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Hari Om

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GUIDELINES FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

Do japa a little

Repetition of any mantra or name of the Lord is known as *japa*. *Japa* is an important *anga*, limb, of *yoga*. *Japa* checks the force of the thought current moving towards objects. It forces the mind to move towards divinity. Whenever the spiritual aspirant shows lack of vigour in his *sadhana*, the *mantra shakti*, power of the mantra, reinforces the *sadhana shakti*, power of practice, of the aspirant. Constant and prolonged repetition of the mantra for some months cuts new grooves in the mind and the brain. Eventually it helps to have *darshan*, vision, of the Supreme Reality.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

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Contents

- 4 The Focus of Yoga
- 6 Discipline
- 8 Harmony and Lifestyle
- 11 Excel
- 12 I am Learning to be Happy (Extracts)
- 18 The Hardest Sadhana
- 21 The Experience of Ant Niranjan
- 31 Lessons in Awareness
- 33 Moment to Moment Yoga
- 39 Full of Joy and Energy
- 40 Learn to Apply
- 42 Krodha
- 47 Hints for Control of Anger
- 49 My Interactions with Sri Aurobindo in Rikhiadham
- 52 God's Name for Kali Yuga
- 53 Attitude Towards Sadhana

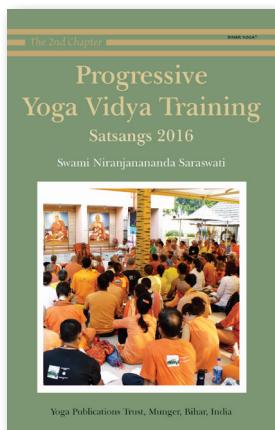


The Yogi is superior to the ascetic. He is deemed superior even to those versed in sacred lore. The Yogi is superior even to those who perform action with some motive. Therefore, Arjuna, do you become a Yogi. (*Bhagavad Gita VI:46*)

तपस्विभ्योऽधिको योगी ज्ञानिभ्योऽपि मर्तोऽधिकः । कर्मिभ्यश्चाधिको योगी तस्माद्योगी भवार्जुन् ॥

The Focus of Yoga

From Progressive Yoga Vidya Training, Satsangs 2016, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Sri Swamiji's aim was not to teach twenty asanas or pranayamas or pratyahara or dharana techniques to people, but to ensure that there is a focus and aim to the practice of yoga. This focus or aim was given by Swami Sivananda himself.

When yoga became popular in the last century, everybody thought that the practices of yoga lead to deeper states of meditation and self-realization. Yet, nowhere in the yogic

literature is it said that yoga will lead to enlightenment. The focus of yoga is not enlightenment, realization, samadhi or moksha. It is management of life, in one simple sentence. This relates to two things specifically, as mentioned in the yogic traditions:

Nasti maya samah pasho.

There is no bigger bondage or noose than maya.

Maya is delusion, and the mind is always in a state of delusion. It is this delusion that has to be removed. That is point one. The second is:

Nasti ahamkarat paro ripuh.

There is no greater adversary in life than your own ego.

Observe how the yogis have played with words here. With two simple words they have defined the purpose of yoga. The delusions of the mind have to be removed and the self-centric nature has to be harmonized. Why does one have a

selfish, aggressive and reactive nature? Due to desires and expectations, which are again expressions of the mind. Thus, two ideas – overcome the delusion and regulate your nature – are the foundation of yoga.

The antidote to these two are wisdom and yoga:

Nasti jnanat paro bandhuh.

There is no greater friend than wisdom, understanding, knowing.

Nasti yogat param balam.

There is no greater force than yoga.

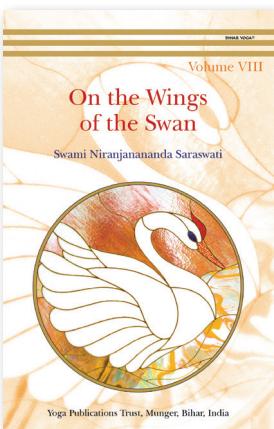
Knowledge, awareness, understanding, and yoga with its aspirations, practices and principles, together become the antidote for maya and selfishness. That is one theory: that the purpose of yoga is to overcome the influences and effects of maya and make you more expansive and peaceful.

– 3 October 2016, Progressive Yoga Vida Training



Discipline

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



Discipline means to become responsible; indiscipline means to become irresponsible. It is as simple as that. If you are responsible and you act in a responsible manner, you are disciplined. If you behave in an irresponsible manner, then naturally you will be labelled as undisciplined. The problem is that people want 'rights'. 'This is my right. That is my right.' People are more aware of their rights and less aware of their responsibility – the basic idea is forgotten. People want rights without responsibility. However, if you become responsible, then naturally you get rights.

Discipline is nothing but being responsible for oneself. Discipline does not mean that you have to act according to this time or that time, within these parameters or limitations, or in this area. All that can change: today you are here, tomorrow you will be some place else. However, if you become responsible for yourself, your development, your wellbeing and your peace, then that responsibility will be seen as a discipline – in action, behaviour, attitude and mentality.

What is responsibility? I do not have to define that. You know what responsibility means. There is a greater sense of responsibility when you feel that you belong. For example, a piece of rubbish has been thrown on the path. Somebody goes and picks it up, and puts it in the rubbish bin. It did not tax anyone; it was a simple act. If you leave the rubbish and wait for somebody else to remove it, are you being responsible? If



somebody tells you, "Please pick up that rubbish," a reaction happens.

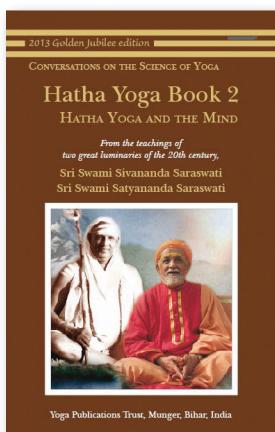
Discipline is not a structured method, system or lifestyle – that in the morning you do this, in the afternoon do this, in the evening do this. Routines change from place to place. In your home you also have a routine, but by following the routine you do not become disciplined; it is by becoming responsible for your development that you become disciplined.

When you are responsible all rights come to you naturally; nobody can deny you any rights. On the other hand, if you want rights and you do not want responsibility, you will struggle with everyone, whether it is your family members or the government. Therefore, take responsibility for your growth and development. That is the best form of discipline, which will also make you free from your own mental hang-ups, reactions and bondages.

– 8 January 2008

Harmony and Lifestyle

From Conversations on the Science of Yoga – Hatha Yoga Book 2,
Hatha Yoga and the Mind



Why is hatha yoga recommended as a system for creating mental harmony?

Swami Satyananda: It is said that when the mind is restless, the prana becomes restless. In the same way, if the prana is agitated, the mind becomes disturbed; therefore, to control the mind and the prana, the same truth can be used.

Those who have strong willpower can control the prana by controlling their mind but those who have no willpower and whose minds are weak and distracted, should control the prana first and thereby bring the mind under control.

Most people find it very difficult to control the mind. Any of the raja yoga techniques may be practised, but for many, it is still not possible to control the mind. When control of the mind is forced, the result may be a headache, heaviness, depression and lethargy. Often people try very hard to concentrate and after this effort a lot of anger is felt. Therefore, one has to find out how to handle the mind and how to handle the prana.

One point must be remembered – that control of the mind and control of prana are not separate, but go hand in hand. Each person has to find out which one he can control more easily. When the mind and prana both come under control, then the awakening of kundalini begins and samadhi expresses itself. It is stated in *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (4:24):

Dugdhaambuvatsammilitaavubhau tau tulyakriyau maanasa- maarutau hi;

Yato maruttatra mana pravrittiryato manashtatra marutpravrittih.

Mind and prana are mixed like milk and water. Both of them are equal in their activities. Where there is pranic movement or activity there is mind (consciousness). Where there is consciousness there is prana.

The mind is difficult to control as it is such a subtle substance, and to control the mind there must be an efficient controlling power. Therefore, start with prana, as pranas are grosser than the mind. Prana can be comprehended, prana can be handled, but one cannot handle the mind. The mind is handling the mind and therefore one cannot depend on it, as the mind which is handling the mind does not cooperate with the person whose mind it is. With prana, however, it is not like that – if the pranas are not ready to cooperate, they can always be manipulated.

How does the hatha yoga lifestyle liberate the mind?

Swami Satyananda: In the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (1:14) it says:

Evanvidhe mathe sthitvaa sarvachintaavivarjitat; Guroopadishtamaargena yogameva samabhyaset.

In this manner, dwelling in the hermitage, being devoid of all thought (excess mentation), yoga should be practised in the way instructed by the guru.

