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Hari Om

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GUIDELINES FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

Yoga at any age

You can start hatha yoga practices at any time of your life, at any age. You must have sincerity, earnestness, faith, vigour and vitality. You must proceed cautiously and step by step. Over-exertion should be avoided. The yogic practices will give you success if you observe mouna, *mitahara*, moderation in diet, and practice of japa and meditation. Success in asana, pranayama, and other yogic practices depends upon the constitution. Therefore, in yoga there are different exercises to suit different people.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

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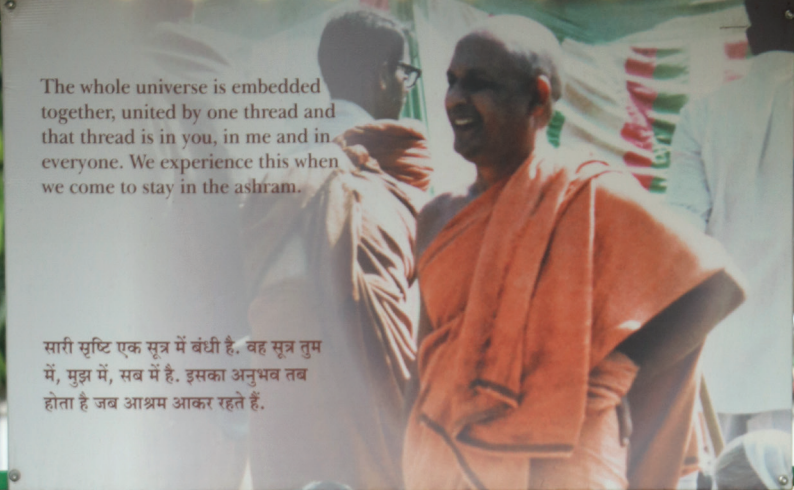
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Contents

- 5 The Play of the Gunas
- 6 Yogic Studies (English) 2019-2020
- 8 Sanyam - the Spirit of Change
- 12 Purpose of Nadi Shodhana
- 14 Yoga and the Digestive Fire
- 18 Start Sadhana Now
- 21 Understanding Prana
- 26 Mental and Spiritual Dimension of Yoga
- 33 Goodness
- 35 Yoga Chakra 2019
- 37 Where Do We Go From Here?
- 45 Secret of Energy and Dynamic Work
- 47 Yoga for Businessmen
- 53 For Sadhakas

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 ॥



The whole universe is embedded together, united by one thread and that thread is in you, in me and in everyone. We experience this when we come to stay in the ashram.

सारी सृष्टि एक सूत्र में बंधी है, वह सूत्र तुम में, मुझ में, सब में है. इसका अनुभव तब होता है जब आश्रम आकर रहते हैं.



Your Ashram

In the ashram, the first factor is identification with the place; the second is understanding the intent of the place; the third is cooperating in the place; the fourth is communicating with people; and the fifth is supporting people. These are the five aspects of an ashram.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

The Play of the Gunas

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

“If yoga becomes a mighty world culture can we expect an end to man’s suffering and the evils of the world?” This question has been put to me many times. Although yoga is going to become a mighty force at the end of this century and during the next, this does not mean that man will not fall ill, that rivalry will not take place, and that everyone will love each other. It does not mean there will be no hatred in the world, and that everybody will become happy and free from problems and disease.

According to the sages, there is a very clear concept that the world is a play of the three gunas. The three gunas are *tamas*, *rajas* and *sattwa*, and if you combine these stages, they create millions of things on the mental plane. Whether yoga becomes a mighty culture or not, they will still exist; they always remain the same. Diversity is the nature of the world. Yoga cannot go against it. There will be diverse religions and sects. There will still be wars and there will still be love, hatred and massacres. There will also be people like Buddha and Christ coming from time to time. You cannot go beyond all this because the world is the play of the three gunas.

You may envision an idyllic lifestyle, universal peace and harmony, but how can that be? There will always be grass, thorny bushes and snakes, and there will still be floods, droughts and epidemics, even if high blood pressure, cancer and rheumatism no longer exist. However, one great change will be brought about through the power of yoga. Yoga will bring light to man’s thinking processes and will improve the quality of his thoughts and perception. Thereby it will enable him to understand the necessity of his problems. And this is what we are expecting.

Yogic Studies (English)

2019–2020



Starting each day with *Hari Om*,
Feel how the ashram becomes a new home.
Home, where everyone is teacher and friend,
Under Swamiji's never-ending care.
Like rivers of grace, flowing from high altitudes,
He touches and fills everything with joy and gratitude.
I come here to breathe in the spirit of freedom,
To overcome conditions which separate me from wisdom.
This high knowledge is contained here,
Accessible to those who are truly sincere.
Bihar School of Yoga is the place to be,
To connect with truth in the 21st century.
We're gaining through giving - that's how we succeed
My mind and heart are full of such seeds.
Seeds, that I'm responsible to grow,
The results - the future will show.

– Miroslava, Lithuania



Words cannot do justice to the three months that I have spent in the ashram. It is a feeling of pure bliss to have worked on myself on so many levels. Sweeping, chopping, cleaning the drains felt like a mundane task until I actually realized it was stirring so much in me. My journey from being a germ-phobic to voluntarily cleaning the washroom, from not being able to shut my eyes for one minute to keeping them closed during the entire evening sadhana, from getting irritated at everything to accepting everything with arms wide open has been inexplicable. I am making now some space in my heart for a little more courage to believe in myself and a little more faith in that celestial being high above. Grateful, always!

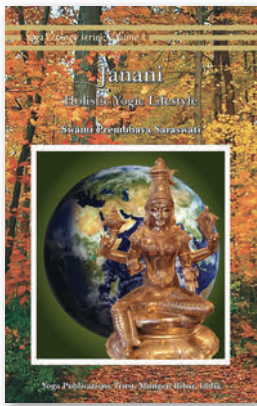
– Ashi Jaiswal, Jabalpur



Sanyam – the Spirit of Change

Sow a thought, reap an action, sow an action, reap a habit, sow a habit, reap a character, sow a character and reap a destiny.

– Swami Sivananda Saraswati



Nowadays, if you ask someone what yoga is, they will probably tell you that it is a series of postures that bend and stretch the body and a few breathing techniques for health and peace. This is partly true, but shows a very limited understanding of yoga. Yoga is a complete way of life; it is the most simple, practical and healthy way in which to live, for an individual and for the planet.

Vedic culture

Yogic lifestyle is based on the vedic culture which is both an attitudinal and spiritual culture. The lifestyle is based on the cultivation and development of the human personality by encouraging positive qualities and samskaras. Our *samskaras* or impressions are the experiences which mould character, attitudes and beliefs. When we live positive experiences we create positive samskaras, and positivity will manifest in the character and in life. This moulding of character takes place through our daily activities and lifestyle. According to the vedic culture, there are sixteen main samskaras which represent the beginning of new conditions or situations in life. This process begins before birth and continues throughout life and until

death. Each major transition in life, such as pregnancy, name giving, first solid food, education, marriage, is welcomed, acknowledged and blessed with success and auspiciousness and acts as a doorway to divinity and the beauty present in the cycle of birth, life and death.

The vedic society lived in harmony with nature and the daily lifestyle followed the natural biorhythms of the earth and sun. Nature was not seen as something to use and abuse for one's own selfish needs but it was to be respected and revered as divine. Through mantra people connected and communicated with nature and the elements.

The vedic rishis lived and taught a balanced lifestyle for the head, heart and hands. They taught that through proper diet, sleep and exercise people could apply themselves properly to other areas of life such as marriage, profession, sport, self-study and reflection, time management, relaxation, aradhana and havan. They gave tools, methods and techniques to manage the instincts of fear, sleep, craving and sexuality.

Sanyam

Real yoga is 'sanyam yoga' as it beautifies all strata of the human personality.

– Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

The vedic rishis gave guidelines for living each day permeated with the attitude of *sanyam* which literally means restraint. Swami Niranjanananda explains that the word sanyam is composed of two Sanskrit roots sam and yam. *Sam* means total, the total personality, all the dimensions of human nature. *Yam* is *yama*, a state of mind which you maintain, cultivate and develop. Therefore, sanyam means all dimensions of the human personality and lifestyle are taken through a process of transformation and beautification and that state is maintained and developed. The main attitude that must be cultivated in a holistic yogic lifestyle is sanyam.



Changing one's lifestyle

For the majority of us, there are certain aspects of our lifestyles that we cannot easily change, such as culture, climate and environment, governments and language. However, we can begin to change and regulate the small habits of our daily lives, and this will naturally

lead to bigger changes and the evolution of our personality.

Changing to a holistic yogic lifestyle means replacing the destructive habits that do not bring positivity and health into our lives with nourishing habits that encourage health, positivity and contentment in head, heart and hands. This can be done through regulating one's lifestyle and the cultivation of yogic attitudes and awareness.

