and intellectual disability. (2)

Biomarkers regarding what we know up to now about ASD are non-existent. This has resulted in a varied sort of intervention methodologies developed in different fields: educational, social, medical fields, etc. Clinical observation is still the one that regulates and determines treatments to follow, though some statistics can be made within pharmacology.

CONTENT - EXPERIENCE ENVIRONMENT

The project was implemented in two consecutive different social environments. First, in a city with 120,000 inhabitants where financial backing is diverse depending on the countryside, industry and tourism. Its medical assistance includes specialized professionals and public and private health centres. It has a wide educational provision from kindergarten to university. It also has four special schools that deal with the entire range of mental health disorders. The experiences were implemented in one of them that offers care for students with Severe Emotional Disorders (SED). This experience lasted one year.

As a second stage, the work was implemented in a city of 100,000 inhabitants, an estimate based on oil, factories, civil service, cattle and agritourism development. It has medical help specialized through public and private health centres. The project was conducted in the mental health section of a regional hospital over a period of one year and after that, in a private, interdisciplinary research centre over a period of four years.

The project coordinators didn't choose the cases, but the involved children came diagnosed by specialists. More than 90% of the children had received two or more independent diagnoses, agreeing 100% with the ASD diagnosis.

There was fluent communication with the professionals, parents, and all those who helped take care of each child with the different therapies: psychologists, therapist aides, motor development experts and others. The yoga teacher worked together with a speech therapist and a child psychiatrist, both specialized in ASD, in the experiences carried out in the hospital and interdisciplinary research centre.

The project was implemented in the first city during a year and in the second one for five years.

Registrations were obtained in the course of the last five years through various formats: stories, films and reports.

Group of children

The children involved in this experience were a heterogeneous group, not only regarding age and sex, but also intelligence quotient, diagnosis and human communicative behaviour. In order to describe it, let's take into account these variables:

- Out of a total of eleven children diagnosed with ASD, three girls aged between eleven and fifteen and eight boys aged between four and fifteen.
- In terms of intellectual quotient, three children showed intellectual performance score lower than the average level; one of them showed a notorious low average intellectual quotient. The other eight members of the group had a medium to high functioning intellectual quotient.
- The group included autism, non-specified autism and the Asperger Syndrome diagnosis using the DSM4.
- The human communicative behaviour of a child, which includes communication, language and speech, constitutes as a double display. On one hand, it is the starting point to develop the task and on the other hand, it is one of the displays that will be used for evaluating. Four well-defined variables were used (5). They are:
A: A child that can speak and communicate using verbal language with communicative function.

- B: A child that can communicate through gestures, pictograms, etc., but doesn't speak.
- C: A child that neither speaks nor communicates.
- D: A child that can speak but cannot communicate: to echo what people say, word repetition without communicative function.

Development

The carried out methodology is called Connected Integration Pattern®. Its principal approach acts on the perception channels, purifying them to enable the free flow of energy. Cellular intercommunication will be encouraged through its implementation. First of all an anamnesis, an accounting of the medical history, is carried out on each child. It consists of:

- A. Report of a medical professional who is in charge of the monitoring.
- B. Personal interview between the yoga teacher and parents to collect a description of the child's capabilities, priorities, emotional ties, sensorial gaps, self-stimulations, and more.
- C. Registration of the child's behavioural observations. This provides knowledge of the child's present evolutionary state and to orient the way in which yoga techniques will be applied. The application of the model will be developed as follows:
 1. Context of a yoga session
 2. Work one-on-one, teacher and student
 3. Condition of space: quiet, clean, ventilated and warm
 4. One hour regular weekly meetings. The scheme and procedure of the meeting are based on three principles, being the relational framework of this methodology.

Nexus without attachment: This means to establish a teacher-student relationship where this distinction is kept. The teacher is required not to get emotionally involved by supporting himself and acting as a facilitator.

Pedagogical instrument: It consists of moulded, modelling and precise verbal instruction techniques.

Moulded techniques: This program is carried out when the child doesn't have the ability to imitate another gesture or movement. In this case, the teacher helps the child by guiding the child's poses and movement through corporal contact while the verbal instruction is given. In this way, a relationship is established between the word and the action that leaves a motor registration in the body itself, omitting the cognitive aspect that manifests a gap.

Imitation – modelling: By modelling, it is understood that the learning is achieved through observation and has its basis in the theory of social learning. Its primary theory is that any behaviour acquired or modified by a direct experience can be learned or changed through the observation of others and the consequences that follows the behaviour. This theory is reinforced by the existence of mirror neurons.

Verbal instruction: It consists of using the spoken word to guide the task bearing in mind the following guidelines:

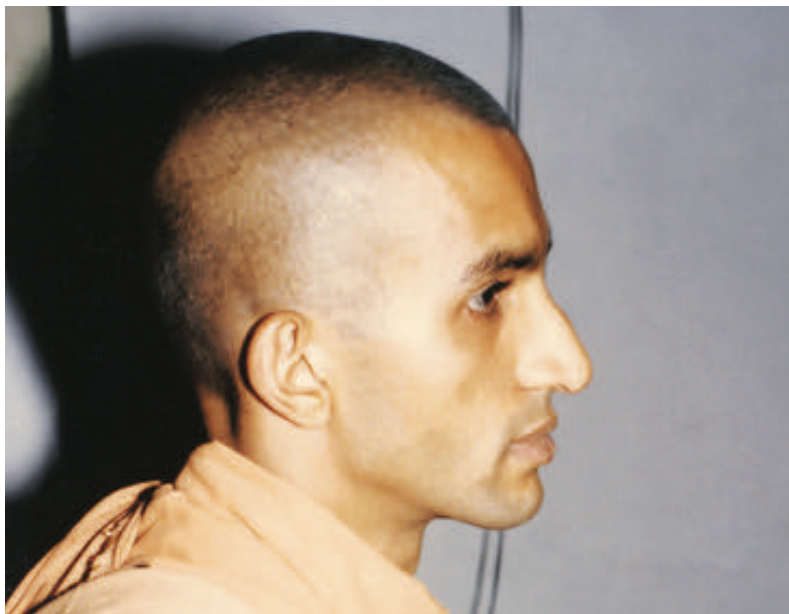
- Shortness: Use the fewest words possible, one to three maximum depending on the child's particular characteristics.
- Specific language: Give the same instruction each time you expect the child to perform the same action; avoid changing terms by using synonyms.
- Pro-positive expressions: Instructions will be done through positive phrases, avoiding the use of 'no'.
- Regarding time: To recognize the time that each child needs to process the given instruction and reasonably waiting for execution of the answer.

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Yoga – Not Therapy

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



There is one body, there is one mind and there are hundreds of types of therapies. Nature cure is one, yoga therapy is one, allopathy is one and homeopathy is one. Body is one and mind is one, and it is here that the therapies are all interrelated.

Different types of therapies are good for different types of symptoms – psychological or physiological. If you want a quick relief, one type of therapy is better. If you want relief without medicines, another type of therapy is better, or if you want to help yourself through natural ways such as using steam bath.

There are many ways to keep healthy. You cannot say that one therapy is the ultimate way, that nature therapy is the best method of healing or that yoga therapy, or any other method or therapy is best. It all depends on your requirements and your physiological and psychological condition.

For some chronic problems yoga therapy has proved to be useful in cases where allopathy and nature cure has failed.

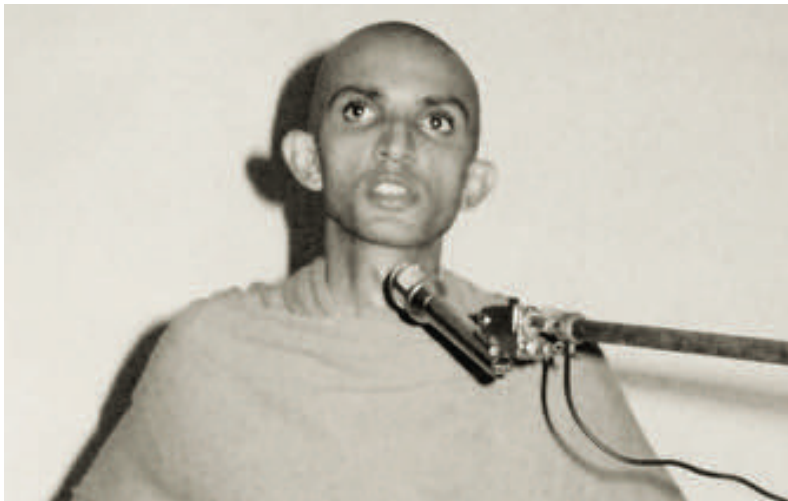
Generally, in India people come to yoga as the last resort, after they have tried allopathy, ayurvedic medicines, or nature cures. At the end of the road, they come to yoga.