'Dwelling in the hermitage, being devoid of all thought', means that by living in a place of spiritual vibrations the mind is free from unnecessary thoughts cultivated by society and the modern lifestyle. Under normal conditions the mind can never be thoughtless. Yogi Swatmarama is actually saying that the mind should be devoid of all thoughts that are irrelevant to spiritual life. Anxieties and worries caused by family and business should be absent during sadhana, as such disturbances affect one's ability to concentrate. It is a natural tendency of the mind to dwell on past events and to contemplate the future, but this tendency must be controlled.

The mind must be concentrated on the practice at hand and it must be kept in the present. There is a constant and habitual mental chatter which has to be nullified, and for this the practice of *antar mouna*, inner silence, is very useful.

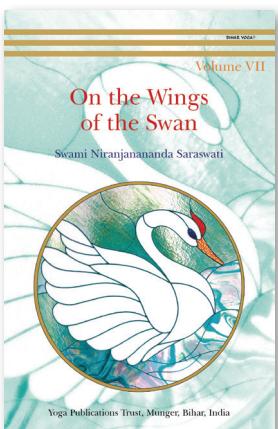
An undisciplined mind is like a boisterous child, telling stories, continually distracting one from sadhana. If one is working in one's study, children are not allowed to come in and create disturbance; the same principle should apply during sadhana practice. When the mind is assailed by unwanted and irrelevant thoughts, cultivate the habit of putting these thoughts aside until later, when the sadhana is finished. This does not mean that those who have no control of the mind are excluded from practising. Few people have real control of their mind. At man's present stage of evolution the mind is weak. However, one has to start somewhere so it is better not to be concerned with mental activities; just do the practices and let the mind do what it likes. If one does not try to constantly block and suppress the mind, it will automatically become obedient and concentrated through the process of sadhana.

In the days of Yogi Swatmarama, people may have been more sattvic by nature. Nowadays people tend to be either tamasic or rajasic. A sattvic person will have a quiet mind and his sadhana will progress unhindered by the *chitta vrittis* or 'mental modifications'. However, a rajasic person will have a very restless and oscillating mind, while a tamasic person will have a dull and lazy mind. Therefore, concessions must be made.

It should also be remembered that in Swatmarama's day, more people were able to devote their whole lives or a considerable portion of their lives to sadhana. It is not possible for people today to leave all their social commitments and simply practise sadhana all day. Few people can even manage to take a month off work to retreat into seclusion for intensive sadhana. This is highly recommended, but if impractical, further lifestyle modifications need to be made. For the average person it is enough to have a room set aside and to devote thirty minutes to sadhana each day.

Excel

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



Yes, there is competition, there is negativity, there is confusion, there is miscommunication, there are conflicts, there are problems; there are many things that happen. The power structures and power plays are there, so those things happen. They have been happening since the time of Adam and Eve and they will continue to happen until the end of the world.

What should one do to manage this situation or this condition? Focus on

your own excellence, and that is it. Nothing more needs to be said. Focus on excellence and try to excel in everything that you do without worrying about other people, without worrying about yourself, without worrying about your ambitions, drives and motivations, for they will be changing all the time. The drive to obtain excellence in everything that you do will ensure that you will always achieve and succeed in life.

— 28 April 2006



I am Learning to be Happy (Extracts)

Maria Carolina Nieto Angel, PhD. Education, University of Canterbury

To my Guru: Swami Niranjananda Saraswati with love and deep gratitude.

This story is about how learning to stay happy helped me to conclude the four-year journey of my PhD between 2014 and 2018. In this journey, I learnt that a PhD is first and foremost an endeavour into the emotional and spiritual dimensions of the self, rather than a purely academic project. The PhD candidate requires appropriate tools to reach the expected destinations – thesis submission, oral defence and graduation – in a balanced state of mind and good health.

I aim to illustrate with instances of my own experience the possibilities of using yoga of ‘head, heart and hands’ to support the research journeys of present and future PhD.

Head

Over-thinking and mental tension are common experiences in the PhD journey. The candidate is constantly required to engage in intellectual enquiry, find explanations, provide a rationale for her analysis, and write using high standards of academic style. Therefore, over-thinking creates mental tension, confusion and mental dissipation. All these experiences usually result in emotional tension. However, I will leave the aspects of feelings and emotions for the next section.

There are two main tools to overcome mental tension that proved useful to me. The first is mantra and the second is pranayama.

Mantras are sounds or vibrations that when repeated might create observable change in the behaviour of the mind.

Mantras are not religious or esoteric songs they are ‘vehicles for the expansion of mind and liberation of energy. The sounds which you receive and the sounds you make, create resonant waves in the depths and surface of the mind’ (Satyananda, 1979). In the West, the power of sound to influence energy and matter has been researched extensively. How have the mantras supported me?

Many times in the course of my writing, I found myself correcting and editing my work too many times. I became aware of a negative mental pattern evolving in a way that eroded my creativity. Furthermore, such mental patterns created a negative mood of self-blame, lack of confidence and mental tension. Progressively, I learned to deal with that by going for walks and mentally repeating the *Gayatri* mantra, which is connected to developing mental clarity and creativity. Even in winter season whenever I observed the need to re-focus the mind and relax, I would put on my winter jacket and go for a walk and chant the mantra. After 15 minutes or so, I was able to return to my desk and continue working.

Pranayama are techniques that increase vital energy by developing awareness of the breath and ability to control the breath. While mental, physical and/or emotional tension weakens our capacity to face challenging situations, controlling the breath helps to release tension and re-charge vital energy. How have the pranayamas supported me?

My efforts to interpret data, to analyze, and to ‘make meaning’ of data resulted in mental and physical tension. Furthermore, as my first language is Spanish, writing the thesis in English entailed an unprecedented challenge for me. In the face of that situation, I procrastinated, and many times, attempted to find comfort in higher doses of coffee, tea or food. Unfortunately, those provided only temporary relief while the energy of my body further diminished. A very simple and effective technique was to use a pranayama that consists of observation and awareness of breath in the nostrils until the length of breath in the right nostril equals

the length of breath in the left nostril. I was able to practise that at the desk, by just closing my eyes and observing the natural breath for some time.

Heart

Yoga nidra: This technique is a powerful tool for physical, mental, and emotional relaxation. Yoga nidra has evolved in the last 50 years as a true gem from the Bihar School of Yoga to assist people from all walks of life to deal with the challenges of modern urban environments.

The yoga nidra helped me to clean the mind after a full day of work. It became particularly useful in the last stages of the PhD to keep me connected with the positivity expressed in the ‘resolve’ that is to be repeated three times at the beginning and at the end of the practice. This ‘resolve’ is known as the *sankalpa*, and consists of a simple statement expressing the highest aspiration one has in life. Therefore, repeating the *sankalpa* was an effective way to remain positive in the face of the emotional and mental challenges.

Self-observation and expressing happiness: Two fundamental aspects of yoga as a lifestyle refer to self-observation (*swadhyaya*) and expressing happiness (*manaprasad*). Because of this approach, the tradition preserved by BSY departs from the common understanding of yoga in the West that is focused mostly on the fitness training and the physical aspects of yoga.

Self-observation was the tool that allowed me to understand how I could use the many challenges in the course of the PhD to deepen a process of internal personal transformation. The practice of *swadhyaya* helped me to be more aware of the fluctuating states of my mind, and the conditionings that affected my emotions.

One instance of such awareness practised with *swadhyaya* concerns managing the regular feedback from supervisors in the course of writing the thesis. How did I receive their feedback? At first I would be very happy if the feedback was positive and disappointed if the feedback was not so good. Over

time, the practice of self-awareness helped me to observe – like a witness – my responses to their comments. I would still feel excited or disappointed but the tools of awareness helped me to understand that I was able to move away from the situation of unhappiness triggered by the feedback of my supervisors. Of course this is an effort at which I did not always succeed. Nevertheless, the more I practised the more I realized my emerging abilities to combine self-awareness and willpower more efficiently.

Another example, which I remember vividly, occurred very close to the submission date. Seven chapters of my theses were completed and one chapter almost finished. However, for that one last chapter, one paragraph needed to be improved. I was feeling very tired and, similar to climbers, I was close to the peak of the mountain but lacking the oxygen that allowed me to move further. I looked at the piece of paper in front of my desk where I had written: ‘The Niranjan Challenge’. Then, went to the ladies’ toilet and looked at my face in the mirror. I said to myself, “Okay, I take up your challenge, I can be happy right now and do my best.” I drank a sip of water, put a smile on my face, looked straight in my eyes and began to dance! I told myself, “I can be happy here and now.” I even recorded my funny dance and sent it to my children right there. I wished from the bottom of my heart that they also could learn the tools to remain happy amid difficult situations. Then I went back to my desk and finished the job.