We cannot expect improvement and change in life without facing the negative and destructive habits of our physical, mental and emotional behaviours. Dissecting one's personality and examining the traits that underlie one's animalistic behaviour requires courage and honesty. Using yogic techniques such as a spiritual diary, review of the day and *pratipaksha bhavana*, developing the opposite positive quality, we can learn to see, understand and accept that these habits exist. Only then can we recognize them and begin to replace them with positive and creative attitudes and behaviour.

We need to see how to make our interactions with other people and our environment more positive and uplifting. This process of change is not an intellectual exercise and it can take years, some say even lifetimes, of dedicated endeavour to re-condition and transform one's personality. Otherwise we are just enforcing external disciplines. Swami Niranjana says that it is like placing a straight pipe over the curly tail of the dog. Once you remove the straight pipe the tail returns to its original curly nature.

When yoga becomes a way of life, identification with and expression of the balanced, positive and optimistic nature takes place and then one attains physical health, mental health and spiritual wealth.

– *Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

Life is too short to live without happiness and health in our daily lives. It is our birthright to live with happiness, but it is our responsibility to live with health and happiness through the choices and efforts we make in our daily lives.

Change requires discipline

For true learning, change and growth to take place in our lives there must be discipline and practice, for example if one wishes to play the guitar, then to achieve this goal one must practise daily with discipline and commitment to produce melodious music – this is sanyam. Sanyam means focusing and encouraging the growth and transformation of all that is good, creative and beautiful.

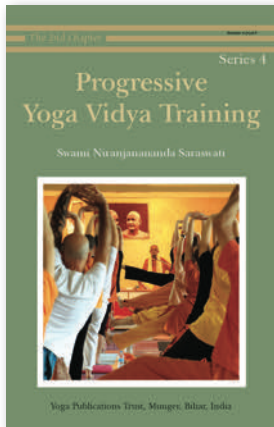
Sanyam is the process of transformation that applies to each and every expression in life, including behaviour, attitude, speech and thought. Through sanyam we are continuously developing better and newer qualities in life, and replacing the old, detrimental and destructive ones. Through sanyam we can transform the limiting and the negative into positive and uplifting.

Sanyam will cultivate the right samskaras, and samskaras will cultivate the right character, personality, trait, behaviour and action.

– *Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

– *Printed in Janani – Holistic Yogic Lifestyle,
Swami Prembhava Saraswati*

Purpose of Nadi Shodhana



Nadi shodhana pranayama is a term coined by Sri Swamiji. In kriya yoga, inhalation and exhalation are known as *arohan* and *awarohan*, ascending and descending breath. In the language of classical pranayama, nadi shodhana is known as *anuloma viloma*, inhalation and exhalation, or *anuloma* and *viloma*, respectively. These are the names you will come across in the yogic literature: *anuloma viloma* and *arohan awarohan*. You will not find the name

nadi shodhana. Sri Swamiji gave the name nadi shodhana to the pranayama of *arohan awarohan* or *anuloma viloma* as it indicates the purpose of the balancing pranayamas. The *nadis* are the conductors of prana shakti; *shodhana* means to clean, to purify. What is being purified and cleaned here are the passages that conduct the prana shakti throughout the body.

In most other traditions, the practice of alternate nostril breathing is spoken of only as *anuloma-viloma*, which means inhalation-exhalation. However, Sri Swamiji used the term nadi shodhana, for that is the term used in the classical texts, indicating the purpose and depth of the practice. It is not only about breathing in through one nostril and out through the other.

You will have learned that there are 72,000 nadis in the body. Many people think of the 72,000 nadis as nerves in the body, or as channels like the arteries and veins, but nadis are more subtle; they are the pathways of prana. Nadis were originally defined in *marma vijñana*, the knowledge of marma, which was the forerunner to acupressure and acupuncture. Marma vijñana is the original practice, which was developed further

by the Chinese and named acupuncture and acupressure. The Chinese did a lot of work on the nadi system as they discovered the nerve meridians. They outlined the flow of the nerve meridians and discovered that if you put pressure here, this will be the effect; if you put a needle there, that will be the effect. Using pressure and needles alters the flow of prana shakti. As a result, acupuncture, acupressure and the study of the nerve meridians have become the main source of information about nadis. However, originally the subject of nadis was dealt with in marma vijñana, which speaks of 72,000 channels that conduct the flow of prana to each and every organ, system, joint and muscle.

These flows of prana are controlled and guided by two major nadis: pingala and ida, the solar and lunar energies, prana shakti and chitta shakti. Prana shakti manages the physical behaviour of the body and chitta shakti manages the subtle behaviour of the mind. They are not two different things; they are part of the same. You have muscles and you have strength. A muscle is physiological, made up of fibres; strength is not physiological, it is just the strength of those physiological fibres. If you see a muscle, there is bound to be strength there; they are part of the same structure, although the muscle and strength can be experienced separately as well. Prana is like a muscle and chitta is like the strength of the muscle; they function together. Prana is the one managing the body: the movement, nourishment and sustenance of annamaya kosha, and chitta is the subtle one managing the internal, mental functions and the psychological and psychic behaviour. Ida and pingala are the two main pathways for the flow of prana, one gross, the other subtle; they control all the nadis in our body. Every other nadi flows out of them and purification of these two nadis is the primary purpose of nadi shodhana pranayama.

– *Printed in Progressive Yoga Vidya Training, Series 4,
Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*

Yoga and the Digestive Fire

Swami Karma Karuna Saraswati, New Zealand

Fire is a force of nature. It is used for survival, however, if it is over-activated it can destroy and if it is under-activated it goes out. Often fire is associated with flames but this is only the most physical aspect of the fire element. In the yogic view, fire is a powerful and transformative energy existing in the macrocosmos and the microcosmos. The digestive system is the inner fire within the physical body that sustains digestion, energetic levels and is increasingly showing itself to be vital to overall mental and physical health.

The gut

Many Eastern systems such as Ayurveda, Chinese Medicine and yoga theory have considered the digestive system the centre of health for the whole body for thousands of years. Science is finally getting on the bandwagon with research supporting the importance of digestive health not only for physical but also mental wellbeing. There are approximately 200 million neurons in the gut, which send signals to the brain, and the brain sends messages back out to other body organs. So what the gut tells the brain influences many other bodily systems.

The gut is often called the second brain. There is also a growing body of evidence showing that the strains of bacteria that are predominant in our gut influence mental and physical wellbeing. It is now recognized that serotonin, one of our feel-good hormones, is primarily signalled and produced by the gut. Deficient serotonin can contribute to anxiety, stress, depression and rage. Factors such as stress, our external environment, what we eat and how we breathe all change the gut bacteria and thus our mental health and the cycles goes on.

Manipura and the gunas

From the yogic viewpoint, this area of the body is related to the manipura chakra or the solar plexus energy centre. The name solar plexus itself reflects the fact that the internal sun lives here. The Sanskrit word *mani* means 'jewel' and *puri* 'city' thus, *manipura* is described as the 'city of jewels'. We know that jewels



are luminous, full of wealth and power. This symbolizes the qualities of the digestive area. In the physical body the inner fire regulates the digestive area, energizing various activities of organs, systems and processes of life. It is highly important to the inner wealth of energy and nutrients.

When the inner fire is rajasic (over-activated) it can express itself as a competitive force, power oriented and with driving ambition. This can be seen in the modern corporate world, where a thirst for success and power override the environment and other humans. The fire energy can also get depleted quickly when over-activated resulting in exhaustion or illness. Stress is another expression of a rajasic manipura. It is meant for emergency situations, like running away from a lion, however, much of the time, it is triggered by one's perceptions of pressure: financial, job or family challenges.

When the 'fight, flight, freeze' is activated, key physiological changes occur such as increased breath and heart rate, as well as shutting down digestion and reproduction. Many modern digestive challenges have their roots in long-term arousal of the stress response. Thus, it is very important to look at how we can turn on the 'relax, rest and digest' arm of the nervous system through enhancing our relaxation response and shifting our perspective towards life.

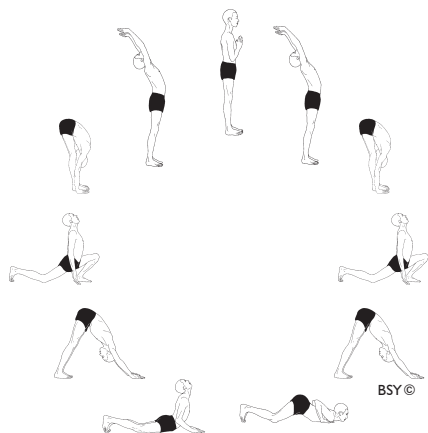
The tamasic (under-activated state) of manipura is one of powerlessness and lack of energy. People feel they have no

control over the events of their life, and they lack the power to implement change. As manipura chakra is the storehouse of prana or fuel, if the storehouse is depleted, then physical health becomes poor, and depression and lack of zest for life can manifest. There may also be sluggish digestion and excess mucus in the body, also resulting in illness.

