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Hari Om

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GUIDELINES FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

Rest a little

You should not reduce your sleep by the use of medicine. That will affect your system. Sufficient rest must be given to the body through sleep. When you regularly enter into deep meditation, the system derives considerable rest and automatically sleep can then be reduced. That will not affect your health.

Sleep should be reduced gradually and cautiously. Now, for one month go to bed at 9.30 pm and get up at 4 am. After one month, go to bed at 10 pm and get up at 3.30 am. Again, after one month go to bed at 10.30 pm and get up at 3 am. Thus, by gradual means you can reduce your sleep. Sleeping in day-time must be avoided.

—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 ॥

Simplicity



Simplicity is plainness, unaffectedness, artlessness, straightforwardness, guilelessness, cunningless, absence of ostentation.

Simplicity is freedom from duplicity, affectation or pretension. In dress, in character, in manners, in style, in all things, the supreme excellence is simplicity. There is a majesty in simplicity. Simplicity is Nature's first step and the last of art.

Be what you say. Say what you are. Write as you speak. Speak as you think. Be simple like a child. The door of moksha will be opened to you. Purity and simplicity are the two wings with which man soars high to the kingdom of God.

The greatest truths are the simplest; and so are the greatest people. Goodness and simplicity are indissolubly united. A simple, frank person is the most agreeable person.

— *Swami Sivananda Saraswati*

Simple life is a veritable blessing because it makes one free from cravings and desires, which cause suffering and pain. Simplicity opens the gates which lead to heaven and God.

– Swami Satyananda Saraswati



The scientific culture of today has not given us the freedom to express and experience our nature, and it has removed from us the ability to experience simplicity in life.

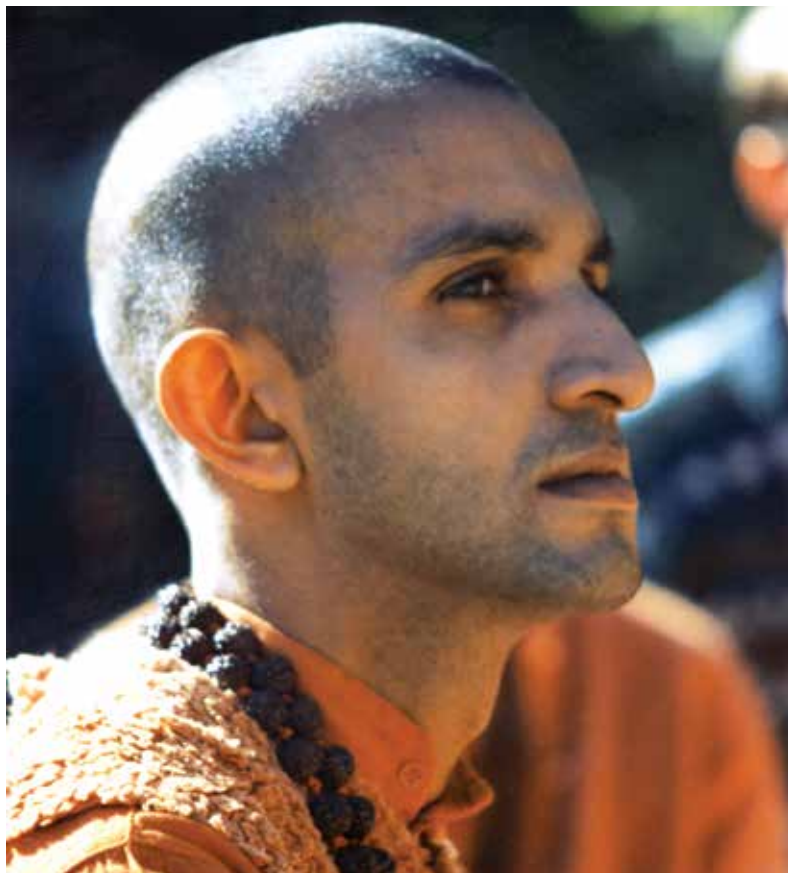
Rishis have said, “Live simply, practise restraint.” What is restraint? What is living simply? Sri Swamiji has described it beautifully: Simplicity is where you can experience the purity of your body and mind and live according to nature and not try to manipulate nature. That is the concept of living simply.

Restraint is not hard imposition of a thought on what is being expressed. Restraint is not discipline. Restraint is a process of re-educating our mind or creating a different condition of our mind.

– Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Re-Educating the Mind

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Evolution is not a process of continuous progression, rather it is coming to a stage of life, then standing still and harmonizing that area before taking another step. There is no continuous progression; it is stop, go, stop, go, stop. This evolutionary process is very natural and spontaneous. In order to be educated, to get our degrees and diplomas, we have to go through kindergarten, primary and secondary school, college

and eventually university, moving in sequence from one class to the next. In the same way, we have to go through different stages in spiritual life, in relation to our karma and our awareness of karma.

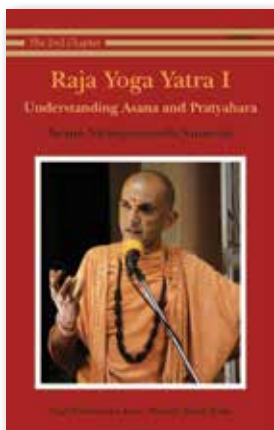
The most important point to remember is to keep *ahamkara*, the ego or 'I' identity, in check and free from the influence of the *gunas*. There are two aspects of ego. One is the 'I' identity and the other is the simple 'I'. This simple 'I' is the *drashta*, or seer. When there is identification with the object of cognition, that is *ahamkara*, the 'I' identity. For example, a beautiful flower can be seen in two ways. One way is to see the beauty and shape and to appreciate it. That is the simple 'I', an acceptance that the flower is there. The other way is to desire the flower, pick it, take it to our room and put it in a vase. That is *ahamkara*, where there is no appreciation of the flower in its natural form, but the desire to take it and keep it with us.

Keeping this aspect of desire in check has been mentioned in the fifth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*. We must begin to observe and appreciate the natural form, not only of the world, but also of ourselves. An effort has to be made to change the direction of the mind. In order to overcome that aspect of 'me' identifying with the objects and situations, we must re-educate the mind to appreciate, and not to want, desire or crave. This is a part of *sadhana* which has to be understood and realized in meditation.

Re-education of the mind can only be done through the stages of *pratyahara*, because in this state there is already dissipation and we try to focus and centre ourselves in that state of dissipation. So, this mental education is to be provided in *pratyahara* and not in the stages of *dharana* or *dhyana*. In *dhyana*, we are experiencing the continuity of consciousness. In *dharana*, we are experiencing the one-pointed, focused state of consciousness. In *pratyahara*, we are educating and re-educating the mind, the nature, the *gunas* and the *vrittis*, the tendencies of mind. Therefore, *pratyahara* is an important aspect of life.

Clearing – the First Step

From Raja Yoga Yatra 1, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



The first step in yoga is clearing, just as the clogged drains of the house have to be cleared for the water to pass through. The dirt that has accumulated over months and years is blocking the flow of water and that has to be cleared. Therefore, the first condition in yoga is *shuddhi*, purification. Even hatha yoga begins with *shuddhi kriyas*, the *shatkarma*, not with *asana*. In *raja yoga*, the clearing has to take place in the mind, in all the four faculties of the

mind. The four aspects of the mind are *ahamkara*, the ego; *chitta*, the memory, *buddhi*; the intelligence; and *manas*, the reflective power. They are blocked as they are influenced by the three *gunas*: *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattwa*.

Three forms of ahamkara: The *tamasic* ego is self-obsession, 'me and mine, me and mine'. It is the self-oriented awareness, the selfish attitude in life.

Self-projection and narcissism is the *rajasic ahamkara*. In Greek mythology there is the story of *Narcissus*, who would look at his reflection in the water and say, "How beautiful I am!" That is *rajasic ahamkara*. Facebook is nothing but an expression of the *rajasic ahamkara*. If you like Facebook, you will not want to agree with me, but the fact is that self-projection in any form is *rajasic ahamkara*.

Sattwic ahamkara is connection with the higher awareness, 'me and my God', 'me and my guru', 'Thy will be done'. The connection with that inspiration represents *sattwic ahamkara*. Thus, if there is a block in *ahamkara*, it will be in *tamasic* and *rajasic ahamkara*, and that has to be cleared.

Three forms of chitta: The tamasic chitta dwells upon negative memories. 'This person is like that, that person is like that, he had harmed me, he had screamed at me.' Dwelling upon your negative memories about people and situations, which may be due to your own impositions, is tamasic chitta.

