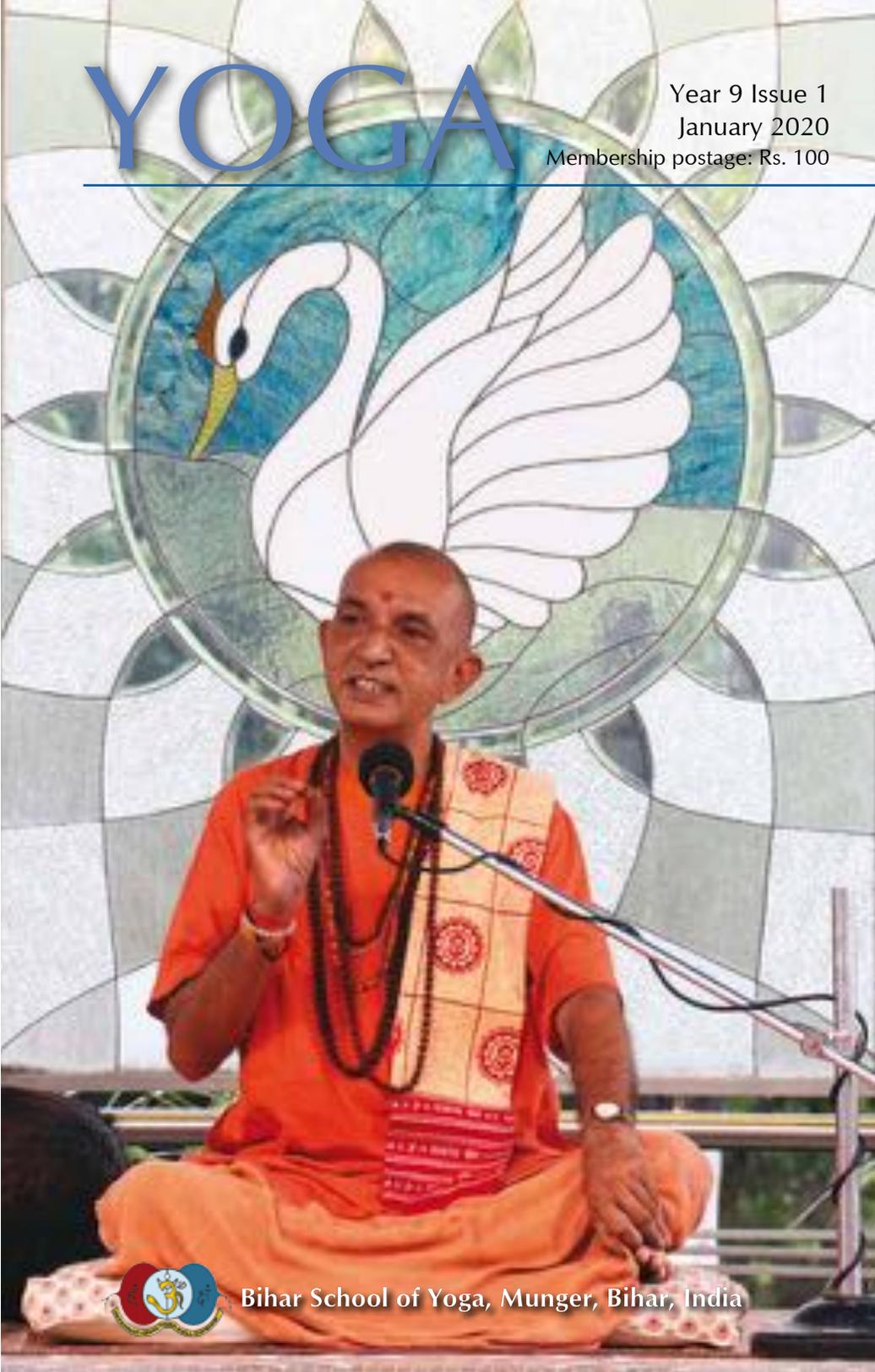


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Year 9 Issue 1

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Hari Om

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Plates: 1–4: Progressive Yoga Vidya Training,
October 2019



GUIDELINES FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

By choosing the battlefield for the teaching of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Sri Krishna wanted to point out to us that wisdom should not recline on the armchair. If his wisdom did not accompany a man to the field of battle, it was no wisdom at all! Real wisdom will serve you right on the battlefield, right in a crisis, and will enable you to surmount the obstacle, resist temptation, arise victoriously from the trial. That is what a sadhaka should understand from Krishna's choice. It was a fitting prelude to the great 'Yoga of Equanimity' that He was about to preach through Arjuna to the entire humanity.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

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

तपस्विभ्योऽधिको योगी ज्ञानिभ्योऽपि मतोधिकः । कर्मिभ्यश्चाधिको योगी तस्माद्योगी भवार्जुन ॥

Vishwa Yogapeeth

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



The Sri Yantra Aradhana forms the foundation of this ashram. This ashram is known as Bihar School of Yoga and as Vishwa Yogapeeth. Bihar School of Yoga is the academic aspect. It is the school where you come to learn yoga. After learning yoga, you go home and live your life. Vishwa Yogapeeth is the place where you realize yoga vidya. You realize the nature of yourself, you realize that it is possible to change, transform and overcome the dross of life and connect with inner and outer luminosity.

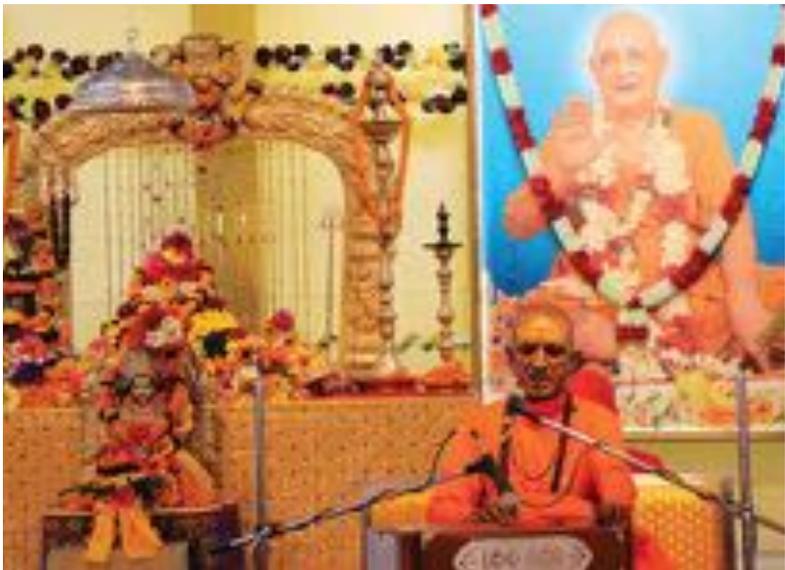
If you want to connect with your luminosity you have to work hard, not with the practice of asana and pranayama, but with the drive to change the negative into positive. Asana and pranayama are the physical yogas which will only give you physical benefits, not spiritual benefits. Fine-tuning the sattvic nature to overcome the tamasic will lead you to the dimension where you experience unity which is the purpose, aim and goal of yoga.

Vishwa Yogapeeth represents that commitment, drive, motivation and dedication to experiment and experience the totality of yoga vidya, the wisdom and knowledge of yoga. Bihar School of Yoga represents the sequential, linear, physical and psychological component of yoga which is what everybody is looking for and desiring today.