Likewise, in many other situations I used the tools of yoga to keep me connected with what is positive and uplifting.

Hands

Asana: At the time of writing the thesis I could spend on average four to six hours of desk-based work daily. Due to the mental tension involved in writing, my body became stiff and tense. Many toxins are accumulated because of this sedentary form of life and because of the anxiety. Therefore, a daily routine of

asanas – physical postures aimed at deepening awareness and relaxation – helped me to maintain a healthy body.

I have a personal routine of asanas that I have been practising almost every day for the last 13 years. However, the intensity of the research required me to practise some asanas during the day while I was in the University campus. My desk was located on the east corner of the Laboratory of Māori Research – Te Ru Rangahau. It was the most amazing place to read and write that I could have ever imagined. I was able to see the sunrise in the morning and enjoy the sunset in the evening. On clear mornings in winter I was able to see the Canterbury Alps, all beautifully covered in snow. The desk was right by the porch and many days I walked down the porch listening to the seagulls and other birds singing. In that corner where the desk was located, I had enough space to roll out the yoga mat and practise some forward and backwards bending asanas during my working hours.

Where to from here?

After submission, oral defence and graduation, there was a void. There was too much mental energy, too much mental activity, but no work to be done. I couldn't resist that void. Instead, I engaged myself in a frantic search for a job and outlined a plan full of ambitious goals to write articles and deliver presentations. It was only in March 2019 that I began to consciously slow down. Another aspect of yoga assisted me in this new phase of transition: karma yoga. Karma yoga is a very important aspect of yoga concerning our capacity to live with full awareness and detachment. Karma yoga is a vast subject and I do not aim to discuss it here, but karma yoga as a science and lifestyle has been very beneficial supporting me to become more human, more connected and happier.

Yoga is a life learning process. I have experienced the benefits of a holistic understanding of yoga applied in daily life. I firmly believe that many of the tools and techniques that come from this ancient tradition could be supportive for PhD

students who struggle to keep healthy and happy. Moreover, I am convinced that a different approach to the whole PhD process is necessary. A yogic approach could assist this much-needed revision.

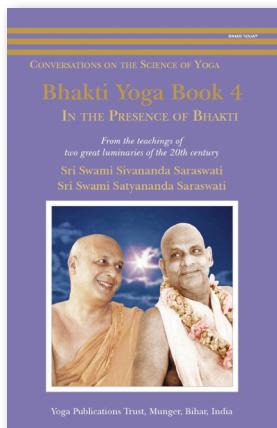
Table 1: Head, heart and hands: yoga techniques and benefits

Technique/ Tool	Head	Heart	Hands
<i>Yoga nidra</i>	Removes emotional and physical tension		
<i>Sankalpa</i>	Keeps the person focused on his or her highest aspiration		
<i>Mantra</i>	Relaxes and focuses the mind		
<i>Yama and Niyama</i>	Keeps the person connected to or with the positive and the creative		
<i>Asana</i>			Removes physical tension. Balances mental and physical energy
<i>Pranayama</i>	Calms and focuses the mind	Releases fear and dissipation	
<i>Swadhyaya</i>	Holistic self-observation to gain self-knowledge		



The Hardest Sadhana

From Conversations on the Science of Yoga – Bhakti Yoga Book 4,
In the Presence of Bhakti



What is the importance of being positive?

Swami Niranjanananda: Yoga has always maintained that one should maintain positivity and protect it from negative influences. Just as one protects one's garden from rodents and insects, one has to protect the good one is trying to cultivate in life from the destructive negative influences which surround one. One has to be observant about the negative things in life. One rotten

apple can spoil the whole basket of apples, yet one good apple cannot rectify even one rotten apple. Therefore, one always has to be observant about negative, detrimental influences and try to maintain optimism and positivity, and learn all the time. One should not worry about mistakes, everybody makes them. People who do not make mistakes have never tried anything new. People who make mistakes always try new things.

What is the hardest sadhana in life?

Swami Niranjanananda: One important effort has to be made, which is maintaining a positive and balanced attitude. This is possibly the most difficult practice due to the various types of stress one undergoes. Stress disconnects from one's inner harmony, strength, optimism, clarity, creativity and constructive participation in life. To maintain a positive perspective is the hardest thing to acquire in life. One should analyze oneself for a few moments and see if one is optimistic or pessimistic by nature. Is there happiness or depression in

the face of challenges? What kind of nature is predominant right now?

To remain positive is the hardest sadhana of life. The aspirant tries to understand the components of awareness and positivity that need to be cultivated. Just as salt gives taste to food, awareness gives taste to the mental expressions and experiences. One can be positive only if there is constant awareness.

What are some of the practices that can help one remain positive?

Swami Niranjanananda: Positive thinking in all situations and connecting and identifying with one's inner strengths, *sadvichara*, is a sadhana of bhakti yoga. When one experiences any difficulty or suffering, one prays to God to help one overcome shortcomings and distress. One feels there is pain and suffering within and one cannot connect with the source of strength, so one prays to an outer figure, God, for help.

Another approach is to recognize one's own strength and remain positive. It is difficult to maintain a balanced attitude in all situations. Arrogance has to be under control. If one is arrogant, one will see the negative in whatever is being said and done, and react. The moment one is able to manage the ego and learn humility, one will become more positive and, with humility, discover the strength within. In a tempest, a banyan tree can be uprooted by the force of the wind, yet a humble blade of grass simply bends over and stands upright when the wind has gone. If one remains inflexible, one will be uprooted. Thinking to be so strong that nothing can shake one is actually one's weakness; however, if one begins to bend, that humility and acceptance will make one positive. It will give complete control over one's strengths for it will allow one to become humble and face situations with a positive attitude of mind.

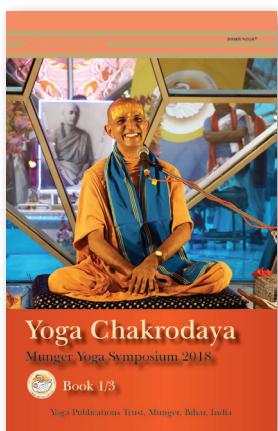
The aspirant should live in the present, maintain a positive attitude all the time and associate with people who are positive



all the time. If one associates with people who are negative about others, one's thoughts will not remain positive either. Sri Rama stated that there should be no falsity or crookedness in life. This is the process of coming to this point where one can develop a guileless disposition, a mind free from perversity, and absolute contentment. When one lives in the present, one will be contented. If one lives in the past or future, there will be discontent.

The Experience of Ant Niranjan

From Yoga Chakrodaya, Munger Yoga Symposium 2018, Book 1/3



Swami Niranjanananda: Everyone is having experiences all the time, even now. Your skin is feeling the heat, it is an experience you are having. The hardness of the floor, it is an experience you are having. The sweat on the face, it is an experience you are having. The peacefulness of being here, it is an experience. The agitation you feel when you go to the kitchen is an experience. Anything that changes the condition, quality and behaviour

of mind is called an experience. The problem is, you are not aware of the experiences.

Are you aware of the hardness of the floor? Not until it begins to hurt you. Are you aware of the sweat on your face? Not until it begins to drip. Are you aware of the heat in the environment? Not until you begin to sweat. Therefore, only when an experience reaches its peak do you become aware of it. The peak triggers three responses: *raga*, *dvesha* and neutral. *Raga* means attraction, *dvesha* means repulsion, and neutral is neutral. Example: after Swami Prembhava's visit to Europe, people have been writing of their experience of the sessions. One letter from Europe said:

"I've been living in this city since my birth for the last forty years. I go from my house to my workplace walking every day. I walk down the same footpath every day. However, it was only after doing the yoga ecology course that for the first time I noticed the trees lining the avenue. I noticed the greenness

of the leaves, the sturdiness of the trunks. For forty years they were there, but for the first time I actually saw them."

This account indicates that something opened up a different perception. Whether it was asana, pranayama, aradhana, meditation or the environment, it opened up another door of perception, and the person suddenly saw the trees lining the footpath he had been walking for forty years. Until now they had not registered. Suddenly they registered, 'Wow! These trees are here. Look, the leaves are green. Look, the trunk is solid and sturdy. What a surprise that for forty years of my life I never noticed them!' This is an experience of yoga lifestyle, where you become aware of the experience. The example is a neutral experience: recognition of something that exists.

Then there is the raga experience. Now I don't travel much, but when I used to be a peripatetic sannyasin, with my address on the road or in the air, many people would come and talk about their practices of yoga. Many meditators would also come and say, "Swamiji, I've been learning how to meditate for some time. For many months I did not see anything in my meditation, and then one day I saw an angel and light. I was totally intoxicated by that vision and experience. It has happened only once, it hasn't happened again. How can I have that experience again?" I would ask, "When you are not seeing the angel, what are you seeing?" The response would be, "I am making the effort to go back to that state of consciousness where I saw the angel. I want to go back there." This means the person was not meditating; they were only striving and making the effort to go back to a state. Would that qualify to be an experience?