Yoga has been helpful in the treatment of many types of chronic ailments, also in many cases where modern medicine has failed such as in the case of cancer. Through practices of relaxation and breathing, patients have been able to stop the growth of cancer and often reverse the process. Those people who only had a couple of months to live, look forward to their future with great optimism.

All therapies are useful, when it comes to need, use and time. All ideas of yoga therapy are wrong, for we do not try to help anything or anybody through yoga. We simply try to put the body in order. In this process rheumatism, stomach ailments, breathing or nervous problems disappear by themselves once the body reaches a state of balance, equilibrium and harmony.

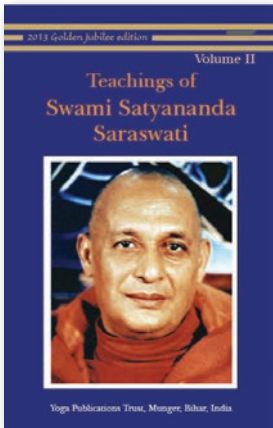
So there is no such thing as yoga therapy, yet there is something which is known as yoga.

– 19 March 1986, Ganga Darshan, Munger



Evolutionary Role of Karma

From Teachings of Swami Satyananda Saraswati, Volume II



Swamiji explains how karma should be accepted and transformed into karma yoga in order to set the process of self-enlightenment into motion. Recorded at the Festival of Health held in Bogota, Colombia, in October 1980.

You may practise raja, hatha, kundalini, mantra and bhakti yoga, but if you underestimate karma yoga, then all these yogas can lead you to a dissipated and dispersed state of mind. Every person who is practising yoga should transform his daily activities through the philosophy of karma yoga.

The purpose of your daily work should become spiritual, or rather you should realize nature's spiritual purpose behind your karma. If you renounce your karma, your mind will not find a basis for evolution.

Before you can realize the role of karma yoga in relation to spiritual evolution, you must first understand that the purpose of karma yoga is to create a stable base for the mind. In meditation the mind has to remain constantly on one object without any interception of another idea. But if you keep on practising this without having attained the state of sattwa, without having purified the mind, you will only fall back into a tamasic state. In order to prevent this, the practice of karma yoga was designed by nature for every man, because we all have ambitions, desires and passions.

If you don't have any desire, you definitely will not make any karma. If desire were to be eliminated, then man's psycho-spiritual evolution would come to a halt. Therefore, desires

must not be curbed. You should either fulfil them completely or else realize their uselessness.

By curbing your desires, you are killing your opportunity to act. Say you have a desire to have a child. To fulfil this you need to have a wife or husband, a home, a job, shop or business, and then so many things follow. These things are what keep this untrained mind busy all the time. This is how karma keeps the devil beat. Mind is a great force, a supramental force, and if this force is not properly utilized, it will feed the wrong centres in the mental personality and perhaps become destructive. Therefore, nature has created karma.

In the *Bhagavad Gita* it says that every action produces threefold reactions - desire, aversion and a mixture of both. If you receive something which you want very much, that makes you happy. However, if you receive something which you don't want, that makes you very unhappy. If you receive something which you like and dislike, you will be both happy and unhappy. When the mind is affected by negative reactions, it often becomes depressed or deranged, thereby allowing such diseases as asthma, cancer, hypertension or diabetes to take hold. At these times one may even commit suicide or divorce his wife. Anything can happen because the karma affects the personality and the behaviour. So we have to find a way of creating karma whereby the consequences do not affect us. That path is known as karma yoga.

In the pursuit of our day-to-day lives, our attitudes towards karma have become purely materialistic. Every time we think about spiritual life, we think in terms of renouncing karma. In the ashram also, if you ask anyone to do some work they invariably refuse on the basis that all actions are maya, and by this man is bound. But it is not true; karma can never be a cause for bondage. Nature has created karma as a scheme for man to evolve and to know the behaviour and deeper stages of the mind, and through the mind, to achieve spiritual awareness.

Mind and spiritual awareness are not two different things. At one stage there is milk, at another stage the milk becomes

curd, at a third stage the curd is churned into butter, at the fourth stage it is clarified into ghee, and finally at the fifth stage it becomes part of your curry. In the same way, at one stage there is the gross body, at another stage the *vasanas* or passions, at the third stage the psychic experiences, and at the fourth stage the supreme reality.

Atma, or the supreme reality, manifests itself at different stages. The mind is one of these stages and you cannot obliterate the mind. You can only purify the mind and remove the dross, the *samskaras*. Then, at the very nucleus or basis of the mind, *atma*, or *chaitanya*, will be revealed. Therefore, *karma yoga* is any action which is done with higher awareness, for the sake of the work, because work keeps the mind and body occupied. Even if the work does not pay you in terms of money, still you do it.

In the same way, if you, as householders, try to transform your daily *karma* into *karma yoga*, then first of all you have to accept the role of *karma* in spiritual evolution. Then whatever you do you will feel grace and bliss in every work.

First of all, you must remember that it is not meditation which is the beginning of *yoga*; it is the training of this undisciplined, uneducated, powerful mind, which flows like a river in full spate. This mind cannot be controlled at different points. It has to be educated. Education is most important and this education is provided to the mind through *karma*. This means that everything you do, right or wrong, is *karma*, and that *karma* can be transmuted into *karma yoga* provided there is enlightenment in you.

Why are you bored with your work? It is due to your attitude. If the attitude is correct, you can go on doing the same work for fifty years. When you consider your work as a duty, a way of serving others, it never becomes dull. It is only when you think of it in terms of your own development or pleasure that work becomes intolerable and monotonous.

It is actually far easier and more motivating to work for others than for yourself. This is the secret of *karma yoga* which



few understand and are able to apply. This is the difference between karma and karma yoga. You create karma when you act with yourself in mind, with your personal desires and problems as a motivation. When you act, not for yourselves but as a service, an offering to others, the mind is freed and you experience the benefits of karma yoga.

Actually, karma yoga can be practised anywhere at any time. It is not necessary to live in an ashram to practise it. But few understand the basic principle behind it and the necessity of it being performed with the correct attitude. In the ashram you learn how to practise karma yoga and this is very important. Otherwise, you may spend your whole life working for yourself and increasing your suffering, rather than working for others and ending your suffering along with theirs.

So karma yoga is a necessary part of life. It is as necessary as eating, talking or walking. For you must go on creating karma as long as you are alive. You cannot live without action. Therefore, let your actions be performed as a service to the evolution of all beings and you will enjoy a life of utter freedom, simplicity and bliss. All your needs will be bestowed on you as if blessings from God. You will never be lonely or suffer any ills. When the mind is at peace with itself, the body attains health. People are drawn to such a person like bees to nectar. It is impossible to keep them away.

Benefits of Yoga in Fibromyalgia Patients

Lazaridou A, Buliteanu A, Vijjeswarupa MA, Teodosiadis A, Dorado K, Edwards RE, Schreiber KL, Department of Anesthesiology, Perioperative, and pain medicine, Brigham and Women's Hospital/ Harvard Medical School, Boston, Massachusetts

Ecological Momentary Assessment of the Relationships between Sleep Affliction, Neuroendocrine Response, and Allodynia in Fibromyalgia Patients: The Impact of Daily Yoga Based Exercise (Asana)

Background

- There is growing evidence that alternative therapies such as yoga, exercise and meditation can improve outcomes for patients with chronic pain syndromes, such as Fibromyalgia (FM), which have proven to be notably resistant to conventional pharmacological approaches.
- Fibromyalgia is characterized by persistent, widespread pain, myofascial tenderness, high levels of distress, and dysregulated sleep. It is thought that HPA axis abnormalities may contribute to the pathophysiology of FM (1).
- Previous studies have shown beneficial effects of exercise in FM (2), but it is often difficult for patients to begin regular exercise because of widespread pain.
- Yoga is a holistic practice that combines many of these non-pharmacological therapies, incorporating gentle physical exercise and stretching, breathing techniques, and mindfulness.
- This pilot study investigates the introduction of daily exercise and meditation through participation in a gentle yoga program on sleep, pain, and psychosocial function in FM patients.