When the fire centre is balanced, the person will have a strong digestion, energy to accomplish anything (in a balanced way) and will feel healthy and vital. A person with a balanced fire chakra, will usually do actions that benefit humanity and for higher spiritual purposes. In order to create balance in the inner fire, yogic tools can be of incredible support. Certain hatha yoga practices can be used to either calm the nervous system and the inner fire or to activate it.

Yogic perspective and practices

Restorative yoga practices, diaphragmatic breathing and yoga nidra help to ignite the relaxation response, which supports strong digestion. Other postures act directly to strengthen and balance the internal fire by strengthening and activating the abdominal muscles and organs and activating or balancing the fire. The yoga practice of Salute to the Sun, *surya namaskara*, is another powerful practice to awaken the internal sun energy and leave one feeling relaxed and energized simultaneously.



Breathing practices are also important to support the digestive system. Diaphragmatic breathing is the fastest way to bring about the relaxation response. The breath is with us 24/7 and is the only autonomic response that is also under our conscious control. When we are conscious of the breath, it is a gift that allows us to manage our mind, emotions and change our physiology.

Other more classical breathing practices such as *bhastrika pranayama* are heating and activating and work by strengthening the internal fire. It increases the vital energy of the practitioner. Due to a rapid exchange of air in the lungs, more oxygen is available to the body to feed all the cells and carbon dioxide is pumped out, releasing toxins. The heating nature of the practice increases metabolism and burns up waste products, removing diseases caused by the imbalance of the water, earth and wind elements within the body.

Beyond the physical body, it is important to begin developing an awareness of our mental patterns and actions especially around stress and food. A meditation practice known as inner silence or *antar mouna* helps us to become an observer. How do we utilize our energy? Are we acting out of anger, from stress, from a selfish drive or out of insecurity? Do we eat to live or live to eat? This type of self-analysis can support a gradual process of transformation and lead to a more balanced use and management of our fire energy and a more healthy digestion.

With the conscious use of the element fire in the micro and macrocosmos, we can transform our life to create greater health, life energy and a drive towards positive action to help others and ourselves. Ultimately, inner transformation leads to outer changes allowing the fire of life to burn in a balanced way.



Start Sadhana Now

Swami Sivananda Saraswati



16th September 1950. Swami Sivananda addressed the students of the B.N. College, Patna University. The following is an extract:

“My dear brothers, don’t think you can study the *Gita* after you have grown old, when you are 50 or 70 years of age. You don’t know how to control this body. The legs have become very luxurious. You cannot sit in padmasana. Now you can start practising padmasana; if you feel the pain apply some oil. Make the body light by light food and pranayama. Practice of bhastrika purifies the nadis. Many people nowadays suffer from constipation; if they practise a little pranayama, their constipation will vanish. Practise bhujangasana, shalabhasana and dhanurasana. They will make the spine elastic. They will increase the peristalsis also. Don’t take churan or powder, but practise asanas.

Meditate on the nature of the self. 'I am *Satchidananda-Existence-Knowledge-Bliss Absolute*'. Meditate on divine qualities. If you are not able to practise this abstract meditation, then meditate on the sun, the light, or all-pervading ether or air. Meditate on the light that is shining in your heart; meditate on those dream pictures that you sometimes get. Meditate on the form of your guru or saints. Meditate on anything your mind likes best. Meditate on the form of your father, on his qualities.

Get up at 4 am. This is not possible if you go to bed at 12 after having been to the cinema. Nowadays cinema houses are springing up everywhere, every day. They produce all sorts of eye diseases. The mind is also filled with craving and restlessness. That is what the cinema bestows on you. Yes, you are eager to go to the cinema.

*Paranjikhani vyatrinat swayambhuh,
Tasmat paran pashyati na antaraatman,
kashchit dheera.*

We want such upanishadic *dheeras*, people with wisdom. One who dies in war is not the only dheera. A spiritual hero is also a dheera. The external warfare will end in a few months or years; nowadays with atomic and hydrogen bombs, the duration of wars is much shortened. But this is not the case with the internal warfare. It goes on for years together, for several lives. The termination of this war depends on the amount of scientific knowledge that you have acquired.

The scientist is a raja yogi only; but his mind works in different grooves. He has given us much comfort but has increased our restlessness. For all his mastery of science, he is groping in darkness. He won't find the atma through or in his laboratory. *Atma* is the self – to attain which you will have to withdraw the mind from the external objects and direct it within.

When you close your eyes for a little while, at once you want to open them. You have not practised meditation. If you study for four or five years, you can become a MA, if you write



a thesis, you can become a PhD. But to develop a single virtue it takes several years.

Be regular in your japa. Be serious. This is your life problem. You must reach the goal. Discipline the indriyas. There is a great power in the Lord's name. When a man is bitten by a cobra, he gives a telegram to one who knows the mantra; and the man is cured. If I come near you and utter the word bichchu, scorpion, you at once jump up. When I say rasagulla, your mouth waters. When I say 'You are a donkey', you get enraged. What is there: have you developed four legs? When such is the power of mere words, what a great power must be in the Lord's name? Prahlada and Mira knew the power of the name.

The spiritual seed must be sown when you are young. Even when you are studying in college, get up in the early morning and meditate. Just as a powerful lens is made only by rubbing it – rub, rub, and rub the mind and make it pure. Don't argue much on transcendental matters. Arguments fail. The frail intellect will not be able to grasp *adhyatmic*, spiritual, truths. When you are in a delirious condition, the little intellect does not function. Even the best doctors are baffled at times: they are unable to explain certain states of a man. They call them idiosyncrasies. This is because the mind is a finite instrument; it is frail; when one is under chloroform, the intellect vanishes. Let us not depend upon this finite intellect. Let us repeat Ram Nam.

– From Sivananda's Lectures, during All-India and Ceylon
Tour – 1950, Chronicler Swami Venkatesananda

Understanding Prana

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Manas and buddhi are the dimensions of logic. When you come to the dimension of feeling, *bhava*, you are dealing with chitta and ahamkara. The expressions of chitta are recognized as the six conditions or *swabhavas* of mind, which have a distinct identity, *guna* or attribute associated with it. The six are: *kama*, passion; *krodha*, anger; *lobha*, greed; *moha*, infatuation; *mada*, arrogance; and *matsarya*, envy. These are the expressions of chitta beyond vrittis and samskaras.

Infusing positive prana

Many times in meditation, when the vritti of arrogance, passion or greed comes up, it becomes very intense and powerful. You might have heard stories of meditators who lost control and were unable to handle their own behaviour and actions, becoming like a mad person. The intensity is so strong that it colours the manas and buddhi. It does not remain separate from manas and buddhi.

Even the *samskaras* or impressions are coloured by one of the six conditions. The basic foundation of chitta are the six conditions, and the impressions and memories represent the extension of these six conditions. For instance, if you have a memory of some anger in your life, which you have not released, it is coming from *krodha*, an underlying foundation of chitta. You can forget a person, but you cannot forget *krodha*. That *shakti*, that power, remains within you. You can clear the memory of the person or the incident from the mind, but that is only one instance of the experience of *krodha*. *Krodha* exists as part of the nature of chitta.

For pacification of this nature of chitta, you have to withdraw the prana from *krodha*. You can then be angry at one person and smiling at the next person, both at the same

time. It is possible when you are not holding on to something, rather you are making a factual statement. This is a method to deal with the experiences of chitta.

When you have a passion and zeal to do something, to achieve something, first analyze it. If you are doing it in the right manner the outcome will be appropriate and correct, and then you follow the progress. If not, simply remove the prana from that idea and it will die a natural death. You don't have to feel, 'Oh because of this I can't do it now.' You don't have to go into the state of self-pity. If you do so, you are not removing the negative inside, instead you are giving food to the negative feelings more and more. By feeling sad or bad, you are giving more vitamins and blood to something that needs to die. You are keeping it alive by moving into a state where the absence of something is making you sad.

From this perspective, the six conditions are expressions of chitta, and prana has to be taken from them for the mind to attain harmony. You then move into the realm of *aham*, where you simply experience your being at present, 'I know I am because I exist.' You experience this, which is the self-awareness, self-identity.

Working with prana

Pranas are many in number. Usually only ten are spoken about, the five major ones: prana, apana, udana, samana and vyana; and the five minor ones: devadatta, kurma, naga, krikara and dhananjaya. There are also other forms of prana: manas prana, buddhi prana, chitta prana, aham prana. Beyond these also there are other pranas which direct this dimension of experience and connection.