Another example: imagine that you see the angel and hear the divine trumpets blaring away in your meditation. You open your eyes, then again close them and think, 'I shall deepen that experience.' You try to recreate what you saw and experienced. Now you are recreating it, you are not seeing it again. It is not darshan any more, it is now a creation of your own mind, and that is not an experience.

Experience is that which happens spontaneously and automatically, without information to you, "I am coming." If you expect the experience to come on the 10 o'clock train when you sit down to meditate, then definitely that is not going to happen. It is not going to come at that prescribed time. Yet the mind has changed. The mind is now attracted to repeating the same experience where you felt that first bliss and happiness, where you felt, 'Now I have become truly spiritual. I can see angels. I can hear the divine music. I have become a prophet and I can profit from it!' The entire attitude of meditation changes into that of imaginative fantasy. That is not deepening the experience, that is going on your own imaginative journey, following the shadow of an experience that you had when you did the right meditation. Without any expectation or anticipation, you came to a stage where suddenly the vista opened up before you. Now, when you are making the effort, the vista is not opening up any more; it is only a reflection of your raga.

Then there is the opposite, the dwesha experience. There are people who come to me and say, "Swamiji, I have stopped meditating." Why? "Because every time I meditate, something negative comes out of me." The negative that was being released has stopped the individual from going through the experience. When you see bad things, you think, 'I am doing something wrong.' Seeing the devil doesn't fit in your understanding or in the jacket that you have made of the experience, therefore you do not want to continue. That is dwesha.

People also feel that in order to deepen an experience, they have to go in and in and in, become more focused, more concentrated, more acutely pinpointed in a dot, sharpen the pencil so that it comes to a sharp tip. People think the more they sharpen their pencil and the more pointy the tip becomes the more the concentration will improve, the awareness will improve, everything will improve. What they do not understand is that when you reduce the lead to a point, your awareness has actually reduced; it has not expanded. You have reduced your awareness by going into it and focusing more.



Let us say, I am an ant, a sannyasi ant. The owner of the house, God, brings a picture printed on a dot matrix printer, not on a laser printer but on a dot matrix printer. The picture is all pixelated, showing small squares of white, grey and black. God puts that picture on the floor, and tells me, "You ant Niranjan, walk up to that paper and see the picture." This ant Niranjan begins to walk on the paper, trying to look at the picture, trying to deepen the experience of looking at the picture. However, he can only see white fields, grey fields and black fields stretching on endlessly; sometimes the white becomes black, sometimes the black becomes grey, yet he never sees the whole picture. God says, "Okay, my dear Niranjan ant, come onto my finger." I somehow manage to climb on to His finger. He lifts me up high and says, "Now look down." When I look, what was previously white, black and grey fields, in different shapes and hues, have suddenly taken the image of a person. I can see a face in the picture. This is what has to happen in order to deepen an experience.

I am giving you the opposite understanding. You have to rise above what you are experiencing to see the bigger picture. That is deepening the experience, where you are able to see not the pixelated form but the actual picture the pixels have made. To do that, you have to leave the paper and go higher. The experience is left down there and your observation, your drashta awareness, is up here. That is when you can see the full picture. If you try to deepen your experience while being on the field of black, grey and white, you will only try to dig deeper. If you dig in the white field, you will only go deeper into the white space. If you dig in the black field, you will only go deeper in the black space. If you dig in the grey field, you will only go deeper in the grey space. Your whole awareness will be restricted and contained, not expansive.



Thus, the first point is that you are having experiences continuously, irrespective of whether or not you are aware of them. It is a continuous process at physical, sensorial, mental, emotional, psychic and spiritual levels. There are times when you cross a person on the road and say, "I got bad vibes from that person. I didn't feel right when the person passed me. I felt something negative from him." Was that a physical experience? Was that a mental or logical experience? Was that an emotional experience? No, it was a psychic experience. This is an example of how experiences are taking place all the time though you are not aware of them. When you become aware of an experience, you either desire or dislike it so much that you limit your perception and ignore all the peripheral and small experiences that continue to take place. You only try to recreate the one that you liked, as you have become attached to it, and that is your raga. In order to see the bigger picture, there has to be awareness of and detachment from the experience.

If you are doing *bhujangasana*, the cobra pose, and somebody says, "Experience your body," where will your attention naturally go? To the lower back, since that is where the maximum tension is. You are not experiencing the posture; you are experiencing the tension in the lower back. Is that the experience of *bhujangasana*? Yet that is what each one of you, from the senior teachers to the junior practitioners, do. If you hear, "Experience your body in *bhujangasana*," the attention will instantly go to the lower back, 'It is aching. How much longer do I have to hold?' That cannot be called full experience. This indicates that people do not realize the meaning of the word 'experience'. They do not realize its complexity or vastness.

If I had to experience my body in *bhujangasana*, I would do it differently. I would visualize the whole posture, the whole body. I would experience the whole body from the top of my head to

the tips of my toes in one thought, one glimpse, one idea, and not just focus on the part which is aching. I would see the whole picture. That is the experience of bhujangasana. If you are told, "Experience the pain in your back," then you are free to take your awareness there, but that is not the instruction. You were told to experience your body in bhujangasana, and you are unable to do that as you are translating that into something else: becoming aware of what is hurting you and is unpleasant to you.

The same thing happens in meditation. What you don't understand you reject, and then stop the practice. What you decide to accept, you chase. Deepening the experience, on the other hand, is an expression of everything. It is an understanding of all the expressions of the body and mind.

Experience is one thing, awareness of the experience is another thing, and understanding the awareness of the experience is a third thing. As it is said, "I know that I know." Not just "I know." You all know, yet you all forget what you know. Therefore it is no good saying, "I know." If you can say, "I know that I know," you are reaffirming and accepting that.

Thus, to deepen an experience, don't go into it; rise above it. If you try to go into it, you limit yourself. The awareness which extended for miles has now been focused to a few inches. Instead, if the awareness which is a few kilometres wide can be increased to ten kilometres, that is deepening the experience. Now you are able to see a bigger picture, have a better perspective and understanding.

This is one reason people flounder in meditation. They go in so deep that they are unable to extract themselves. If you say, "Come out of it," they reply, "But I have been doing this for the last thirty years. How can I just stop and change everything?" You have to accept a different approach if you wish to realize that deepening of awareness is understanding, observing and knowing that you are undergoing that change, that transformation, that feeling, that experience.

– 22 October 2018, Munger Yoga Symposium









Lessons in Awareness

From Yoga Chakrodaya, Munger Yoga Symposium 2018, Book 1/3



Sannyasi Agnideva (Ignacio Copete, Colombia): When Sri Swamiji came to Colombia and into our lives, we did not look at him merely as a yogi or a visiting professor. We tried to observe him to understand him, to see what he was, what his mission was and what our purpose with him was. So we would be literally just looking at him, at everything that he did, the way he put the foot out, his chappals, everything. We were trying to learn and understand what was going on with him and what he had to teach. This was the first time we were in front of a yogi, face to face, and we did not know what to do. We took him to the museums! Yet, the main thing was that we were in the process of trying to understand who he was and how he did things.

From then on, that was our main attitude. The whole group did the same, though each one had their own experiences. So what I am going to tell you is a few experiences in my life that I had with Sri Swamiji, which helped to understand his teachings.

The first time that I met him, it was a shock. I was just out of law school, young, powerful, I could do everything that I wanted. I was a young man and by definition young men do not cry. Sri Swamiji landed, and fate had it that he was going to stay in my house, in my parents' house, I moved out of my room to give it to him. He got in the car and I was in the front. As I sat there, I started to cry, for twenty-five minutes, for no reason at all.