Hypothesis

Daily yoga-based exercise and meditation can improve pain and FM symptoms, sleep disturbance and psychosocial function in patients with fibromyalgia.

Methods

After initial screening and enrolment of 38 subjects, 28 patients completed the program (74%), each of whom served as their own control before and after intervention.

Inclusion criteria: age 18–75, FM diagnosis for > 6 months (Wolfe criteria (3)), average daily pain score of 4/10 or greater, at least mild degree of sleep disturbance (PSQI score > 5), not currently engaged in rigorous physical exercise routine, stable dose of medications, access to a computer or tablet at home, and proficiency with e-mail.

Visit 1: Informed consent, self-report questionnaires designed to assess pain, sleep quality, and psychosocial function.

Demographics, Health History, Brief Pain Inventory (BPI), PROMIS short forms for anxiety and sleep disturbance, the Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI), a measure of fatigue (VAS 0-10), Pain Catastrophizing Scale (PCS) the FFMQ (Five Facets of Mindfulness Questionnaire), the Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) and Revised Fibromyalgia Impact Questionnaire (FIQR)

Quantative sensory testing (QST): Temporal summation of pinprick pain, temporal summation of leg cuff pain, distraction analgesia, pressure pain threshold, conditioned pain modulation, and cold pain ratings.

Satyananda Yoga Program: Subjects attended a 6-week Satyananda Yoga program specifically adjusted for chronic pain patients.

Each weekly in-person session lasted approximately 1.5 hours, including asana, pranayama, yoga nidra, meditation.

Subjects were then sent a daily 30-minute yoga video for practice at home.

Ecologic Momentary Assessment: During 3 weeks (before yoga, week 2 of yoga, and week 6 of yoga) subjects were asked to participate in a more intensive data collection, including: saliva samples 3x daily to assess cortisol awakening response, upon wakening, actiwatch to assess sleep function, and twice daily completion of electronic symptom diaries (via Redcap) to assess their day-to-day pain experiences, fatigue, anxiety, stress and sleep.

Visit 2: After completing the 6 weeks of daily exercise, subjects underwent the same testing as in Visit 1 (QST and psychosocial variables via questionnaire completion).

Statistics: Paired sample t-test was used to compare pain, FM symptom, and PCS scores between baseline and post-yoga.

Independent sample t-test was used to compare groups. Pearson Correlation was calculated to determine association between variables.

Results

- Average daily pain reported on pain diary significantly decreased between baseline and week 6 of yoga ($p=0.042$, Figure 1).
- Reported worst ($p=0.016$), but not average pain ($p=0.55$) on BPI significantly decreased from baseline to post yoga intervention (Figure 1).
- There was variability among participants in terms of both amount of daily home yoga practised, as well as decrease in pain symptoms. Greater benefit seen in subjects that practised for an average of 25 minutes/day or higher (28% of subjects), compared to those who practised less than 25 minutes/day (72% of subjects) ($p=0.023$). (Figure 2 and 3)
- Those whose catastrophizing (PCS scores) decreased during the yoga program (57% of subjects) also had greater improvement in fibromyalgia symptoms ($p=0.031$) (Figure 4).

Figure 1: Average Pain Scores before and after yoga program

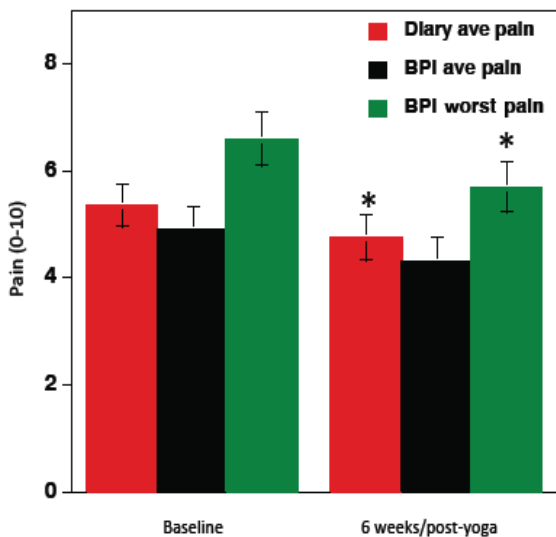


Figure 2: Change in average Pain Scores in subjects who reported practicing more vs less daily yoga practice

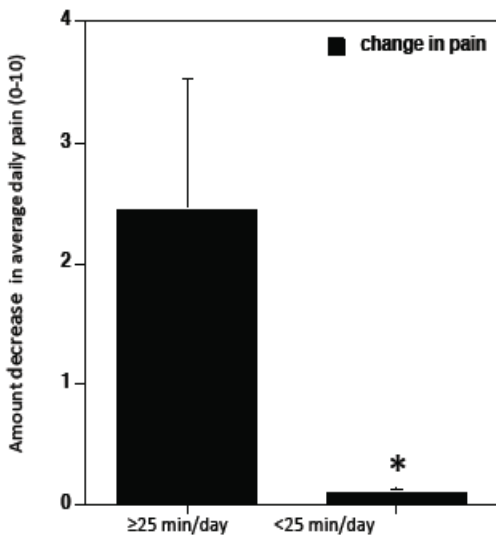


Figure 3: Positive association between amount of yoga practiced and change in pain from baseline

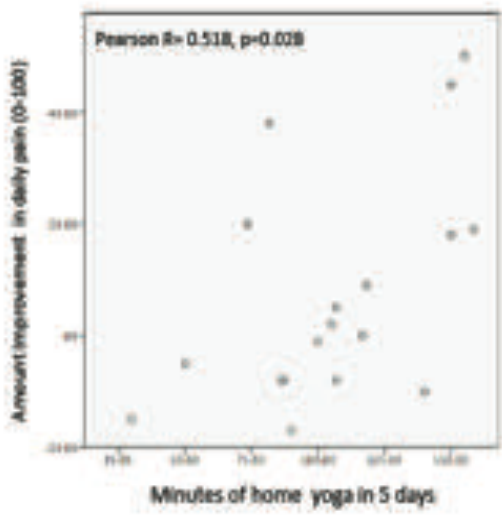
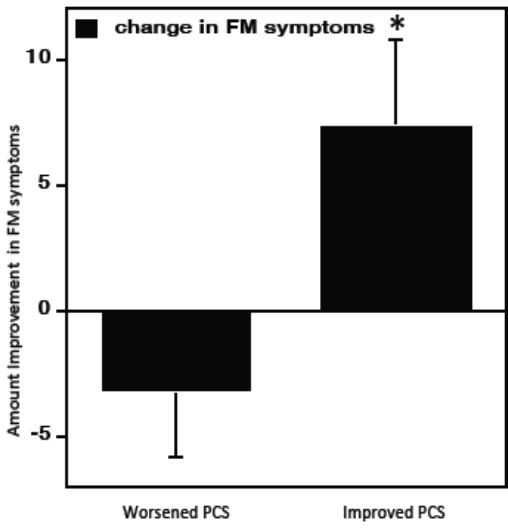


Figure 4: Change in FM symptoms in those whose catastrophizing scores increased or decreased after yoga program



Discussion

This preliminary analysis of our pilot study on yoga intervention in FM patients suggests that there is a modest overall improvement in reported daily pain on electronic pain diaries, although mixed results on the BPI and FIQR.

- There was substantial variability in adherence to the goal of daily home yoga practice, but those who were able to practise >25 min/day showed greater improvement in their pain.
- The impact of the yoga program on catastrophizing was also variable, but those who improved in terms of catastrophizing also showed decreases in reported FM symptoms.
- Further analysis of the full sample will further investigate the impact of yoga-based exercise on stress responses and sleep, and whether this is related to changes in pain and other symptoms in FM.
- Further analysis will also explore which patient characteristics can predict individuals who will gain most from yoga-based exercise.