Yoga vidya few people desire. When you can't reach the grapes because they are too high, you say the grapes are sour. Therefore, it is difficult for people to experiment and experience yoga vidya as it demands an awareness which is constantly aware, not in parts. It requires the ability to look at yourself objectively, it requires the wisdom to know the difference between the correct and incorrect and it requires the strength and the willpower to change the direction of the mind from self-orientated to divine-orientated.

Anybody who undertakes this journey in true sincerity will discover that we have really been given a lot by our creator, yet we are unaware of what we have been given. We need to grow up, just as a child identifies with toys when he is young and then comes out of the attraction of toys as the body and mind grow. In the same way, there is a need for our mind and emotions to grow, mature and become ripe - not to react but to act. In this manner step by step we will complete the journey.

– 7 February 2019, Basant Panchami, Ganga Darshan, Munger



Discipline

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Discipline is a word which is least understood in the world. What is the purpose of discipline? To be able to guide the expressions of the mind is the purpose of discipline. There is no need to say how our mind functions. We know that it is subject to distractions, it becomes distracted easily. We know that it is subject to likes and dislikes. It has strong emotions, ideas, convictions, and beliefs. We know that it is subject to the gunas: sattwa, rajas and tamas. When influenced by these natures of mind, the mind itself functions in an erratic way. There is no clarity in its behaviour.

The role of discipline is to help manage the mind, to be able to create a conditioning in the mind where it is connected with positivity and creativity. Normally we may wish to become positive, yet the conditions of mind do not allow us to focus on the positive. Normally we may wish to become creative, yet there are too many distractions which hamper our creativity. There is a continuous struggle with oneself.

How do we manage this mind? The thinkers said - through discipline. This discipline has been defined in many ways. The easiest definition of discipline in my understanding is the ability to still the mind, the ability to observe the mind. Initially, to create a conducive environment in our personality and to realize the mind, we have to follow certain imposed ideas to become more observant and to sensitize our perceptions to mental behaviour and expressions.

One example is mouna. Mouna is a simple word - silence - yet it is difficult to do. As long as the mind is not practising mouna and continuing to chatter, we will be forced to chatter ourselves. When the mind becomes still, relaxed and quiet, mouna becomes natural, spontaneous and

easy. That is one example of how an external condition can help improve the quality of the mind.

How far we can progress on such paths that is up to us. How we take such disciplines to help us or hamper us, that is up to us. The purpose of every discipline is to make us realize the behaviour, attitudes and natures of the mind. When we are able to direct the mind according to our wishes and choices, then that stage is known as discipline. When we are subject to the influences of the mind, then that is the normal state of behaviour.

Throughout our life we have done as our mind demanded of us; according to our likes, our dislikes, our wisdom, our ignorance, our maturity or immaturity. However, simply following the nature and behaviour of the mind leads to dissipation and distraction. This has been the experience of those who have been able to control and guide the mind. They have said discipline is important to obtain peace, be content and express human creativity and human wisdom.

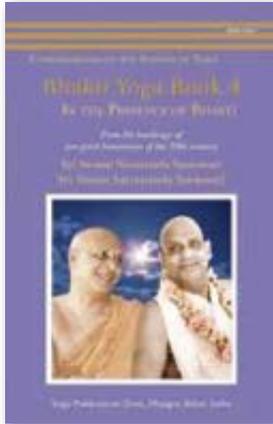
From this perspective, discipline represents only management of mind. The first sutra of Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras, Atha yogah anushasanam*, represents the direction in which yoga moves to provide the faculty of observation and the ability to direct the mind with wisdom, knowledge and understanding. Ultimately, discipline is an expression of our balanced personality, of our balanced, harmonized emotions and attitudes.

To create this condition, we have to start with something external by regulating our lifestyle and the mental behaviours. Trying to understand them and see if the outcome is appropriate or inappropriate for our development and growth, and the environment in which we all live together. We need to understand the concept of discipline as a way to improve the expressions of human nature and behaviour.

– 4 August 2001, Ganga Darshan, Munger

Towards Perfection

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



How does contentment express inner balance?

Swami Niranjanananda: The desire for gain comes when there is arrogance. Depression comes with loss when one is not self-willed and lacks self-confidence. When one is one's natural self, then there is contentment. Externally, one is centred and balanced in both victory and defeat. At the psychological level, the mind is properly harmonized and there is no ill will towards anyone or anything. One does not see shortcoming or negativity. Everyone is expressing according to their level of education. In a school the children behave and act according to the class they are in. It is the same in the world. Each one is in a different class and the maturity is according to the class they are in. Finding a balance in the expressions of the mind, generating a feeling of inner contentment and experiencing completeness is the eighth form of bhakti yoga.

Why is contentment essential in yoga and life?

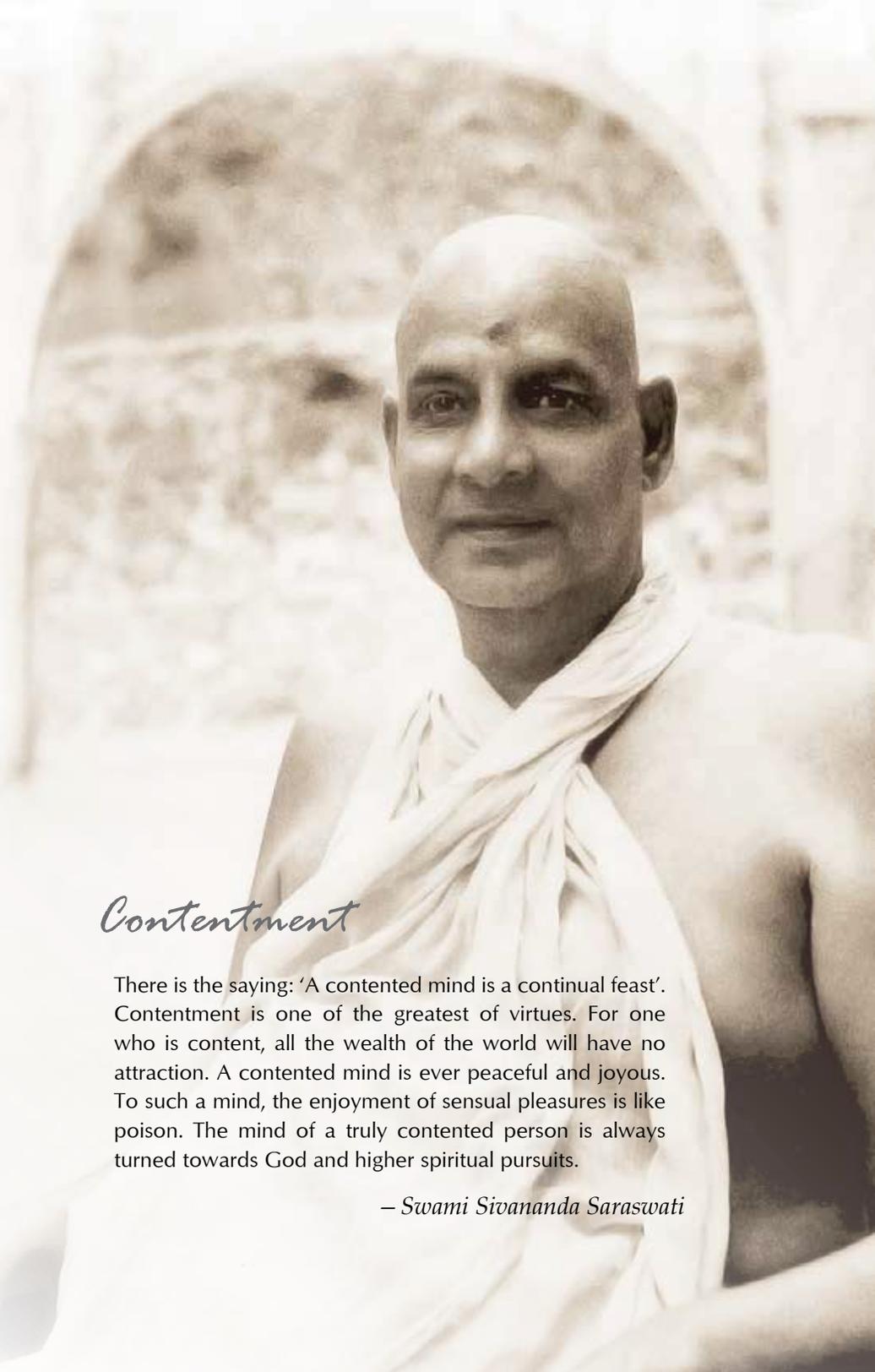
Swami Niranjanananda: The purpose of yoga and the purpose of human life are the same: to excel in whatever field one is in, whether it be as a student, worker, businessman or sannyasin, and to explore the creative aspect of that field. The purpose is to find contentment in life, and through contentment, total perfection.