The rajasic chitta highlights memories of your achievements and attainments. 'This year I climbed Mount Everest which nobody around me has done', so you think about it and feel happy.

The sattwic chitta consists of memories that inspire you. 'My moments with my God when I shared an apple with Him.' That is a positive memory!

Three forms of buddhi: The tamasic buddhi is inactive, dull, and shows lack of appreciation.

The rajasic buddhi is the application of the intellect to satisfy one's own needs. The manipulations and justifications constitute rajasic buddhi.

The sattwic buddhi sees the whole picture. 'This person is like this due to this situation, condition, event, or interaction.' When the sattwic buddhi is active, you have the full picture; it is not a reactive picture.

Three forms of manas: Tamasic manas has a low capacity for analysis and rationality. When tamasic manas is predominant, there is no learning. You could be hearing the same lesson for thirty years, but it will not go in.

Rajasic manas represents excessive analysis. 'Why did that person say that?' and the mind goes on a whirlwind trying to make out every possible scenario. This over-analysis is the rajasic manas. For example, when you look at somebody and smile, their rajasic manas kicks in: 'Why did that person look at me and smile? Am I alright? Is my hair okay? Is something off?' Why not just accept that the person was simply happy and therefore he looked at you and gave a nice cheerful smile? When you try to find the reason behind every small thing, twisting your mind in a knot, you are under the influence of rajasic manas.



Sattvic manas is the balanced analysis arriving at the right conclusion.

Pratyahara as mental shuddhi

The three conditions of the three gunas exist at all the levels of the mind: ahamkara, chitta, buddhi and manas. The tamasic and the rajasic conditions block the mind, they become the rubbish inside the head. Therefore, shuddhi has to be applied at all levels in yoga. Shuddhi does not denote merely physical purification but also mental purification.

Mental shuddhi is pratyahara. Just as physical shuddhi is shatkarma, mental shuddhi is pratyahara in raja yoga. Before you can reach the state of *dharana*, concentration,

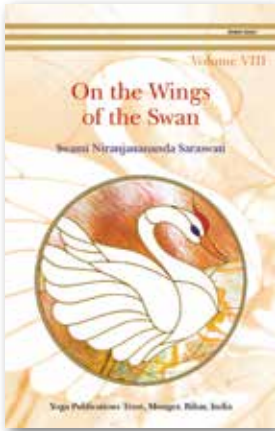
you have to attain mental shuddhi through pratyahara so that the energy can flow without obstruction or distraction.

The principles of pratyahara should be applied in your normal day-to-day routine and also in your yogic routine. Just as there is a set of five or six specific rules for yoga nidra, for every practice of pratyahara there are specific rules and conditions that define where you have to go, what you have to acquire and become, and what you have to release. If you follow them in a systematic way, not follow the whims of the mind but the path given by yoga, then in a few years' time you will see a beautiful butterfly emerging from the cocoon.

– 24 October 2016, Raja Yoga Yatra 1, Ganga Darshan, Munger

Organization and Discipline

From the Wings of the Swan, Volume VIII, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



People think that organization and discipline relate to external actions, but in reality, they reflect the state of the mind. Organization and discipline represent a balanced behaviour of mind. In order to know how balanced the mind is, just take a look at your own bedroom and you will discover that your room reflects your mind. If the clothes are thrown on the bed, if the plates are put on one side without any care, if the almirah has become a dumping place for your clothes and other items, then that shows the state of your own mind and mental character. If you are habituated to maintaining your room properly, it reflects a better mental character. So it is not a big thing for me to know somebody's mind and how they are; I simply have to look at their room, nothing more than that. I do not even have to talk to the person to know what they are like, I just look at their bags, how they pack things and the items they carry with them. If you look at that, you know what they are like, because mental behaviour, mental organization and discipline are always reflected in the outer behaviour.

Here is another example: it is a common thing that can happen to any one of us any time. You receive a plate full of five, six, seven different items of food, and each of those items looks tasty and palatable to you. Now, you look at all that and you feel so happy thinking, 'Oh, food of my liking has come finally and not the dry roti and the saltless dal', and in that moment of greedy elation you want to consume all the items together. You



have a bit from here, a bit from there, a bit from here, a bit from there and the interesting part is that while you are picking up one thing your eyes are looking at something different and your thoughts are thinking about the third or fourth item that is on the plate. Try it one day and you will see what your behaviour is. That type of behaviour indicates blocks in the free flow of natural mental discipline, the state of mental organization. If I have to eat the same food I will eat one item first and enjoy it, then the second item, then the third, then the fourth, because I know that those items will not run

away anywhere. I do not have to take a bite from each item in the first round. Why not enjoy one item to its fullest and then move on to the second item?

Now this is an example of how the mind, even in the normal little things, is so disorganized that it cannot make up its own mind. This reflects a lack of mental organization and inner discipline. Organization means first defining the priorities, then defining the sequence in which the work will be performed – defining the sequence for the expression of your creativity. This happens when you have attained some knowledge and awareness of your own mental states. For this reason, yoga begins with *anushasana*, observation and management of the arising mental behaviours. When the mind has been pacified then the outer environment is also organized spontaneously.

– 10 February 2008

Jnana Yoga

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

The idea that jnana yoga is only about asking the question, 'Who am I?' is a mistake. The ability to ask such a question and arrive at the right answer requires you to transcend the lower levels of manas and buddhi. Therefore, jnana yoga does not begin with that. Rather, jnana yoga is a process of attaining a state of awareness and knowledge through *abhyasa*, practice.

The rungs of abhyasa and sthiti

There are seven sequential practices of jnana yoga. The first is *shubhechha*, the right intention. This right intention has to be practical. You cannot say, "My intention is to discover God therefore I am going to question, 'Who am I? Am I God's part, God's extension, or God?'"

People go through many different mental gymnastics when it comes to jnana yoga. However, jnana yoga begins with positive intention, in relation to oneself and also in relation to others. If I see you in pain and I am able to help you, that is also fulfilment of jnana yoga, not just seva or karma yoga. When you identify and connect with the right intention, it becomes your motivating factor, your inspiration to help someone else. You have to soften your mind and heart to come to this purity of *shubhechha*, the right intention.

The second practice is *vicharana*, contemplation, not on abstract things but on what matters. You will get nothing by contemplating on God or religion, as God and religion are nothing but sets of beliefs. I stick to my belief and you stick to your belief. A clash happens when you try to impose your belief on me or I try to impose my belief on you. Otherwise what is called religion is just a collection of beliefs. My God has four arms, your God has two. Both statues are placed somewhere, you don't like the four arms as my God does not conform to

your idea of a two-armed God. So what do you do? At night you go and cut off two arms of my God, and that is how clashes begin. It is just imposition of one's ideas on others. Jnana yoga is not about that.

Contemplation is not on something abstract. It is on something that you can do to improve yourself. There is no use discovering you are the holy spirit if your family life is in crisis and turmoil. You have to deal with that first before you can start to think that about being the holy spirit. Thus, vicharana is prioritizing the efforts for your development.

The third is *tanumanasa*, observing the subtle mind. You have to observe what crops up from the deeper mind, you have to always be attentive to what is coming up and manage that.

These three stages of jnana yoga represent the condition that you have to cultivate in yourself through practice. Once these three conditions are created then you can say 'I practise jnana yoga'. Can you develop the condition where you have the right intention twenty-four hours of the day towards everyone, including yourself, your family, profession, the nature and the universe? Can you develop the condition where your mind is always following the right, the pious, the positive, the constructive and the creative? If you can, then you can say 'I practise jnana yoga'.

The first three stages of jnana yoga are *abhyasa*, practices, which create the *sthiti*, the condition. The next four are *anubhava* and *prapti*, experience and attainment.

The rungs of experience and attainment

The first experience of jnana yoga is *sattwapatti*, reaching the state of sattwa. This is possible when you are able to overcome the negatives of life. If you do not reach the state of sattwa, jnana yoga has no meaning.

Asamsakti is the second experience. It means separation and detachment from the material world. This is a natural process, but now it is done with awareness. A little boy plays with a toy and for him that toy is as real as you and me. There is so much



identification with the toy that if you take it away, he begins to cry. As he grows out of that age and the state of mind where the identification took place, toys do not matter anymore.

The identification changes. By following the process of jnana yoga, a natural dis-identification and separation takes place from the inanimate and animate objects of the world.

The next attainment is *padartha abhavana*, lack of feeling for objects. It means that you are not emotionally attached to anything. There are people who feel so hurt and depressed if their car receives a little scratch. They are identifying so much with that object that just a little scratch becomes the cause of cerebral, mental, psychological tension for days to come. If you disconnect, a scratch is a scratch, you will get it fixed, finished, nothing to worry about.