Prana is an important aspect of the raja yoga tradition. The chakras and kundalini also represent prana. The Samkhya system does not speak of chakras or kundalini. It speaks of the turiya state. This is one reason why people have not understood prana in the right context, and why their advancement in meditation is hampered.



You think of meditation as dealing with either the senses: inputs that you are receiving from outside, or dealing with the mind: what you are generating inside. You try to sort and solve these two areas, yet the connecting agent between the senses and the mind, which is prana, the cause of discontentment, continues to remain. You only avoid the symptoms, but the cause is strengthened by giving prana to it, by thinking about it. Just as soil is given nourishment by adding compost, any experience is given nourishment by thinking about it. This kind of thinking becomes brooding, brooding becomes worry, worry takes you into depression, and then a solution is hard to find.

The idea of prana pratyahara is to first awaken the pranas and then pacify them. In Sri Swamiji's satsangs and lectures, he speaks of a system called nyasa, which is found in the tantras. In this system, different types of mantras are placed on different parts of the body, each intended to evoke a different pranic response. There are mantras for *shuddhikaran*, purification. When these are placed on specific regions of the body through touch, cleansing of the pranic centres and channels takes place.



It is a process where mantras are chanted and simultaneously different parts of the body are touched to activate the prana shakti in those parts. There are practices of nyasa where only the mental process is used: different mantras are placed in different parts of the body by visualizing the part in your mind.

Sri Swamiji derived the practice of yoga nidra from the nyasa system. Placement of a mantra creates a response in the prana located in the region, and this idea was used in the past for spiritual realization. While most people know of the relaxation aspect of yoga nidra, Sri Swamiji in his original teachings used it for spiritual purposes. He gave two systems of yoga nidra: one, the short, forty-minute one for relaxation, which everyone practises; the other, the long, three-four hour one for spiritual awakening, which he taught to only a few people.

The glue

Prana shakti is not just prana, apana, samana, udana, vyana, or devadatta, kurma, naga, krikara, dhananjaya, or even manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara pranas. It is a homogeneous experience of everything put together. Everything that is fragmented is put together and you see that as a form or experience. The agent that puts everything together is prana shakti, the active element. An example: you have a jigsaw puzzle and you are putting one piece at a time in its place. Who is doing it? The jigsaw puzzle is not doing it by itself. Somebody is putting it together and that is you. You are not

the jigsaw puzzle; you are the maker of the picture of the puzzle. Prana shakti operates in the same manner, according to vedantic thought.

The universe and the cosmic self are seen as pulsations of prana. From the vedantic perspective, everything is pulsation of prana. In the absence of prana, destruction takes place. As long as the pranas are in the body, there is no decay. The body begins to decay the moment it dies. Why is it not decaying now while you are alive? Why does it wait for the prana to leave the body before it begins its decay? It is because prana is the glue, the agent that holds everything together.

Reaching the luminous chitta

The practice of prana pratyahara belongs to the original raja yoga tradition. You progress to it only after you have worked with the senses, manas and buddhi. When you work with the senses, you learn to detach them from their associations. When you work with your manas, you know how to direct your senses and mind to do the right thing. When you work with buddhi, you are able to bring luminosity to the dark areas of your own intelligence and cultivate special traits of discrimination, to know the difference between right and wrong, appropriateness and inappropriateness, correctness and wrongness of a situation, an event, an act or a thought. Buddhi allows the understanding of dharma to take place. Therefore, buddhi is an important component.

Chitta allows clearing of the six conditions. When chitta becomes luminous, you can say that it is the experience of self-realization, the absence of everything that was detrimental. There is luminosity of everything that is uplifting, positive and enriching. This is illumination of chitta. Even Patanjali has used this idea, by stating that when you work through the vrittis of chitta, you can experience samadhi, which is illumination.

*– 22 September 2018, Raja Yoga Yatra 3,
Ganga Darshan, Munger*

Mental and Spiritual Dimension of Yoga

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Then comes the mental side of yoga, which is composed of prana and consciousness. Energy and mind, in the mental side of yoga, both have to be dealt with. Patanjali deals with mind and the classical raja yoga deals with prana. Combining both of them becomes a good tool to work with both areas of prana and consciousness.

Two ideas are important in Patanjali's raja yoga to deal with the mind. Forget the eightfold path, forget samadhi, just think of two things, drashta and chitta vritti. *Drashta*, to become the observer. You can only become the observer of the mind. You cannot become the observer of shakti, energy or prana, rather you become the expresser or the experiencer of shakti, yet you can become the observer and witness of the mind.

What are we to observe in the mind? Thoughts, in reality are not worth our time, for they are totally irrational, idiotic and sometimes misleading. So thoughts are out. What we observe as chitta vritti are the memories. Everything is decided by past memory. How you are going to interact with people is decided by past memories already filed in your brain. It is those memories which bring out a reaction, a response. Those responses are the vrittis. If you see your adversary, your enemy who you haven't seen for many years, you will be seething inside. As long as you are aware of your enemy,









you will be seething inside. That will be your reaction, your vritti.

It is the memory component, the chitta component, that we have to look into, not the manas component. If we understand drashta and chitta, then the subject of mind becomes clear. It is said that the mind is composed of manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara; *manas* being the reflective mind, *buddhi* the intellectual mind, *chitta* the *smriti* or memory mind, and *ahamkara* the ego mind, I-mind.

The thinking, reflective mind, manas, is superficial. Thoughts can change. Just as you change your clothes, your thoughts can change. Buddhi is generally relegated to the background as the memories are quite strong. When buddhi comes in, logic, intelligence, then *viveka*, discrimination comes in. Otherwise buddhi takes a back seat.

Chitta is the active principle. Behind chitta is the ahamkara, the ego principle. Chitta and ego together constitute chitta vritti: it is ego which responds to the memory. It is ego which takes the stand when memory says, 'this has happened'. The real focus of pratyahara, dharana and dhyana is now shifting from manas and buddhi to chitta and ahamkara.

In the classical raja yoga you see everything as pranic expression. There is a question, 'Why can't you erase your memory?' The answer is, 'It is still coloured by colours of prana'. Visualize this, you take a polaroid picture. You keep it in your album. As long as that picture is not exposed to sun and light, it will retain its colours. If you expose the picture to sunlight, the colours will begin to fade and gradually after some time, the image will fade, and only the white paper will remain once again. Memory is like that. The memory which you had of your early days is still as vibrant and alive as it was then. If you remove the prana from the memory, the colours come out and it becomes sepia and black and white, it will fade away. Another way of *nirodha* or controlling, is to remove the prana from the memory and not give it any fuel. Once prana is removed, the memory will dissolve, dissipate, it will be gone.

Spiritual dimension

In the mental dimension of yoga, the systems lead you to the state of meditation. Meditation is complete absorption in experience. When that meditation experience happens, that absorption, then you are ready for the spiritual aspect of yoga. Until now you only had to play with your mind. When *dhyana*, absorption has happened, then you come to the spiritual dimension of yoga. By the time you come to *dhyana*, your mental attitude and awareness has become much more positive, your stressors have been managed much more efficiently and there is more peace and harmony.

You are more in control of your sensorial and mental behaviours. You are on a good path and spiritual realization becomes a living experience, not just fantasy or imagination. According to Sri Swamiji, the goal of human life is to cultivate spiritual awareness, not God realization. That spiritual awareness is the awareness of the positives.

In the second chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* (2:54), Arjuna asks Krishna, 'How does an enlightened being live in this world? What does he eat? What does he think? What does he drink? How does he live?' Krishna says to Arjuna, 'Just like you and me and everyone else. They may be enlightened, but as long as they are in this world they have to live according to the rules and laws of the world, the senses, the body, nature and everything. They will feel hungry. They will feel sleepy. They will feel everything that a normal human being experiences. The only difference is that they will be seeing the luminosity in everything, while others see darkness everywhere'.

It is a simple statement. The enlightened being will see luminosity everywhere, while all others see darkness everywhere. This luminosity can mean hope, positivity, optimism, inner strength.

– 2 October 2019, *Progressive Yoga Vidya Training*,
Ganga Darshan, Munger

Goodness

Swami Sivananda Saraswati



Supreme goodness is God.

Goodness is the state or quality of being good in any sense of that word especially kindness, benevolence, morality, virtue. It is an act or expression showing goodness. It is an act of compassion or mercy. If you do good to humanity, you nearly approach the gods. Be good and do good – the whole ethics and right conduct are contained in this.

A good man always lives with God. He lives in God. He has a divinity within him. A good man who does good actions attains fame and longevity. A good deed is never lost. It purifies the heart and leads to the descent of divine light and the dawn of divine grace. He who sows courtesy reaps friendship. He who plants kindness, reaps love.

Goodness is love in action. It is noble to be good. Goodness is the greatest virtue. Every good deed is a grain of seed for

immortality or eternal life. Promote the welfare of the whole world. Do all the good you can in all the ways you can, to all people you can, in every place you can, at all the times you can, with all the zeal, strength, love and heart and interest you can, as long as ever you can.

