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Hari Om

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GUIDELINES FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

Life has become complex these days. Therefore, a great deal of continuous mental and physical strain is imposed on modern humanity by its deadening daily work and unhealthy mode of life. Man has acquired many artificial habits and has allowed nature's original habits to lapse. He has forgotten the first principles of relaxation. He will have to learn lessons from the cat, dog and the infant in the science of relaxation.

Chanting of mantras generate potent spiritual waves or divine vibrations. They penetrate the physical and astral bodies of the patients and remove the root causes of sufferings. They fill the cells with pure sattwa or divine energy. They destroy the microbes and vivify the cells and tissues. They are best, most potent antiseptics and germicides. They are more potent than ultraviolet rays or Röntgen rays.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

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

तपस्विभ्योऽधिको योगी ज्ञानिभ्योऽपि मतोधिकः । कर्मिभ्यश्चाधिको योगी तस्माद्योगी भवार्जुन ॥

Digital Fasting

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Let me tell you a story. A man, Mr X, calls his friend, Mr Y, early one morning by phone and there is no answer. So Mr X keeps trying to contact Mr Y by calling him many times for the next few hours, but still the phone remains unanswered.

Mr X begins to worry thinking something bad has happened. So he sends messages – no answer. WhatsApp – no answer. Email – no answer. Twitter – no answer. Instagram – no answer. Now Mr X really becomes worried. He begins to dread that something awful has happened.

So in the evening he decides to go to his friend's house to find out what happened. Around four o'clock, he walks into his friend's house, and there he sees his friend sitting in the garden in his lawn chair with a nice cup of steaming tea, reading a book, totally relaxed and happy.

Now Mr X, who has been sending messages and making phone calls is really furious. He says, "I have been trying to contact you since morning, and you have not answered anything. None of my calls have been answered, none of my messages have been answered. Are you ill? Are you sick?" Mr Y says, "No. I'm perfectly healthy. I'm just enjoying my life. Today I'm fasting." Mr X becomes quite irritated. He says, "Fasting is related with food. You may not have eaten, I can understand that, but you can at least answer the phone."

Mr Y smiles and says, "Listen, today is my fasting day. It means fasting from digital consumption. Today I don't touch

my phone. Today I don't look at my messages. Today I don't look at the social media. Today I don't look at my account. Today I just put the phone aside and become myself. I take up a book which I want to read, and read it. I spend time with my family, laughing, playing, going out to places with them; I am not just caught up looking at my phone."

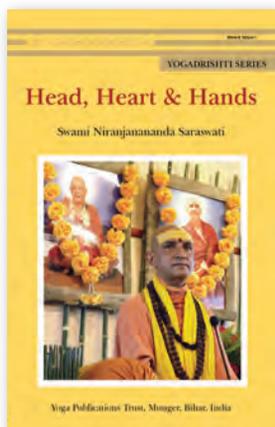
We have become so dependent and weak that we cannot live without a digital input for more than a few minutes to couple of hours. Can we break that pattern and become contained in ourselves? Instead of dissipating the energies outside, can we retain the energy and go through a process of self-awareness, self-discovery? Can we connect with the sense of happiness that is our internal feeling?

– 1 January 2018, Ganga Darshan, Munger



Creativity in Action

From Head, Heart & Hands, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Your actions should be guided by the creative principles; they must become creative. Creativity is the beginning of attaining the positive qualities of hands. This is where the concept of karma yoga comes in. Perform actions, whether physical or mental, psychological or spiritual, do whatever you need to, but do not expect anything from your actions. Don't look at the outcome. Try to do your best and develop immunity to the

responses of the behaviour or action.

Elation of non-expectation

When I first came to the ashram as a six-year-old boy, whenever Sri Swamiji would ask me to do something, I would run to finish the job and then go back to him. He would only ask, "Completed the job?" I would say, "Yes, Swamiji." He would never say, "Very good." He would say, "Okay, this is the next job."

Much later, when I was older, I realized that after completing a job, my expectation was to receive a pat on the back. That was my expectation and I never received it. What I am indicating is that even with guru, there is expectation. When you work in society, there is of course expectation of money, recognition, name and fame, which is an even worse condition. But even with guru, when one is asked to do something, one may do it to the best of one's capability, but at the back of the mind the idea is, "I hope Swamiji appreciates what I have done." That was my expectation too. "I hope he likes it. I hope he will pat me on the back and say, 'Niranjan you did very well.'" But it

never happened. When I realized that this was my expectation, I became very alert. I said to myself, "Hey, I'm expecting this. This is the result that I'm seeking from my karma. Not good." The day I stopped thinking about it was the first time that Sri Swamiji patted me on the back.

Even in the life of a disciple, there is expectation. It applies to all of you, yet you give lectures saying, "Don't expect anything." You have expectations, yet you lecture everybody on non-expectation, because that is what is said in the *Bhagavad Gita*, this is what says Swami Sivananda, this is what says Swami Satyananda. Despite saying all that, deep inside, the need, the desire for results exists. Even swamis don't perfect karma yoga. I did not perfect karma yoga until I realized that I have certain expectations from my guru.

Transcending boredom

The law of improving your karma is that you do not identify with what you do, yet you give it your best shot, your full creativity. In my life as a sannyasin I have often lived a routine life, but I was never bored in any routine, but I see other people getting bored and fed up. "I have to go to the same office every morning, see the same people, face the same problems . . ." all these thoughts come. "The same job, the same table, the same boring work, writing vouchers and receipts day in and day out." You get bored. When boredom sets in, creativity stops. When boredom sets in, mind management stops.

I have never been bored because right from the beginning I was very aware of a sutra that my guru gave to me to perfect yoga and I followed it. He said, "Think of everything that you do as if you are doing it for the first and last time in your life. Think of every day as the first and last day of your life." Even as a child I used to think every day, "This is my first day in this life and whatever I do, I'm going to do with utmost perfection." Many times I had to draft letters or do other such routine work necessary in the ashram, but I developed a pattern of thinking which I carry even today, "Today is the first day of your life.

Therefore, live it well, live it happily and with total creativity.” That is why even if I had to draft the same letter twenty times, I never got bored. Each draft for me was the first and the last one. I never got bored with any work, whether it was cleaning, classes, administration, working for Sri Swamiji or independently. This attitude also allowed me to put all my efforts towards doing the right thing in the proper and perfect way.



Developing a new perspective on performance

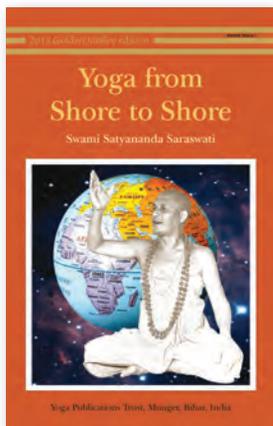
Karma yoga is actually an attitudinal change of how you look at situations, events and performance. When you are able to truly practise karma yoga, there is no dissatisfaction in life. What will dissatisfy you if everything is being done for the first time and you have given your full input to it? There is no question of dissatisfaction in this case.

Dissatisfaction is experienced when you feel that you have not done enough. Why did you not do enough in the first place? Either because you did not understand the work or you were lazy. Therefore, creativity is the trademark of the faculty of hands. To become creative, initially you have to make a conscious effort. Creativity cannot be achieved without conscious effort. However, such effort is required only for a certain period of time until you become conditioned in the new mentality. Once an attitudinal change comes about, you develop a new perspective on your performances in life.

– 12 October 2010, Ganga Darshan, Munger

Awareness and Karma Yoga

From Yoga from Shore to Shore, Swami Satyananda Saraswati



By the word 'awareness', I mean the act of becoming aware of one's self. By increasing awareness, through meditation and with a one-pointed mind, you can travel deeper and deeper into the regions of your psyche until you reach the point of enlightenment.

Enlightenment

What exactly is meant by the terms of enlightenment and awareness? There is awareness of the outside world; we hear sounds, understand things and our senses are capable of cognition. In sleep there is unawareness. At the most, if you try to concentrate and unify the tendencies of your mind in sleep you become aware of dreams and visions, but there is another awareness – an awareness of our innermost individuality. You are aware of the body; you are aware of thoughts; you are aware of your dreams, delusions and imaginations, but have you ever had a glimpse of an awareness different from these? To have an awareness beyond the body and mind awareness – this awareness is enlightenment. Or, in the language of the Upanishads, to be able to realize, understand, visualize the immortal personality in man, that which doesn't undergo death and decay, this is enlightenment.