How does one's attitude towards people and situations affect contentment?

Swami Niranjanananda: Santosha means finding contentment within and not finding fault with others. Both go hand in hand. Complete santosha is being contented and at peace. Many people are contented but not at peace. They are happy, yet still they try to find faults in other people, situations or circumstances, believing that if they would change, they would become even more contented and happy. That is the ego principle again playing up: 'I want more, this is not enough.' If aspirants observe themselves, they will find they are discontented whenever they criticize others, situations or the environment.

Santosha means accepting the realities of the situation in which one is, and leaving the critical mind behind, freeing the mind from searching for falsity. Therefore, one should just be in tune with oneself. Once one begins to vibrate in a positive manner, the energy will influence the surroundings and others will be uplifted in their interactions.





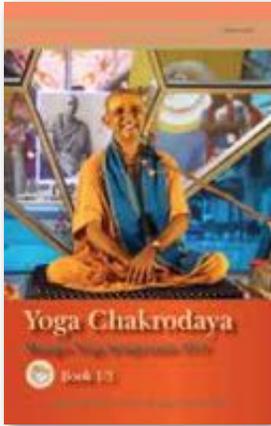
Contentment

There is the saying: 'A contented mind is a continual feast'. Contentment is one of the greatest of virtues. For one who is content, all the wealth of the world will have no attraction. A contented mind is ever peaceful and joyous. To such a mind, the enjoyment of sensual pleasures is like poison. The mind of a truly contented person is always turned towards God and higher spiritual pursuits.

— *Swami Sivananda Saraswati*

Concentration and Awareness

From Yoga Chakrodaya, Book 1/3



Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati: When you sharpen the lead of a pencil into a fine point, what happens? Although it is sharp, the thickness has reduced to a single micro-point. Its span has reduced, whereas awareness has to be like the torchlight in which the light can be enlarged. You know, one of those focus torchlights: you shine the torch and then shift the lens to enlarge the projection of light. The more you enlarge the projection, the more you

see. With one laser point you can't see all the items in a pitch dark room. With a torchlight, you can see many more items in the room. That is the type of awareness that has to be cultivated.

Concentration has to be a natural part of awareness. Concentration does not mean fixation; it means knowing the identity and the presence, and keeping that in check. If your thoughts run wild, you have to concentrate, and by concentration you can stop them from running wild. However, before you do that, you have to be aware that your mind is running wild. Your mind runs wild the whole day long, yet you are not aware of that. By the time you walk from the kitchen to the pandal, your mind has gone to many destinations and back. You are not aware of these journeys of the mind, you are only aware of the journey of your legs from the kitchen to the pandal. You are observing your legs, not your mind. You are observing the tension in your legs, the tiredness, the heat and the sweat in your legs, but never the tension of the mind, the

tiredness, the heat and the sweat of the mind. That awareness is not there. You go on living your life without awareness.

Having vision does not mean awareness, having buddhi does not mean awareness. Awareness is a natural faculty of the mind which sees everything and can focus on anything. Therefore awareness and concentration go hand in hand. You cannot separate the two. Don't try to concentrate, try to become aware, and you will find that concentration becomes easier. Try it today and see. Usually when you try to concentrate intently, you go cross-eyed, your forehead creases into a frown and all the muscles of the face contract. More tension is being created in this process. Where is the relaxation that should take place? That is why awareness and concentration have to happen together.

Another point: if you keep your eyes closed in pratyahara, there can be too much self-absorption and obsession with the internal world. That is why you are told in kriya yoga to reach the state of pratyahara with eyes open, whereas in other meditations you are told to close your eyes. By following this path, you attain pratyahara at three levels: pratyahara or mastery over ida, pratyahara or mastery over pingala, and pratyahara or mastery over sushumna.



Masters of ida, pingala and sushumna pratyahara

You have heard of Babaji. Babaji is a practitioner of kriya yoga, as taught by his guru. Due to his sincerity, dedication and sadhana he attained what he had to attain through kriya yoga.

People say that his siddhi is to be ever-youthful. People who recognize Babaji always see him as a sixteen-year-old boy. They say he never ages. That is the effect of kriya yoga. Babaji taught this kriya yoga to Lahiri Mahashay, Sri Yukteshwar and Paramahansa Yogananda, and the tradition goes on. The kriya yoga of Babaji which renews his cells and does not allow him to die, is pingala pratyahara. He is able to harness the prana shakti flowing in the pingala nadi so that his cells don't die and he is able to remain ever-youthful.

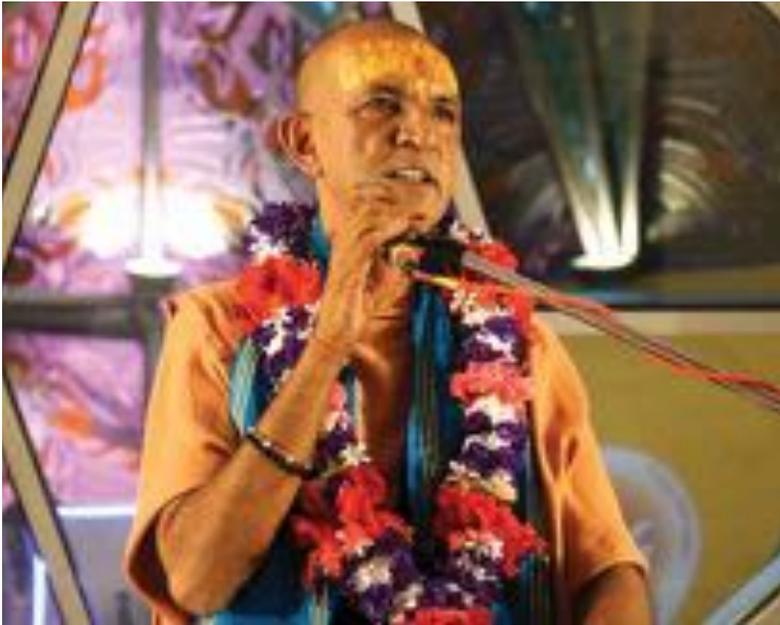
Another example. You might have heard the story of Adiguru Shankaracharya, of how he was able to transmit his soul to another body. Just as people are able to transmit their thoughts if they are proficient in the art of telepathy, in the same way it is possible to transmit one's soul to another body and then come back. Adi Shankaracharya did that. He transmitted his soul from his body to another body, for whatever purpose. When the time was over, the soul re-entered his original body. Adiguru Shankaracharya was a practitioner of kriya yoga,



and he perfected ida pratyahara, mental pratyahara, where he could tell the mind, 'Stop the control of the body', tell the spirit, 'Go to that body,' guide the spirit back into his body, tell the mind to become active again. That is ida pratyahara.