Nations and peoples do not obey the laws of goodness. Therefore, the present world is beset with evils of various sorts. Cultivate good habits. Goodness is a habit. Goodness of nature is an inclination. Without goodness man is a brute or vermin. He is a mischievous, wretched, despicable thing on this earth. He is a burden on this earth.

How to become good

Return good for evil. It is the sign of a real man. Love begets love, hatred begets hatred. Doing good and bringing happiness to others brings goodness and happiness to you. Good is the conquest over evil. It is not the absence of evil.

Little self-denial, honest service, little words of cheer, encouragement, sympathy and kindness, little acts of kindness, little virtuous deeds, little silent victories over temptations – these will pave a long way to the attainment of eternal bliss, perennial joy, everlasting peace and immortality.

The law of cause and effect is inexorable and unrelenting. You reap a harvest of suffering, poverty, pain and sorrow, because you have sown the seeds of evil in the past. You reap a harvest of plenty and bliss, owing to your sowing the seeds of good. Try to understand this law. You will then begin to sow only seeds of good.

Entertain good, sublime, divine thoughts. Shut your mind from evil thoughts just as you shut your doors against the approach of enemies, thieves and dacoits. Always perform good actions. Evil cannot enter your mind now.

Even a little good thinking and a little doing good are highly benevolent. It will lead to eternal bliss. Then, why not try a little good thinking and good doing? To do good is human. To be good is divine.

Yoga Chakra 2019

Most of the practices might have been known but being taught in an ashram environment and as part of a collective sadhana gave new input and information on myself (and consequently their effect). Thank you for that.

The most important lesson for me was the unexpected focus on happiness, emotion, pratipaksha bhavana, heart . . .

It made me realize a misconception I had, which might have been the reason my years in yoga classes had not really affected my lifestyle. I wrongly expected things to change by themselves just by sitting on a yoga mat for 4-6-10 hours a week. Happiness was never part of my 'yogic dictionary'.

Self-observation and courage for acceptance were my main 'goals', but no attempt was made to reverse negativity or focus on positivity. Now I realize happiness is a choice and needs my active participation and mental reprogramming. This 'power' I realized I have is the greatest gift.

I found the satsangs and the meditations on the review of the day and the pratipaksha bhavana especially helpful in creating a positive mental environment which I try to hold on to.

Lastly, distinguishing pleasure and happiness has not always been clear, as at first, reverting from pleasure brings a small degree of sadness. Swami Niranjan's definition made me realize a lot about my life and free time. I found seva and especially the evening programs very good examples on how one can direct all the awakened energy in a healthy way and most importantly, find ways to fill up one's time that bring joy and sharing without attachment and introversion. Thank you from my heart for this amazing experience.

– Swami Atmaratna, Australia

The biggest learning for me has been a precisely defined method to take ownership of my own happiness. The biggest mental unease has been my habit of planting entities outside of my control, including God, and blaming them for all my problems. That happiness is a choice and that I can choose intelligently every moment with awareness to be happy has been not just a learning, but also the biggest gift that I shall carry forward with me from this course.

For this a heartfelt thank you to Bihar School of Yoga and especially Swamiji for making me experience this simple wisdom: my most cherished treasure can be with me through an intelligent application of my discriminating powers.

I have made the sankalpa to be aware of what thoughts I feed into my mind, what I can eliminate and what I can retain through a daily practice of observing my mind to be responsible for my own happiness. With gratitude.

– *Devjyoti, New Delhi*

I decided to attend the Yoga Chakra course to deepen my understanding of yoga and to achieve inner peace despite all the stress, anxiety and tensions that surround me in daily life.

I got all the answers I sought:

- to be aware of the thoughts that come up in my mind;
- to cultivate the witness attitude and not be involved with the thoughts;
- to guide my thoughts towards positive behaviour;
- to observe and study myself which is important and involves effort not just intellectual analysis;
- to keep correcting myself if I want to improve my lifestyle.

I learnt that change can be achieved by fine-tuning prana and mind and increasing positive thinking. Thank you very much for organizing the course.

– *Jignasu Ananda, Slovenia*

Where Do We Go From Here?

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



When we ask ourselves the purpose of our life, ultimately, three things are relevant. The first is *sanyam*, knowing how to restrain ourselves. In the absence of restraint, there is no end to ambitions. These eventually lead one astray and destroy peace of mind and the feeling of contentment. The second purpose is developing the qualities of the heart. A human being is a combination of the faculties of head, heart and hands: intellect, sentiments and action. Most often, we

highlight the use and faculties of the intellect, and relegate the faculties of the heart – sentiments and feelings – to the background, thinking that if we express them, people will consider us weak and manipulate us.

The third purpose is to help others, to look beyond actions and performances that are self-centred and self-oriented and are intended to fulfil our own needs. So these are the three components that have to be managed: restraint, cultivation of the softer qualities of life and learning to lend a helping hand. If you adopt any of the three as your aim in life, cultivate a particular attitude and mentality, you will discover that the vacuum that you feel after having attained the peak of material prosperity is filled. This is the message given in the Upanishads as well.

Practise restraint

Now, let us analyze the first component, restraint. There are too many distractions inherent in the modern lifestyle. We want to play with every new thing that comes on to the market because it helps us boost our self-image, our ego. It is no doubt true that money brings vices with it. The outcome of acquiring material prosperity is gaining vices because you now have more confidence in the green paper than in your own abilities. And when you lack inner confidence, the mind, body and the family fabric become weak. Confusion, stress and anxiety become the order of the day. This is constantly happening to us. We are unable to manage pressures and stresses. We are unable to manage our own dissatisfactions, and there is always a craving to find the missing link. We are always trying to find something which will make us more fulfilled, contented and happy.

Yoga says that if we are able to restrain some of the dissipated and destructive flow of energy and action, we will become more creative. But how can one acquire the quality of restraint? There is a practical method, a theory, which I call the SWAN principle. SWAN is an acronym standing for Strength, Weakness, Ambition and Need. To practise it, on a sheet of paper, in one column make a list of all your strengths, all your positive qualities. In another column make a list of all your weaknesses and shortcomings that you feel inhibit your growth and clarity of mind. Now make a list of your ambitions. Even if you want to acquire the moon, write it down. Make another list of your immediate needs and long-term needs, the bare minimum that you require in order to lead a fulfilled and satisfied life. Maintain these four lists, look at them from time to time, and cross out and add until you are satisfied that they reflect a true picture of your character and personality.

Now, pick out one strength and cultivate that to the maximum. Do not go overboard, use your common sense. Next, pick out one weakness, and try to overcome it in one month. Try to analyze an ambition. Does it reflect your innermost

desire or not? Try to analyze your needs, and find a balance between your ambitions and needs. Transcend and overcome one weakness, cultivate one strength, and find a balance between ambition and need. Spend five minutes every day doing this; sit down quietly by yourself when you come home, and reflect upon this. In this way, with the development of an awareness of your performances during the day, you will be able to develop a good structure of restraint. You will be able to function using optimum strength, having transcended the weaknesses and debilities of the personality, and knowing the difference between need and ambition.

Develop the qualities of the heart

The second point is developing the soft qualities of life. People have always believed that brilliance or genius is determined by the highest IQ. However, in this century, people are not thinking about IQ any more. They are thinking about EQ, emotional quotient. You can no doubt raise your level of intelligence, but at what cost? Besides, such development of intelligence is directed towards material understanding, not personal understanding.

A basic flaw in our life is that we are not educated. I am not talking about degrees and diplomas. In university, school and college, we are educated to cultivate, nurture and develop the intellect, but we do not have any experience of life. Nobody has taught us how to face problems and stresses. Nobody has told us: "Whenever you are under stress, lie down on the bed or on the ground and count your breath back from 30 to 1." We do not know a simple thing like that. We study medicine, law and science, for an MBA, but we do not study human character and behaviour, or how to modify them. This is a great flaw in our education system, and it will take its toll on humanity one day when we discover that we are unable to face even the least amount of tension and stress.

Developing EQ, emotional quotient, or making our feelings more expansive and soft, is another direction in which life has



to develop, especially in the case of achievers. You need to have a philosophy of life, which need not be a religious belief. It is irrelevant what religious path you follow or whether you are a believer or non-believer. You need to have a philosophy in life which guides your performance and defines your aspiration.