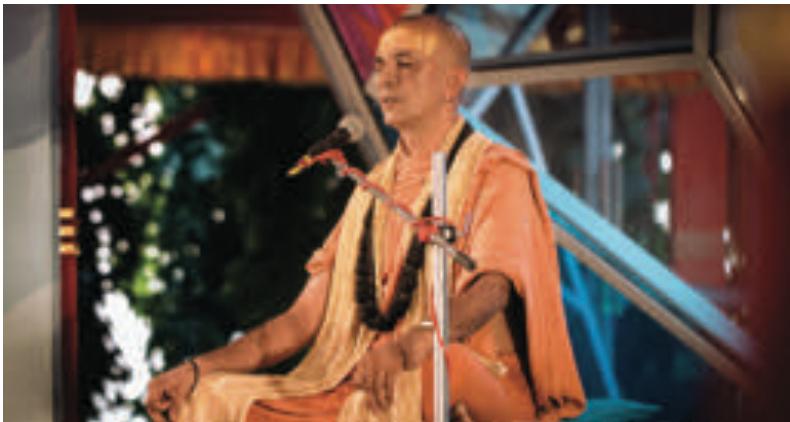
He was supposed to be in Bogota for five days. The first day nothing happened, the second day nothing happened. I ended up being appointed as his translator by him. He started to talk, talked for ten minutes and said, "Now you translate." Yet nothing happened. On the third day, I decided, "I have to go and talk to him and see if he is my guru." I went to him and said, "Swamiji, are you my guru?" "Of course! I have been giving you all kinds of clues, but you do not understand, you are not aware." So my first contact with Sri Swamiji was not very successful as far as awareness goes. I failed the test.

The second time I met Sri Swamiji was here in India at the old ashram for the convention in 1973. There was the Diwali celebration and I was walking right behind him. As I had been his translator, I sort of felt that I was allowed to be near him. I was really close, Indian style. I was walking behind him and suddenly he turned around and said, "You know!" From then on 'you know' for me was like 'Hey Siri!' You know what 'Hey Siri' is? It is a command that you give to an iPhone so that Siri starts listening to you. It is a command of alertness to a device. So the moment Sri Swamiji would say, "You know", I knew that something important was coming. It happened throughout my life with him.

He turned around and said, "You know, if a person achieves the capacity of being a witness of everything that he does, thinks or feels, he has achieved the most important thing that a human being can achieve." He said this, turned around, and continued walking. From then on, those were the rules of the game.

Moment to Moment Yoga

From Yoga Chakrodaya, Munger Yoga Symposium 2018, Book 1/3



Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati: The first chapter was the age of yoga propagation, the Stone Age, and the second chapter is the age of yoga experience, the Bronze Age. The Stone Age had its own distinct identity, which has evolved into the Bronze Age. Similarly, the Bronze Age has its distinct identity, and in the course of time, when the materials and tools have been accumulated, it will progress into the next age. In every age things move forward, nothing goes back.

In the same manner, you as yoga learners – I am using the expression ‘yoga learners’ – must think and recognize that you have to develop the yogic experience rather than teaching others to develop the yogic experience. It is totally unjustified to the tradition, to the gurus and to the wisdom of the vidya that you are telling other people to relax, while your own mind is under stress. That is not honouring the vidya or the parampara. If there is a feeling to honour the vidya and the parampara, the tradition, the knowledge and the wisdom, then a definite effort has to be made to make your lifestyle a bit better than what it was yesterday.

As learners of yoga who live in their own centres, teach in different locations in the city, or live in an ashram, a question must be posed: you are teaching others, but what are you doing yourself? Are you living what you are teaching? To answer this, you have to see and observe your lifestyle.

It is not possible or practical for everybody to live a perfect yogic lifestyle. If you live at home with your family and have to look after the children's education, the shopping, the job, the house, and are only a part-time yoga teacher, then definitely it becomes more challenging to live the yogic lifestyle of your choice. There are many other factors that divert your energy, time and attention.

The other group, people who live in ashrams for some time, also cannot be considered living a yogic life. An ashram has its own set of disciplines, and yogic life, which is unique to you, has its own set of disciplines. Ashram life may require you to get up at four in the morning, but merely getting up at four is not yogic life. If you begin your day with the chanting of the three mantras, irrespective of when you get up, then it is a yogic life. You have to decide at what time you are going to wake up depending on your environment. Whatever environment you are in, you have to live according to that. In the ashram, if the class is going to start at five, then you have to be up early, but that compulsion is not there at home.

To live a yogic life no matter where you are, you have to spread the yogic awareness throughout the day. One of the biggest shortcomings in people, whether yoga practitioners or advocates of yoga, is that they are not able to sustain a routine and discipline. They think, 'My yoga is done in the classroom. When I am not in the classroom, I don't have to think about yoga.' This kind of thinking means that you don't even understand the meaning of the word yoga, yet you talk about it as if you were a master. Just by reading a few books and making eloquent speeches, you do not become a master. There is a sutra in the *Yoga Sutras* about regularity, continuity and believing in what you do: *Sa tu deerghakaala nairantarya*

satkaara sevito dridhabhoomih – “It (sadhana) becomes firmly grounded by being continued for a long time with reverence and without interruption.” If you remember this sutra, it will help you understand the path of sadhana.

Yoga is not classroom teaching. You have heard from all the speakers during these four days that the yoga they learnt was more from interaction, observation and self-correction and not from classes of asana, pranayama, yoga nidra and pratyahara. Nevertheless, the biggest misunderstanding continues to exist that ‘I practise my yoga every day from this time to this time, and then I am free to do other things.’ No, you are not free to do other things. You may not do your asana and pranayama and yoga nidra and meditation, yet you are not free. You have to maintain the yogic awareness and attitude throughout. It is this aspect which will help you in life, not practice of asana and pranayama. Therefore, take yoga away from classroom learning, teaching and practice; put it into your personal life as a moment to moment practice.

To make yoga into a moment to moment practice, you have to look at all the components of the Satyananda Yoga system that Sri Swamiji has devised. Then make capsules of the practices to do at different times of the day. Spread the practices over a twelve-hour period. In the morning, practise the three mantras. The practice of mantras pacifies the mind, as is indicated in the meaning of the word mantra. Many of you think, ‘Why do I have to chant mantras in the morning when my mind is already pacified? I should do it when my mind is disturbed.’ You think in such a manner as you listen only to the words without understanding their intention.

The mind does not need to be pacified only when you feel the stress, for the mind is always under stress. Even when you are not aware of it, the subconscious and unconscious activities continue to take place. Even right now subconscious and unconscious activities are taking place, yet you are not aware of them. To develop awareness of those activities, moment to moment awareness has to take place. If you are moving your



hand, you should know that you are moving your hand. If you are moving your head, you should know that you are moving your head. Not a single act should go unnoticed. If I am even flexing a finger right now, I am aware that my finger is being flexed. That degree of awareness has to come. Continuous, constant awareness has to be built up. This can happen if in the morning you make three sankalpas; one for the body, one for the mind, and one for the entire life. Body

requires health, therefore the first sankalpa is for health with Mahamrityunjaya mantra. Mind requires wisdom, therefore the second sankalpa is for wisdom with Gayatri mantra. Life requires distress-free living; therefore the third sankalpa is for overcoming distress with the 32 names of Durga. By making these three sankalpas in the morning when you are fresh from sleep, you plant positive seeds in the mind. Then you can go about your daily business.

There are many books that have been published over the last four years as part of the second chapter initiative. There is a particular series, 'Yoga for Everyone'. These contain practices in capsule forms: with minimum practice you can get maximum benefits. This approach has to be adopted in life. There can be five asanas, four asanas, seven asanas; one pranayama, two pranayamas, three pranayamas, no pranayama; this practice, yes; this practice, no; this practice, half; this practice, one quarter, according to the different capsules that have been made. Each capsule has a specific purpose, just as Disprin, antibiotic or bronchodilator each has a different purpose.

The capsules include asanas, which can be practised for no more than fifteen to twenty minutes before breakfast. The logic is simple: if you have a headache, you take one Disprin and the headache goes away in ten minutes. By taking ten Disprins, will the headache go away in one minute? No, but you will definitely damage your system. It is the same with yoga. If you do five asanas for your need, they will fulfil the purpose. You don't need to practise fifty. You are free to do them; that is your choice, especially if you want to show off to yourself. If you want to derive the benefit, then be specific.

Pranayama can be practised during the day, whenever you feel low in energy. Even in your workplace, go to the toilet, light incense and practise your pranayama. It is possible, people have done it.

When you come back home from your work or other external occupations in the evening, lie down on your bed for ten minutes, practise yoga nidra and get rid of everything. At night, before going to sleep, practise meditation.

What you do in a two-hour session in a class can be spread across the whole day. Each time you do something, you are renewing your connection and awareness, with yoga and with yourself and your condition. The more you observe yourself, the more the desire to fine-tune will develop. You will begin to notice the little bits here and there which need rectification.

Along with all this, there has to be some swadhyaya, something that you study every day. You read the newspaper every day, try reading one page of satsang also every day. Make that part of your daily news. Every time you open your computer or IPad, after completing the job, read a satsang and change the mind, change the mind completely. Try to develop the positive qualities while living your usual life, away from all the disciplines of the ashram, which is hard.