Similarly, if you get a pimple on your body, then you apply some medication on it, finished. Or you may look at the pimple again and again, begin to worry and run to ten specialists, 'This

doctor doesn't know, he did not give me the right answer. I know it is something different, I am different, this is different, it is not an ordinary pimple of the world.' You go to twenty specialists to prove to yourself that what you have is something unique, it is not an ordinary pimple; it is carcinoma! When you hear it is carcinoma, the mind suddenly changes. If you did not know what it was, it would be a simple pimple and it would go.

When you attain the state of jnana yoga, you see an object as an object, nothing more. Even your own body has the same significance for you as your house; you just look after it, but you don't have any attachment to it. When this state has deepened, then the final state of jnana is experienced: *turyaga*, the transcendental state where the mind becomes universal.

Thus, jnana yoga is a process where the ego awareness gradually dissolves and a higher awareness manifests. The ego awareness has to dissolve and a higher awareness has to manifest. Then the question 'Who am I?' has a different meaning. Right now you are asking your own ego 'Who am I?' That awareness has to dissolve. That is why jnana yoga cannot begin with the question, 'Who am I?' or 'Who are you?' That is reinforcing the ego, whereas the ego has to be dissolved in jnana yoga.

This is how you go wrong in your basics and in your beginning with jnana yoga. You have to start by developing the right intention, by developing the ability to observe and contemplate: observation of the little heads that come up in your mind from time to time. Then you reach the state of sattwa. Then you detach yourself from sense objects and develop a feeling that they are not relevant to you, you use them yet they are not relevant to you. That allows you to transcend the gross dimension and you become established in the wisdom component, the jnana and the vijñana component. From this follows a change in lifestyle.

– 23 October 2018, Munger Yoga Symposium

Munger Yoga Symposium



There are no words to describe the feelings and experiences we have had at the Munger Yoga Symposium 2018. Any attempt to express the beautiful and treasured moments seems to be limited and incomplete.

Swamiji presented the principles of applying yoga vidya in our lives which will bring out our inherent positive qualities and transform ourselves. He gave us more than we asked or planned for, and we felt the love and care in every activity, during satsangs, in yoga classes at Chhaya Samadhi or participating in seva, akhand kirtan, following the rituals in Akhara during yajna ceremonies.

The symposium was organized to every detail, and even the idea of separating the participants in blue and red brought to our minds the main forces of ida and pingala working harmoniously.

We saw people's smiling faces as they were coming out from the DVD theatre, the Kundalini Awakening Centre, the Satyam Yoga Prasad area and at the same time we were hearing the akhand kirtan from the amphitheatre. Such generosity of giving in any form we have never seen anywhere.

The light of Satyananda Yoga in the 2nd Chapter reflected the knowledge spread freely, is entering to the electronic age

as Swamiji uploaded the Satyananda Yoga books and DVDs to the web and launched in cyberspace the Satyananda Yoga encyclopaedia 'Bihar Yoga Wiki'.

Participating in the presentation and beginning of the 2nd Chapter of Satyananda Yoga, we feel very much honoured and blessed by our Gurus and heartily wish that the new chapter will transform and finally uplift humanity.

– *Sannyasis Vedamurti and Durgashakti, Greece*

I have not been in Munger since the 4-month course in 2009. During the Symposium I realized more and more how Munger has changed. There was so much love coming to all of us that almost every day, there were tears in my eyes. There are no words for the generosity, the hospitality, the care and love that we were given. I cannot describe how and what it touched within my heart and soul.

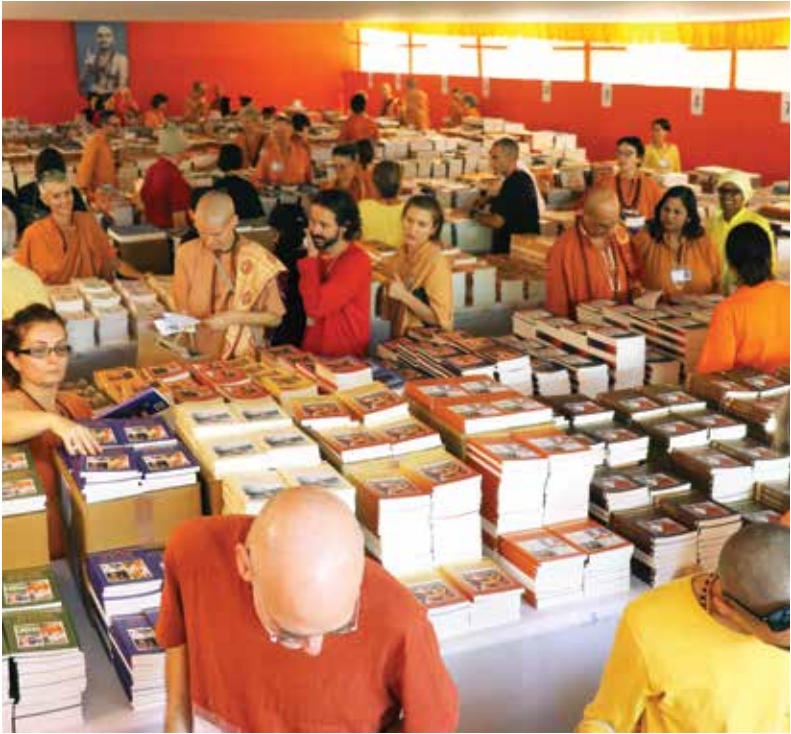
The symposium as a whole is not easy to grasp. For me, at this moment, right after the closing of the Symposium, I find that it was heart-opening and most likely will have that heart-opening character in the future too, whenever I connect with my memories of the Symposium.

– *Jignasu Samadhi, Switzerland*

The events of the Symposium swept me off my feet. I felt affection in everything, from the fancy food, endless prasad and all the various programs. Swamiji indulged us like a mother indulges her child on a special occasion, so that the child can be cheerful and receptive to the gems of the occasion.

I returned drenched in that love, joy and laughter. I returned full in every way. A silent celebration is continuing within me. My commitment and effort is to connect with this silent celebration from moment to moment.

– *Sannyasi Atmadeep, USA*



I feel grateful for having the chance to attend this Symposium. Yet, the precious gift that I received was not what I expected. Yes, I came to hear the words of wisdom from Swamiji, to receive strength and inspiration, and I have abundantly obtained that, but at the same time, I was craving for new and deeper techniques, which I thought would establish me firmer on the yogic path. So I sat in the classes, trying to absorb as a sponge every word I heard, eager to implement that at home.

Of course the illusions were immediately disparaged. Unfortunately, there is no such technique, only a tough road, enlightened by the awareness to live a more happy and fulfilling life. I am eager to start that journey. I don't expect it to be easy, but I feel guided and supported for all the falls and rises that will come.

– Marija Stevanovic, Serbia

More Permanent Change



Head, heart and hands must synchronize if you want to realize your goals, whether they are material, spiritual or both. The ashram provides a suitable environment for this metamorphosis to take place because the lifeline of the ashram is spiritual. By spiritual I mean pure and untainted.

Purity of environment enhances that side of your personality which is ready to accept inherent weaknesses and blemishes, change your outlook and opinion as well as improve yourself. The fault is not in the environment or in the people with whom you have to interact, the problems you face arise from within. The circumstances only act as a catalyst to bring them to the surface. Everything you feel, think, say or do is coming from deep within.

Ashram life gives you the chance to reflect on this and therefore the changes that take place in you after spending time in the ashram are more permanent and abiding.

—Swami Satyananda Saraswati

One Hundred Percent Attention

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

People often ask how they can maintain the level of energy, clarity and subtle awareness that they experience in the ashram when they are practising back home. That is where the challenge is.

In the ashram, you don't have any distraction. You come here for a course. From morning until evening you are running from your room to the course, to lunch, to dinner, to class. So you are not doing any of your normal activities or duties. However, at home there are more engagements, more responsibilities, more duties, whether it is your children, profession, house or kitchen.

At home you should make the effort to be absolutely one-pointed when you are practising. For that period, you should forget the house, and for one hour nothing exists. You will find that this will help you maintain your own awareness and experience. If while practising you begin to identify with what you have to do after you finish the practice, then the whole purpose is defeated.

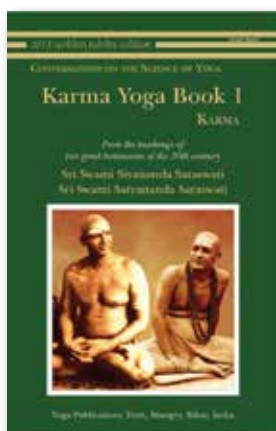
Therefore, at home, when you are doing your practices, be one hundred percent attentive to that, not ninety-nine, then you will be able to maintain the energy and mindset that you experience in the ashram.