This enlightenment is misunderstood by many. During meditation light flashes may appear, we may lose body consciousness, we may have beautiful scenes and experiences revealed to us and, in our ignorance, we think these experiences are enlightenment, but these experiences are only a process we have to experience as progress is being made in our meditation.

During the ultimate process of enlightenment, what happens? How does one feel? Unless one has attained enlightenment, one has no conception about it. Even he who has attained enlightenment is unable to express it because it is purely a matter of self-experience. Unless you have a tongue to taste, it is impossible to convey to you through the ears the exact nature of sweetness, but still there are aspirants who insist on being told!

Meditation

Meditation begins at the point of pratyahara. Pratyahara is the fifth step of raja yoga, and literally means 'withdrawal of consciousness' or transcendence of the outer world and outer experiences. The experiences of smell, the experience of auditory perception, the tactile consciousness – all these are experienced through the medium of the senses. In meditation the mind can be withdrawn and disconnected from these mediums. The mind sees, the mind experiences and the mind cognizes through the different centres of the body, but when outer awareness is withdrawn, the body is there but does not feel. This stage is often believed by spiritual aspirants to be a very exalted state, but actually it is only the beginning, the first stage of pratyahara.

During the process of transcending the external world, visions and subjective perceptions are experienced. Sometimes they are mistaken for telepathic communications. These visions and dreams are due to the depth of the concentration, and they are symbols of the deeper personality. They manifest as the consciousness becomes subtler and subtler. When you walk through the market, you see different shops to the left and right, and it is an ever-changing scene. In the same manner, in meditation the mind experiences various things, changing scenes from within. It means that the mind is passing through the different planes of consciousness: the conscious, subconscious and unconscious. Different layers, depths and heights are experienced. The experience may be of the astral



plane, or it may come from a previous incarnation or from your present life. Sometimes, the consciousness develops forms and images of angels and demons, or perhaps the nature, character, tendency or personality of the meditator will symbolize itself in the form of hills, jungles, men or women, in beautiful or ugly forms, or otherwise. All this may happen during the deeper stages of meditation, but they are only distractions and must be discarded. Distractions may come from within or without, and they must come under your control. To remove these distractions, these images, these symbols from within, one must develop an unconscious willpower. A strong willpower in the conscious life, external life, will not help you here. One who has taken to the path of meditation will have to develop the unconscious will.

The faculty of conscious will allows us to be rid of the distractions and dissipations of the conscious state. If distracting thoughts enter my mind during meditation when I have not yet transcended outer consciousness, it will be the conscious will which eliminates them, but when I am deep in meditation, having lost contact with external consciousness, I am in the land of visions; I require only one object of concentration. Here,

I need unconscious will in order to remove all the distractions from the spiritual path or from the path of meditation.

The unconscious will is developed by the use of a mala during the practice of meditation. The mala is moved from one end to the other and then the direction is reversed back to the starting point. One never crosses one bead, the sumeru, and so systematically the meditation is broken from time to time. The secret of this unconscious will is that the meditation is broken like this, periodically.

This might appear a novel method, but according to the guru tradition it is said that a beginner's meditation should be broken so that he can develop his unconscious will and remove himself from any plane he doesn't wish to be in, as in the land of dreams, or so that he can correct his meditation.

You may have to break your meditation twice, thrice, four or five times. Many believe meditation should be continuous, unbroken, but I say it should have breaks until the form of meditation becomes constant and begins to shine in the inner space of your awareness.

Distractions

In meditation your consciousness may become suspended; there is awareness of a time, but periodically it is overcome by a momentary void. Also one may experience telepathic communication and foreknowledge of things to come. These are obstacles or disturbances to meditation and these types of distractions are difficult to avoid. Many spiritual aspirants become lost in the snares. They become psychic and begin to practice psychic arts or spiritual healing, or they become telepathic mediums. These things are considered great achievements, but yogically speaking they are the downfall of spiritual life. The practitioners of these arts go on an offshoot away from the object of meditation, for one can either possess siddhis or enlightenment, but not both.

Therefore, on the path of meditation there are three types of distractions: distractions on the conscious plane in the

form of thoughts and external things, distractions on the astral plane in the form of visions, and distractions in a higher plane in the form of psychic knowledge and psychic events. The first type of distraction is quite easy to tackle; the second type can be removed with the unconscious will; but when psychic knowledge dawns and you become aware of new things in the deeper stages of meditation, progress becomes very difficult and many spiritual aspirants cannot go further.



In deep meditation when one has foreknowledge that such and such an event is going to happen, naturally meditation is broken, or even out of meditation one might feel that something is going to take place; one becomes so psychic. This is an achievement in itself, but so far as meditation is concerned it is a distraction, a setback and it must be removed from the path of spiritual life.

To succeed here one has to be very careful. One must shun these psychic powers right from the beginning. The aspirant must put himself on the path of karma yoga, and do duties, physical, mental and intellectual. If he does karma yoga the spiritual power generated through meditation can be practically channelled, for this extra spiritual power, responsible for these psychic powers, must be properly utilized and directed. The *Bhagavad Gita* says that spiritual aspirants must devote all their time to the performance of duty through karma yoga. The meditator should never shun the active life. So, in order to avoid the distractions of the third type, it is necessary that one has some outlet for the expression of the current of spiritual power.

Only then is it possible for the aspirant to experience enlightenment as spoken of by Buddha, Christ, Mohammed and many other people. When you find yourself approaching this point of enlightenment it is something very wonderful. Consciousness remains intact, you have not lost touch with yourself, and yet at the same time you are not aware of the outer universe. You feel all throughout that you are awake, you are actually awake.

Indescribable experience

The experience of enlightenment, as I have said before, is indescribable. It is a point of consciousness where the world is lost for the time being, but the inner consciousness remains intact and nothing of the inner light is lost. Enlightenment is a process in the beginning, it is not a final state because the area of enlightenment is too vast. Beginning from self-awareness it is a process of ascendance; it is not a process of descension. It keeps on ascending and you feel the awareness growing within you. Awareness becomes more and more intense. You can feel this awareness as you can feel the forms of the world. Just as we see men and women around us, in the same manner this awareness is felt. It is not so much an expansion of awareness as a realization of awareness. It is like this. We can be aware that an electric current is flowing through a wire, but that is not the same as if I happen to touch the wire, for then I will experience the electric current directly.

Knowledge and experience, knowledge and realization, they are two entirely different things. This is acutely realized in enlightenment. During the process of enlightenment, awareness becomes more and more prominent, and in the state of enlightenment the awareness experienced by you is at such a height or at such a depth that you can actually feel it. In that process of enlightenment, the ignorance, the distractions, the impurities, the difficulties and the doubts of life are completely rent asunder, and it is then that revelation starts. Revelation means an inner knowledge that manifests. The spiritual being,

or the spiritual reality within, comes to prominence. Then one realizes it was not the speech, it was not the mind, it was not the lower body that was functioning in my life, but it was the lower spiritual person and reality.

Beyond the body there is the mind and beyond the mental personality there is the higher spiritual personality. It is always operating, it is always there, it is never absent in us, but it is we who are unaware of it. We are breathing all the twenty-four hours, but we are unaware of it. Our heart is beating, but we are unconscious of the fact. There are many processes in the body and in the mind, and there are various events in your own life about which you are always unconscious. It is because we are so extroverted that we do not know what is taking place inside us. Similarly, there is this higher awareness in us that we can develop consciousness of, not through the intellect, but only by experience.

I shall illustrate this point with an experience of Ramana Maharshi. One day he felt that he was dying. He lay down on the floor and saw himself split into two. He then saw himself lying there as objectively as you see me now and I see you. It is possible for us to become aware of our spiritual personality in that manner, but it is rare, and for most of us, awareness of the existence of the body, of the mind and of the higher self is absolutely absent. Just think for a moment: right through from morning to night how long are you aware of your existence? I mean physical existence, not spiritual existence.

Exhaust your karmas

We haven't the time to be aware, or rather we are just not aware and therefore we cannot be aware of our physical existence all the time. If we were, the tempo of day-to-day life would be disturbed, but it is possible, and just as you can develop awareness of the body, similarly you can have awareness of your thought process. But can you become aware of the spirit, *atman*, at will? No, and yet this is the one thing it is really important to be aware of – the immortal Purusha, the part

of you which doesn't die. This man dies, the body; the other man also dies, the mind, but that third man, the immortal self, does not die.