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Impressions Yogic Studies 2017–2018 (English)



Gratitude is the most prominent sentiment involved through this adventure of Yogic Studies. Our phenomenally sincere and generous class teachers graciously guided us to the limitless scope of expanding our awareness and connection with all creation. In the integrated culture of Ganga Darshan, sitting in satsang, sweeping leaves, chanting Sundarkand, observing the swaras and rolling rotis provide equal opportunity to flow with the beautiful stream of life.

Blessed with open and receptive classmates, I find myself infused with positivity and creativity. It has been a true honour to see their transformation through their own efforts. Thank you to the many subtle teachers, each resident, guest and person present at the ashram who made our experience of yoga alive, fresh and possible.

So many times I found myself incredibly humbled by the spirit of offering embodied all around the ashram. This whole atmosphere permeated with the unconditional love of Swamiji, patiently nudging us to be our best and be for others. My heart swells with appreciation for all those who have kept the ancient wisdom in circulation. All that remains is for me to apply their

teachings when I soon leave here, kindle this inner light so it shines steady and bright.

– *Jignasu Atmachaitanya, Australia*

The 4-month Yogic Studies is nothing but a blessing in disguise for yoga aspirants. It not only taught me the basics of yoga but along with it, it moulded my personality as well.

The discipline, the daily routine and the atmosphere here helped me to inculcate the gurukul system of learning. The practical approach of teaching adopted helped me to grasp and understand the nuances of different aspects of yoga much better than any book, theory or any other methodology of teaching.

In the ashram, I met and worked with people belonging to different nationalities, different cultures, different traditions, different languages and different mind-sets, which taught me how to tackle difficult situations with ease. The positivity and energy of the ashram is very contagious. It helped me to assimilate the teachings imparted during the yoga classes.

According to me, what places BSY apart from any other institution/body of yoga across the globe is its approach towards yoga as whole. It adopts the experiential learning system which helps an individual to internalize and experience by himself the ancient teachings and techniques of yoga.

– *Amit Shamnani, Madhya Pradesh*





My life until the start of the Yogic Studies was one of circumstantial convenience. Growing up, I involved myself in all activities that were expected of me; thus my behaviour was conditioned into what it was. After a series of life-changing experiences, it became clear to me that I had had very little conscious involvement in who I was. I came to BSY with the primary aim of challenging myself and also to learn yoga.

My whole life, independence, ambition and exercise of free will have been preached. This invariably led into my own search for presumed freedom and control. It is ironic, then, that this search led me to this tradition and this course and toward complete surrender. I have experienced more physical pain, emotional extremes and mental disturbance than I could have imagined.

I feel like I have been given a way to rectify a field overrun with detriment. It is up to me to nurture my sadhana as I would that hand which holds all potential.

– *Abhishek Sheth, Karnataka*

There are only few words, which could speak for my journey through the 4-months Yogic Studies course. At the beginning was an arrogant, vain, self-centred man who following the whispers of the heart walked in to BSY. As he is about to walk out, he feels more human.

– *Satyadhara, Czech Republic*

Healing Power of Yoga

Prasad, Bulgaria

I started practising yoga in a very difficult period of my life. Soon after that I realized the benefits of practising on the physical and mental levels. The most interesting thing for me is the healing power of yoga.

After a really bad conflict with a colleague and after a hard period of shouting and arguing, a swelling appeared on my throat. It was almond size and very painful. Doctors did not have any idea what it was and suggested to operate so they could see what the problem was.

My yoga teacher told us that if we had pain in our body to breathe in and breathe out during meditation from the place where we felt pain. We should visualize a golden light while breathing in and see grey fog while breathing out. I decided to try and together with this visualization I was singing *Ham* seeing my throat from inside. I did this twice for about twenty minutes each time. After the second time I felt a warm energy going away. The swelling was gone after that.

I know that the conflict at work expressed itself in a physical way to show me my reactions. Yoga and mantra practice helped me and healed me. I know that I am on the road to discover more about the healing powers of yoga that we can develop with practice.











Relaxation

From the teachings of Swami Sivananda Saraswati

The science of relaxation is an exact science. It can be learnt very quickly. The relaxation of the muscles is as important as their contraction. I lay great emphasis on the relaxation of the mind, the nerves and the muscles.

Relaxation is of two kinds – physical and mental. There is another classification. If you relax certain muscles of certain parts only, it is partial relaxation. If you relax the muscles of the whole body, it is complete relaxation.



Physical relaxation

You must know how to relax all the muscles of your body after you have finished your daily course of exercises. The practice of relaxing the muscles will bring rest to the body and the mind. The tension of the muscles will be relieved. People who know the art of relaxing do not waste any energy. They can meditate well.

After finishing your exercises and asanas, lie flat on your back. Keep the arms relaxed at the sides. Keep them quite loose. Relax all the muscles from head to foot. Roll the mind over the body from top to toe. You may find that certain muscles are not completely relaxed. Relax them also.

Roll on to one side and then relax as completely as possible. Do not strain any of the muscles. Relax completely. Roll on to

the other side and then relax again. This is done naturally by everyone during sleep.

Relax the head, shoulders, arms, forearms, wrists, fingers, thighs, legs, ankles, toes, knees, elbows, waist, etc. Yogis and wrestlers know the method of relaxing thoroughly. When you practise this exercise, you should think of calmness and strength.

If you like, you can practise relaxation by lying in an easy chair, after finishing your asanas or exercises. Those who know how to relax can take a short nap for ten minutes or so at any time they like. Busy people and doctors and lawyers should know this science. They should relax the mind and rest in the waiting rooms of railway stations and in bar rooms as well. They will then be quite fit for further activities. Relaxation refreshes a person completely.

If you do not possess a knowledge of this science of internal and external relaxation, you will waste your physical and mental energy considerably.

Yogis conserve their physical and mental energy and utilize it to their best advantage. They are perfect masters of this useful science. Those who practise relaxation never experience fatigue. They can close their eyes for a few minutes even while standing and so prepare themselves for further work. Energy flows into their nerves when they relax, just as water flows when a tap is opened.

Physical relaxation is an art and as such it has to be practised regularly in order to achieve success and gain the maximum benefit. Success in physical relaxation will make mental relaxation easier.

Mental relaxation

Just as you relax your muscles after having practised your asanas and physical exercises, so also you will have to relax the mind after concentration and meditation, and after the practice of memory training and will-culture. Relaxation of the muscles brings repose to the body, and relaxation of the mind brings

repose to the body. The body and mind are intimately linked. The body is a mould prepared by the mind for its enjoyment.

The mind gathers experiences through the body and works in conjunction with the prana, senses and body. The mind has influence over the body. If you are cheerful, the body will also be healthy and strong. When you feel depressed, the body cannot work. Conversely, the body has some influence over the mind. If the body is healthy and strong, the mind also will be happy, cheerful and strong. If there is a little stomachache, the mind cannot work well. Thought manifests as action, and action reacts on the mind. The mind acts on the body and the body reacts on the mind. Removal of tension in the muscles brings repose and calmness to the mind.

By relaxing you give rest to the mind, to the tired nerves and to the overworked muscles. You get immense peace of mind, strength and vigour. When you practise relaxation of either the body or the mind, the brain should not be occupied with various kinds of irrelevant, extraneous thoughts. Anger, envy, disappointment, failure, indisposition, misery, sorrow and quarrels cause internal mental strain. The practice of relaxing the mind will remove this internal mental strain and fill the mind with new mental energy. It will make you cheerful and happy.

Mental poise and calmness may be brought about by eradication of worry and anger. In truth, fear really underlies both worry and anger. Nothing is gained by worry and anger; on the contrary, much energy is wasted by these two lower emotions. Be careful and thoughtful. All unnecessary concern should be avoided. Expel all fear, worry and anger. Think of courage, joy, bliss, peace and cheerfulness. Sit for fifteen minutes in a relaxed state in an easy, comfortable position. You can sit in an easy chair. Close your eyes. Withdraw the mind from all outer objects. Still the mind. Silence the bubbling thoughts.