– 11 August 2018, Paduka Darshan, Munger



Samskaras

From Conversations on the Science of Yoga – Karma Yoga
Book 1, Karma



Should one try to create positive samskaras or eliminate negative samskaras?

Swami Satyananda: Samskaras can be eliminated in a positive or negative way. Instead of blocking, interfering with or trying to eliminate the samskaras, it would be much better to develop, create or initiate stronger samskaras. For example, when a person tries to develop the inner experience, he is creating strong samskaras. Thus the

positive overcomes the negative. In the positive method, one cultivates all the mental, emotional and physical qualities which will saturate the mind with sattwa guna and perfect equilibrium.

Although it is possible to fix the samskaras, this is dangerous for the majority of people. Sometimes in the effort of adjusting, pacifying and eliminating the samskaras, one develops an abnormal personality. Whether through mantra, yantra, tantra or religious practices, please do not make the mistake of fighting with the samskaras. This will only disturb the structure of trillions of archetypes in the brain. What is one going to do with these archetypes? Be positive and don't fight with the base of life.

No one is quite sure if there are samskaras at all. A person may be just a machine – who knows? If so, somebody must be running this machine. Do motor cars have samskaras? Maybe a person is also like that; one can't be sure. Please don't go by faith and belief alone. Be sure not to make that mistake in

life; go the sure way. The surest way is to develop a higher, nobler and more sublime attitude to life; then all the positive samskaras will follow. All will be transformed in the course of time.

One does not have to kill the samskaras; one does not have to destroy the base of one's existence. This is a destructive way. Rather one should remove the vasanas, the latent desires and passions. It is not possible to destroy samskaras and exhaust karma! I cannot do it, so I am moving along with my demons. A person should have good samskaras in order to overcome the negative ones, because the law is that positive overcomes negative. When a person develops positive karma, positive attitudes and positive qualities in his body, speech, mind and emotions, the negative will naturally be weeded out.

What are the methods to remove samskaras?

Swami Satyananda: There are some forms of karma which can be managed well. It is important that one works out one's karma, otherwise evolution is incomplete. Many ways have been suggested to work out the samskaras. The most important way is expressing and living them. Karma has to be lived and worked out, whether it is good or bad. There is no way of avoiding it.

The karmas are unalterable, like seeds. When they fall from the tree, they sprout. By performing karmas one exhausts samskaras, and the accumulated karmas in the deep layers of consciousness, known as *karmashaya*, are destroyed. Working out one's karma means fulfilment of the obligations of man's nature and reality. By becoming a swami I am working out my karma. In the same way, everybody is working out their karma through their present incarnation.

The life of a householder was designed not merely to enjoy, not merely to while away time, but in order to work out the rajasic and tamasic properties of nature. A householder has the opportunity of expressing, releasing and working out his karmas in the form of passions, desires and ambitions, as

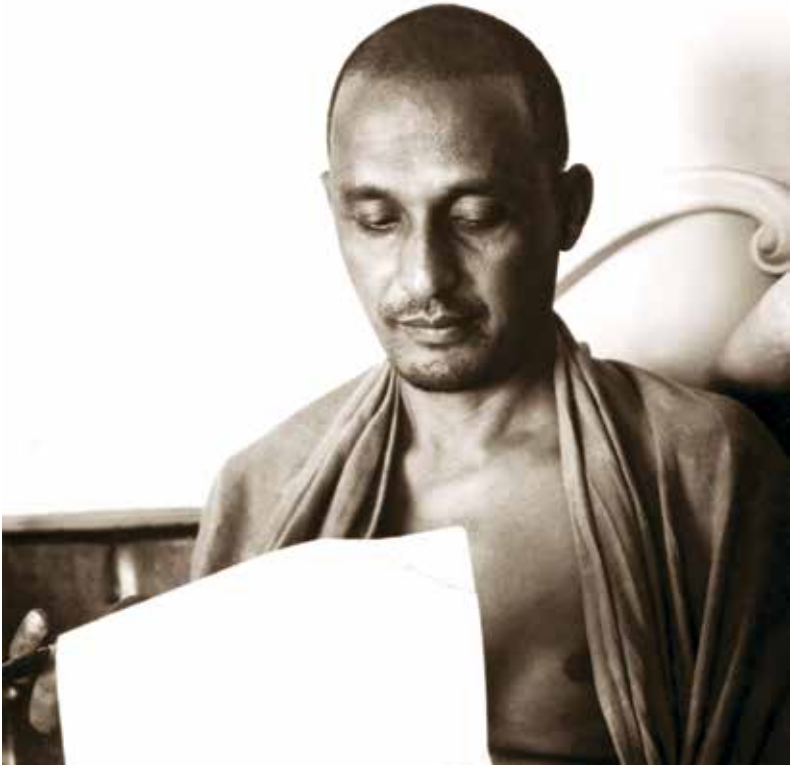
well as experiencing the agonies, happiness, fears, frustration, hatred, jealousy and thousands of other traits that belong to the lower mind, to tamoguna and rajoguna. The lower nature, in the form of *tamas* and *rajas*, is released through this association with the objects of the world. Through the involvement of one's ego with every situation, person and experience in life, the lower, dormant nature comes out. Therefore, be involved in everything and by the involvement of ego with many events in life, work out the karmas.

It must be remembered that without working out these crude and gross karmas, one cannot experience the light that is within. First clean the mirror, then the face can be seen; clean the globe of the bulb and then the light will shine through. Thus, within a person the dross has to be cleaned, and that is the purpose of *grihastha*, or householder ashrama.

The second way the karmas can be worked out is by going deep into meditation: *pratyahara*, *dharana* or *dhyana*, and expressing or transforming those *samskaras* in the form of visions. In the stages of *pratyahara* and *dharana* a lot of visions and feelings are experienced. This means one has not lost the individual ego. One is still at the level of duality. These experiences in meditation are only a transformed vision of one's *samskara*. One is expressing the *samskara* in that form. This can happen in the state of *pratyahara*, *dharana*, *dhyana* or in the early stages of *samadhi*. The deeper one goes, the greater is the fixing process of the *samskara*. These are the two important methods.

The third method is to voluntarily impose some sort of hardship upon oneself. By exposing oneself to any kind of hardship, the whole mind gets a jolt and all kinds of things come out of it. The mind begins to express itself during the period one is imposing the hardship. These hardships are known as *tapasya*, penance. This is a negative process, so side by side, positive *samskaras* should be added.

The fourth method which brings out karma is karma yoga. Karma means 'action'. In the day-to-day life, the actions



to which one is exposed are necessary for one's evolution. Therefore, seventy percent of one's life must be karma yoga. Serving the guru, serving the poor, working without any selfish motive, are also very important paths for the exhaustion of karma. This is karma yoga.

Asana, pranayama, ajapa japa, nada yoga and the other practices of yoga help to rid the mind of the accumulated samskaras, impressions and unconscious memories. No matter which yoga one practises, the toxic matter of life is going to come out: thousands of patterns of experiences, unworked karmas, suppressed emotions and everything else that is there, desirable and undesirable, necessary and unnecessary, horrible and wonderful. The chitta is a storehouse of cosmic knowledge; it is a treasure trove.

The Witness

From Living Shankara, Swami Yogakanti Saraswati

In the *Upadesha Sahasri* (18:36) Shankara disagrees with the Buddhist theory of the temporal gap – that what we call the individual soul is only a momentary consciousness of the present moment, and there is no separate witnessing consciousness that persists from the beginning to the end of momentary phenomena (and beyond).