It has no form and experience of it cannot be communicated, but nevertheless it can be experienced. The saints have given it three names: *sat*, *chit* and *ananda*. *Sat* means 'existence', 'pure existence', *chit* means 'consciousness' and *ananda* means 'bliss'. These are the three attributes common to all experience of this Purusha, this underlying consciousness. The Upanishads say this Purusha is of a golden colour and somewhere it is said it is luminous, but whatever it may be, it is hard to know. My only request to all spiritual aspirants is to be constantly aware, aware of the spiritual self beyond the body and the mind.

Enlightenment is a difficult topic to speak about and I have been trying for years to clarify my understanding of it. At the age of six, my spiritual life began with an experience. I was outside my body and I was able to see the body, but I could not feel it, and there was an awareness of a different type from the body and mind awareness. I had been trying



for many years to experience that state again, but I did not succeed. When I first met Swami Sivananda in 1943 he just gave me one small key - he said, "Exhaust your karmas." The *sadhaka* must reduce the weight, the grossness of karma. In your awareness there are layers and layers of grossness: impressions, dirt, distractions, *vasanas*, the hidden desires, and many, many other things. All these karmas should be exhausted. The exhaustion of karma is an important *sadhana* in the process of enlightenment.

If you exhaust your karmas, then surely experience in meditation will give positive rewards, but karma cannot be exhausted by karmas. Every karma brings a new impression, so in order to exhaust them, you will have to do karma yoga and not karma. What is the difference between the karma and karma yoga? Karma yoga is an impersonal karma without attachment. Karma is karma with absolute attachment. Karma creates anxiety and neurosis, whereas karma yoga never does. Karma



gives rise to exhaustion, but karma yoga brings satisfaction. Karma yoga means selfless dedication and karma means selfishness. In karma everything is for myself and in karma yoga everything is for yourself. These are the distinctions between karma and karma yoga. By karma you add to your karma and your destiny becomes more and more gross. By karma yoga your personality becomes purer and purer, day by day until you experience unbroken peace of mind.

There is only one enlightenment; there is no incorrect enlightenment. Once enlightenment is achieved there is no more darkness in life, there is no ignorance. The light is very clear and the light is very quiet. There is tranquillity, there is no tension and everything is full of bliss. Discrimination between real and unreal is revealed during the process of enlightenment. Everyone can see that he who is enlightened has the light, he doesn't have to prove it, it is patent.

Enlightenment is the ultimate aim of human life. It is for enlightenment that everyone is born and takes on physical existence. This is the pinnacle of human effort and human

accomplishment. It may be called enlightenment, nirvana, darshan, samadhi or kaivalya, but it is all the same. In all cases, to fulfil this life task, it takes a combined effort of karma yoga, bhakti yoga, jnana yoga and raja yoga. Raja yoga is difficult, simpler is bhakti yoga and much simpler than these is karma yoga. Karma yoga may be the simplest, but that does not mean you should only do karma yoga. No, you must practice a synthesis of these three: karma yoga, bhakti yoga and raja yoga.

Meditation must be combined with karma yoga. If you meditate for three hours, then you must work for ten hours, and if you meditate for six hours then you must do eighteen hours work. It is like this: if you have so much vegetable, there must be this much salt; vegetables and salt are never in an equal quantity. Meditation is the salt of life, but karma yoga is the method or the vegetables. Never be lazy in the name of the spiritual path. Meditation combined with karma yoga brings about that awareness which is easily visible in the life of a man in his action, in his behaviour, in his thinking and in his contribution to society and towards himself.

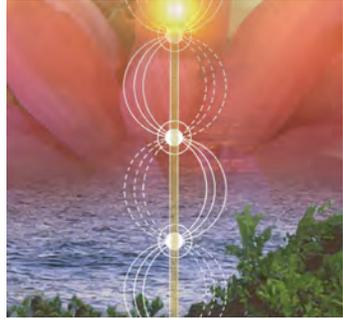
– 1968, Tokyo University, Japan



My Beginnings in Yoga

Mantraratna, Serbia

Life brought me to Malta in 2001. One cycle of my life was over and in my 28th year I was ready for the new cycle. Beginning my new chapter on that island, the tiny spot in the middle of the sea, ignited many questions within about the Self, the 'I' and desire to learn meditation and yoga.



My days were filled with reading of spiritual literature, search for texts on yoga and meditation and practice of meditation. One day by the sea, the brightness of the sea and sound of the waves, I read one line of the *Yoga Sutras* (1:2) *Yogaschitta vritti nirodhah* - "To block the patterns of consciousness is yoga." Those words went deep inside me.

Until that day my understanding of yoga was limited mainly to hatha yoga and asanas. That scripture, the commentaries and verses went deep into my self and awoke a strong urge for self-enquiry and self-discovery. The comparison of the restless mind with the sea, the description of the waves and the clear bottom of the sea, made a powerful impact on me, and I could not leave the book for quite some time.

I went to yoga and visual meditation classes. I realized that yoga was my path. The feeling of deep inner contentment, happiness and fulfilment after doing asanas, pranayamas or reading yogic literature, was unique and unknown to me before. That was love.

One day I found the book *Prana Pranayama Prana Vidya* of Swami Niranjanananda. On the cover page was a photo of Swami Niranjan and my eyes stayed fixed on it. That was the moment of recognition of my guru.

Soon I discovered the book *Asana Pranayama Mudra Bandha* and the following months I dedicated myself to the practices and study of the techniques. Apart from that, mantras became my focus of interest, as well as study of other yogic scriptures and singing kirtans.

After a few years I returned to Serbia where I joined the Bihar School of Yoga group. In 2006 I met my guru for the first time and received initiation. Today I do my sadhana regularly along with my duties towards my family and work. I try to maintain the feeling of peace and inner contentment that develops through the sadhana in all my day-to-day activities.

The feeling of love that karma, bhakti and hatha yoga generate in me are priceless experiences I have in this life as a yoga disciple.

Hari Om Tat Sat



Satsang on Heart Disease

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



What is the yogic approach to cardiac patients and to heart disorders?

Well, the yogic management of the diseased heart is slightly different from that devised by the medical scientists, but in my experience, both systems can be used in conjunction for the patient's benefit. As you know, many yoga experts in India have appeared publicly from time to time and stopped the heart completely for some minutes, hours or even for many days.

In earlier times, people either witnessed these events or believed in them, but in recent years, such feats as burial underground followed by resurrection have been carried out in the presence of physiologists and cardiac physicians, using laboratory monitoring equipment, and the results have been validated scientifically and widely publicized in medical journals and newspapers in India and other countries.

The clinical definition of death is stoppage of the heart for three minutes or more and a death certificate is issued on that

basis. But these experiments on yogis have shown conclusively that the human heart can be voluntarily stopped and then induced to function again after more prolonged time periods, as a result of yogic training.

How is this relevant for cardiac patients? In the first place, it leads to the conclusion that the heart is not an independent organ failing of its own accord, and that heart disease is an effect or result of an imbalance or loss of control occurring elsewhere. Where then does heart disease originate from? Surely, it is in the brain, where specific vasomotor centers have been isolated which control the rate, intensity and regularity of the coronary impulses. Therefore if someone is suffering from cardiac arrhythmia (uncontrolled, irregular heart beat), angina (pain due to cardiac insufficiency) or a slow failing heart, we should really say that he has some malfunction in the coronary control centres of the brain, rather than something fundamentally and irreversibly wrong with the heart itself.

The most important factor leading to derangement in the coronary impulses emerging from the brain is a prolonged, excessive build up of anxiety and emotional conflict arising in domestic, marital or employment situations, coupled with a high level of subconscious intra-psychic stress arising from deeper unresolved and suppressed conflicts and memories from childhood and early life experiences. These cause fear and insecurity whenever they bubble up to the surface of the mind. When deep feelings of anger, competitiveness, jealousy, aggression, rejection and so on are not vented but are denied expression and suppressed back within the mind, the cardiac impulse becomes unsteady. This occurs when the tension and strain relayed down to the heart as an excessive level of sympathetic nervous activity. As a result, the heart strains and labours excessively, and heart strain and failure is the end result. Therefore, our mental and emotional metabolism is directly reflected in the performance of our hearts, and this is why in yogic therapy we approach the problem here at its roots, whereas medical science, which focuses more upon the

heart itself, relies on long term drug therapy to bolster up the failing heart mechanism, with little reference to the underlying causes on the mental and emotional planes.