Here is another way to relax the mind. Close the eyes. Think of anything that is pleasant. This will relax the mind in a wonderful manner. Think of the mighty Himalayas, the sacred river Ganges, any impressive scenery in Kashmir, the

Taj Mahal, the Victoria Memorial in Calcutta, a lovely sunset, the vast expanse of ocean, the infinite blue sky. Imagine that the whole world and your body are floating like a straw in this vast ocean of Spirit. Feel that you are in touch with the Supreme Being. Feel that the life of the whole world is pulsating, vibrating and throbbing through you. Feel the Lord Hiranyagarbha, the ocean of life, is gently rocking you on His vast bosom. Then open your eyes. You will experience great mental peace, mental vigour and mental strength. Practise and feel this power within.

During your daily activity, also stop your work for a few minutes and think of the peace of God. Feel His peace and serenity all around you, and that it fills your entire being from head to foot.

May peace and bliss ever fill your being!



From Stress to Relaxation

Gloria Alzate (Divali), Psychologist, Masters in Education, coach and teacher of Satyananda Yoga in Bogotá, Colombia

Stress has been called the disease of our time. The daily conditions of today's world have increased the pressure, making it much more difficult to find mechanisms to allow us to live in a harmonious and balanced way. Society is governed by the clock, forcing us to follow an unrestrained rhythm to respond to its demands. Family life has become much more complex, with changes in the female and male roles, fragmented families, single parents, or parents burdened by overwork, without the support of other family members. Work is highly competitive, very demanding in skills and extended work schedules, which end up invading periods of rest and recreation.¹

Likewise, increasing population in modern cities, urbanization and migration complicate the educational services, medical services and transportation, creating a polluted environment where it is even difficult to breathe. Difficulties in mobility generate long travel times that directly affect the possibility of finding spaces of calm and diversion. In addition, the electronic pollution characteristic of our time, especially with computers and mobile phones, bombards us with excessive information and messages of all kinds that overwhelm the recipient, demanding an immediate response, as if life were to end in the next minute.

Natural and unnatural stress

This scenario ends up overwhelming people and generating physical, mental and emotional tensions that block their ability to act, affecting their health and wellbeing. For this reason the World Health Organization (WHO) predicts that by 2020, stress will be the second leading cause of disease worldwide.²

However, stress is a natural adaptive response, which plays a protective role in dangerous and life-threatening situations. It was first described as a non-specific response of the organism to any demands placed upon it, by Hans Selye (1976). This response may be psychological or physiological and is related to a harmful situation or intrusion.³

On the other hand, Dr Walter Cannon, an eminent physiologist at Harvard University, discovered that mammals have the physical ability to react to stress with a survival mechanism, called the 'fight-or-flight response'. When faced with stressful situations, the body releases stress hormones and triggers a series of changes in the body to respond quickly to a threatening stimulus. These changes include: elevated heart and breathing rates, changes in blood flow, increased sweating, dilated pupils, inhibition of salivation, decreased digestive function, increased glucose secretion, among others.⁴

It is very important to keep in mind that this physiological response of the body activates the sympathetic nervous system to respond to an alarming episode, but afterwards it is necessary to return to a state of calm, in order to restore normal functioning of the body systems. Continuing to generate this stress response repeatedly can lead a person to a 'phase of resistance', that is, to be constantly stressed, which leads to a final phase of 'exhaustion', with significant health deterioration.⁵

In this context, Udupa (1977) suggests four progressive stages in the evolution of stress-related disorders: in the first stage symptoms such as anxiety and irritability appear due to an overreaction of the sympathetic system. The second stage is characterized by physical symptoms such as high blood pressure and increased heart rate. In the third stage, abnormal clinical manifestations increase in the body systems. Severe symptoms appear in the last stage and long-term medical care is necessary.⁶

It has also been found that in modern life the fight-or-flight response is used inappropriately, because it is utilized

in situations that require a behavioural adjustment and not to escape or to face the enemy in the face of a threat. It is precisely this inappropriate use that causes the psychosomatic diseases of our time, such as diabetes, heart attack, asthma, irritable bowel, peptic ulcer and immune disorders.

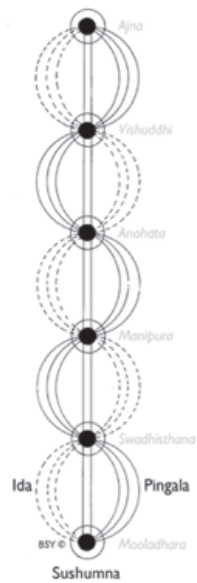
However, just as humans have a natural response to stress, we are also equipped with an innate counter-response to generate states of calm and tranquillity. This response has been termed the 'relaxation response'.

Dr Herbert Benson of Harvard University demonstrated that humans have their own mechanism by which mental concentration leads to a deep state of rest. He based his work on experiments carried out by Walter Hess, a Swiss Nobel Prize physiologist, who by stimulating certain areas of the hypothalamus, generated the fight-or-flight response, but by stimulating other areas, triggered the opposite response: a restorative and protective process against the excesses of stress.⁷

Dr Benson's experiments with people suffering from hypertension and other ailments showed that the relaxation response leads to physical, mental and emotional tranquillity by activating the parasympathetic system. In this state of relaxation the heart rate, blood pressure, metabolism and respiratory rate decrease, because the body requires much less oxygen.⁸

Enter yoga: asana

The discoveries of Dr Benson validated for Western civilization knowledge developed millennia ago by Eastern yogis. From the point of view of yoga, we have two different energetic forces: pingala and ida, known in the modern world as the sympathetic and parasympathetic system. *Pingala* is the force representing energy (*prana*) or action, and



ida is responsible for thinking.⁹ To eliminate stress these two forces must be in harmony. The practice of yoga is oriented to create this state of balance and harmony.

For yoga, the cause of illness is not stress, but the inability to adapt to a changing situation.¹⁰ From this perspective, Satyananda Yoga works in an integral way on the five dimensions of existence: the level of physical experience, the energy field of the individual, the mental dimension, the psychic level and the dimension of happiness and bliss. In addition, yoga is oriented to find a perfect coordination between the different bodily functions so that they work for the wellbeing of the whole body.¹¹

Reaching a state of wellbeing requires counteracting the unhealthy rhythms that the body has developed, and the best way to achieve this is to superimpose new psychophysical rhythms that promote health. In yoga, these rhythms are created in a slow and systematic way, so that the structures are modified little by little. This is achieved through a daily yoga practice that includes asana, pranayama, yoga nidra and meditation.¹²

Asanas are specific body postures or movements, generally synchronized with breathing and consciously performed, that open up the channels and energy centres of the body. The free-flow of vital energy produced by the practice of asana leads to a state of balance and mental calm.

In the case of stress, asanas provide harmony in the functioning of the endocrine system and other systems that are closely interwoven: the circulatory, nervous, respiratory and digestive systems, which play an active role during the adaptation of the body to stress.

On the other hand, the mind and body are not separate, because the tensions or knots that accumulate in the mind are reflected in the body and vice versa. Asanas release these tensions in somato-psychic form, that is, from the body to the mind, and in this way integrates and harmonizes the body and mind.



In addition, the practice of asanas while being conscious of the body and the act of breathing temporarily leaves aside tensions and worries; over time, the relaxation achieved accumulates progressively, generating permanent changes in the mental and emotional structures of the body.

The first condition of happiness is to have a healthy body; therefore, asanas form the backbone of applied yoga. Not only are they aids to keep the physical system healthy and strong, but they also contribute, imperceptibly, in support of their complement, pranayama, to build mental resistance to disease.¹³

The practice of asanas has been shown to activate the relaxation response by slowing the rate of respiration and metabolism, as well as reducing oxygen consumption and body temperature. They produce specific effects on the glands and internal organs, and alter the electrochemical activity of the brain.

The help of pranayama

The second component of Satyananda Yoga is *pranayama*, a practice that produces an expansion of vital energy. It is through breathing that we can direct the pranic force to emerge at a certain point.