Lord Shiva is always in the state of sushumna pratyahara, where you have to hold and contain the energies of the chakras and kundalini. If those energies are let out, then he does the *tandava nritya*, the dance of destruction. Therefore he has to contain and hold them back. Shiva remains in the state of sushumna pratyahara all the time.

From this perspective, kriya yoga pratyahara techniques should lead you to relaxation and awareness. The dharana techniques should lead you to awareness and concentration. The dhyana technique should lead you from concentration to illumination. Thus, relaxation, awareness, concentration, illumination, these are the four rungs of kriya yoga. The whole system is a sequential process which allows you to easily move through all these states of consciousness.



Attention

Swami Sivananda Saraswati

There is great attention if the object is very pleasing. You will have to create interest. Then there will be attention. If the attention gets diminished, change your attention to another pleasant object. By patient training you can direct the mind to attend to an unpleasant object also by creating interest. Then your will can grow strong.

If you closely watch, you will note that you observe different objects at different times. This perception of now one object and now another when the physical conditions are constant, is known as the fluctuation of attention. Attention is changing. The objects themselves change or fluctuate but there is no fluctuation in the observing individual himself. The mind has not been trained to bear prolonged attention. It gets disgusted through monotony and wants to run towards some other pleasing object. You may say, 'I am going to attend to one object only', but you will soon find that even though you may attempt very hard, you suddenly perceive something else. The attention wanders.

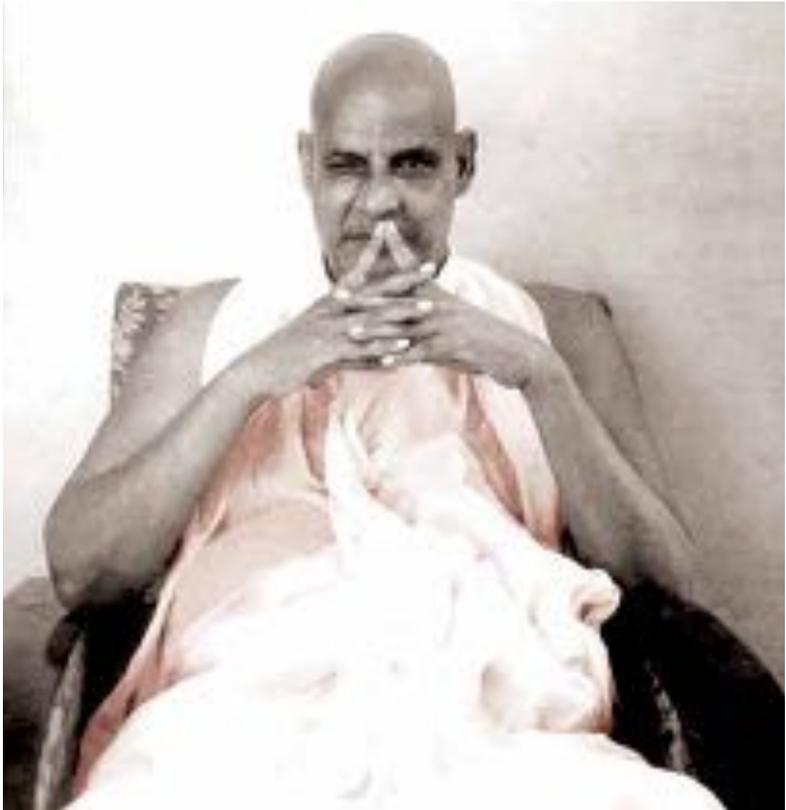
Interest develops attention. It is difficult to fix the mind on an uninteresting object. When a professor is lecturing, when the subject is abstract and metaphysical, many people leave the hall quietly because they cannot attend when the subject is uninteresting. But if the same professor sings and tells some interesting and thrilling stories, all the people hear him with rapt attention. There is pin-drop silence. Lecturers should know the art of attracting the minds of their audience. They will have to change the subject matter for a short time, and bring in some nice stories and suitable illustrations. They will have to look at the listeners directly in their eyes. So many things are necessary if one wants to become a successful lecturer, if one wants to make the audience more attentive.



Napoleon, Gladstone, Arjuna, Jnanadeva all had wonderful power of attention. They could fix their minds on any object. All scientists and occultists possess attention to a remarkable degree. They cultivate it by patient, regular and systematic practice. A judge and a surgeon can get positive success in their respective professions only if they are endowed with the power of attention to a high degree.

When you do any work, plunge yourself into it. Forget yourself. Lose the self. Concentrate upon the work. Shut out all other thoughts. When you do one thing, do not think of any other thing. When you study one book, do not think of any other book. Fix the mind there steadily like the arrow-maker who has no consciousness of his surroundings. Eminent scientists are so busy in their experiments and researches in their laboratories that they forget to take food, even for days together. Once a scientist was very busy at his work. His wife, who was living in another district, had a serious calamity. She came running up to him in the laboratory with profuse tears in her eyes. Strange to say the scientist was not a bit agitated. He was so very attentive at his work that he even forgot that she was his own wife. He said, "Madam! Weep for some more time. Let me make chemical analysis of your tears."

Once, a gentleman invited Sir Isaac Newton in for dinner. Newton went to his host's bungalow and took his seat in the drawing room. The gentleman forgot all about Newton, took his dinner and retired to his bed. Newton was amusing within himself very absorbedly on some important point of science. He did not stir from his seat. He forgot all about his dinner and remained like a statue in the same chair for a very long time. The next morning the host saw Newton in the drawing room, and only then remembered inviting him for dinner. He felt sorry for his forgetfulness, and apologized to Newton in a meek voice. What wonderful power of attention Sir Isaac Newton had! All geniuses possess this power to an infinite degree.



Sleep

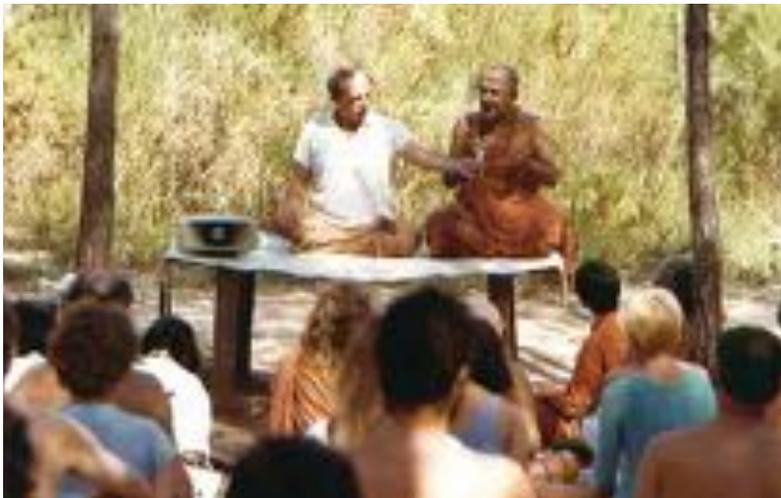
Swami Satyananda Saraswati

Sleep is not the aim of life. It is a necessity. If you obtain a technique which enables you to do without sleep, then you are very fortunate.

Yogis sleep in samadhi. Worldly people sleep in ignorance. That is why sleep does not give them knowledge. Keep a mala by your side, practise mantra and then go to sleep. When your sleep is disturbed during the night, take up your mala and repeat your mantra. Do not try to sleep.