If a yogi can stop and restart the heart through specific psychophysiological training, then surely a cardiac sufferer can learn to recognize and gain control over the anxiety generating mental patterns which are constantly throwing his own heart mechanisms into revolt and disarray. We have found that lasting cardiac relief cannot be gained while the load of environmental and intra-psychic stress remain suppress and unresolved.

Approaching heart disease in this way, we follow a yogic treatment program which has proved tremendously effective for cardiac patients, and a new awareness of his situation soon emerges. He begins to recognize and understand his problem more objectively, in the light of this relaxation, as confidence in his ability to relax his mind is gained. By going beyond the constructive confines of his mental anguish into a refreshing realm of relaxation, a new, more joyful person begins to emerge spontaneously, confident of his abilities to live. He no longer feels confined in an impossible predicament in which he is estranged from his own failing heart, but sees that the root cause is his own thinking, and that he possesses the power to heal his own heart and mind through yoga.

Can you tell us briefly the yoga practices you use?

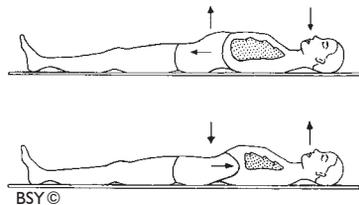
Yes, of course. First and foremost are the practices of yogic relaxation, but they must be administered by a skilled yoga therapist. This is because it is the whole concept of relaxation through yoga which must be conveyed to the sufferer, who is often completely beset by fears about his heart, his family, business and so many other things. It is an experience which has to be conveyed and then mastered by the sufferer himself so that he can confidently short-circuit the enormous load of anxiety he carries with him, and enter into a more relaxed state of being. In some countries, yoga teachers prescribe yoga

nidra and pranayama, while strictly avoiding asana, but in our Indian ashrams the approach is not like that. We prefer to teach these patients more dynamic methods of relaxation.

Yoga nidra is a wonderful relaxation practice, but it is a passive one. We prefer the practice of nada yoga, where you are aware of the mantra or sound and just that. You concentrate on the sound, tracing it to its source. As you know, sound vibration has a very powerful influence upon the mind, because it is appreciated and understood or purely on an intuitive, feeling level, without any intellectual analysis. In fact, it effectively renders the intellect incapable of its normal operation, and in a fearful, neurotic and tense mind this brings an instant release of tension which is soothing, relaxing and totally absorbing. Different mantras have different effects on the mind and the psychic centres, including the heart, and there is a whole science which can be applied very effectively.

Nada yoga can be practised from shavasana, and the musical scales of a harmonium can be used. The patient just lies down quietly, free of all restrictions, such as shoes, tie, tight belt, etc; with lightly closed eyes and mouth. The legs of the patient should be a little elevated, so as to promote the return of the circulating blood to the heart. In this way the deepest experience of physical, mental, emotional and cardiac relaxation is experienced. An alternative is for the instructor to chant the mantra *Om*, asking the patient to let go of all preconceptions and ideas and just follow the sound, absorbing himself within the vibration.

I have said that we do not teach pranayama, but I should qualify this. We do not teach conventional pranayama, but we definitely make use of the breath as a vehicle of relaxation. Our approach is that there is never any question of straining, withholding or resisting the breath. Rather, the patient learns to make friends



with the spontaneous inflowing and out-flowing breath, but makes no effort to control it in any way. He only witnesses it effortlessly, and gradually he chooses as his best vantage point the navel, which rises and falls spontaneously with the breathing cycle. No strain should be generated, but navel awareness grows gradually. This is found to automatically alter the filling patterns of the lobes of the lungs and the chambers of the heart, and respiration becomes deeper and more efficient spontaneously. The heart rate slows and the cardio-respiratory efficiency increases automatically. This is a vital step for many anxious cardiac patients, firstly because they are often fast, shallow breathers, unconsciously confining the breath to the chest cavity, in parallel with their cardiac anxiety. This practice effectively unties the physiological, psychological and psychic knot in the heart region, where it has often been confined for many anxious years. Again, great relief is experienced.

Another practice we use is known as bhramari. This is both a pranayama and a practice of nada yoga which is practiced in a sitting position. In the scriptures, the heart centre is termed 'the centre of unstruck sound' and also as 'the cave of the bees'. In bhramari pranayama the humming sound of the bees is produced and traced towards its source. This produces deep mental and emotional relaxation and is extremely effective in cardiac disorders and in other diseases characterized by a high level of mental tension, such as epilepsy and asthma. However, it must be learned correctly, because the whole process is very subtle. It is a process of inner absorption into the humming sound, which is produced with very gentle exhalation. The practice must take place effortlessly, without any strain to prolong the vibration unduly, or to make it loud. It should be spontaneous and it can be very soft. It is essentially an internal sound, and when the ears are blocked with the fingers, the patient is instructed to follow the inner vibration and discover the source.

– Printed in YOGA Vol. 19, No. 2 (February 1981)

Yoga Changed My Life

Swami Yoga Gnana Saraswati, Bulgaria



Yoga changed my life, but firstly yoga changed me. This happened slowly and unnoticeably. The people in my family used to call me mimosa – a plant which when even tenderly touched closes its leaves. I was the same – the smallest quarrel made me suffer and close in myself. Looking at somebody crying made me cry also. I was too sensitive and it was very difficult to live in this world, full of pain and suffering.

I was a teenager when I started to question why there was so much injustice, war, sickness, agony and death. I was told that God wants it to be like this, but this answer did not satisfy me. I found books about yoga philosophy, about the law of karma, reincarnation and so on, and I felt that this is true.

The right path

When I found Satyananda Yoga I understood that my search was over and I had found the right path for me. The rest was to follow this path and not to stop the efforts.







The first visit to an ashram was in 1988 to the Satyanand-ashram Greece. I felt that this world of yoga is mine also. Seeing the people with guru robes clicked something in me and I knew that I wanted to become like these people and to belong to this tradition. I was initiated into mantra and received a spiritual name. My real journey in yoga began . . .

The first effect of yoga was on my mind. I became more calm and happy, because I understood that there is no chaos in the universe, but just cosmic laws.

The second thing was that my health improved. I stopped being sick so often. With regular surya namaskara and pranayama my body became more stable.

The third effect was enhancing my energy level. Besides the hatha yoga, I think that my initiations into karma sannyasa and later into poorna sannyasa played a very important role.

Another change happened in the attitude to my work. After accepting the karma yoga principles, I stopped being frustrated and blaming myself and others if something was not perfect. This helped me so much that I would like to give thanks again and again for this precious gift, which karma yoga gave me.

I was afraid to be open and to be hurt, but slowly yoga practices for managing the emotions helped me to accept myself and others as they were. Maybe my heart started to become cleaner and to open little by little . . .

I started to see the small miracles, which happen so often, but before I was blind to see them. After all, everything is a miracle of the Divine power!

I felt inspired and started to share with other people the yoga knowledge which I had received. I became a yoga teacher. This act of sharing gave me even more fulfilment and a new meaning to my life. I felt content with serving others through yoga and other possible ways. This added joy and richness to my experiences and feelings. Now I may say that I changed very much and my life also is very different from what it was.

I have attended several courses in the ashrams of our tradition. The most powerful impact on me was the Sannyasa

Training Course in Munger for 6 months in 1992–1993. I experienced the sannyasa type of life and was inspired to live it in my life. Living in the ashram was not easy, but very useful to understand myself, my character and my reactions. It was a great experience.

I have been many times to India and there I met the great yogi Paramahansa Satyananda and received his darshan. The meetings with him were for me unique and uplifting. I saw him and Swami Niranjan as two people having the same spirit and soul. How can I remain the same after such meetings! I felt happy, my soul was singing with joy!

I would like to thank all yoga teachers and acharyas who taught me yoga and its principles. Especially I would like to thank my Guru, Swami Niranjanananda, who guides me year after year and maybe life after life. I receive from him knowledge, support, energy, example and lessons which I cherish deeply in myself as the most precious gifts I have ever received. When he initiated me into poorna sannyasa, I felt really born again! From sadness to joy, from darkness to light – this is my journey. I feel the divine presence of Guru in my life. For me he represents goodness, strength, wisdom and truthfulness.

I thank Guruji, for allowing me to become his disciple and sannyasin and change my life for good.