This is a very interesting point on the nature of consciousness. By claiming that consciousness can transcend the brain and personality, Vedanta foreshadows the discoveries of Oliver Sacks, a leading scientist in the field of neuropsychology. His researches into degenerative brain diseases such as Parkinson's indicate that there is a 'witness' to the breakdown of brain function which can stay intact throughout the process. Sacks writes that while he was studying how the nervous system is organized at the level of primitive, subcortical behaviours and controls, he was overwhelmingly confronted by the responses of his patients to the ongoing breakdown of their mental processes. He speaks of their heroic struggle to adapt and survive as their external and internal worlds collapsed. For him, this became the real focus of his work and the study – how they struggled to maintain their identity while different levels of 'reality' collapsed around them:

... it was, by virtue of the enormous range of disturbances occurring at every level of the nervous system, a disorder that could show, far better than any other, how the nervous system was organized, how brain and behaviour, at their more primitive levels, worked . . . But then, over and above the disorder and its direct effects, were all the responses of the patients to their sickness – so what confronted one, what one studied,









was not just disease or physiology, but people, struggling to adapt and survive . . . Through them I would explore what it was like to be human, to stay human, in the face of unimaginable adversities and threats. Thus, while continually monitoring their organic nature – their complex, ever-changing pathophysiologicals and biologies – my central study and concern became identity – their struggle to maintain identity.¹

Like Sacks with his patients, Shankara is totally absorbed in the effort his disciples must make to regain and maintain their identity – which for him implies realization of Brahman, the ever-expanding consciousness. It is a one-pointed flight through the matrix of different levels of consciousness by constantly identifying with the Witness. In *Upadesha Sahasri* (18:83) he writes:

The non-conscious intellect appears to be conscious, and its modifications also, like sparks of red-hot iron. But one's knowledge of the appearance and disappearance of the mental modifications is only possible because of the (continuous) witness – and it is through this reflection of the witness that the intellect may know itself to be Brahman.

Neuroplasticity and sadhana

The new concept of neuroplasticity helps one recognize the aptness of Shankara's description of the relationship between brain, awareness and consciousness. Although for some years science argued that mind was a result of the brain, experiments on animals and humans have now shown the brain as being a tool of consciousness. The brain can actually be shaped by how we direct our awareness; it is not only shaped by genetics.

¹ Oliver Sacks, *Awakenings*, Picador, Pan, London, UK, rev ed 1991, p. xxviii–xxvix

Neuroplasticity means the brain is not totally 'hardwired' from birth. We can, ourselves, affect the conditioning of the brain and nervous system at a molecular level because new areas of the brain can be assigned to new perceptual or motor tasks by repeating an activity for a long time. For this neuroplasticity to happen in experimental situations, however, sustained awareness or attention is indispensable. And we should note that for yoga sadhana or for meditation to 'happen', sustained awareness or attention is also indispensable.

Sharon Begley refers to Mike Merzenich's experiments in 1996 with monkeys who received repeated stimulation of their fingertips while music was played.² Some monkeys were taught to pay attention to music, some to the tactile sensation. As a result, different parts of the brain developed, with an expansion up to three times, either in the auditory cortex or in the somatosensory cortex, according to where attention was trained. Such experiments prove that one's attention directly affects the activities of the neurons in the brain, resulting in physical changes in the structure and capability of the nervous system. Her assertion that we therefore 'choose' from moment to moment what the ongoing form of our own mind will be is an interesting scientific validation of the teaching of Buddha, Shankara, and the living gurus of today.

It gives new insight into why Patanjali stressed *abhyasa*, extended unbroken practice for a long time, with respect (attention), and why Shankara placed such emphasis on the need for *nididhyasana*, the relentless repetition of the practice of meditation.

The recognition of neuroplasticity focuses attention on the need to leave the once-accepted hypothesis that the brain creates consciousness or mind, and demonstrates that it is a reciprocal process, or even the other way round. If the brain is like a laptop, consciousness is like the internet. The brain

² Sharon Begley, *Train Your Mind, Change Your Brain*, Ballentine Books, New York, USA, 2007, pp. 158 & 159

is controlled by physical-electrical circuits, enclosed by DNA and conditioning, but the number of dendrites, and the myelin sheathing which speeds up some neuronal channels and affects our habit patterns, moods, perceptions and responses is shaped by life experiences. So, new software and motherboards can be added, and one can download from an ever-expanding source: consciousness.

The 'discovery' of neuronal plasticity can be used to argue that the personality is mechanical, but the core identity can witness the personality inherited, the conditioning received, the breakdown of it and its evolution – even, it is claimed by adepts – through death and rebirth.



People are now writing books about re-wiring the brain and neuroplasticity, yet the understanding of neuroplasticity and re-wiring the brain has been there in the pranic science of yoga, specifically in regard to mudras.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Sadhana

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



In order to cultivate spiritual awareness, one must move from *tamas* to *sattwa*. This is the definition given of spiritual awareness, of spiritual realization. Identify not with the changing and craving nature of the mind but with the pure, luminous and peaceful nature of the mind. The journey from *tamas* to *sattwa* is the spiritual journey. This is the essence; this is the secret of spiritual life.

The process which takes you from *tamas* to *sattwa* has a name, and that is *sadhana*. Generally, when we use the word '*sadhana*', people identify it with a spiritual discipline, a spiritual practice. However, *sadhana* means attainment of perfection in that which you do.

It is mental training that allows one to discipline the mind and, after that discipline, to embark on the path of *sadhana*. The management of the mind and entry into *sadhana* begins with the cultivation of mental awareness and by knowing, "What is my mood at present? How is that mood or mental condition making me behave, act and respond? Is it an appropriate response or inappropriate? Is it a positive interaction or negative?" This understanding has to come first. When one knows how the mind responds, certain disciplines can begin to be incorporated into the mental behaviour; through discipline, the patterns of thought, the patterns of expression and the patterns of understanding can be changed.

Dream Intuition

From Philosophy of Dreams, Swami Sivananda Saraswati

“He who is happy within, who rejoices within, and who is illumined within, that yogi attains absolute freedom or *moksha*, himself becoming Brahman.” (*Bhagavad Gita*, 5:24.) The highest spiritual knowledge is knowledge of the Self. He who has known himself, rather his self, for him nothing remains to be known. The wisest of the western philosophers Socrates, gave the highest and the best of his teachings to his disciples in the injunction ‘Know Thy Self’. The Indian saints likewise gave their highest teaching in the form known as *adhyatma-vidya* or self-knowledge.

Know Thy Self

Knowledge of the Self, which has been called the supreme knowledge by the wise men of all ages, has seldom been recognized as a mystery by the ordinary man. He seems to know himself so well that he does not think it even necessary to reflect upon himself. Not only does the uneducated illiterate person think it useless to reflect upon himself, but the highly cultured modern man also thinks in the same way. The greater the advancement of science and learning, the less we find in the modern man a desire to know himself.

There are two opposite reasons that lead a man not to reflect upon himself: first, he thinks that he knows the self too well, secondly he thinks it useless to think about himself, because the true nature of the self can never be known. Some think that thinking about oneself is a morbid mentality. This is a form of introversion from which one has to free oneself as soon as possible. The study of dreams is corrective to such an erroneous view.

There was a time when psychologists thought, the less we thought about our dreams, the better. The psychologists who

take consciousness to be an epi-phenomenon still hold the same view. Seashore, for instance, thinks that it is only abnormal people who think too much of their dreams, and that thinking too much about dreams leads to abnormalities. There is much in the waking life to be attended to and he who spends his time in thinking about his dreams is missing so much of his waking life and this contributes to his own failure in life.

Now psychology, however, has changed this point of view. It shows that deepest wisdom comes through reflection on dreams. No one has known himself truly, who has not studied his dreams. The study of dreams at once shows what a great mystery our soul is, and that this mystery is not altogether insoluble, as some metaphysicians supposed. Dreams reveal to us that aspect of our nature which transcends rational knowledge. That in the most rational and moral man there is an aspect of his being which is absurd and immoral, one knows only through the study of one's dreams. All our pride of nationality and morality melts into nothingness as soon as we reflect upon our dreams.

Beyond logic

There is logic in our dreams or rather the logic of our waking consciousness is just like the dream logic. The great philosopher Hegel constructed his logic without taking into account what the dream logic has to reveal. Now logic, which at the same time claims to be a system of metaphysics, cannot be complete without taking into account the absurd constructions of dream experience. Logic is only a tool of intellect, which enables it to deal with the waking experience alone. This fact is revealed to us through the study of our dreams. The real must transcend all logical categories; or the categories by which it can be comprehended have to be such as will not only suffice to catch the waking experience but the dream experience too. This simply means that it should be broad enough to comprehend both the conscious and the unconscious life of a man. To conceive of such a category cannot be the work of waking



consciousness. Such a category must necessarily transcend both the waking and the dream consciousness. Thus we are led to the necessity of intuition or a logical thought to comprehend Reality, when we begin reflecting upon our dreams.

The modern study of dreams shows that they are not meaningless presentations. Every dream presentation has a meaning. A dream is like a letter written in an unknown language. To a man who does not know Chinese, a letter written in that language is a meaningless scroll. But to one who knows that language it is full of most valuable information. It may be the letter calls for immediate action; or it may contain words of consultation to one suffering from dejection. It may be a letter of threat or it may speak of love. These meanings are there only to one who would care to attend to the letter and would try to decipher it. But alas! How few of us try to understand these messages from the deep unseen ocean of our own Consciousness!

Why do we dream?