Breathing influences the function of each of the cells of the body and also all mental processes; it supplies the oxygen and



glucose necessary for the integral functioning of a person. Very shallow, irregular or inadequate breathing becomes a source of stress and renders the body's energy insufficient. Also, when people are stressed, they change their breathing pattern, which leads to a lack of proper oxygenation. Therefore, pranayama techniques are essential to restore correct breathing, generating states of calm and balance.

To counteract stress, various techniques are used such as awareness of the breathing process, expansion of respiratory capacity through abdominal breathing, complete yogic breathing and viloma pranayama. Also, balancing practices like anuloma viloma and nadi shodhana pranayama, and tranquilizing techniques, such as ujjayi pranayama and bhramari.¹⁴ These techniques restore physical health by improving body oxygenation, generating balanced and calm mental states, harmonizing emotions, preparing for meditation and leading to deeper levels of human experience.

More than relaxation - yoga nidra

The third component is *yoga nidra*, a systematic method of inducing complete physical, mental and emotional relaxation, which generates a hypnagogic state, intermediate between sleep and wakefulness: the body sleeps, but the mind remains alert following the instructions. Its purpose is to lead us to a higher state of consciousness.¹⁵

The state of yoga nidra seems to reflect an integrated response of the hypothalamus, which leads to a decrease in sympathetic nerve activity (excitatory) and an increase in parasympathetic function (relaxatory). Such a relaxation response is considered to be the opposite of the fight-or-flight response.

In addition, stress-related psychosomatic illnesses and afflictions are caused by excessive identification of the psyche with the physical body through the sensory channels, leading to fatigue, exhaustion, or nervous breakdown. This tendency is effectively alleviated by working from the body to the mind.

Consequently, the progressive movement of conscious attention through different parts of the body induces physical relaxation, clears the nerve channels of the brain and relaxes the mind. Thus, yoga nidra restores psychosomatic balance through the release of prana or energy, through the *pratyahara* state or conscious withdrawal of the senses. This energy is directed to the healing and rejuvenation of tissues, glands and organs.

On the other hand, the experimentation of opposite sensations during yoga nidra stimulates the centres located in the base of the brain, responsible for maintaining the harmony between our internal and external environment. It harmonizes the opposing hemispheres of the brain and helps balance impulses and control unconscious functions. It also develops willpower in the emotional field and can produce a deep release of emotions.

Likewise, the visualizations that are used in yoga nidra bring unconscious contents to the conscious mind, which when observed in a detached way, are released and cleaned, dislodging the latent conflicts causing the stress. In this way, by practising yoga nidra one accesses the deeper layers of personality, the subconscious and unconscious levels of the mind, which is the most powerful force in humans.

In addition, when the body and mind are relaxed, a short, clear and positive *sankalpa* or resolution is formulated, which

is mentally repeated three times at the beginning and end of yoga nidra, with full conviction and feeling. The sankalpa acts as an order that reaches the unconscious and acts to effectively change an attitude, behaviour or destiny.

Meditation for body and mind

The fourth component is meditation, which consists of generating a state of complete rapport with a focus point. This focused concentration is a direct and effective way to control stress levels, restore mental balance, clarity and accuracy. Thus, meditation allows us to access the inner world, explore the mind and eventually transcend it.¹⁶

Consequently, meditation is a very powerful relaxation technique, with many therapeutic applications. Its power lies in the activation of the parasympathetic system, which causes a deceleration of the metabolism, a significant reduction in oxygen consumption (20%), and in the production of carbon dioxide, by lowering the respiratory rate. In addition, blood pressure drops well below the normal state, heart rate decreases and blood flow increases.¹⁷

These characteristics make meditation an integral treatment for stress, which involves the entire mind-body system. By generating a deep state of relaxation, meditation helps the bodily processes to regain their normal levels of activity. It also reduces anxiety symptoms and emotional responses by acting on the limbic system.

Swadhyaya for everyday life

As described above, each component of Satyananda Yoga itself contributes to generating the relaxation response, but by articulating all four into an integral whole, it enhances their effects, acts at a deeper level, and becomes a very powerful system. Thus, the yogic methods for stress management approach the physical body through asanas, awaken the vital energy through pranayama, lead to deep relaxation through yoga nidra, and generate a state of harmony through

meditation. These practices restore internal balance on a physical, mental and emotional level, and lead to a change of attitude.¹⁸

This has been my experience in the last five years at the Satyananda Yoga Academy in Bogotá, where we have designed eight week-long modules to transform stress. In these modules, practitioners take a weekly class of an hour and a half, and during the other days, they are encouraged to perform a daily sadhana at home.

Each of the elements of the modules has been carefully designed around a target and a sequence. In addition to the practice of asana, pranayama, yoga nidra and meditation, previously mentioned, each class has a theoretical explanation of ten minutes and a swadhyaya to practise during the week. This *swadhyaya* consists in developing a study of the self through observation, not only in the execution of practices, but in everyday life. It seeks to become aware of thoughts, emotions, behaviours, ways of reacting to situations and the impact on oneself and others.

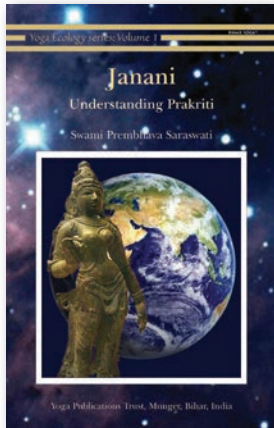
For example, in the module 'Stress in Everyday Life', swadhyayas are oriented towards the following points: identifying sources of stress in personal life, becoming aware of how to react in stressful situations, observing personal manifestations of stress and carrying the practice of yoga to daily activities (karma yoga), in order to identify with the activity and clear up the mental and emotional turmoil.

In this way, the participants in the modules have replaced the fight-or-flight response with the relaxation response and thus can live in a more harmonious way and with improved quality of life. This is the true power of transformation of Satyananda Yoga.

For complete bibliography, please contact the author.

Trees – the Essence of Prithvi

From Janani: Understanding Prakriti, Swami Prembhava Saraswati



Our intimate relationship with trees extends back to the beginning of the human race and we are indebted to them for life.

Evolution of consciousness

Millions of years ago the planet Earth was covered with thick forests, woodlands and grasslands that contained millions of species of trees, shrubs, herbs and grasses. Through the process of photosynthesis, the plants were able to convert the light of the sun and the waste products of carbon into energy, oxygen and water, which enabled animal life, including homo sapiens, to evolve. The plants provided air, water, soil, food, clothing, medicines, wood and protection for the human race to begin its journey on the path towards where it stands today.

The dependence on trees is so crucial; the human race could not exist without them. They are still the providers of the air, water, soil, foods, wood, energy, shelter and medicines for survival as they were thousands of years ago.

Over the last few hundred years however, the face of the earth has been altered and there is now not a forest that lies untouched by the greed of modern civilization. The majority of the fossil fuels, such as coal (resources of which are being exhausted today through excessive energy use) are the result of wood that has been fossilized through time. Without these fuels modern society could never have attained the heights of technology, communication, travel and science that it has become dependent upon. People have forgotten this

dependence on trees and have thus been destroying the very species that unites them with their life-source and has the power to reconnect them to the divine consciousness which is Earth.

God exists in all forms. The devotee can worship God in whatever form he wishes, and that form will appear before him.

– Swami Satyananda Saraswati

Sacred trees of the world

The relationship with and dependence on trees is the reason that, since time immemorial, people have worshipped trees as divine, sacred beings that deserve our reverence and respect. Many cultures believe that gods and spirits reside in trees. Cutting down a tree means depriving the spirit of the tree of its home. Destroying or injuring a tree is seen as one of the greatest sins that one can incur. Most of the sacred trees are associated with healing and medicines; thousands of modern medicines and antibiotics were discovered in rainforests of the planet.

In all cultures around the world there are stories of tree worship, trees with healing powers and folklore.

Sacred trees of Europe such as the oak, apple, birch and ash were used by the Celts, Druids and Shamans for healing, medicine and the worship of divinity. These ancient cultures communicated with the spirits of trees and performed spiritual practices near groves and forests of these sacred trees.