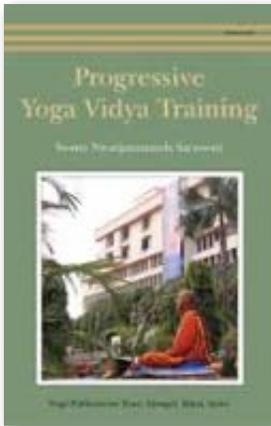
Yogis sleep less, therefore thank God that he made you get up early. Its only rakshashas who sleep a lot. Three hours is enough. If you fall asleep while repeating your mantra, your sleep will be of a higher quality. After a while, you will find that while you were asleep you were unconsciously repeating your mantra. Then you will be very close to happiness. Everybody should have this experience. It is very important.

– January 1979, Barcelona, Spain



Chitta

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



The first evolute of human existence is *ahamkara*, ego. It is the first identity of an individual without awareness. From a handful of seeds if you pick one out, the seed is still a seed but you have isolated it. That is *ahamkara*, selection of one, isolation of one. The moment you isolate one from the other, it is seen as an independent unit. *Ahamkara* is that: the first separation from our cosmic, transcendental nature. That state is without awareness, without consciousness. There is no cognition in the state of *ahamkara*, only one identity of being separate. *Aham* means 'I', *akara* means 'form': 'my form'. It is a general statement; you are not saying 'my body, which has two eyes and one nose, two nostrils and one mouth'. You are only saying, 'my form', which is the total self.

From *ahamkara* comes *chitta*, and *chitta* is the most important subject in yoga. From *chitta* emerges *buddhi*: logic, rationality, understanding, knowing, intellect. From *buddhi* emerges *manas*: reflection, thinking, analyzing, deciding. *Manas* is directly linked with *buddhi*. If logic is there, then the thinking process will be appropriate, proper and sequential. If logic is not there, then thinking will be disjointed; you will want to travel to the moon one second and become the president of the world the next second. There will be no connection. It is a state of psychosis, where there is no connection between thoughts, events, conditions, actions. Therefore, *manas* is the reflective and thinking power of *buddhi*. *Buddhi* and *manas* can be clubbed together, while *ahamkara* and *chitta* can be clubbed together.

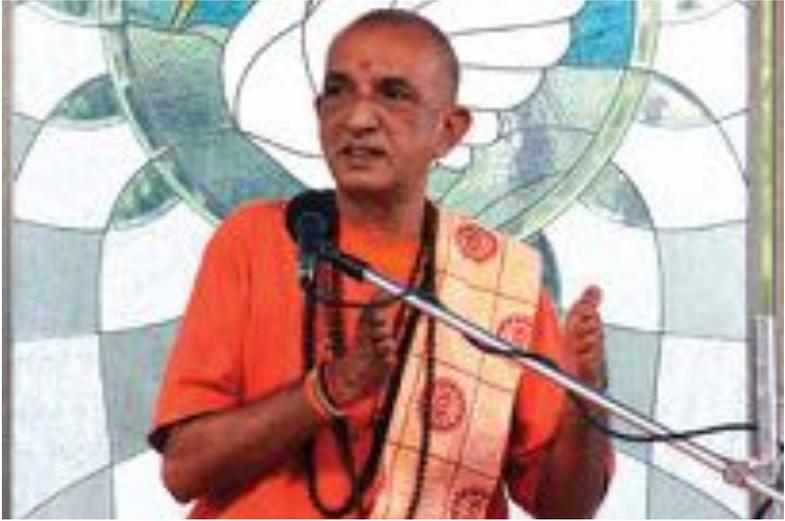
Play of memory

Chitta is described as the storehouse of memories, impressions, samskaras. These impressions and samskaras are memories of past events. There cannot be memory of any future or present event. What you are hearing has become the past already, and you don't know what you are going to hear in the future. You can only retain the impressions of what has been spoken, as it belongs to the past. Past begins one moment after the present. Thus chitta is the storehouse of memories of past events.

When the Spanish people came to America, they travelled in huge boats. The indigenous Indians who were there saw the boats entering the harbour, but they had no recognition of what they were looking at as they had never before seen boats. They had no memory of what a boat is. They simply saw objects in water and did not feel any threat, as there was no memory on which to rely, no memory to signal danger. The ships came in easily and the Spaniards took over the country. The point is that when they looked at the ships in the waters, they could not link that experience with anything from the past. This memory bank is chitta.

If you have seen even a paper boat, that memory will be there so that when you see a big boat, you will associate it with your memory of the paper boat. If that memory is not there, it means there is no impression in chitta, and you will look at a boat without any association whatsoever.

If you draw a horizontal line and intersect it with a vertical line in the middle, all that is to the right of the vertical line is the future, and all that is to the left is the past. Everything that has happened in the past is not part of your buddhi or manas, it is part of your chitta. Thus, when we say *chitta vritti nirodhah*, chitta is referring to something specific. At that level, the limitations created and experiences derived from your past become the vrittis. Ten years ago you had a fight with someone. When you see him today, it is that vritti, that memory, which is triggered. That is chitta, not manas, not buddhi.



The five vrittis

There are five vrittis in chitta, as defined by Patanjali. The first is *pramana*, cognition, and cognition is always dependent on memory. If there is no memory, there is no cognition. However, this cognition is not happening right now through your senses, mind or logic. It is not the present cognition, but past. That is *pramana*. A child who has put his hand in fire will have that memory even twenty years later when he sees fire: 'In my childhood I burnt my hand.' That is *pramana*.

Now, if as a child you were about to put your hand in fire and your brother removed it, you will not have any memory of your hand burning in fire, maybe a vague memory of heat and singeing, but no memory of actual burning. This becomes *viparyaya*, when you are not aware of the final outcome and you waffle around in the periphery. When you have no association or experience with the final outcome, then it becomes *viparyaya*: 'I am not sure.'

The third vritti is *vikalpa*. You remember something of the past and say, 'I could have handled that better'; you see the choice that you had before you and begin to curse yourself, 'Why did I not do that?' That is *vikalpa*.



Nidra is the fourth vritti, stopping the flow of information coming to the conscious mind. There is a time when you just block the flow, for you need to remove yourself from the activity in the mind, from the stress and the anxiety. Therefore you stop, relax and rest, to maintain the balance.

The fifth vritti is *smriti*, which means memory. However, as a vritti the reference is not to long-term memory, as long-term memory has become part of your impressions. The short-term memories are *smritis*: 'What did I have for breakfast yesterday?' You do not remember what breakfast or lunch you had one week ago, but you remember what you had today or yesterday. These short-term *smritis* have to be revived in order to enter into *pratyahara*. Thus, *smriti* as a vritti and as impressions contained in *chitta* are two different things. The impressions of *chitta* are carried forward, the *smriti* is of the moment.

The latent impressions in the consciousness of *chitta* are not called *smritis*; they are called *pratyaya*, which means a seed of information. You have hundreds of *pratyayas* in your mind, or hundreds of seeds of information. It is like the bytes in the computer; *pratyayas* are the kilobytes and megabytes in your mental computer. They fill up your hard disk and every week you have to spend time clearing it. The less *pratyayas* you have, the easier it is to access your files and documents. The impressions in *chitta* are *pratyaya*, whereas impressions in *manas* and *buddhi* are *smriti*. That is the difference.