In the ashram, October is declared the month of happiness. If you observe for how long you are happy during the day, you will be surprised to find that it is not more than fifteen to twenty minutes in the entire twenty-four-hour span. Can you

increase the span of happiness? From twenty minutes per day, can you make it half an hour, then one hour, then two hours, and keep on increasing the duration of being happy? That will help you.

People are forgetting how to be happy. Earlier this year, there was a news item that in Oxford University a course on happiness was being given by a professor, and it was the most participated-in course. While in other classes there were thirty, forty or fifty students, in this class there were about five hundred students who wanted to learn how to be happy. What a pathetic state of human life that now courses have to be conducted in universities to teach you how to be happy.

You have to learn how to be happy as you have forgotten how to be happy. Therefore, applying the component of lifestyle yamas and niyamas becomes that much more important. If you can develop these yogic attitudes along with swadhyaya, satsang, kirtan, mantras, they will create a substantial change in the environment of the group, the family or the ashram. Wherever there is a group effort, the environment will change.

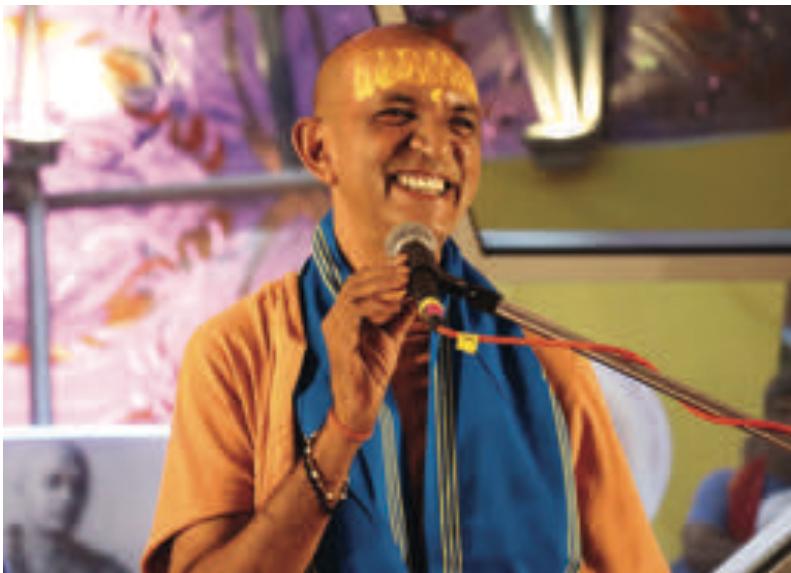
Even the Saturday Mahamrityunjaya mantra havan is not an individual effort. In India at least, the entire family gets together and even neighbours come to do the Mahamrityunjaya mantra, the purpose being to create a change in the mental environment. Definitely, it brings about more unity, cohesiveness, understanding, communication, affection, sympathy, love and connection. All these lead to strengthening of the human nature.

You have to think in terms of lifestyle. Don't just focus on the practices that you wish to learn or do; focus on how you can live a harmonious yogic lifestyle, no matter where you are, by creating a routine for yourself. Then we will be able to move into the second chapter of yoga with optimism and hope and bring about a qualitative change in our life and in our environment.

– 23 October 2019, Munger Yoga Symposium

Full of Joy and Energy

From Yoga Chakrodaya, Munger Yoga Symposium 2018, Book 1/3



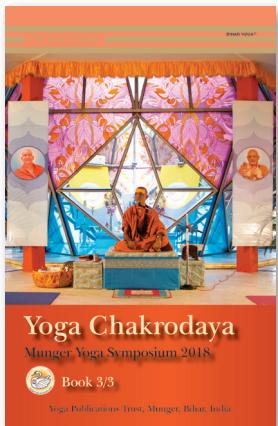
Jignasu Shaktimurti (Greece): I feel very proud to have participated in this historical event of Satyananda Yoga. I was given everything I needed and much more. The difficulties at the physical level have been forgotten and now I feel so full of joy and energy and so inspired to begin working and putting into practice the yoga ‘from moment to moment’.

The main thing that made me cry sometimes was to see all the positive qualities expressed by Swami Niranjan and especially his love for all of us. He took care of everything in such a detailed manner. The perfect environment, the plants and flowers, the music, the kirtan, the delicious food, the evening programs, the havan, so much prasad! Everything was perfect.

I will try with all my heart to be serious, sincere and committed to all the responsibility he gave us. Thank you!

Learn to Apply

From Yoga Chakrodaya, Munger Yoga Symposium 2018, Book 3/3



Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati: What we learn and what we apply in life are two different understandings. I have seen that happen now at the program. We all talk about awareness, and everybody thinks of awareness as being aware of oneself. When we are seated together in the classroom, everybody is well aware of what they are doing and thinking, how they are sitting, what is their environment – the mind goes to all those areas. It is guided to those areas, and after a class of meditation everybody says, “Oh, wonderful meditation! I was so aware.” That is only a classroom expression and understanding. It does not percolate down to behaviour and action.

An example: a song was presented just now. Beautiful song. Two people had one mike and a second mike next to them was left empty. Nobody noticed or observed this, nobody was aware of this. The instruments were overpowering and the voices were dim so nobody could understand the words. No one applied the awareness to ensure the correctness of what was happening.

I am using this instance as an example to tell you that this is how you apply your understanding and awareness. You don't incorporate these components of your knowledge into action. That is where human beings always fail, and that is why despite the guidance that is given all the time to everybody, people do not progress or evolve. Everything becomes a technique only, not a condition of life. “Swamiji teaches the techniques of awareness in class but I never apply them in practical life.” That is the attitude. So how can you cultivate

spiritual awareness? Your participation, your awareness and your action have to come together. That is yogic life. Not the ability to practise meditation for three hours. That is yogic practice. What is the outcome of that practice? In real, practical life, all the wisdom, understanding and awareness is put aside, and you fall back to your normal nature. If somebody reminds you of this forgetfulness, then one of the six conditions of mind raise their head, depending on the incident, situation or event.

The six conditions which are inherent in the mind are passion, aggression, greed, infatuation, arrogance and envy. All interactions in life are guided by one of these six and not by human wisdom. Therefore the negativity rises and develops in the personality. Why does one become more and more tamasic? It is because one falls prey to the influence of the six conditions of mind.

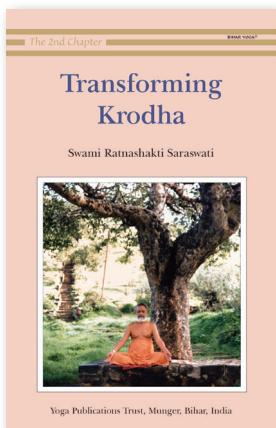
The purpose of yoga is to manage the six conditions of the mind, not just the conditions of body. People use yoga for health and wellbeing which is physical, and for peace and relaxation which is psychological. Fair enough. However, don't limit yoga to that only. Use it to fulfil your needs, but remember that the aspiration of yoga is to manage the six conditions of the mind, for it is these conditions that lead you into the well of suffering, insecurity, ignorance and negativity. No matter how good your health is, no matter how much money you have, if you fall prey to these conditions, there is never happiness, contentment or satisfaction. Therefore, application of the *vidya*, the understanding, to improve the lifestyle and bring a qualitative change in the perceptions is necessary. That is the effort of the second chapter.

No new asanas are being taught, but an understanding is developing. No new pranayamas are being taught, but an understanding is developing. You have to learn to apply that understanding in practical life. If you are able to do that, then you are living the yogic life and following the aspiration of the second chapter of yoga.

– 26 October 2018, Munger Yoga Symposium

Krodha

From Transforming Krodha, Swami Ratnashakti Saraswati



Krodha is usually translated to mean anger, but from the yogic perspective this is incomplete. *Krodha* is a *vritti*, a particular frequency of mental energy that completely alters the pattern of mental behaviour and thoughts. *Vrittis* are described as being circular in form, which means they can expand infinitely and contract without losing their shape, form or strength. When this field of influence is dominant in the mind, *krodha* creates its own pattern of thought, experience and expression. This manifests in a multitude of ways, from frowning, impatience, irritation, frustration, criticism, backbiting, and gossip to indignation, hostility, aggression, rage, fury and violence.

Anger is just one expression of *krodha*: the aggressive and negative emotional reaction to a perceived provocation or threat. This instinctive response mechanism for protection and preservation is evident in both animals and humans. Dogs growl, bark and bare their teeth in response to an unfamiliar person or perceived threat to their territory. A female dog will react with ferocious anger to protect her puppies. People also react in anger when they perceive something or someone to be threatening, offensive or insulting. An angry person will identify a specific event, interaction or person as the cause of their anger. The reaction of anger is always projected onto an external cause, but in reality the cause of anger is *krodha*, the *vritti* that manifests in the mind.