The Italian cypress, known as the 'Mournful Tree', has been associated with death and mourning for the past 2,000 years. Planted in Islamic and European cemeteries, the tree's legend goes back to ancient Greek and Roman mythology. It is said that a man named Cyparissus accidentally killed his stag and begged the gods to punish him with eternal grief. Granting his wish, the gods turned him into a cypress tree, which would forever stand and mourn the dead.

In traditions of Japan, it is believed that wherever a willow tree is present, a ghost will appear. Due to the association between the movement of the water with the moon's phases, willows are also considered sacred in witchcraft in many European cultures. The yellow oak is sacred to the Native American Indians. The Delaware Indians believe the tree possesses the power to heal, and they pray to it whenever help is needed.



The baobab trees, native to the African Savannas, are considered to be ancient beings, known to live up to 3,000 years. People revere the baobab tree as sacred and believe it holds the spirits of the dead for generations within the massive trunk. Throughout history, kings have organized their meetings under this tree, believing that it holds the wisdom and knowledge of their ancestors that may aid them in making wise decisions.

The most renowned sacred tree of the west is the Christmas tree. In December in almost every home, various species of conifers are decorated, adorned with lights, ornaments and gifts. Families sit around the tree on Christmas day to share gifts, sing songs and connect in a joyous spirit of Christmas. The Christmas tree has become associated with the celebration of the birth of Christ, yet the roots of this tradition lie in pagan rituals celebrating the coming of the winter solstice. Here the decoration of a living tree outdoors with hanging candles helped dispel the dark and cold mid-winter night with light and festivity. This tree was known as the Yule tree.

The Story of My Wrist

Sannyasi Karuna, France

While attending a session about ashram life, in August 2012, in Ganga Darshan, I fell down in the hall and broke my right wrist. The doctor in Munger put my wrist into a plaster and there, I was to do nothing for 3 weeks.

For a few days having a lot of free time in my room, I started to practise some pawanmuktasana mentally: mushtika bandhana (hand clenching), manibandha naman (wrist bending), manibandha chakra (wrist joint rotation). I was imagining my right wrist making these exercises perfectly and quite easily.

Back in Paris, the French doctor scanned and confirmed that I actually had two scaphoids fractured (two of eight small bones that make up the carp bones of the wrist). When I met Stéphane, a friend of mine and physiotherapist, he told me that after removing the plaster, I would need some rehabilitation sessions in order to regain the full capacity of my hand. "Do not worry, I'll show you the exercises later on," he said.

During the next two weeks, looking forward to be freed from the plaster I continued to practise pawanmuktasana mentally. Then without cast, I continued to practise pawanmuktasana but this time physically and synchronized with breathing.



A week later I met Stéphane again. I showed him all the movements that my joints could do thanks to the daily exercises of yoga. "I can't believe it! This is the result that one can have after three months of physiotherapy!" He didn't know about yoga. I showed him various practices of pawammuktasana and all that I had done. "Very interesting," he said, "I have nothing better to suggest to you, you know more than I do!"

I laughed and said, "Yes, you could advise your patients to do the same, but then you would have fewer patients!" "Do not worry about me, most people prefer to pay and meet me for support during the rehabilitation sessions, have some massage and if necessary take a pill or two, rather than being prescribed to do simple exercises at home themselves."

Needless to say, after less than three weeks, I had recovered the full flexibility of all my wrist joints.

Three years later, in December 2015, once again, in the old kitchen of Munger, I slipped on the floor. I felt great pain in my right wrist again. I went to see the radiologist who said that the radius was broken and assured me that no trace of the former fracture could be seen. He put my wrist into a bigger plaster.

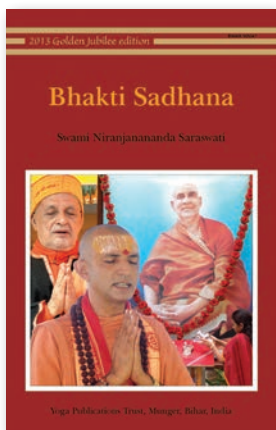
Back in the ashram, I started the exercises which had been so successful the previous time. One month later, I could perform *chakrasana*, the wheel pose, a posture which requires flexibility and strength of both wrists. This shows:

1. The effect of pawanmuktasana on the inner power of our self-healing;
2. The powerful effect of manomaya kosha on annamaya kosha through awareness and prana.

Thinking of my friend Stéphane, I am reminded that many things can be bought in the world but not yoga. We should feel, live, deepen, activate yoga in all our being and by integrating it everywhere, just let it be . . .

Bhakti and Bhakti Yoga

From *Bhakti Sadhana*, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



The bhakti tradition has two prominent texts. The first is the *Bhakti Sutras* by Sage Narada and the second is the *Bhakti Sutras* by Sage Shandilya. The bhakti propounded by Sage Narada is emotion-based, whereas the bhakti propounded by Sage Shandilya is knowledge-based. In the knowledge-based bhakti, a person does not desire anything for himself or others; he wants only to be close to God. The emotion-based bhakti involves prayer and the

desire to do away with the lack, suffering and sorrow in life. For this reason, knowledge-based bhakti has been considered nirakara bhakti and emotion-based bhakti, sakara bhakti.

Sage Narada says that supreme love towards God is bhakti. Sage Shandilya says that any kind of love and attraction towards God is bhakti. Love is seen in both definitions of bhakti. According to Sage Narada, only one who has freed his senses from the bondage of maya and is able to worship God with one-pointed devotion is a bhakta. He says that first you must free the senses and the mind from the bondage of maya. The bindings of maya are happiness and sorrow. You hope for happiness from the objects of attraction, and you want to avoid that which repels you.

The *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali state (2:7): *Sukhanushayi ragah* - "Raga is liking accompanying pleasure." One becomes attached to that which gives pleasure. It is also said in the *Yoga Sutras* (2:8): *Dukhanushayi doeshah* - "Dweshah is the repulsion of accompanying pain." Any object, action or conduct causing sorrow is always considered abhorrent. Everyone runs away

from pain and unhappiness and wishes for pleasure and happiness; however, the happiness you desire in life is material happiness. Inner, spiritual, eternal joy is possible only when the very seed of desire for material happiness is destroyed in the mind and the seed of love for God sprouts in the heart.

Sri Swamiji says, “Awaken *atmabhava*, the ability to see yourself in all beings and to see them in yourself, and attain the love of God.” At present, your mind is identified with the senses and sense objects of the material world, not with the spirit. What does it mean to identify with something? If you fill a pot with water, the water moulds itself to the shape of the pot. Thus, the water is identified with the pot. If you break the pot, the water will be freed of that form. Similarly, the senses, while enjoying the sense objects and experiences of the world, take on the appearance and shape of the objects they are enjoying.

Your mind assumes the form of the things you see, hear and think about. For example, while taking a morning walk, you see something beautiful and attractive. This object you have seen is outside of you; it is separate from you. However, when you saw that beautiful, enchanting object, its picture was imprinted upon your mind. At that time, the mind and the object became one, they assumed the same form. Now, an emotion, a desire, a thought appears: ‘I want to acquire and possess it.’ This is *raga*, attraction, and *asakti*, attachment; this is the desire for happiness and satisfaction. *Asakti* is when you wish to possess an object due to attachment and attraction. The opposite is also true. If you see something you dislike, the mind identifies with the disliked object. The result is that you remove yourself from the object. This is called *virakti*, disenchantment.

Methods to attain bhakti

The methods of attaining bhakti have been described in the scriptures as: *Shravanam kirtanam Vishnoh smaranam padasevanam* – “Listen to the names of the Almighty, and serve other creatures while remembering Him.” Free your mind of anxiety and remember God. Anxiety is a natural human



tendency. People worry if marriage is not taking place, and they worry if it does. If there are no children it is a matter of worry, and if there is a child, there is worry. There is worry if there is no job and worry when there is one. People are never free of anxiety, and that anxiety is always connected with worldly objects and matters. Even when you sleep at night, the thought process of anxiety is seen in the form of dreams. When you are awake, the same thought appears in the mind again and again.