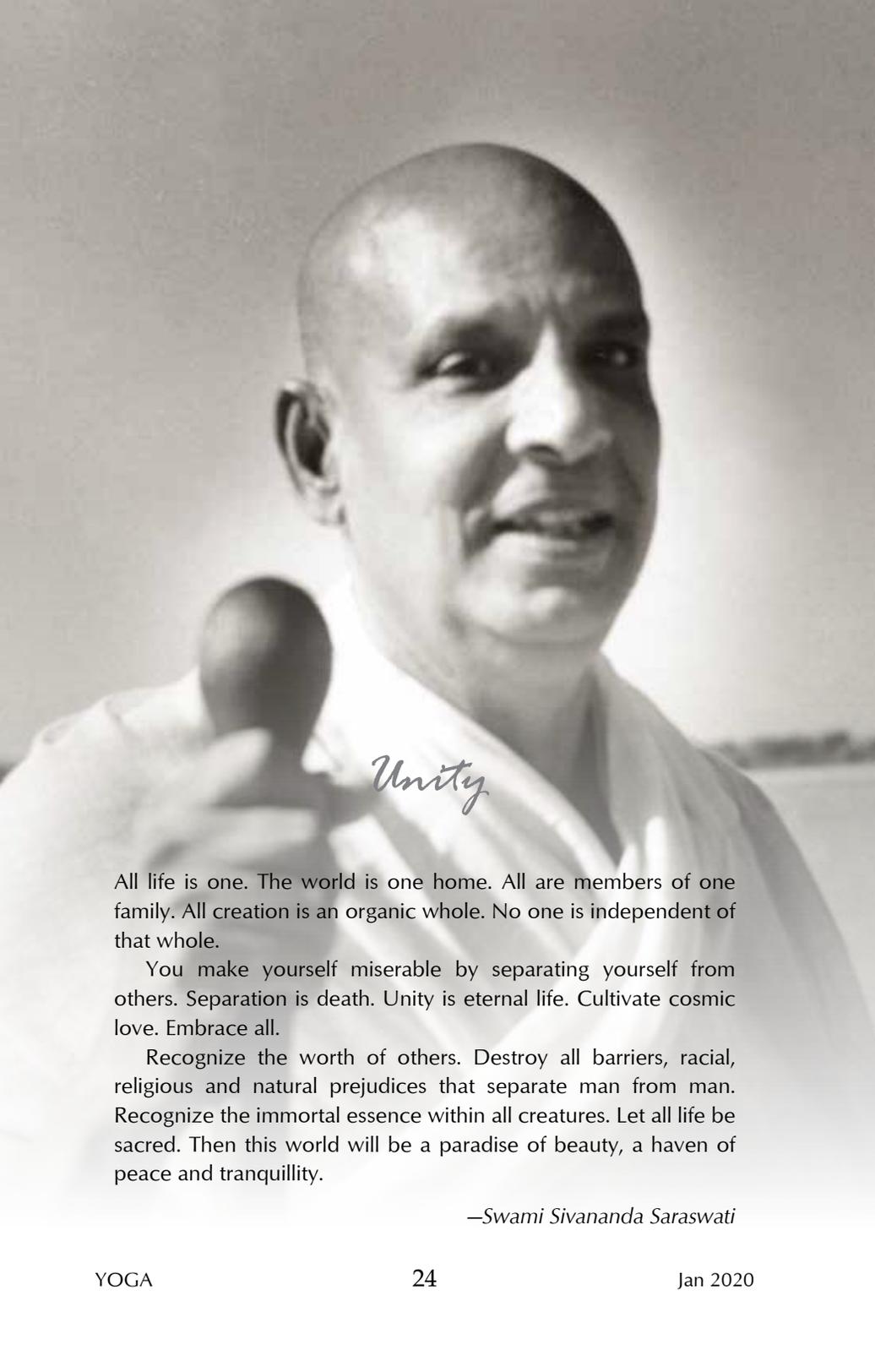
Third level of control

When we say the purpose of yoga is to manage the modifications of chitta, then we are not looking at the first level of manas and buddhi. We are looking at the third level, and from the third to go to the fourth level since the vrittis will also affect ahamkara, the self-awareness: how you perceive yourself, as positive, optimistic, pessimistic, critical. All these perceptions are formed.

Working with chitta vrittis is accessing the third state, the third expression of the mind. To manage the first level of manas, pratyahara is enough. To manage the second level of buddhi, dharana is enough. For chitta, you require dhyana, meditation, as it takes you into your inner psyche. For ahamkara, you need samadhi, for only there the dissolution of the ego can take place.

Chitta vritti is the third level of control that you acquire in your life. This process begins from raja yoga. Prior to this, manas and buddhi have to be dealt with through the practices of hatha yoga. In hatha yoga there are systems of concentration, such as trataka, which allows you to settle down, focus, internalize. The mental chatter, the manasic chatter stops with trataka. The other meditative techniques in hatha yoga also lead you to manage the behaviour of manas and buddhi. Raja yoga is not the subject of the mind; it is the subject of chitta and ahamkara.





Unity

All life is one. The world is one home. All are members of one family. All creation is an organic whole. No one is independent of that whole.

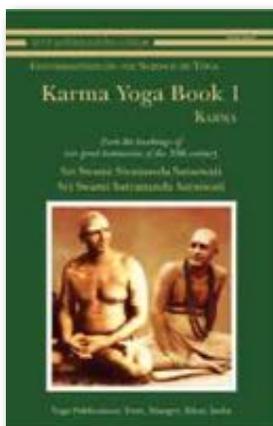
You make yourself miserable by separating yourself from others. Separation is death. Unity is eternal life. Cultivate cosmic love. Embrace all.

Recognize the worth of others. Destroy all barriers, racial, religious and natural prejudices that separate man from man. Recognize the immortal essence within all creatures. Let all life be sacred. Then this world will be a paradise of beauty, a haven of peace and tranquillity.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Karma and Samskara

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



How does karma relate to samskara?

Swami Satyananda: All of one's thousands, millions and trillions of previous experiences are stored within in the form of archetypes or *samskaras*. They are in such a vast number that one can't imagine it. The totality of these archetypes is called *karma*, which is responsible for incarnation. This karma is responsible for destiny and is the basis for evolution.

Whenever the soul is affected by an experience of life, it is known as samskara. Whatever the mind can register from the experiences of life is samskara. Over time one makes a transition from animal to human, and from human to divine. This human birth is an important stage of evolution. Each impression that is related to one's existence in life must be registered, known and understood, and that is samskara. Just as a tree produces seeds, a person constantly produces samskaras in every moment of life. The movie camera continuously captures the movements outside; similarly, the inner mind is always photographing everything that takes place in one's life.

Whatever one is doing at present and has done earlier is stored in the form of archetypes, or seed impressions, deep in the memory and is never destroyed. The images of thousands of men and women one has come across, the millions of ideas one has thought, the thousands of actions one has done in the past are all registered within. The inner consciousness registers each and every thought that passes through the mind.