Krodha arises from *raga* and *dvesha*, the mental experience of attachment and aversion. *Raga* is the desire to possess or

attach to something pleasurable and *dvesha* is the desire to be free of something or someone unpleasant. From this perspective, raga and dvesha are the opposite ends of the same experience. That experience is desire. This is why although they seem and feel to be opposite, their effect upon the mind is the same. In attachment, the mind spontaneously and naturally gravitates towards the object of attachment. A mother naturally thinks of her children, and the mental connection that binds them is love and attachment. With dvesha, two enemies cannot stop thinking about one another and their minds fixate on the object of dislike, unable to break the connection of hate and negativity.

It is the same with kama and krodha, the first evolutes of raga and dvesha. Kama is desire and krodha is the negative aspect of desire. Kama is desire for something pleasurable and krodha is the desire to be free from something unpleasant. The impetus towards violence, vengeance and retaliation, the need to dominate and bully, these are all negative desires embedded in the different expressions of krodha. Krodha also creates and sustains a connection between the individual and the other person or the object of displeasure. The vritti strengthens that connection through repetition of negativity. Every expression of hostility, resentment and frustration strengthens the bond of krodha existing between two people.

Anger is only a modification or form of desire. Anger is desire itself.

— Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Social impact of krodha

Krodha destroys the cohesion of society. The social impact of krodha is seen not only in anger and violence, but also in the fear, insecurity and chaos that it creates. By its very nature the vritti is unpredictable and hostile, angry people can explode at any time. Unpredictability causes instability and insecurity in relationships. Where there is instability and insecurity it

is very difficult to maintain trust. Trust, respect and a sense of shared values are the foundation for secure relationships and social harmony. In the family unit secure relationships and trust are especially important factors in the emotional development of children. Trust and security are destroyed by the unpredictability of krodha.

Krodha reduces the intimacy within personal relationships. Hostile, angry people are less likely to have healthy supportive relationships and tend to have fewer friends. Hostile people are also more likely to suffer erratic mood swings, depression, and to become verbally or physically abusive towards others, alienating family and friends. Venting anger and frustration with words or actions makes the situation much worse, especially for those who are in the immediate path of the attack. Even partners and other family members tend to be more guarded and less able to relax in their interactions with hostile people.

All evil qualities proceed from anger. If you control anger, all evil qualities will vanish by themselves.

– *Swami Sivananda Saraswati*

The most extreme expression of krodha is violence, and debates continue as to whether or not society has actually become more violent. Definitely the social picture of today describes a changed world – one in which the security of the 1950s has given way to a violent society characterized by drug wars, robbery and killing on neighbourhood streets, and violence in school corridors. The impact of the increase in violent content in entertainment, computer games, apps, movies and media is significant. Studies suggest that exposure to violent media increases the likelihood of aggressive behaviour in the short and long term as well as encouraging hostile perceptions and attitudes. Repetitive viewing also desensitizes individuals to violent content. Research has consistently shown a correlation between TV violence and escalating aggression and social

anxiety, and negative impacts upon real-world behaviour.

Exposure to krodha in any form impacts most significantly upon children. A major exposure is through television and digital games. Research on the effect of TV violence on children points to the inescapable conclusion that viewing media violence is related to increases in aggressive attitudes, values, and behaviour. Exposure to violence is among the most detrimental experiences children can have, affecting how they think, feel and act. Children who see or experience violence around them are more likely to use violence as they grow older and into adulthood.

The impact of krodha upon social relationships and society is undeniably negative. Negative emotions are the basis of destructive interactions and toxic connections between people. Negative emotions develop societies based on fear, inequality and domination. Positive emotions are the connections that provide support, care, respect, appreciation, friendship and love. Positive emotions increase and gain in strength when reciprocated through connection with others. Positive connections create positive relationships, positive relationships foster strong, stable, nurturing family units and systems; stable families create cohesive communities and cohesive communities forge the way for peaceful harmonious creative societies and cultural development.

Man has reached the moon but he is incapable of bridging the rift between his neighbour and himself. Blessed is this man of the scientific age. It is this ignorance which has to be removed.

— *Swami Sivananda Saraswati*

Sadhana for ahimsa given by Swami Sivananda

First, control your physical body. Suppress your feelings. Follow the instructions of Jesus Christ in his Sermon on the Mount:

If a man beats you on one cheek, turn to him the other cheek also.

If a man takes away your coat, give him your shirt also.

This is very difficult in the beginning. The old *samskaras*, impressions, of revenge, of 'a tooth for a tooth', 'an eye for an eye', and 'paying in the same coin' will all force you to retaliate. You will have to wait coolly. Reflect and meditate. Do *vichara* or right enquiry. The mind will become calm. The opponent who was very furious will also become calm, because he does not get any opposition from your side. He gets astonished and terrified also, because you stand like a sage. By and by, you will gain immense strength. Keep the ideal before you. Try to get at it, though with faltering steps at first. Have a clear-cut mental image of ahimsa and its immeasurable advantages.

After controlling the body, control your speech. Make a strong determination, 'I will not speak any harsh word to anybody from today'. You may fail a hundred times. What does it matter? You will slowly gain strength. Check the impulse of speech. Observe *mouna*, silence. Practise *kshama* or forgiveness. Say within yourself, 'He is a baby-soul. He is ignorant, that is why he has done it. Let me excuse him this time. What do I gain by abusing him in return?' Slowly give up *abhimana*, ego-centred attachment. *abhimana* is the root-cause of human sufferings.

Finally go to the thoughts and check the thought of injuring. Never even think of injuring anyone. One Self dwells in all. All are manifestations of One God. By injuring another, you injure your own Self. By serving another, you serve your own Self. Love all. Serve all. Hate none. Insult none. Injure none in thought, word and deed. Try to behold your own Self in all beings.

Hints for Control of Anger

Swami Sivananda Saraswati

1. Be alert. Pray. Do more japa. Practise vichara. Keep a watch over your mind. Be silent. Observe mouna daily for an hour. Forget and forgive. Bear insult and injury. Observe Brahmacharya.
2. See God in all. Submit to God's will. Then you cannot get angry.
3. In the morning meditate on the virtue of patience. Manifest it during the day. Take a vow 'I will practise endurance and *kshama*, forgiveness, during the day'.
4. Speak sweetly. Speak little.
5. Mix little. Have congenial company. Have satsanga. Read spiritual books.
6. Remember the lives of saints like Eknath, the Avanti Brahmin of the eleventh Skandha of the *Bhagavata*. You will derive inspiration. You will develop love and *kshama*.
7. Give up intoxicating liquors, meat and tobacco.
8. Remember the *Gita* slokas (3:37 and 16:21) describing anger as a monster and gate to hell.
9. If you find it difficult to control anger, leave the place at once. Take a long walk. Drink cold water. Repeat *Om Shanti* ten times. Do japa of your Ishta mantra or count from 1 to 30. Anger will subside.
10. Stand as a witness of the *vritti* of anger. Be indifferent to it. Do not identify yourself with it. Identify yourself with the Atman. Fill the mind with ideas of love, joy, etc.
11. Develop patience to a considerable extent. People lose their temper when they become impatient. Allow the mind to dwell constantly on the opposite of anger, the virtue of patience. This is the *pratipaksha bhavana*, method of raja yogins.



12. Do not give vent to anger. Control the body first. Have physical control. Practise this again and again. Be regular in your japa and meditation and kirtan. This will give you great inner spiritual strength.
13. Food has a great deal to do with irritability. Take milk, fruits, moong-ki-dal, curd, spinach, barley, groundnuts, butter milk. Do not take carrots, onion, garlic, cauliflower, massoor-ki-dal and drumstick.
14. Observe mouna for two hours daily. Occasionally observe mouna for a whole day. This will put a check on the impulse of speech. When a man gets excited, he speaks anything and everything. He has no control over the organ of speech.
15. Prana entwines the mind like a creeper. Pranayama leads to the control of mind. Pranayama will put a break on the impulse of speech. It will give you abundant energy to check anger.
16. Do not argue much. Do not retort. Speak sweetly always. Do not use abusive words. Become a man of measured words. If a man abuses or insults you, keep quiet. Identify yourself with Atman. Atman is the same in all. It can never be hurt or insulted.
17. A Vedantin denies the body and mind as illusory sheaths. He does vichara, enquires, 'who am I' and practises *neti-neti* - 'not this, not this'. 'I am not the body'. 'I am not the mind', *Chidanandaroopa Shivoham* - 'I am blissful Shiva or Atman'. He identifies himself with Brahman or Atman, the Eternal. The world is unreal for him. He chants *Om*, sings *Om* and does japa of *Om* and meditates on *Om* and derives soul-power and spiritual strength.
18. If you entertain mithya drishti and dosha drishti, if you look into the defects of anger and the benefits of patience, you will never become angry.
19. The combined method is more effective. If one method fails, take recourse to the combined method. Do japa, pranayama. Sometimes do vichara.