Independent Again

Lokesh Dani, USA



My name is Lokesh Dani. I am working as an IT engineer in Stamford, USA. This is a story of my journey from an independent person who was reduced to a dependent person (on the eve of the US Independence Day) and has come back to being independent again with the blessings of God, my Gurujī Swami Atmaswarupa, my wife, family and friends.

Injury

On the bright sunny day of 4th July 2013, I decided to go skydiving with my friends. There was a feeling of fear in my mind, however never did I think that there could be such a severe injury.

Everything seemed to go fine from the moment I was in the plane to the moment of jumping in a tandem skydive, where you are attached to somebody who is controlling your life.

I was enjoying my jump and the descent to the ground, however, all of a sudden, I found myself on the ground with no parachute. I landed on my hips and was detached from my trainer. Having landed on my hips, resulted in a compression fracture of my L1 and resulted in a complete spinal cord injury.

Surgery

In a nearby hospital I was advised to wear a plastic brace to heal my injury without undergoing surgery. I found myself in acute pain and was told that I would not be able to urinate and go for bowel movements. I was trained in the hospital how to use a catheter and suppository to empty my bladder and rectum.

On discharge from the hospital, I continued my research and came across a doctor who advised surgery to relocate my vertebra and put the spinal cord in its original place. Hence, I underwent surgery on 17 September 2013. My injured vertebra was removed

and a metal stand was placed. My spinal cord which got pinched as a result of my injured vertebra returned to its original form. At that time, doctors found that the nerves responsible for bowel and bladder movement were not dead and were carrying signals. My surgery was very intense but very successful.

Post-surgery

After six to eight months of post-surgery, I was able to walk again with the help of a walker and there was less pain in my legs compared to pre-surgery. The sensation in the bladder also increased, however, I still had to use a catheter and suppository. I continued to find different treatments for my bladder, yet nothing was working out until I was introduced to the world of yoga by Guruji Swami Atmaswarupa.

Yoga

My wife never gave up and would ask everyone if anyone had come across any doctor or treatment for my case. Ultimately, one of her friends through a relative introduced us to Swami Atmaswarupa and his yoga centre in Jamui.

Initially, we were very apprehensive and were not very sure if I should take the risk to go Bihar and practise yoga for my treatment. Upon further discussion, my friend cited examples of people with different disorders, including spinal injuries, who received good improvement at the ashram. We decided to go for it and prayed to God for improvement.

Journey of yoga

It was a rollercoaster ride which at the end gave me happy news and improvement of my core issues. Let's take a ride!

Day 1

We landed in Jamui, full of confidence and at the same time with a lot of queries and anxiety. We were greeted by Swamiji and everyone at the ashram. Since we reached late at night, Swamiji advised us good rest and asked us to meet him in the morning.

On the morning of the first day, it was good to see nature very close in the ashram with many trees, cows and gardens. I met Swamiji, and after the initial discussion I mentioned my injury and all the details of the surgery and post-treatment.

My first lesson or say treatment started with the theory on the basics of yoga which I must admit clarified a lot of my queries: yoga is not an exercise; yoga is a natural process to attain a healthy life. Yoga is to be done only as long as there is a pleasant sensation. This removed the fear from my mind that I would be asked to do a tough exercise which would hurt my spine further.

Like everyone, I would keep asking what is the yoga for my case. Swamiji politely answered that yoga would not just focus on one issue but on the overall balance of ida and pingla to achieve a healthy life. He gave a good example: in an office there is a smell of a dead mouse; many agencies were called to get rid of it, but each agency focused on a specific section and if they didn't find the mouse there, they would give up. One agency, following the principle of yoga, first removed all sections, found the dead mouse and then rearranged everything. Similarly, my treatment was divided into three sections:

1. Overall body flexibility and positivity of mind;
2. Restore bowel and bladder movement;
3. Rearrange and tune up the whole body, and the bladder and bowel to perfection.

Based on this, my treatment started with: yoga class in the morning, theory class, yoga nidra, chanting, food at correct times and full of protein to support yoga.

Day 2 to 5

Morning: Practice of basic yoga to relax my joints – pawanmuktasana 1. Each day Swamiji would appreciate that there was an improvement as compared to the previous day which kept my morale high. With proper breathing techniques, I did not feel that there was something that a person with such an injury could not do.



Afternoon: As usual, I would have my queries as when I would see the difference. He pleasantly answered all those queries with his real-life examples, analogies which kept my faith alive.

Yoga nidra: I was introduced to this amazing practice, which was deep relaxation and at the same time it was fun as in the process I would go for a deep sleep.

I was sometimes scared that since I slept I would miss it, but Swamiji told me that it is all part of the practice. He used to quote that “Don’t reject or accept any thought. Let anything come to mind, the more you try to reject or accept the more it would appear.” And it did work miraculously.

Chanting of mantras: I would practise every morning *Mahamrityunjaya* mantra, *Gayatri* mantra and the *Durga* mantra. It helped me to at least connect me to that unseen power/ God/Cosmic Force for some time and made me feel as if I was in a temple. I did not feel like a patient, which had a deep, positive impact on my mind.

Day 6 to 14

Gradually, Swamiji took me deep into different yogasana without any feeling that this was a yoga which could be difficult for me. I was walking my life on two sticks: suppository and catheter.

1. So, Swamiji took away my one stick and made my finger that stick to support my life and I started to do moola

shodhana. I initially felt uneasy doing it, but when I had a good bowel movement, I would feel that at least a day had passed without suppository.

2. Yoga nidra, chanting and different fibrous food continued. Every day I would see progress in yoga nidra and share my thoughts with Swamiji.
3. Once, I got used to moola shodhana, Swamiji asked me to reduce the frequency of catheterization and applied moola shodhana for relieving urine. This would gradually or at least for some time make me pee a little on my own without catheter.

Day 15 to 25 (life changing)

1. Gradually, I could do those asanas which the previous day seemed impossible.
2. I could do triyak bhujangasana, marjari asana, a modified form of udarakarshanasana, all thanks to Swamiji.
3. Once Swamiji saw that the required angle had been achieved, he asked me to practise to pee on my own with the help of vajroli and ashwini mudra.

I still remember that I felt my bladder being full and that the pee would not happen and I was ready to use the catheter, but then some drops poured on their own and I could squeeze something very little on my own. Finally, the day came when I did not use catheter for a whole day and use it only at night.

Now, Swamiji introduced me to this amazing kriya of shatkarma, kunjral and neti. He felt I had enough flexibility to do TTK (tadasana, triyak tadasana, kati chakrasana). I must admit that the whole process of gulping water and performing TTK after every two glasses was a bit overwhelming but at the same time a ray of hope shone forth when bowel movement would occur. The whole process of hatha yoga finally paid off and I was able to relieve myself one day without moola shodhana.

With continued effort of yoga, I started to squeeze my bladder, although I needed to practise it quite often. The bladder which was left to rest for three years started to function again.

Gradually, Swamiji advised me not to use the catheter at night and to go frequently for urination by practising vajroli. Finally, I counted my days when I regained my bladder and could squeeze on my own.

Summary

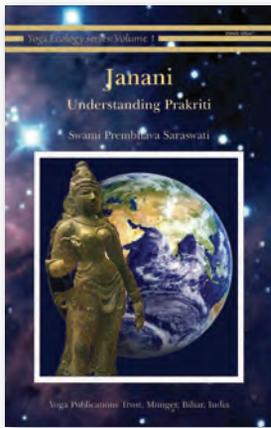
With the blessing of God (mantras), Swami Satyananda, Swami Niranjanananda and under the guidance of Swami Atmaswarupa, I came a long way to have my body function again. I still have a long way to go to achieve perfection but I definitely have a path laid out for it by Swamiji. Step by step under his guidance I will climb the mountain.

I and my family have deep regards for the Bihar School of Yoga in Munger and the yoga centre in Jamui for teaching us and showing the light on our way to life.



Ashram Life

From Janani, Understanding Prakriti, Swami Prembhava Saraswati



Ashram life is centred around seva and karma yoga. Through karma yoga one is able to purify the mind and ego and pull oneself out of the selfish, self-centred awareness; to become aware of one's place within this world and the impact one has on it. Through karma yoga all aspects of one's personality are transformed from the tamasic to the sattwic state.

Karma yoga encourages people to go out into the garden, to sweep leaves and weed the flower beds burying hands deep in the soil. Through karma yoga one learns to mix and relate with people of all cultures, languages and beliefs. These interactions teach the vastness and variety of Mother Earth and all her people. There is respect and understanding for people of all walks of life, and the selfish individualistic attitudes begin to fade away.