What kind of a philosophy should that be? It should be to overcome the negative traits and restrictive qualities of life and to cultivate the benevolent and peaceful aspects. How do you do it? Practise 10 minutes of meditation every night before going to sleep. This is an effort you should make for the sake of your own sanity and peace. Allot 23 hours and 50 minutes to your society, family, profession, the world, and 10 minutes for your peace, benefit, tranquillity and sense of wellbeing. For these 10 minutes, sit down quietly and develop a thought or idea in the mind: "For these 10 minutes I am not this body, nor the experience of comfort and discomfort associated with the body. I am not the mind, nor the experience of pleasure and pain that arise in the mind." Try to create total disidentification, total disconnection from the physical and the mental experiences. Now, if you are not the body, if you are not the mind, then what

are you? Just yourself, nothing more. And in that experience of yourself, experience the space, the stability, the silence inside.

Next, quickly review the activities of the day: "I woke up at this time in the morning, I had this for breakfast, I wore this, I read this, I saw this, I spoke this, I did this, I did that." If you find a challenging situation in which you reacted in a particular manner, then hold the reel there for few moments. Freeze the recording, look at it, and think how you will react if you encounter the same situation again. In a better way or in a worse way?

If you continue to do this every day for a month, you will find that your responses have changed. Instead of going like a bull in a china shop and shattering everything around, you are more careful, more conscious, more aware of what you are doing and more in control of your responses. You will be better able to manage your levels of stress by acknowledging them and saying, "Tomorrow I will find a better way to deal with this situation. I will not subject myself to the same agony that I underwent today." Cultivation of awareness will take place with this meditation. After having reviewed the activities of the day, observe the flow of the natural breath for five minutes, and try to take long, deep and slow breaths. This completes your 10-minute meditation practice.

You do not need to replace other practices or rituals that you may or may not be following. Include this meditation as a habit in your life, not as something you are forced to do. Without any complication, in a very simple manner, sit down, become still, disidentify from the body and the mind, review the activities of the day, analyze, say to yourself, "Tomorrow I will deal with this situation in a better way," plan, observe the breath, relax and stop. That's the meditation.

As you become more aware of your unconscious reactions and responses through this process, you will find that you begin to cultivate the softer qualities of life. These qualities come with understanding, with putting oneself in others' shoes, knowing the difficulties that they are facing, and trying

to find a compromise, balance and harmony between them, between your aspirations and others' performance.

Lend a helping hand

To lend a helping hand is the most important thing in life, because it allows you to connect with other beings. Humanity is one single club; there is no elite group and no deprived group. The groups may exist socially and economically, but as part of the life experience that we are all undergoing, there is no separation. Some people have had the opportunity to express themselves and others have not had such an opportunity. When their time comes, they too will shine. After all, it is the same brain, the same mind, the same force in each and every one; the application depends on the opportunities that one gets in life.

Swami Sivananda was an advocate of humanity. By profession he was a medical doctor, but he left his lucrative practice to become a sannyasin. And he became a sannyasin of the highest quality. There is a difference between those who take sannyasa because they are committed and those who are escaping from life. There are people who take sannyasa to escape from life, and there are people who take sannyasa because they want to commit themselves to help others grow and prosper. There are many who belong to the first category and a few who belong to the second. Swami Sivananda had only one aim in mind, "How can I help another person attain health, peace and prosperity?" And it is his teachings that are being lived in the institutions that are created in his name, Sivananda Math and the ashram.

Paramahamsaji also says that there is much hypocrisy in our lives. Life should be innocent, simple and joyous. We put on different masks every moment to project ourselves in a particular way. Even when we look at ourselves in the mirror, we have the masks on. We want to see ourselves differently, not as we are. We become so used to seeing ourselves in the mask that when we remove it, we don't recognize ourselves any more. "Am I really like this?" is the question that comes.

The only way we can feel free internally is by experiencing oneness, *atmabhava*, being able to see ourselves in other people. This is when we begin to understand them and their situations. Having come to this point, if we are capable, we should help them out. If not, we should direct them to somebody else. But a movement of cooperation must take place between human beings, not to satisfy our egos, but to help others come out of their misery.

There is a famous saying: "If a person is hungry, don't give him fish to eat, but teach him how to fish." This has been the principle of Swami Sivananda. He did not believe in charity; he said that charity is the mother of poverty, of dependence, weakness. He always emphasized the role of *purushartha*, self-effort, self-empowerment. To lend a helping hand, therefore, means that you empower another person to manage and look after their own life and be responsible for their peace and prosperity. This is the actual meaning of the phrase 'lend a helping hand'. And this is the idea of service or *seva*.

Paramahamsaji tells us, "If you go to the market to buy shoes or clothes for your two children, instead of buying two pairs, buy three. Two for your own children and one for the unknown child that you have adopted in your mind." There are enough deprived people in the world to whom you can give that pair of shoes or that uniform, and they will cherish it for the rest of their lives. They will always remember the kindness showered upon them. If every affluent citizen looks after the needs of one deprived citizen, in ten years there will be no poverty anywhere.

All you have to do is see yourself in that deprived state. We are very fortunate that we have enough to eat and also to waste. Eighty percent of the population in this country does not have a square meal a day. They are our fellow beings who need some encouragement, who need to know that they have not missed all the opportunities in life and that somebody is looking after them. If this becomes your one activity in life, you will die happy, knowing that you have brought smiles to

one person or family. When you have this realization, it will be a day of great satisfaction.

What next?

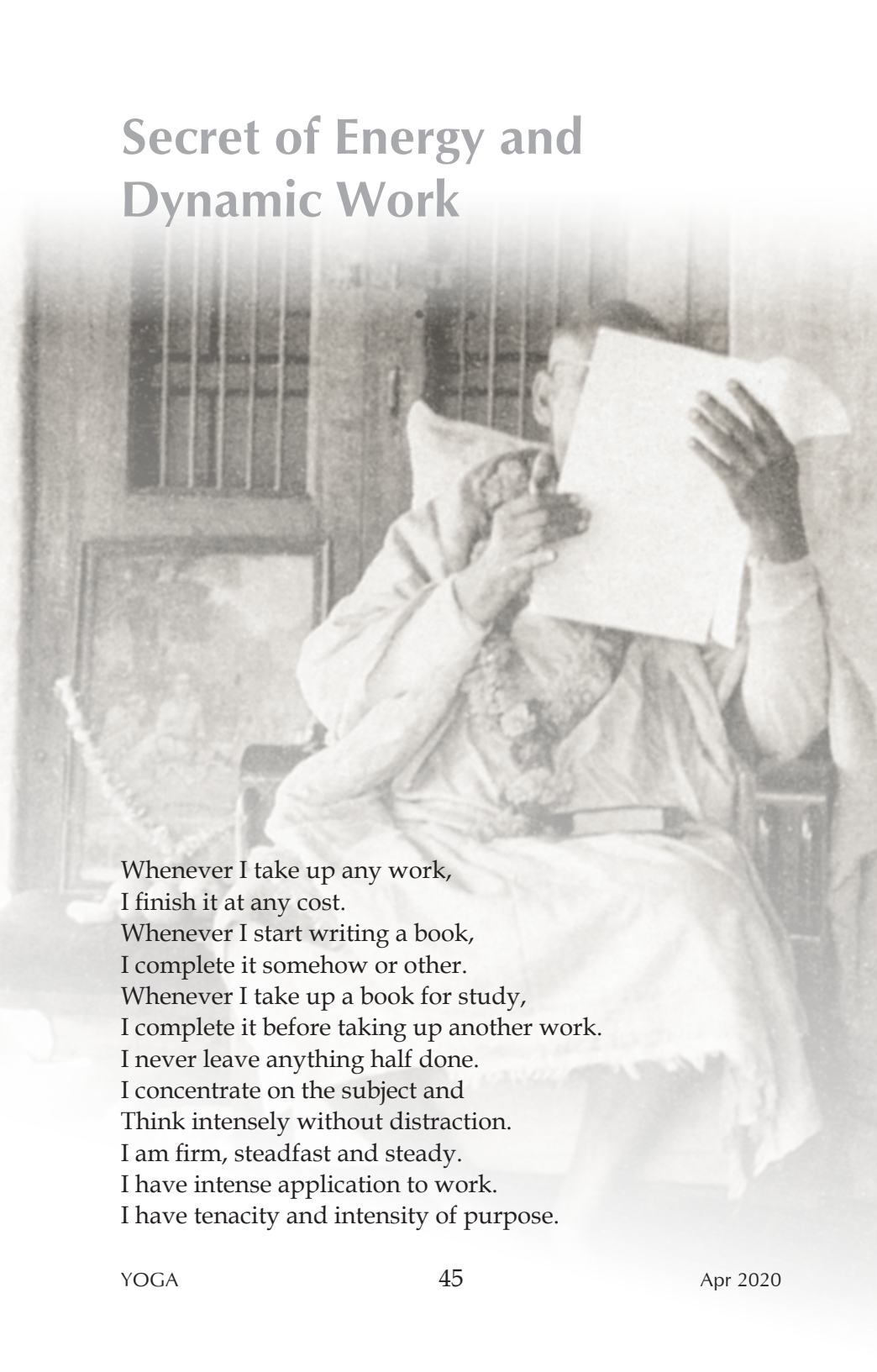
The three concepts of restraint, developing the softer qualities of the heart and clarity of mind, and lending a helping hand provide a definite direction and purpose to life, which acquisition of material prosperity cannot do. Today, we do need a direction in life. In this context, yoga assumes significance. Yoga is not what you read, hear about or see in the media. Yoga is a lifestyle, it is an attitude of the mind, it is the cultivation of the best that a human personality can offer. Yoga is developing and integrating the faculties of head, heart and hands. Yoga provides a method; it is also a tool to discover the excellence within. Once we discover the excellence, efficiency, clarity, awareness and understanding within, they reflect in our outer behaviour, in our performance and actions, and in our way of thinking.