My Interactions with Sri Aurobindo in Rikhiadham

Sannyasi Shivapratap, Kolkata

The fifth Satchandi Mahayana was in progress and like so many others, I was there participating in seva.

One day I decided to run across to the visitors' car parking area, where the stalls for malas, photos of gods and goddesses, etc. had already commenced their day's sales, and buy myself a little spiritual gift - a sumerini mala.

In the first stall sat an old man with sunken cheeks, prominent cheek bones and a monkey cap protecting his head and ears from the morning mist. He sat huddled, wearing a black coloured, horn rimmed pair of glasses like Mahatma Gandhi, which sat on his nose at an angle of 45 degrees.

After exchanging our Namo Narayans and at my request, he carefully chose and gave me a tulsi mala for sumiran. I took it in my hand, inspected it knowledgeably and paid him his price. After a quick "Namo Narayan" I ran back to resume my seva, mala already rotating between my thumb and ring finger, and japa happening in silence with spiritual conviction written all over my face.

With the blessings of Devi Maa and the inspiration and protection of three Paramahamsas, no less, I resumed domestic life full on, mala between my specified fingers and mantra on my lips. After a few weeks of sumiran, I could distinctly feel an occasional tingling up my spine. The frequent but mild rumbles near the manipura chakra confirmed to me that I was on the right track and that my sadhana made moksha inevitable and irrevocable. It was no ordinary mala. It had come into my life from the tapobhoomi of a stithaprajna.

A few months later, as happens frequently in worldly life, I had a tiff with you know who. Balance switched to dis-balance,

that quickly gave way to irritation which in turn manifested in anger. Although I am a Taurus, I roared like a Leo and strode out of the house like the elephant in Munger market which Swami Niranjanji talks about. I went and found myself a place to sit down under the sky and resumed my japa furiously.

One bead, one mantra, next bead, again the mantra, third bead . . . Suddenly, a thought crossed my mind. Do you know how many beads there are in the mala? The japa stopped as if an emergency brake had been applied. I counted 1, 2, 3 . . . 24 . . . 27 . . . 29 . . . 32. Thirty-two?! Good God! Thirty-two! But that's not a multiple or sub-multiple of 9 as it should be, must be. Nine is definitely a very auspicious number. If you add up the digits of 108, doesn't it come to 9? Following these incisive calculations and realizations, my buddhi kicked in further.

I was doing it wrong all these months. What a waste of spiritual time and energy. How could that old man give me a sumerini mala with 32 beads! Wasn't he from Rikhiadham and not College Street. How could he? Didn't he know that a sumerini mala must have only and precisely 27 beads! This was destiny playing tricks with me.

All the spinal tingling, manipuri rumbling stopped but not my anger. The only positive development was that now my negative anger was transformed into spiritual anger, not worldly anger. I went home, threw the mala back furiously into my travel bag, stopped my sumiran japa and got down to planning my next visit to Rikhi.

From that day, the only tingling I felt whenever I remembered the number 32 or when I saw an old man with horn rimmed glasses was at the temples, and that's not where the kundalini energy flows past. What a horrible waste of valuable spiritual time, and that too because of an ignorant, toothless old man. I reached Rikhi soon enough, kept my luggage at the gate and went straight to the mela. The old man was still there, his horn-rimmed glasses were still the same and placed at the same angle on his nose. He gave me a divine, toothless smile and said, "*Namo Narayan.*" He probably saw Narayana

in me, but I only saw red. And you surely know what happens when a bull sees red.

Me: (No Namo Narayan) Didn't you give me this mala?

Old man, after inspecting it carefully: Yes!

Me: You must know that a sumerini mala has only 27 beads?

Old man: Yes.

Me: Count this and see how many beads are there.

Old man, after counting each bead carefully: 32!

Me: So you knowingly gave me a wrong mala.

After a deadly silence of a few seconds, the toothless smile became wider, he straightened his spectacles a wee bit, looked up at me and said, "Baba, taking God's name five times extra won't bring you any bad karma," and handed the mala back to me after touching it to his forehead and heart.

My anger balloon punctured. I felt a severe burning sensation once again but this time on my right cheek as if I had just received the tightest, widest, wristy slap in my life. How true, how innocent, how pure, how simple.

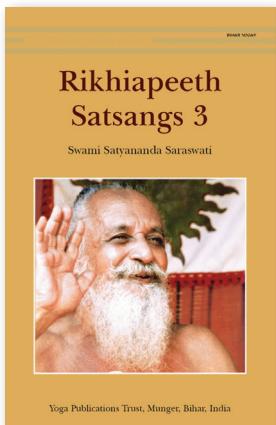
I immediately remembered what Sri Swamiji had said, "Sri Aurobindo used to say that intellect can be a friend initially, but it can become an obstacle in spiritual development."

I don't know this old man's name because he had moved on to his next life by the time I reached Rikhia again the next year, but whenever I hear the name of Sri Aurobindo or realize that my buddhi is chattering too much, I remember him and my right cheek begins to smart all over again. He remains Sri Aurobindo to me to this day.



God's Name for Kali Yuga

From Rikhiapeeth Satsangs 3, Swami Satyananda Saraswati



The four ages have four goals for humankind: artha, kama, dharma and moksha. Two of these goals are predominant in Kali Yuga: artha and kama. Artha means material wealth: money, property and land. Kama means desire. In this age, only these two goals are important and sadhana should be based on these two goals, not on any others. Today, even if you do something good, its goal will be artha and kama. You can perform the highest penance, do kundalini sadhana, say prayers, do tantra sadhana or do Vaishnava sadhana; the goal will be artha and kama. Even if you wish to see God, the goal will remain the same.

In this age of artha and kama you can perform only two sadhanas: helping others and chanting God's name. These are practical ways; not everything is practical. In Kali Yuga, do not even talk of things like liberation. It will remain purely theoretical, like a lecture on water in a desert. Chant God's name, whether with a mala or with the breath, spoken or written, whether it is Rama's name or *Om Namah Shivaya*; it can be any name.

In Kali Yuga that is all a person can do. More than this is not possible. How long does a man live in this age? By the time he approaches forty years, his hair begins to grey. A lot of people visit doctors right from childhood; they are prone to sicknesses. Our genetic makeup has become weak. Earlier, people used to live for a hundred to two hundred years. Until the age of fifty, they would fulfil their desires. Now, even the enjoyment is not complete.

Therefore, during these times it is necessary to do only what is possible and practical, and the only practical thing is to chant God's name in the morning, afternoon, evening and night, for half an hour or fifteen minutes, and do something good for others. This does not mean securing a benefit for a relative. Helping those in need and those who are suffering is called being altruistic. Apart from these two things, forget about everything else. If you have the time, read the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Ramayana* and the *Srimad Bhagavatam*. In this age, only these two things are practical, and nothing else.

— 22 September 1997



My guru, Swami Sivananda, used to ask me, "Do you remember His name all the time?" I would reply, "Swamiji, I try but mostly I forget because I am so busy with administration." He would say, "While doing administration work, you still remember to eat, sleep and go to the toilet. You don't forget those things so how can you forget this most natural thing, because God's name is your very breath." One's whole life has to be dedicated to this.

—Swami Satyananda Saraswati

Become a Fit Receptacle

There is infinite power in Lord's name. You should know how to draw that power. You should be a fit receptacle. A cloth bag cannot hold coals of fire; you should have a good pot for it.

Without purifying the mind, without developing divine virtues, you cannot experience the bliss, the power and the peace that flow from the divine name.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati





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Munger Yoga Symposium 2018

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Dec 18–22	Yoga Chakra Series
Dec 25	Swami Satyananda's Birthday
Jan 27–29	Sri Yantra Aradhana
Jan 30	Basant Panchami Celebrations/BSY Foundation Day
Feb 9–13	Yoga Capsule – Respiratory (Hindi)
Feb 9–13	Yoga Capsule – Arthritis & Rheumatism (Hindi)
Feb 14	Bal Yoga Diwas, Children's Yoga Day
Feb 23–27	Yoga Capsule – Digestive (Hindi)
Feb 23–29	Total Health Capsule (Hindi)
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Mar 14–20	Hatha Yoga Yatra 1, 2
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Apr 4–8	Yoga Lifestyle Capsule (Hindi/English)
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Sep 19–25	Raja Yoga Yatra 1, 2
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Nov 21–27	Hatha Yoga Yatra 1, 2
Dec 2–6	Yoga Lifestyle Capsule (Hindi/English)
Dec 25	Swami Satyananda's Birthday
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