Various answers have been given to this question. According to the most popular scientific view, dreams are nothing but a repetition of our waking experiences in a new form. A more

thoughtful view regards them as productions of an organic disturbance somewhere in the body, but more particularly in the stomach. To this view medical men stick more tenaciously than any other people. Sometimes coming diseases appear in dreams. During an illness dreams are generally more horrible than they are in the healthy condition of the body. These are all scientific theories of dreams. We have here out of account the unscientific theories that dreams are premonitions or that gods or demons or spirits produce dreams, or that the soul goes out to a sojourn in dreams etc.

The scientific theories have been very thoroughly exposed by Dr Sigmund Freud in his *Interpretation of Dreams*. No physical stimulus, whether it is inside or outside the body, no experience of the waking or sleeping state can explain the presentation of the actual dream content. The same stimulus, namely the chime of an alarm timepiece produced three different kinds of dreams to Hidetrant at different times. Why should it be so if the physical stimulus alone is responsible for the production of dreams?

According to Freud all dreams, without any exception, are wish fulfilment. The wishes are actually of an immoral nature. They are revolting to the moral self, which exercises a control on their appearance. Hence to evade this moral censor the wishes appear in disguised forms. The dream mechanism is very intricate. Very few dreams present the wishes as they really are. Dreams are partial gratification of the wishes. They relieve the mental tension, and thus enable us to enjoy repose. They are safety valves to strong impulses. Dreams do not disturb sleep but rather protect it. The irrationality and the immorality of dreams make the morality and rationality of our waking life possible.

The above statement of Freud shows that we know our animal self in dream. But he does not say anything about the spiritual life being expressed in dream. This, it seems, has been done by Jung. According to Jung, a dream is not causally determined as was supposed by Freud, but it is teleologically

determined. The repressed wishes alone do not explain all our dreams. A dream presents a demand to our waking consciousness. If rightly interpreted, it shows the way to be at peace with ourselves. The dreams of the neurotics not only reveal the repressed contents but they also suggest remedies for the cure. A series of dreams sometimes occur to a patient, which reveal the way to cure.

The dream consciousness is superior to the waking consciousness in many respects. Many puzzles of life are solved through hints from dreams. All dreams, according to Adler, are anticipatory in character. They show which way the spiritual life of a man is flowing. To know the actual flow is necessary to correct possible errors. Dreams help us to discover the lifeline of the individual and help us to give him proper advice for self-correction.

Thus, through dreams one may know how one ought to act in a particular situation. The dreams point out a path unknown to the waking consciousness. Saints and sages appear in dreams at times of difficulty and show the way. The more one follows the dream intuitions, the clearer they become.

Song of Dream - Antarai

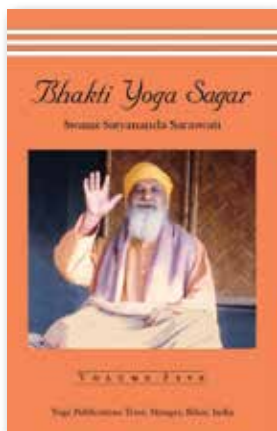
When you perceive the things in Dream
You take them all to be real,
When you wake up and perceive
They are all false and unreal. (Guru Guru)

The world of name and forms is like
The dream you have during the night,
You take them all as real things,
But they are only false and transient. (Guru Guru)

The only one which really exists
Is that God with Brahmic Splendour
Wake up, wake up, wake up to Light,
Wake up, wake up, from Maya's sleep,
And see the things in their proper light. (Guru Guru)

Be Honest With Yourself

From Bhakti Yoga Sagar, Volume Five, Swami Satyananda Saraswati



In the practical side of spiritual life, you have to deal with the mind. In order to deal with the mind, you must know where you are starting from. If you suddenly begin practising kundalini yoga, you will fail. If you want to go to school, which class you join will depend on what you have studied previously. If you have not even passed primary class, you cannot go to university. The lecturer will not be able to explain anything to you, nor will you be able to understand him. So there is no use practising kundalini yoga, swara yoga or other different yogas unless you have examined yourself completely, and in order to examine yourself you have to be honest.

Accept the mirror

You have never seen yourself. You can only see your face with the help of a reflecting medium, either a mirror or calm water. So, first you have to know who you are. Do not say, "I am atma, I am God, I am Brahman, I am immortal." Say, "I am a rascal," and find out if you are or not. Tulsidas has written, "Who can be a greater cheat or a more crooked, wicked rascal and degenerate than myself?" First accept yourself and find out who you are. There are



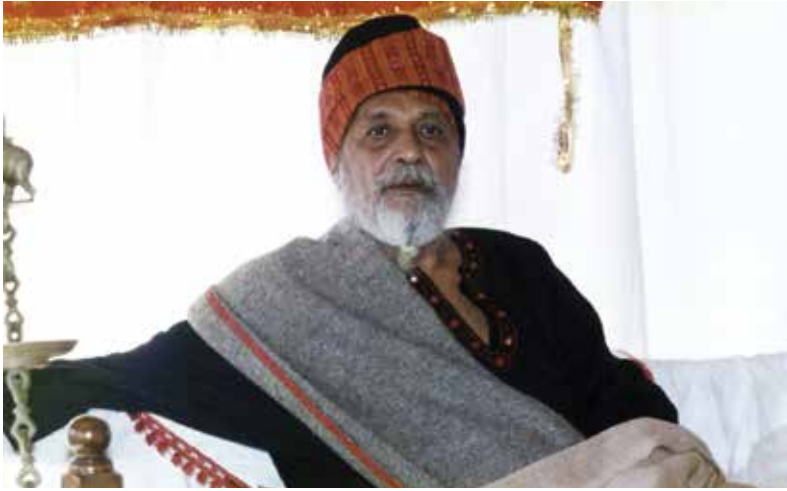
many methods to do this, not just one. You need a mirror. A person who criticizes you is your mirror because he tells you something. He may be a broken mirror, but that doesn't matter. At least he can tell you what your complexion is, so never despise a critic.

Either way, a person should neither despise nor shun criticism. A culture should not despise critics. A nation, a committee, or a community of people should always appreciate criticism. Sometimes it is positive and at other times it is negative, but nevertheless criticism is a mirror. If your husband criticizes you, don't defend yourself, and if your wife tells you off, don't be aggressive. If you react, then later, when you are alone, think about what was said. Maybe she was right, maybe he was right. In spiritual life it is important never to underrate the criticism of others.

So how can you know yourself? By self-investigation and self-introspection, *atmachintan*, by cogitating about yourself, and *atmavichara*, thinking about yourself. You never do it. Instead you say, "Oh, I am great, I am the best person in the whole world. If I were Prime Minister I would have done this and that." I heard that from the mouth of a beggar once, when I was living in the beggars' huts in Benares. Now I remember how big man's ego is. How big is man's ego? How unbreakable is the shell? It is like the castle of Tripurasura.

Three bodies of consciousness

Do you know the story about the castle of Tripurasura which Lord Shiva had to destroy? *Tri* means 'three', *pura* means 'citadel', *asura* means 'demon'. The story goes that the demon ruler of the three cities, Tripurasura, was very afraid of Shiva, so he secured himself by hiding in a city which was like a fort with several boundaries. First was a silver fort with silver boundaries, then golden boundaries and then steel boundaries. This concept of the demon of the three cities is metaphorical because Tripurasura also denotes the three bodies that we are made up of. I am not speaking in relation to matter, I am



speaking in relation to consciousness. You have a gross body, which means there is consciousness of the gross body, a subtle body, which means there is consciousness of the subtle body, and a causal body, which means there is consciousness of the causal body.

If you close your eyes right now, you are aware of your body. This is consciousness of the physical body, *sthula sharira*, or the gross body, comprised of the five senses of action and the five senses of knowledge. Then comes the *sukshma sharira*, the subtle body, where the mind, consciousness, ego, manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara interact. You cannot see the subtle body, but you can feel it. You know that you have memory, that you can think, discriminate, recognize, identify, permute and combine. That mind is the *antahkarana*, *antah* meaning 'internal' and *karana* meaning 'instrument'. This internal instrument is the *sukshma sharira*.

Exploding the nucleus

When you are awake, you are aware of time, space and object, but when you go to sleep at night, for six or eight hours, you are not at all aware; you are disconnected from it. The concept of time, space and object is not just philosophical, it is also a



concept in modern nuclear physics. Time, space and object is the formula for nuclear explosions; the scientific philosophy of time and space meeting at one point, which is the nucleus. That is why it is called the nuclear bomb. Just as you can explode the nucleus of matter if you know the formula, in the same way, you can also explode the nucleus of pure energy, which is the mind.