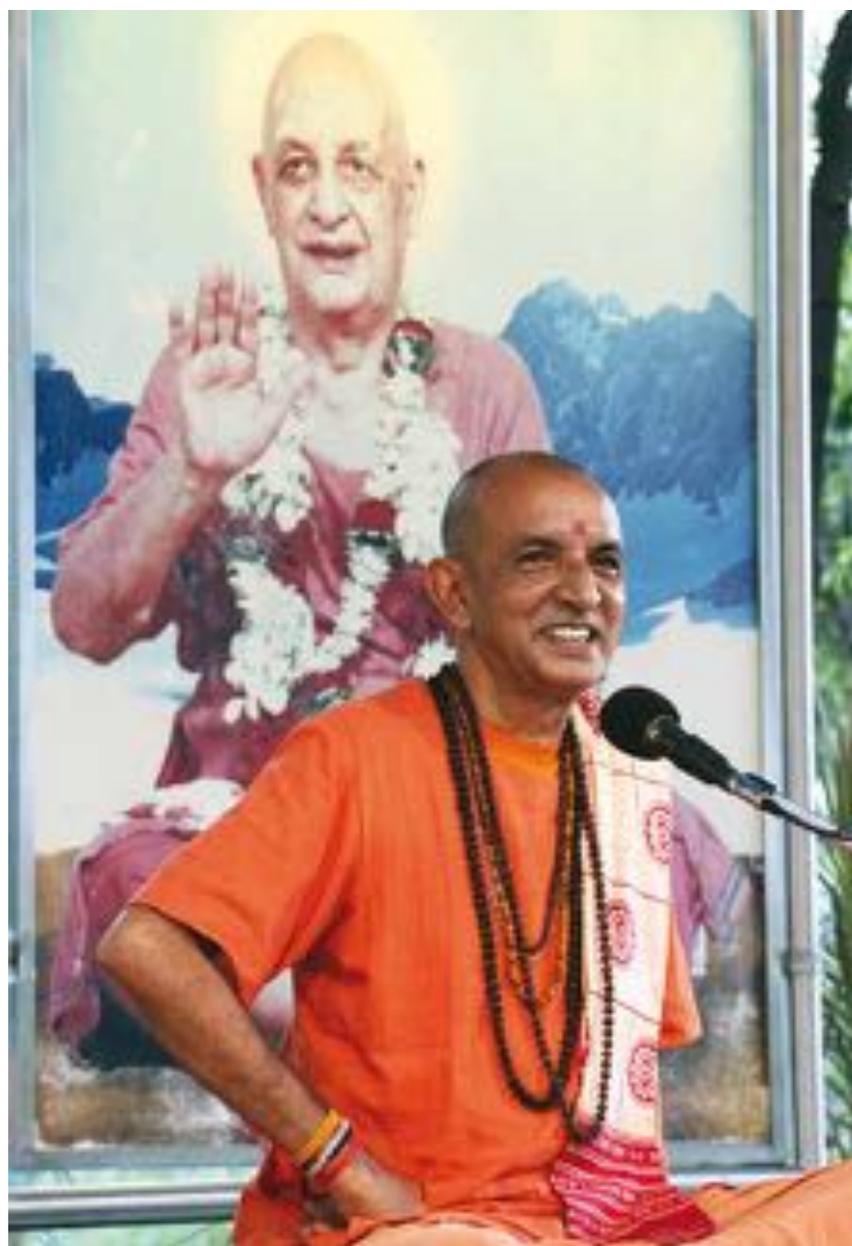


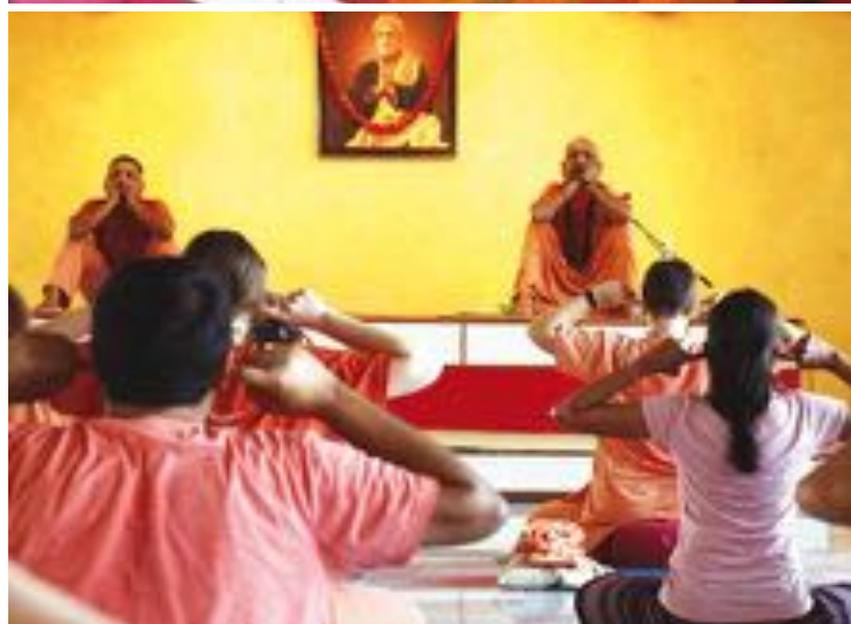
These impressions are known as *samskaras*, and they form karma. An action becomes an impression or *samskara* and that motivates an action or karma. If I hate you or love you, I create karma. If I have attachment for you, I create karma.

Karmas are stored as *samskaras* in the form of microscopic seeds, atoms or units. One's memory contains millions and trillions of archetypes, or *samskaras*, which are the products of experiences in life, the products of karma. These archetypes comprise the seeds of lives, which one has undergone in various incarnations from invisible to visible. This karma is also responsible for one's future incarnation.

Karma is also the basis of desires and cravings. Karma is like a seed. It hibernates within one's being, just as a seed is stored, and remains there for many years. At the proper time it becomes activated and starts affecting one's life and the way one expresses oneself in life. One must express oneself. It can't be avoided, and that expression depends on the karmas and *samskaras*.

Who knows what forces led me to take *sannyasa* and to give lectures on yoga? These were not only the movement of my tongue or the action of my brain. Behind the actions there must be a series of incidents from my past life, which are coming forth together and expressing themselves in the form of this present action. What are the forces that compel one to understand the lessons of yoga? Is it a brainwave, an action, or a function of the eye or eardrum? Behind the apparent, gross









and physical personality of the senses, body and mind there are samskaras, which try to express themselves in the form of behaviour, thoughts and actions.

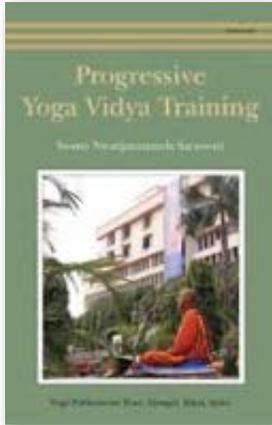
Some people can only express these samskaras by becoming criminals, others by becoming swamis, saints, charitable and generous. Whatever one may do, one must express one's life and existence through the actions of the body, mind, senses and intellect, and that is karma.

Suppose, however, I am recruited and sent to war. I may kill many people in battle; that is my action, but it is not my karma. On the other hand, if I kill people out of hatred, it is karma, because it influences my mind and personality. Thus, karma also means samskara, the impression of an occurrence in life on the mind of an individual, as well as action. Karma is the chain of actions performed by a person in life, or it is the effects of all the activities in life.



The Many Ages of Yoga

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



Everyone goes through four stages of development in life. The first is childhood: you are not mature, you are learning to use your senses and faculties; your thoughts and decisions are erratic, there is no control in these formative years of life. Then, when you gain experience and education, your thoughts and ideas change. What you used to believe in at the age of sixteen does not hold true at the age of forty. The whole mindset undergoes a change; the freedom of childhood is replaced by responsibilities of adulthood. With the responsibilities, the behaviour, the thinking, the expression, everything changes. That is the second stage of life: adulthood.

The third stage is old age. After retirement, when there is no further involvement with society or family, again the personality undergoes a change. Until retirement you are dynamic and active; after retirement suddenly you have nothing to do. People who used to salute you don't even offer you a seat to sit on anymore. The mindset has to change and be given a new direction. Finally, the faculties that helped you grow in life begin to shut down.