By following these three simple precepts, we begin to involve ourselves in the practice of yoga. Making a list of our strengths, weaknesses, ambitions and needs, and being objective about it, is *swadhyaya*, self-observation. When you do not know how to control the frustrations and anxieties of life, what is the use of trying to find something which goes beyond the realm of thought and idea? One has to prepare the ground, like a farmer prepares the ground to sow seeds. Unless the ground is prepared, you can throw high quality seeds on it and they will never flower. But if the ground is prepared, there is a possibility that the majority of the seeds will flower. So prepare the ground. It is by following these precepts that I have been able to overcome the question "What next?" and you too will be able to.

– 24 February 2007,

*Talk to Young Presidents Organization, Bangalore, India,
printed in YOGA, Vol. 7, Issue 1 (January 2008),*

Secret of Energy and Dynamic Work



Whenever I take up any work,
I finish it at any cost.
Whenever I start writing a book,
I complete it somehow or other.
Whenever I take up a book for study,
I complete it before taking up another work.
I never leave anything half done.
I concentrate on the subject and
Think intensely without distraction.
I am firm, steadfast and steady.
I have intense application to work.
I have tenacity and intensity of purpose.

I am now 72 (in 1958). I keep myself busy. I am always blissful and happy. I can do more work. I personally attend to hundreds of students at the Ashram and manage the affairs of the Divine Life Society, the Forest University, the General Hospital and guide thousands of students at far off places through correspondence. I pay much attention to the Printing Press and the despatches of useful books to the students, libraries and religious institutions. I can do more. The secret of my energy for the dynamic work is the keeping up of the Divine Consciousness throughout.

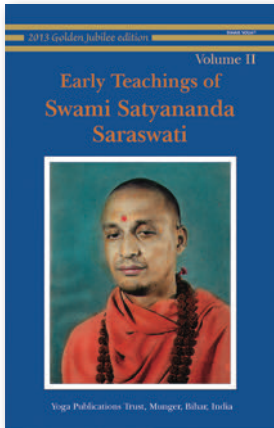
Change the angle of vision and be always happy and cheerful. See only good everywhere. Dance in joy. Saturate the mind with divine thoughts. You will at once feel tremendous, inner spiritual strength and spiritual power from within. The peace you enjoy now cannot be described in words.

Adopt any method that can make your mind move inward, that can make the mind one-pointed and steady. Keep control over the senses. Have a careful vigil and intense faith. Develop willpower. Otherwise, *vikshepa* and *alasya*, oscillation and laziness, will overpower you.

– Printed in Autobiography of Swami Sivananda Saraswati



Yoga for Businessmen



Which yoga practices should we do and how do we apply them in life?

Every asana exerts a mild influence on the glandular system by stimulating the chakras slightly. Pranayama has a deep influence over the nervous system. Just as cigarette has a mild influence and ganja has a more intense effect, so it is with asana and pranayama. Pranayama is a powerful tool. It acts like a bomb in transforming the human personality. The yoga shastras say pranayama is a means to control not only the prana but also the chitta and the whole concept of time, space and object. It is a system in which you extend the possibility of prana shakti into other spheres of your existence, beyond the waking, dreaming and sleeping dimensions.

Although the practices of yoga have become well known to people in all walks of life, still many businessmen do not understand how the chanting of *Om*, for example, can affect their business relationships. I quote the experience of a well-known company in Germany. Whenever their board of directors gathered together for meetings, there were always major disagreements, conflicts and problems, ultimately ending in bitter relationships and lack of cooperation. As a solution they introduced certain practices of yoga into their program. Before the meeting began they extinguished their cigarettes and closed their eyes for five to ten minutes. First they chanted *Om* several times together with a long *O* and short *M*. Then they concentrated for another three to five minutes on the natural breath which flows continuously, repeating mentally the mantra *Soham*. After finishing the practice they began



their business affairs. They found that this short and simple practice of yoga helped them not only in maintaining harmony and vitality in the meeting, but also in tackling the crucial problems of business in an efficient way.

For Hindus *Om* is a sacred mantra, but for scientists of the future generation *Om* may become a powerful tonic for tuning the whole mind. In the Medical University of Barcelona, doctors have conducted

research into the effects of *Om* chanting on the brain. Men and women of all ages, executives, students and housewives chanted *Om* in a variety of ways. They used short *O* and long *M*, long *O* and short *M*, equal *O* and *M*. They recorded the results on a sophisticated polygraph machine including ECG, EEG and GSR, registering hundreds of impulses simultaneously taking place in the body, as well as the alpha, beta, theta and delta waves.

Apart from changes recorded in different parts of the body, the most outstanding result was that the brainwaves alternated between alpha and theta. When *O* was being pronounced, alpha frequency was registered and theta frequency was recorded when *M* was chanted. A state of alpha intensity corresponds to a deep state of relaxation, and theta frequency represents a state of creativity and inspiration associated with states of deep meditation. Now the overall effect of these two alternating waves in the brain is a state of dynamic tranquillity. On the other hand, the state of relaxation normally experienced by an executive during a busy working day is one of passive tranquillity, where the mind feels lethargic and regresses back into the state of *tamas*. This dull state of relaxation can also be

induced through the use of narcotics, tranquillizers, alcohol or fatigue.

As a human being living in this period of modern technology, you must pause for a while and become aware of a bright light on the horizon. You are at the crossroads. You must decide whether your life will continue in the same rhythm as in the past or whether you will take a better, higher way of life through the practices of yoga.

Have you any advice on how to introduce a yoga discipline into one's life?

In yoga we say get up in the morning at four. Practise twenty minutes of asanas, ten minutes of pranayama, fifteen minutes of dhyana, and in this way prepare yourself for the day ahead. Not only is this a part of yogic discipline, but it should be an important discipline for any businessman, because he has to mobilize all his mental, emotional and psychic energies for managing the conflicts, worries, competition and financial problems that he faces daily. Sometimes your spiritual energies are also needed, for without intuition you will not succeed in business affairs. Business is not only dependant on logic and mathematics. Although they play an important part, they do not always work as well as intuition.

These energies combined constitute a state of dynamic tranquillity. When the mind is made wholly dynamic through the practices of dhyana yoga, it gives you excellent results. A concentrated, yet relaxed mind can do the most intense work for long periods of time without tiring. It is less disturbed by both outer and inner distractions and able to remain focused on the work in hand. This one-pointedness renders the mind more powerful, enabling it to act and think with great force.

The practice of dhyana yoga can also be done in the evening when you return home from work exhausted. Practise a meditative technique for ten to twenty minutes, not more, instead of reading the newspaper, turning on the television or relying on the cigarette. Please do not think that I am against

these things. Yoga does not disagree with smoking, after all, Lord Shiva also did it! Yoga only questions one's dependence on it and its effectiveness in helping a person to relieve tensions.

One of the best ways to relax is to go into your room, switch off the lights, sit down quietly for fifteen minutes and concentrate on the spontaneous natural breath which has been going on from the moment of your birth, but you were never aware of it. This practice is known as *ajapa japa*, awareness of the natural breath combined with mantra. The mantra is the silent rhythm of *Soham*, heard within the sound of the breath. Follow it with every inspiration and expiration. Hear *So* as you breathe in and *Ham* as you breathe out. The daily practice of *ajapa japa* can make you feel refreshed and dynamic once again within a short time.

What is a yogic attitude towards life?

Life as a sannyasin does not mean non-involvement with the activities which a businessman faces. The Bihar School of Yoga has its wings all over the world. The work of spreading the mission of yoga involves the practicalities of life and business, finance, property, construction of buildings, institutions and constitutions, and is done by sannyasins who are spread far and wide. Do not believe that I am a man without complications. Everything in life is not smooth, but the mind has to be smooth. Your way of thinking, your method of tackling the problems of life must be smooth.