So, there comes a point when you are certainly there, but you are not aware of time, space and object, and there is the continuity of your existence from the point when you fall asleep until the point when you wake up. When I ask, "How did you sleep?" you reply, "Very well." How do you know you slept very well when you did not know anything? Just think about it. It means that you were aware at that time when you did not know anything. That awareness of non-knowledge is called *karana sharira*, the causal body, where consciousness operates at the fringe. There is minimum self-awareness. This causal body is composed of total tamoguna. So, you have awareness of three bodies, the gross, subtle and causal.

– 30 November 1997, Rikhiapeeth

Sanyam – Balanced Personality

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Sanyam is usually defined as restraint in English, but restraint does not convey the exact meaning. The word 'sanyam' is composed of the two Sanskrit roots 'sam' and 'yam'. *Yam* is like *yama* in the *Yoga Sutras* – a state of mind which you hold and are able to cultivate and develop. *Sam* means total – the total personality, the total expression, the total behaviour, all the dimensions of human nature. So *sanyam* literally means that all the dimensions of the human personality are taken through a process of transformation and beautification, and that state is maintained and developed.

Sanyam works at various levels: first the sensorial level, second the mental level, and then at the psychic and spiritual levels. Sanyam, or the process of transformation, applies to each and every expression in life, including behaviour, attitude, speech and thought.

What is the purpose of sanyam? The psychoanalysts of the past and modern ages have described different states of consciousness. The mind is the interactive consciousness, the surface of consciousness. There are further classifications according to the intensity of experience: conscious, *jagrat*, subconscious, *swapna*, and unconscious, *sushupti*. But what is the conscious mind, what is the subconscious mind and what is the unconscious mind?

Conscious mind

We can describe the experience of *jagrat* and how one responds to the activities of the conscious mind. Right now you are outside and there is light everywhere, everything is illuminated. You can see as far as you want to see; there are no obstructions in the way – that is the conscious dimension. However, you cannot be aware of the entire conscious dimension at the same time, just as you cannot be aware of your total surroundings or environment at the same time. You don't know what is happening behind you, yet you are not sleeping. You don't know what is happening beside you, yet your eyes are open. You don't know what is happening below you, yet you are aware. So where is the focus?

Here is an example. You are looking at me, the torch light of your attention is on me, yet many things are happening around you. There is the sound of birds singing and the noise of cars and music. There are objects, trees, flowers and buildings around you and behind you. You know they exist, but if you want to bring them into focus, then you have to consciously listen to them or look at them. The focus, the torchlight of consciousness, is awareness, attention. If you look somewhere, the consciousness shifts. You are awake, you are not sleeping,

you are not dreaming or fantasizing, but if you simply look away, the focus shifts. So even in the conscious dimension, our awareness is limited to the present experience that the senses are attached to. Our senses have their own limitations; they cannot be aware of the entire creation all at the same time. You can look either north, east, south or west, but not in all four directions simultaneously. That is the nature of jagrat consciousness. Everything is illuminated yet the focus of awareness is only on one object, which is highlighted due to its involvement with the senses.

What happens in this process? While you are watching that building, someone behind you gets out a gun and takes aim at you. The same thing happens in the mind too. All these various expectations and ambitions which you can't face develop. They manifest while you are looking the other way. You don't even know where they have come from, but suddenly you find yourself confronting that obsessive passion, that obsessive aggression, for no apparent rhyme or reason. One minute ago you were at peace with yourself and one minute later you are disturbed. All this play happens in jagrat, the conscious level.

Subconscious

What is swapna, the subconscious? Inside the building there is light, but no direct sunlight. It is dim, and if you need to work there, you turn on the light. The light in each area of the building illuminates a particular area only. The subconscious is like the conscious mind, but instead of being fully illuminated by the all-pervasive sunlight, it is now illuminated in parts by individual bulbs which represent the memory, the impressions, the thoughts, ambitions, strengths, weaknesses, desires and passions. All these areas are being illuminated independently, not by homogeneous lighting, but by individual bulbs which only illuminate that particular area. So when you go to swapna, it is neither bright nor dark. Each bulb represents an individual experience, memory or quality. That is the subconscious.



Unconscious

The characteristic of the unconscious is absence of light, absence of awareness, absence of knowledge or experience. Everything exists, but there is no connection, no relationship, just as the colours and forms of trees and flowers exist at night, but you don't see them. Everything continues to exist, waiting for the light to shine. This is the unconscious.

The activities and contents of the conscious, subconscious and unconscious are reflected in our life and in our character. In each the limited conditioned nature is tamasic. The purpose of sanyam is to transform these tamasic states of consciousness which at present are focused only on association between the senses and the object, so we can derive the appropriate wisdom and experience.

If you want to generate electricity from a flowing river, first you need to contain the flow by building a dam which holds it, lets it build up and gradually, in a controlled manner, allows it to pass through an outlet with force, thus creating another

type of power, hydroelectric power. You are not drying up the entire river bed, but you are ensuring that the normal flow in the river becomes the cause of a greater energy source for a particular purpose. This controlled and guided action is known as sanyam.

Managing the senses

The practice of sanyam is firstly sensorial. The association with the senses – taste, visual and tactile impressions, smells, sounds – has to be curbed because it is the senses that give birth to cravings and desires. The eyes look at a flower. They recognize and appreciate the beauty, the colour, the smell. Suddenly a desire comes: “It’s beautiful, I want it!” It is natural for this desire to come up. But this desire has two parts: the first part is recognizing that the flower is beautiful, the second part is wanting to possess it. The association of the sense organs with the object has given birth to a desire to possess it. The beauty was seen by the eyes, but the idea of possession came after the beauty was appreciated by the mind. This applies to everything – luxuries, houses, cars, stereo sets, TV sets, boyfriends, girlfriends, everything comes in this purview – and then emotional and intellectual responses are evoked.

Managing these emotional responses is the next item of sanyam. If you stop at the point where you say, “The flower is beautiful,” that is sanyam. If you bring in the second part, “I wish to possess it,” then it is no longer sanyam, it becomes *swartha*, selfishness. Sanyam is appreciation of beauty; *swartha* is the desire to possess it. Sensorial sanyam has to come first. There is nothing wrong with a desire for pizza, but if you think about it every day, the desire becomes an obsession. So first the senses have to be managed through sanyam.

Managing the instincts

After the senses, the four instincts: *ahara*, craving for fulfilment and satisfaction; *nidra*, craving for relaxation, sleep and comfort; *bhaya*, insecurities and fears; and *maithuna*, sensual

passions, have to be managed through sanyam. We become so caught up in our own instinct-generated thoughts that we bind ourselves to different ideas, objects, environments and climates, both external and internal. If we can learn not to bind ourselves through the tiny proddings and associations of the instincts, then a lot of mental and psychological problems can be solved.

One simple idea can become an obsession and become so powerful that it can change your mental attitude and behaviour completely. This is known as instinct and often there is no conscious control over it. Many people's behaviour is compulsive; they are compelled to behave in a certain manner. Some people can't live without being negative; they will always find a way to pass a snide remark, yet they don't realize they have done so. This absence of awareness of one's own actions, behaviour and attitude is also changed by sanyam.

Sanyam – food for the soul

It can be said that food is required for the body, pleasure for the mind and sanyam for the soul or *atma*. The body cannot survive for long without food. Food nourishes and vitalizes the body, and therefore we exist. Food creates prana, which maintains the physical structure. If you don't eat, the prana will gradually become depleted, the vitality will go and the body will become weak and sick.

Pleasure plays the same role for the mind. If one is continually under pressure and tension, the mind gets bogged down in a very black state from which it cannot extract itself. To remove that state, pleasure is necessary. It refreshes the mind, it refreshes the mental pranas. If you read a good book, the mind changes. If you watch a good movie, play, joke and laugh, there is a temporary shift. These temporary shifts take the mind away from its areas of frustration and anxiety, and revitalize it.

Sanyam plays the same role for the soul. The soul is an energy. It is a shakti like the mind is a shakti. But it is more

subtle than the mind. The body is the gross manifest form of this shakti, the mind is the subtle form of this shakti, and the spirit is the causal form of this shakti. But are we looking at the body and mind and ignoring the soul?

We take care of the body and mind because we identify with them, and they are more visible, tangible and understandable. But the spirit is the real self within us, and that energy becomes affected by the states of the mind and the body. The only way to release the energy of the spirit is through sanyam. In this context, sanyam means to hold a balanced attitude so that the instincts, obsessive desires and dim, unlit areas of the psyche that drag us away from expressions of the heart or soul can no longer distract us. We restrain selfish impressions that the mind or the senses would naturally gravitate towards. In this way sanyam helps realign the consciousness so we express the energies of *atma*, the soul.