When a thought preoccupies you, you lose sleep. When a distressing thought takes hold of the mind, you are unable to cope with the pain. When a pleasant thought obsesses you, you begin to imagine the heights of ecstasy. This is the influence of thoughts linked with worldly objects and experiences. If you link your thoughts to God and your attention is drawn to Him; if you think about and remember Him again and again, just as you remember your son or daughter, husband or wife, then He will draw your thoughts towards Himself. It is said:

Shravanam kirtanam Vishnoh smaranam padasevanam, archanam vandanam dasyam sakhyam atmanivedanam.

These words sum up the tradition of bhakti. The path the sages have described is simple, yet deeply psychological. People think that bhakti is easy: 'You do not have to do anything,

only think of God.' Yes, you do not have to do anything in bhakti, only think of God, and the experience you have during this thought process is the beginning of bhakti. The meaning of bhakti is love for God. The devotee imbibes this love through *shravana*, listening; *kirtan*, devotional songs; *smarana*, remembrance; *padasevana*, service; *archana*, worship; *vandana*, praise; *dasya bhava*, the attitude of servitude; *sakhya bhava*, the sentiment of friendship; and *atmanivedana*, surrendering and dedicating one's entire self to the divine. These processes cast the mind into the mould of bhakti.

The *Srimad Devi Bhagavatam* says there are three paths to the attainment of moksha. One path is karma yoga, the second is jnana yoga, and the third is bhakti yoga. Of these, bhakti yoga is said to be the most natural and easy. In this, all that is required is connecting the mind with your Beloved, your chosen form of divinity. Jnana yoga is difficult, as it requires you to control the turbulent thoughts. Just as reins are needed to control a horse, just as a goad is needed to control an elephant, similarly jnana yoga and karma yoga are needed to control the dissipations, restlessness and distractions of the mind and to keep the senses in check.

In bhakti, all you need do is turn the torchlight of the mind away from the world of senses and sense objects and towards God. According to the *Srimad Devi Bhagavatam*, bhakti yoga is attained spontaneously when there is a change in the mental direction. It also states that the fruits which accrue through the means of *karma* or action, *jnana* or knowledge, *vairagya* or non-attachment, yoga, charity, dharma, austerities, fasting or pilgrimage, can be attained effortlessly by the devotee through bhakti yoga.



A Happy Blend

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



There are various yoga systems – karma yoga, bhakti yoga, raja yoga, jnana yoga. Apart from these four yogas, there is laya yoga, mantra yoga and a very important form of yoga called kriya yoga. We should not wonder why there are so many paths. Why not only one, either hatha yoga or raja yoga? If you make a careful study of these yogas you will find that each and every path of yoga is intended to affect a reorientation or perfection in some part of your being.

For example, karma yoga helps you to unburden the load of karma which you carry all the time in your mind, so that with a lighter mind you can have inner experiences. Bhakti yoga helps you adjust the surplus emotions which most of you have and on account of which you do not enjoy life but you suffer all throughout. When the emotions are properly balanced, properly adjusted or fixed, then you have practically

no emotional problems. If you have only a wife or husband, if a child is not born, your parents are dead, there is no brother or sister, you have surplus emotions.

As a result of those surplus emotions you suffer, but you do not know what the suffering is due to. In the same way, the relationship with God, the relationship with your own inner self and the relationship with your guru are important in order to adjust these surplus emotions. That is the path of bhakti yoga. When the emotions are adjusted properly, there is automatic concentration of mind and dissipation comes to an end. Raja yoga teaches you how to control the mind, how to control the mental force and bring that to one central point.

Like this, there are various forms of yoga which train the different parts of our existence, but at the same time, these yoga paths should be practised together, because we are human beings, a blending and combination of body, emotion, psyche and intellect – head, heart and hands, let us say. If we follow a lopsided path, let us say practising only jnana yoga or only hatha yoga or bhakti yoga and no other yoga, professing that this yoga is supreme, and this is the highest yoga, then we make a great mistake insofar as evolution is concerned. We may become an authority on that particular system of yoga, but as far as evolution or progress of our inner self is concerned, it will be lopsided.

In order to avoid lopsided development, it is very necessary to make a synthesis, a blending, a happy combination of practices. We are dynamic by nature, rajasic. We are also emotional, psychic and rational. Some people are predominantly rational, others are predominantly psychic, emotional or dynamic. According to the prominence of our qualities, one type of yoga should be our main yoga. I am a raja yogi, or I practise bhakti yoga or I practise karma yoga. It means that side by side with this yoga, which is relevant to my temperament, I am practising other forms of yoga also.

– 15 February 1983, Harlow, England

YOGA AND YOGAVIDYA PRASAD

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

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

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

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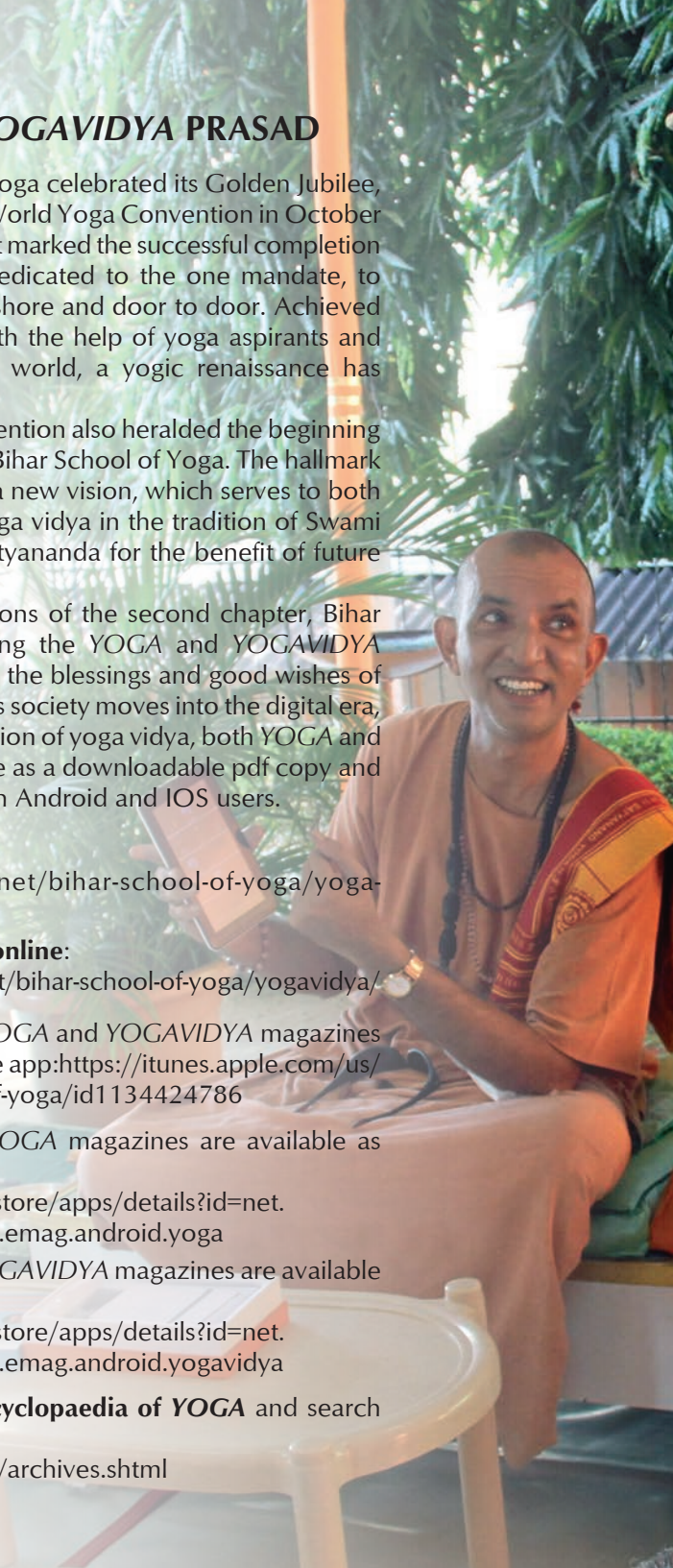
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Yoga Peeth Events & Yoga Vidya Training 2018

<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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