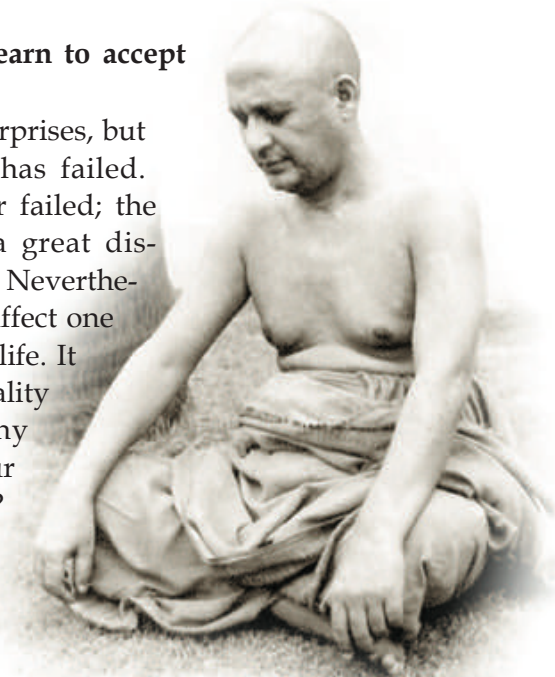
I have been able to involve myself in the activities of life both spiritual and institutional, and in such a way that the mind has remained in a tranquil but dynamic state. I don't believe that you must stop thinking or you should punish the mind by imposing restrictions on it. Rather, you must know how to think. The mind is your friend if it is properly tuned by the practices of yoga. However, an undisciplined mind will be your enemy in life. A good car can still kill you if it is not serviced, maintained and driven by a careful and trained driver.

The mind is like an ocean. When the devas churned the ocean they extracted fourteen jewels from it. These jewels symbolize the positive and negative qualities of the mind. These two natural tendencies of the mind stand opposite each other in conflict. One is trying to balance the mind, the other is trying to distract the mind. We must use sushumna nadi as the base and churn the mind into awakening with the vast practices of dhyana yoga.

Let things come and learn how to manage with life. *Pravritti marga* is the life of involvement. *Nivritti marga* is the life of renunciation, or non-involvement. Everyone, including sannyasins and children, belong to the path of pravritti. Let us involve ourselves in the pravritti marga with a mind that is basically tuned by nivritti. In this way we will be able to manage the affairs of life so efficiently that we will succeed without suffering from coronary thrombosis, which is the unfortunate complaint of most successful businessmen in the world today.

Swamiji, how can one learn to accept failure in life?

You may fail in your enterprises, but everyone at some time has failed. Napoleon and Alexander failed; the Mahabharata war was a great disappointment for Krishna. Nevertheless, failure should only affect one particular aspect of your life. It should not affect the totality of your personality. Why should failure disturb your digestion or your sleep? Why should failure change your attitude towards your wife and children? Failure is failure, accept it.



A warrior like Arjuna had to carry a bow and arrow in his hand; a man in the battle of life must also carry a bow and arrow in the form of yoga. You are riding in the chariot which is the physical body. It is being driven by five horses, the senses. The chariot is being guided by the spirit or *atman*. Do not put down your bow. Yoga has to be heard and yoga has to be practised, not only in a hermitage, monastery or ashram, but in the face of difficulties, conflicts and possible defeat.

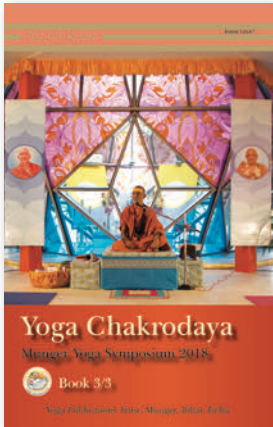
You must understand and convince yourself of the great potential of yoga. A life of fulfilment backed by the power of yoga should be your conviction. You must say, "I have heard about yoga and my ignorance has been dispelled. I have no further doubts about yoga in my mind." In the *Bhagavad Gita* (18:78), Arjuna said to Krishna, "Wherever is Krishna, the lord of yoga; wherever is Partha, the wielder of the bow; there is prosperity, victory, expansion and a sound policy. Such is my conviction."

Life offers great possibilities. Each person has a duty to perform and we cannot remain inactive. The world has become aware of the great boons of yoga, irrespective of religious or national affiliations. This yoga has been lost for a long time, but now it has arisen and is producing good teachers armed with complete knowledge of yoga therapy, yoga science, yoga psychology, yoga history and yoga culture.

Whatever their profession in business, medicine, scientific research, education or family life, people all over the world have accepted yoga with open minds. They are learning it, practising it, propagating it, and above all, living it. Yoga is going to be a mighty culture in the future world order, more powerful and more permanent than any socio-political creed.

– 21 March 1979, Chamber of Commerce, Bangalore,
printed in Early Teachings of Swami Satyananda Saraswati,
Volume II

For Sadhakas



Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati: When Sri Swami Satyananda established the International Yoga Fellowship, he had a vision of people living the yogic life, interacting and presenting a style of life. That was the idea of Yoga Fellowship. However, fellowship represents the finality of yoga, not its beginning. The beginning of the yogic movement was propagation, where more and more people were introduced to yoga. Ninety percent of

these people were focused on fulfilling their physical needs through yoga. Out of the one million people globally who practise yoga today, ninety percent are fitness-oriented. They are those who come to a yoga class, practise, and then go their own way. Of the ten percent that remains, many become yoga teachers and also go their own way. Out of the remaining, there are only a few who want to deepen their understanding and experience of yoga, and they form the nucleus of the fellowship.

The Yoga Fellowship signifies a group of people who are experiencing and living yoga, not who are only practising it. The second chapter of yoga is taking us one step closer to this idea of Yoga Fellowship. Until now, most of you were part of the ninety percent group. The outcome of the Munger Yoga Symposium is that a group is emerging which aspires to deepen the experience and live yoga. They will constitute the beginning of the Yoga Fellowship.

The vision of the first chapter was to create many centres and teachers to propagate yoga. Thousands of teachers and thousands of centres came into existence in these fifty years. The vision of the second chapter is not propagation; therefore



teachers are not needed. What is needed is people who can live the teachings. That is why it has been emphasized during the Munger Yoga Symposium that the training being given is not for teaching others.

We envision that in the next ten to fifteen years, three or four locations in the world will develop where yoga is being lived. Instead of a thousand centres, the number will come down to three or four. They will become the centres of 'yoga from moment to moment'. They will not create teachers, but lead sadhakas and individuals to live yoga in their own homes and environment.

*– 1 November 2018, Ganga Darshan,
printed in Yoga Chakrodaya, Munger Yoga Symposium
2018, Book 3/3*



Yoga Publications Trust

Janani, Water – Sustainer of Life

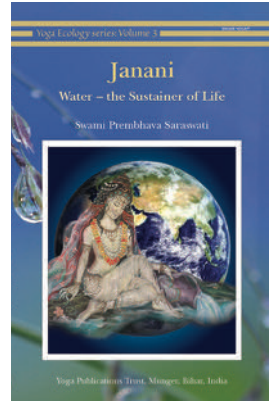
Swami Prembhava Saraswati

131 pp, soft cover, ISBN: 978-81-938918-6-5

Yoga ecology is the yogic and vedic way of ecological living. Only when all the forms of *Janani*, the Mother, are respected and loved will there be peace in the life of the individual and on Earth.

Inspired by Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati, *Janani* is a series dedicated to the ancient *vidya* or science of yoga ecology which encourages aspirants to renew their bond with Mother Nature on a daily basis.

Janani: Water – Sustainer of Life is the third volume of the series on yoga ecology. Water, the *apas tattwa*, is explored in all aspects – from the stark reality of misuse and abuse in today's modern societies to vedic and yogic concepts of water. Readers are given practical guidelines on how to save and respect water.



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Websites and Apps

www.biharyoga.net

The official website of Bihar Yoga includes information on: Satyananda Yoga, Bihar School of Yoga, Bihar Yoga Bharati and Yoga Publications Trust catalogues.

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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Apr 1-30	Yoga Training, 1 month (Hindi)
Apr 4-8	Yoga Lifestyle Capsule (Hindi/English)
Apr 13-19	Raja Yoga Yatra 1, 2
Sep 19-25	Raja Yoga Yatra 1, 2
Oct 1-30	Progressive Yoga Vidya Training 1 (English)
Nov-Jan 2021	Yogic Studies, 3 months (English)
Nov 2-8	Kriya Yoga Yatra 1, 2
Nov 21-27	Hatha Yoga Yatra 1, 2
Dec 2-6	Yoga Lifestyle Capsule (Hindi/English)
Dec 25	Swami Satyananda's Birthday
Jan 3-6 2021	Yoga Chakra Series
Every Saturday	Mahamrityunjaya Havan
Every Ekadashi	Bhagavad Gita Path
Every Poornima	Sundarkand Path
Every 4th, 5th & 6th	Guru Bhakti Yoga
Every 12th	Akhanda Path of Ramacharitamanas

Please be aware that mobile phones are NOT permitted in the ashram.
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