The body, mind, emotions and spirit have to be seen as one unit. In this way we can understand how to reach the dimension of the spirit by using the body and mind to express compassion and love, the language of the heart.

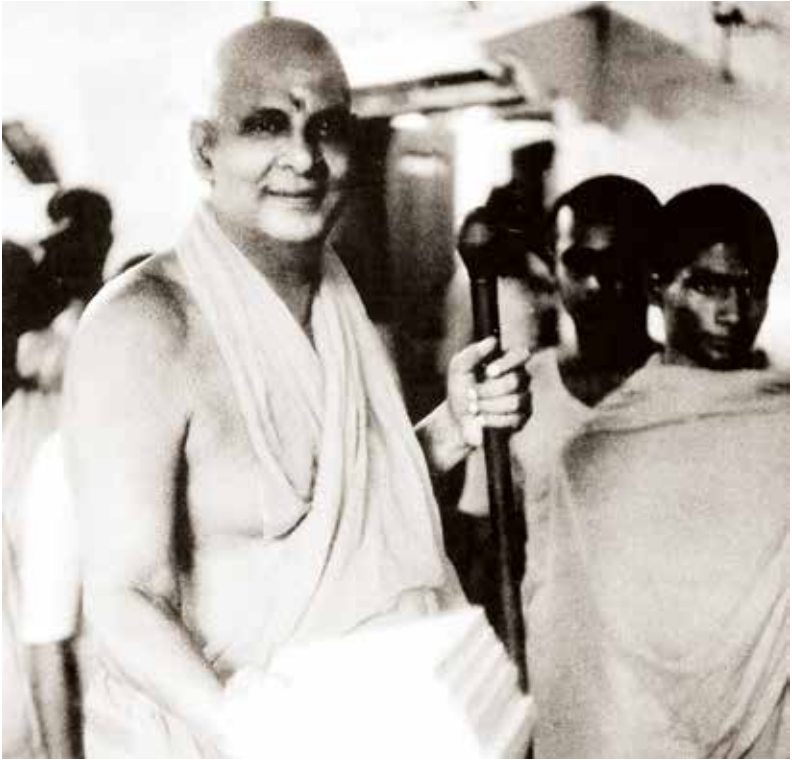
Sanyam in itself is a complete sadhana that can take a whole lifetime to perfect. You can perfect any posture in one month. You can learn kriya and kundalini yoga and have good experiences in six months. But to master sanyam can take a whole lifetime of persisting every day, fine-tuning the radio of the head, fine-tuning the radio of the emotions and fine-tuning the radio of the sensorial experiences.

Real yoga is sanyam, not asana, pranayama and meditation, because sanyam transforms and beautifies the entire dimension of the human personality. Asana, pranayama and meditation are only pastimes, fun and games, ways to enjoy life, but real yoga is sanyam.

– Printed in YOGA Vol. 4, Issue 5 (May 2005)

Goodness – the Medium to Perfection

From May I Answer That, Swami Sivananda Saraswati



What standards should be adopted to measure true greatness?

The true greatness of man is to be measured not by the amount of wealth nor by the number of bungalows which are had or by the exercise of personal influence, but by the degree of selflessness, all-embracing outlook, generosity, liberal views, cosmic benefaction, self-sacrifice, egoless, self-effacing nature, grade of perception of unity in diversity, humanitarian services, etc. A truly great man is pious, spiritually elevated,

magnanimous and noble-hearted. He can never have a thought for himself and he ever prefers the welfare of humanity casting aside all petty, selfish and personal interests. He ever prays for the welfare of humanity. Where there is an open, unrestricted, expansive and large heart, there lies true greatness.

Who is a righteous man?

A righteous man is he who is pure in thought, word and deed and who observes yama and niyama to the very letter. He never moves astray for the sake of paltry gains and selfish ends. He is ever pious, God-fearing, self-centered and selfless. He has cosmic vision and a broad outlook. He is equanimous and tolerant towards all. He is a mine of all virtues like charity, nobility, sincerity, humility, renunciation, serenity, simplicity and so on. No egoism, no lust, no greed, no crooked-mindedness, no vanity can find a place in him. The righteous man is ever the object of adoration of all. There will be no enemies to him at all, for he loves all friends and foes equally.

My experience has made me conclude that goodness does not always pay in our dealings with people. Then what is the use of being good and doing good when goodness is not recognized and properly rewarded? Please illumine.

Whether goodness pays you well or not from the material standpoint, do good and be good always. No doubt the worldly-minded generally take advantage of such people as ideal gullibles to carry their wishes through and even to deceive. It matters nothing, for the Lord is always on the side of the good and the righteous who stick to dharma and who rely on Him. No man is to be considered good without the virtue of piety or God-fearing nature. Goodness and piety go together.

The good man is always the spiritually-inclined, though he is in the world. He is unlike the *vyavaharic purusha*, the practical person. To be good is to increase the purity and devotion unto the Lord in abundant measure. To do good is to reap good in return. If a good action is done, a sweet fruit in favour of you

arises with the result that you enjoy it whether you want it or not. If a bad action is done, the consequent fruit of action liable to be enjoyed willingly or unwillingly will be bitter and against you.

Whether goodness is recognized or not, do good and be good throughout life. This alone pays you well to attain chitta shuddhi and knowledge of the Self. Only those who have no knowledge of the Self, i.e. the worldly-inclined, do not recognize good as a medium of perfection through gradual evolution. Not so is the case with the spiritual-minded, for they know full well that to do good and to be good help them gain the goal of life, viz. God-realization.

Remember that the Lord does recognize and reward always the good people and good actions. He actually lives and moves in them. The good man actually feels the Lord's presence in himself and around without a vestige of doubt. It is a mockery for a man to consider himself good without being able to be conscious of God's presence in him, with him and around him. Do not question the benefit of being good and doing good when goodness is not recognized or properly rewarded, for to work alone man has the right and not to the fruits good or bad thereof.





Dakshina

There is nothing that heaven does not protect,
There is nothing that earth does not sustain
And there is nothing that does not dissolve
In the fullness of time,
But consciousness.

In truth we are all interwoven
And life and death are simply one thread,
One line seen from opposite ends.
In reaping, the plant's death gives life,
For we sacrifice what is conscious and alive
In the pure gifts of earth
To nourish the higher life
And purer consciousness of mankind.
Holy Mother, Shakti, cherishes all
And provides for each
The sustenance that is fitting.
The forces of heaven and earth nourish all
And it is in harmony with dharma
That where there is excess it shall be taken
To make good what is deficient;
That the thirsting mouth shall be quenched
And the outstretched, empty hand shall be filled.
By sharing earth's bounty in the spirit of ahimsa,
Both body and soul will be abundantly satisfied.

He who pursues the path of yoga
Takes what in himself is excessive
And places it in the service of humanity
As dakshina to Shiva.
Thus he preserves his body and fulfils his life
In blissful communion with the Supreme.

—Swami Satyananda Saraswati



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Kriya Yoga Yatra 1

Understanding Pratyahara Kriyas

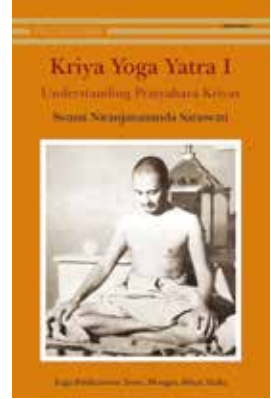
Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

57 pp, soft cover, ISBN: 978-93-84753-39-9

At the World Yoga Convention held in 2013, Swami Niranjanananda announced: "The first chapter of yoga propagation is over. Now the second chapter begins, which is focused on consolidation of yoga and better application of yoga, with sincerity, seriousness and commitment."

In writing the second chapter, a complete change in the training programs at Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth has come about since 2016. Among these programs was Kriya Yoga – Preparatory, during which the focus was on understanding and practising the first group of kriyas, the pratyahara kriyas.

This book presents the satsangs given by Swami Niranjanananda during the program.



New

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Satyam Yoga Prasad

Available at www.satyamyogaprasad.net and as apps for Android and iOS devices.

The collected publications of Swami Satyananda and Swami Niranjanananda are being presented online on the occasion of the Munger Yoga Symposium.

Bihar Yoga Wiki

www.yogawiki.org

An online encyclopaedia of the Bihar Yoga system was launched on the occasion of the Munger Yoga Symposium 2018 with an aim to make the yogic teachings available to all in an accessible and easily understood way.

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Yoga Peeth Events & Yoga Vidya Training 2019

<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 Ramacharitamans

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