The science of karma yoga has to be understood not as the yoga of action but as the yoga of rearranging the personality for the better; not as a method of submitting to somebody's will, but as a method of knowing the visible and invisible actions taking place within the personality.

– *Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

Jnana yoga

An important and essential aspect of ashram life is jnana yoga. Observation of one's reactions and interactions during daily seva and karma yoga is one aspect of jnana yoga. The ashram routine and allocated seva allow one to constantly observe

oneself and find ways to improve. In ashram life, due to personal likes and dislikes situations arise that one normally does not face in daily life. However, in the ashram, rather than running away from the situation, one is encouraged to observe oneself, take responsibility for the part in the problem and improve it, instead of blaming others and expecting the world to change. This is an important training for harmony and balance in everyone's life.

Mouna, silence, from 6 pm to 6 am and during meal times, allows a time for people to observe themselves, observe their mind and its reactions. Mouna creates an environment of peace and tranquillity, a change from the constant chatter and noise pollution of the human species.

True jnana yoga is realizing how to apply the wisdom, how to use the understanding to create a better you and a better world in which there is harmony and union with the cosmic and the inner powers.

– Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Ashram Academics

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Can an academic institution be run in an ashram environment? The answer to this question depends on your point of view. From time immemorial the ashram has been a place of learning, providing an opportunity to live in an environment which is conducive to the development of the faculties inherent in our personality. In this process of development, we have to learn how to face our nature, our personality, our mentality, so that we can transform them and experience a better quality of life.

The interaction between people in an ashram can sometimes become very intense. Yet at the same time there is an aim, a goal, which is spiritual in nature. One cannot ignore the spiritual aspect in life. Those people who feel that spirituality has no place in their life, in the modern context, are missing an important point. True spirituality is considered to be balanced and harmonious interaction between the faculties of head, heart and hands, head representing the intellect, heart representing the emotions and feelings, and hands representing the ability to perform, to interact.

The process of learning, of educating ourselves to experience this harmony of the three faculties, can be learned and experienced in an ashram environment. The system of modern, academic education, school, college, university education, is job-oriented. From early childhood one is trained to excel in a field, a system, a way of thinking, which becomes the guideline for further social interactions in life. From the beginning we decide what we wish to become in life – a doctor, a scientist, a historian, a social worker – and keeping that aim in mind we go through a process of learning which is job-oriented.

Spiritual education or yogic education is not job-oriented, it is self-oriented, discipline-oriented. The most famous statement on this subject is the first sutra of Patanjali – *Athah yoga anushasanam*, ‘*shasan*’ meaning ‘to govern, to rule, to control, to guide’, ‘*anu*’ meaning the subtle nature. This sentence means that yoga is a process of guiding, directing, ruling, governing and controlling the subtle nature. This process can only happen if one is aware of what is happening to oneself, and when one is able to wilfully direct the mental energies to manifest in a creative way. This wilful direction comes through discipline. Discipline is not something that is imposed. It is awareness of and living according to the underlying principle of harmony. That is true discipline.

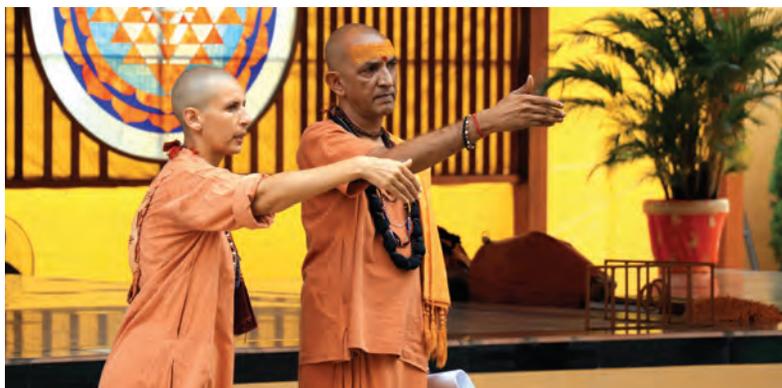
When an ashram becomes an academic institute of learning, this is what we try to give. Everyone comes to an

ashram with their beliefs, idiosyncrasies and preconceived ideas. My rule is, before you enter the ashram, leave behind your preconceived ideas. If you can come with an open mind, without expectations, with an attitude to learn and not to criticize, with a desire to be positive and not to indulge in negativity, then the ashram can become an important centre for the growth of human personality. It is our duty to present this concept of ashram academics to society.

When you come with preconceived notions about how things have to be, you are blocking out your own learning experience, and such people have no place in an ashram environment. The ashram has to be viewed from a perspective, from an angle, in which you try to imbibe the different aspects and manifestations of your own nature, and with awareness, determination, regularity and continuity, experience the growth of your own life.

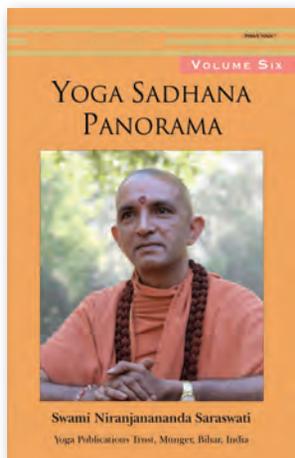
I do not see why an academic institution cannot be run in an ashram environment. If you want my personal view, I would say that an academic institution should *only* run in an ashram environment, and that all the schools, colleges and universities must become ashrams, so the social, moral, spiritual and practical values of life can be imbibed in one go!

– February 1996, Ganga Darshan, Munger,
printed in YOGA Vol. 7, Issue 3 (May 1996)



Sadhana of Swadhyaya

From Yoga Sadhana Panorama, Volume Six, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Sattwa is living spiritual awareness. Sri Swamiji has stated that the destiny of human life is spiritual awareness. Spiritual awareness is the outcome of a developed, integrated nature. This is what yoga has to mean for us, a process by which we can cultivate our own qualities. Therefore, in meditation the aim should not be higher experience, but the development of inner qualities.

We find this in the teachings of Swami Sivananda. Swami Sivananda says that the expression of human qualities begins with serenity, and we are far from serenity in our lives. Situations disturb us. Events and circumstances can disturb us. Relationships and communication can disturb us. The selfish nature becomes disturbed. We lose touch with reality and identify more deeply with selfish qualities. We identify with loss and when we act to replace our sense of loss, our selfish nature again becomes stronger.

Tamas and rajas are the conditions of our life. Spiritual awareness can be experienced when sattwa expresses itself. Yoga is the movement from the tamasic nature to the sattwic nature. If we are living in a closed, tamasic environment with high expectations of greater visions, we live in a world of our own created imaginations and fantasies. We feel that we are becoming sattwic because of our fantasies. This fantasy can be shattered when you observe your patterns of behaviour. Hatred, greed, jealousy and anxiety remain. Many people

have been practising meditation for twenty or thirty years, but they have remained in their tamasic shell. Has anybody become sattvic, even one percent or two percent, despite the involvement with yoga?

We have to move from the tamasic state of life into the sattvic state. With the attainment of the sattvic nature, we live spiritual awareness. From the sattvic nature we move to a state of consciousness where we become one with the creation and the creator. We become the medium for the expression of higher energy. Even now the cosmic energy is expressing through us, but we are not aware of it. We think that according to astrology and palmistry we will live for eighty or ninety years.

When we sleep at night, we die. Sleep is an experience of death. How do you know that in sleep the spirit doesn't leave the body? Yet it is that divine energy which regulates that pattern of living to death, from living to sleeping and back to living. Many different events happen in our body, mind and emotions which reflect and confirm the existence of a higher life-force directing the life processes. In the same manner, when one develops an awareness of this cosmic force directing the expressions and behaviours in life, one becomes realized.

Yoga has to be seen from a different perspective. First follow the aims set by yoga for your development. Secondly, use yoga to develop the faculties of head, heart and hands to acquire excellence in life. Thirdly, understand yoga as a journey from the tamasic state of existence to the sattvic state of existence, from conditioned to luminous. If we are able to understand these three, yoga becomes a sadhana of life. Yoga is the sadhana of swadhyaya. Not the sadhana of asana, or meditation, but the sadhana of *swadhyaya*, knowing the self.

Dharma

From All About Hinduism, Swami Sivananda Saraswati



No language is perfect. There is no proper equivalent word in English for the Sanskrit term dharma. It is very difficult to define dharma.

Dharma is generally defined as 'righteousness' or 'duty.' Dharma is the principle of righteousness. It is the principle of holiness. It is also the principle of unity. Bhishma says in his instructions to Yudhishtira that whatever creates conflict is adharma, and whatever puts an end to conflict and brings about unity and harmony is dharma. Anything that helps to unite all and develop pure divine love and universal brotherhood is dharma. Anything that creates discord, split and disharmony and fomented hatred, is adharma. Dharma is the

cement and sustainer of social life.

The rules of dharma have been laid down for regulating the worldly affairs of men. Dharma brings as its consequence happiness, both in this world and in the next. Dharma is the means of preserving one's self. If you transgress it, it will kill you. If you protect it, it will protect you. It is your sole companion after death. It is the sole refuge of humanity.

Trying to define

That which elevates one is dharma. This is another definition. Dharma is that which leads you to the path of perfection and glory. Dharma is that which helps you to have direct communion with the Lord. Dharma is that which makes you divine. Dharma is the ascending stairway unto God.

Self-realization is the highest dharma. Dharma is the heart of Hindu ethics. God is the centre of dharma. Dharma means *achara* or the regulation of daily life. *Achara* is the supreme dharma. It is the basis of *tapas* or austerity. It leads to wealth, beauty, longevity and continuity of lineage. Evil conduct and immorality will lead to ill fame, sorrow, disease and premature death. Dharma has its root in morality and the controller of dharma is God Himself.

Maharshi Jaimini defines dharma as that which is enjoined by the Vedas and is not ultimately productive of suffering. Rishi Kanada, founder of the Vaiseshika system of philosophy, has given the best definition of dharma, in his *Vaiseshika Sutras*:

*Yato bhyudayanisreya
siddhih sa dharmah.*

That which leads to the attainment of *abhyudaya* (prosperity in this world) and *nisreya* (total cessation of pain and attainment of eternal bliss hereafter) is dharma.

The four Vedas, the *smriti* texts, the behaviour of those who have entered into their spirit and act according to their injunctions, the conduct of holy men and the satisfaction of one's own self – these are the bases of dharma, according to Manu.





In the matter of dharma, the Vedas are the ultimate authority. You cannot know the truth about dharma through any source of knowledge other than the Vedas. Reason cannot be the authority in the matter of dharma. Among the scriptures of the world, the Vedas are the oldest. This is supported by all leading scholars and antiquarians of the entire civilized world. They all declare with one voice, that of all books so far written in any human language, the *Rig Veda Samhita* is undoubtedly the oldest. No antiquarian has been able to fix the date when the *Rig Veda Samhita* was composed or came to light.

The changing dharma

Just as a doctor prescribes different medicines for different people according to their constitution and the nature of their disease, so also Hinduism prescribes different duties for different people. Rules for women are different from the rules for men. The rules for different varnas and ashramas vary. However, non-violence, truth, non-stealing, cleanliness and control of the senses, are the duties common to all men.

Dharma depends upon time, circumstances, age, degree of evolution and the community to which one belongs. The dharma of this century is different from that of the tenth century.

There are conditions under which dharma may change its usual course. Aapad dharma is such a deviation from the usual practice. This is allowed only in times of extreme distress or calamity.

What is dharma in one set of circumstances becomes adharma in another set of circumstances. That is the reason

why it is said that the secret of dharma is extremely profound and subtle. Lord Krishna says in the *Bhagavad Gita* (16:24):

*Tasmaachchhastram pramaanam te kaaryaakaaryavyavasthitau;
Jnaatvaa shaastravidhaanoktam karma kartumihaarhasi.*

Let the scriptures be the authority in determining what ought to be done and ought not to be done. Knowing these rules and regulations, one should act here in this world accordingly and be elevated gradually.



The truth of dharma lies hidden. Shrutis and smritis are many. The way of dharma open to all is that which a great realized soul has traversed.

Women can discriminate between right and wrong, true and false, between dharma and adharma. That is their nature. It is due to their influence that dharma is still in existence.

—Swami Satyananda Saraswati

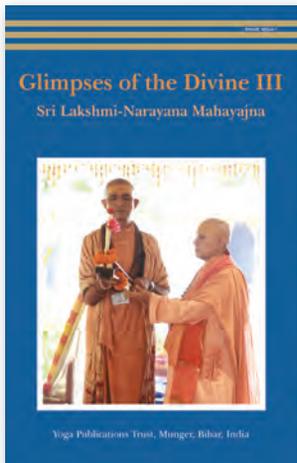
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Dharma is the bonding factor of everything in creation.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Sanatana Dharma

From Glimpses of the Divine III, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



There have been two traditions in the Indian civilization. The ancient one, is known as the sanatana tradition, the *sanatana dharma*, the eternal dharma of humanity. It is the most ancient of the spiritual traditions of the world, and the foundation of the yogic tradition as well. The other is identified as the *yuga dharma*, or the dharma which belongs to a particular age and time and then it is revised, altered and changed. Under this come the different systems of belief which are identified as different schools of thought of Hinduism, such as Shaivism, Shaktism, Vaishnavism, Buddhism, Jainism, and so on. They are all considered different sects.

The vedic lifestyle

In the age of the avatars in Satya Yuga, in the age of Rama in Treta Yuga, in the age of Krishna in Dwapara Yuga, and at the beginning of Kali Yuga, there was only one idea of spirituality. That idea was being good and virtuous, and following all the dharmas in life, fulfilling all the obligations and commitments in life. That was the life that people lived, without adhering to any specific form of belief.

This lifestyle developed into what is known as the vedic lifestyle in this part of the world. The vedic culture did not propagate worship of one, did not identify one omnipotent God as the main figurehead of humanity. Rather, it appreciated the presence of life in every aspect of creation. Just as life is present in your body, in the same manner life is present in

plants, in minerals, in nature. The greenness of the leaves indicates the life of the leaf. The taste of water represents the life in water. The heat of fire represents the life in fire. The sentience in you represents the life in you. In this manner, the ancient seers experienced life in every aspect of creation. For them, no aspect of creation was to be neglected, not even the dirt from the broom, as it was part of nature. There was respect for everything and everyone around. There was cooperation with everything and everyone. Everybody worked as one unit to achieve the aspirations of their life, which was the experience of luminosity and peace, *prakashatva* and *shanti*. *Prakashatva*, luminosity, is the *sattwa* nature, and *shanti* is peace from the turmoil of the environment in life. These were the two aspirations of human civilization in the early days.



All the efforts that were made were to improve one's lifestyle by cultivating the good, the beautiful, the auspicious and the pleasant, and eradicating the evil, the restrictive and the destructive. That is how people lived in the past. This culture was a spiritual culture. It was not a material culture. There was an awareness of one's own aspirations in life. There was an

awareness that 'I need to discover my peace and luminosity' and everybody worked for that. Just as today people work for finance and other resources to survive, in those days people used to work for discovering purity and peace in life. That is sanatana dharma, the eternal dharma that people in this part of the world have followed.

Yoga as part of sanatana dharma

If someone says to you that yoga is part of the Hindu religion, please say to them, "Sorry sir, you are wrong. You are slightly deviated from the facts. Yoga is not part of Hinduism. Yoga is part of sanatana dharma." Sanatana dharma is what allows the opening of the human faculties, the development and expression of the human qualities, which is also the basis of yoga.

Swami Sivananda also said that integration of the faculties of head, heart and hands is yoga. He did not say that attainment of God is yoga. He said that integration of the faculties of head, heart and hands is yoga. Anything that happens after that is a bonus. If you are able to meditate, it is a bonus. If you are able to become quiet and peaceful, it is a bonus. If you are able to become creative, it is a bonus. What you need to do is to cultivate the faculties of head, heart and hands.

A blind man may desire to see the sun, yet it is only a desire. Similarly, you want to be realized, it is only your desire. That is not your need. The need of the blind person is to acquire eyesight, not to see the sun. Once the blind person acquires the eyesight, he can look at the entire creation, not only the sun. In the same manner, your need is not self-realization. That is only an ambition, an idea, a thought. Your need is to improve the life which you are living for the seventy or eighty years that you are here. This improvement can take place with the cultivation of the faculties of the intellect, of emotions, and of performance. When they become positive and pious, then you are living the sanatana dharma.

With positivity in your life, your spiritual growth takes place sequentially, systematically and progressively. This is the

sanatana culture which speaks of connecting with the goodness within and the goodness all around. This culture was lived by the rishis and yogis of the ancient days. They have inspired the spiritual tradition with the purpose of again experiencing, reviving and realizing the sanatana culture in our life. You can belong to any religious denomination, but you can still experience the sanatana dharma awakening within you, for that is a qualitative and transformative process to discover your own strengths and abilities which are creative and uplifting.

Working on twofold purification

What is of utmost importance in any spiritual effort is attainment of purity. This purity is twofold: external and internal. The vedic and yogic traditions speak of two shuddhis, *bahya* and *antar*. External purity relates to the body, environment, household. Internal purity is of thoughts, emotions and psyche. There is the external purification connected to the body, attaining a balance between the three doshas: *vata*, *pitta* and *kapha*, wind, bile and mucus. When these three are disturbed then the body experiences disease; the ease of the body is disturbed.

Then there is purification relating to the environment where you are, the place where you live should be clean, properly ventilated and hygienic. You see this in the ashram. It is clean because we follow the *niyama* of yoga, the yogic discipline of *shuchi*. Cleanliness of the body and the environment is of utmost importance and the first stage of purification.



The second stage of purification is internal. This relates to removal of the masks that are put on the mind and the spirit, which are known as *vikaras*.

Establishment of dharma

According to mythology, Narayana comes down from time to time to establish dharma. This dharma is not morality, ethics, ritual, or faith and belief in God. Dharma is attainment of purity and removal of vikara. For that, God has to appear as an avatara from time to time. The purpose of establishing dharma is to remove the distortions that exist in a personality,



in society, in the environment. The distortions, vikaras, at all these levels are removed when you practise dharma. The vikaras in thought create negative thinking, vikaras in behaviour create negative action and behaviour harming other people.

Narayana or Vishnu comes to remove these vikaras from society, from individual life, from family life, from social life, from national life, from global life. That is the purpose of an avatara. The purpose of an avatara is not to come and destroy people. The purpose of an avatara is to remove the vikaras that have formed in the minds of people, that have formed over intentions, over dharma and nyaya, the appropriate and the just. When these vikaras are eliminated, dharma is again established. Therefore, the elimination of vikaras is known as elimination of evil tendencies. With the removal of evil tendencies, happiness comes into society. People become happy, and follow the path of natural justice. Sanatana dharma is the path of discovering the natural dharma and natural nyaya which uplift an individual in all dimensions.

– 11 September 2015, Paduka Darshan, Munger

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/>

For IOS users both the YOGA and YOGAVIDYA magazines available as downloadable app:<https://itunes.apple.com/us/developer/bihar-school-of-yoga/id1134424786>

For Android users the YOGA magazines are available as downloadable app:

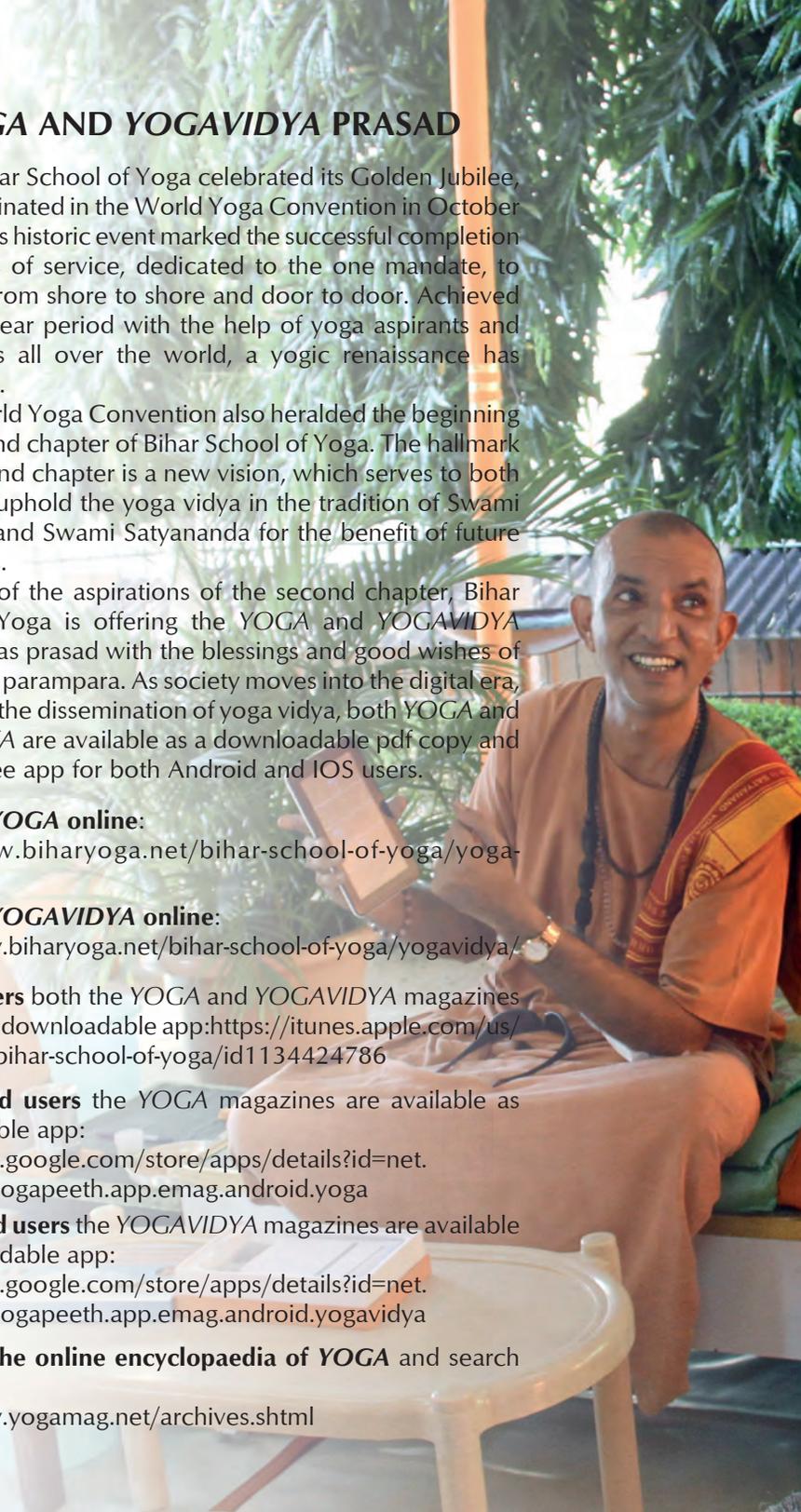
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To access the online encyclopaedia of YOGA and search the archive:

<http://www.yogamag.net/archives.shtml>



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Yoga Peeth Events & Yoga Vidya Training 2019

<i>Feb 6-8</i>	Sri Yantra Aradhana
<i>Feb 4-May 26</i>	Yogic Studies, 4 months (Hindi)
<i>Feb 9</i>	Basant Panchami Celebrations/Bihar School of Yoga Foundation Day
<i>Feb 14</i>	Bal Yoga Diwas, Children's Yoga Day
<i>Feb 18-24</i>	Yoga Capsule - Respiratory (Hindi)
<i>Feb 18-24</i>	Yoga Capsule - Arthritis & Rheumatism (Hindi)
<i>Mar 1-30</i>	Yoga Training, 1 month; (Hindi, for nationals)
<i>Mar 9-17</i>	Total Health Capsule (Hindi)
<i>Mar 11-17</i>	Yoga Capsule - Digestive (Hindi)
<i>April 2-6</i>	Yoga Lifestyle Capsule (Hindi/English)
<i>April 22-28</i>	Hatha Yoga Yatra 1, 2
<i>May 13-19</i>	Hatha Yoga Yatra 3, 4
<i>Jun 2-6</i>	Yoga Lifestyle Capsule (Hindi/English)
<i>Aug 16-22</i>	Raja Yoga Yatra 1, 2
<i>Aug 23-29</i>	Raja Yoga Yatra 3, 4
<i>Oct 1-30</i>	Progressive Yoga Vidya Training 1, 2 (English)
<i>Oct 1-Jan 25</i>	Yogic Studies, 4 months (English)
<i>Nov 4-10</i>	Kriya Yoga Yatra 1, 2
<i>Nov 11-17</i>	Kriya Yoga Yatra 3
<i>Dec 18-22</i>	Yoga Chakra Series
<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 4th, 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