Formation is the first and shutting down is the last; in between is professional responsibility and the retired mind: the active mind and the retired mind. These are the four yugas of life. Similarly, the four yugas of earth, Satya, Treta, Dwapara and Kali, represent the childhood, the adulthood, the old age and the final condition of the decaying body. These are the

four great changes. The pattern of living, thinking, interacting, eating, playing, enjoying, everything changes in each stage.

Yoga of Satya Yuga

Pashupata yoga was prevalent in Satya Yuga. At that time, it was practised by the sages, seers, people who would perform austerities, live in isolation and perfect their own spiritual sadhanas. This included exponents like Dattatreya, Agastya, Bhrgu, who are considered demigods in the Indian mythology. They had that level of perfection and mastery over their body, mind and the elements, therefore they were given a higher status. Their entire focus in life was to experience the Shiva nature by transcending the fetters and bondages of mind.

Yoga of Treta Yuga

In the second period, Treta Yuga, the period of Rama, the rishis brought the concept of meditation to human society. People in society did not practise the full yoga; that was left only to the recluse group. They practised meditation, mantras and other things that could be done in the household environment to improve the quality of life. Thus, at that time Pashupata yoga came out of the rishis' ashrams into certain homes in society. That was the first introduction. Thereafter the social movement gained momentum and people started to practise mantras, meditations, some asanas and other techniques contained in the Pashupata yoga. At that time, yoga was seen in five parts.

The first was mantra yoga, which was the first yoga to be introduced to society during Rama's time, along with meditation. The first rules and disciplines of the practices were created. The first yama and niyama were introduced. The first yama was an idea put into the minds of people who were suffering: don't think of suffering but be happy. As mentioned, when a sick person came to the ashram, Sri Swamiji used to say that the first thing you need to do is to forget that you are sick and feel that you are healthy. All this time you have been thinking, 'I am sick, I am sick, I am sick.' You have been saying



to the doctors, “I have this problem, I have that problem.” You are living in the state of sickness all the time. When you come to the ashram, forget that you are sick, visualize yourself as a healthy person, walk like a healthy person, run like a healthy person, not like an invalid or sick person. Counter that effect of sickness and disease by cultivating the awareness of health. Similarly, when people are suffering mentally, you have to tell them to try and be happy. To come out of that dark mental state, one has to try to forget the pain and suffering and be happy. Therefore, happiness became the first yama and japa became the first niyama.

For the yogis, japa was an ongoing practice. In samadhi and meditation, they would be doing their japa, the mental repetition of the mantra. In society, the purpose of introducing mantra and japa was to give an opportunity to disconnect from the world for ten minutes. You are connected with the outside world all the time, your antennae are pointing out, picking up

all the transmissions from the world. All your five antennae are always active, even at night when you sleep. Japa is the only time when you consciously say, 'I am disconnecting myself and doing this practice. I am disconnecting myself from my condition, my feelings, my thoughts, my emotions, my *pratyayas*, conditionings, and I am focusing on mantra, japa and meditation.' Japa gives one the ability to disconnect from the outer world, therefore it became the first niyama.

Yoga of Dwapara Yuga

Then came the time of Krishna. By this time many other generation changes had also taken place. Mantra yoga was introduced in Rama's time, and in Krishna's time, four yogas came into existence: sparsha yoga, bhava yoga, abhava yoga and maha yoga. The mindset in Krishna's time was different from the mindset in Rama's time. In Krishna's time, of Dwapara Yuga, the adulthood, sparsha yoga, bhava yoga, abhava yoga and maha yoga were introduced. All these yogas were integrated practices. They had asana, pranayama, mudra, bandha, pratyahara, dharana, everything on one big plate. They were not classified or separated.

Yoga at the beginning of Kali Yuga

Then came a time of crisis after Krishna: the civil war, and all the yogas receded into the background. Nevertheless, some rishis still remained active in their practice and experience of yoga in isolated pockets. These people classified yoga at that time, during the beginning of Kali Yuga. They were the likes of Patanjali, Narada, Shandilya, and many other sages. From mantra yoga the whole science of mantra was developed. From sparsha yoga emerged hatha yoga and its theories and practices. From bhava yoga came bhakti yoga. From abhava yoga came laya yoga. From maha yoga came lifestyle and jnana yoga. Other yogas also developed from the main group of practices, such as kriya and kundalini. The classical texts that we follow today belong to this period.

A Thank-You Letter

Respected Swamiji,

Thanks and gratitude to Swamiji for providing us the teachings of yoga. We all are imbued with such an inspiration that will definitely be useful for our overall personality development. The yogas taught like bhramari, tadasana, kati chakrasana were easy to initiate and are very beneficial for increasing a student's concentration power and physical development.

The motivational and inspirational speech that you gave us in which you talked about the significance of yoga in such an easy manner that the students were greatly inspired by you and have taken the initiative of practising yoga in their daily routine. In addition to it, the students were fascinated by the 'Bal Yogis' and felt quite easy and comfortable in their company. Their energy, zeal and enthusiasm motivated the students to follow and practise yoga.

Yoga nidra conducted by them was also a source of motivation, where the students found themselves in a relaxed and soothing environment. It helped them to be close to nature and themselves.

Swamiji and the Bal Yogis helped the students to clear their doubts and gave several remedies for the diseases which are common nowadays.

At last we would like to thank you on behalf of the whole DBDS family.

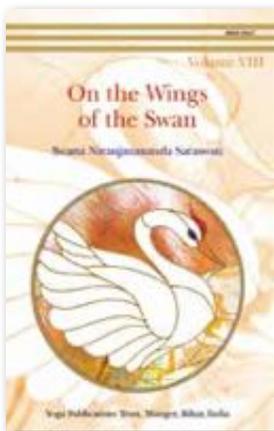
Regards,

Students of DBDS

(Students Council, Dr Bansi Dhar School, Kota, Rajasthan)

The Aim of Yoga and Life

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



Different people have different aims in life. Some have said that God-realization is their aim, some have said self-realization, some samadhi and some freedom. In this way, each person, each philosopher, each master, each yogi has given an indication as to the purpose of life. These purposes have changed from time to time, as you have to remember that no answer is an eternal answer. Questions are created due to changing circumstances and solutions have to be given according to the circumstances.

In the past, when people said self-realization was the goal of life, it was true, and circumstances were able to lead one to experiencing realization. However, self-realization is not an appropriate aim for the present situation, circumstances, or even inclination of people today. Our association, our relationship with the environment, with nature and the world has to be defined first before we actually find out how to experience the higher realities of life. After all, we cannot ignore the world in which we are living, just as you cannot ignore the house in which you live. You prepare your own house so that it is pleasant and comfortable for yourself. In the same manner, you can consider the whole world to be a club of which we are all life members. So while we are associated with this club, what is expected of us and what do we expect from ourselves? Let's start with that.



First get a grip on yourself

What is expected from us is that we should excel in whatever we do – professionally, socially, physically and psychologically. People should have a grip on situations, circumstances and events, and when people have a grip on life, their direction is clear and they can move forward without any questions or confusion. On the other hand, when the grip on situations and circumstances

is not there, distress sets in, and distress becomes the cause of confusion and disharmony in life.

Globally, what does every society, every nation, every civilization aspire to? To prosper socially, to experience peace personally, to utilize wisdom for the homogeneous and integrated development of life as a whole. Everything that is done is geared toward achieving or experiencing this excellence. Why do people work? For prosperity. What is everyone looking for in life? Balance and peace. What can be done to enhance the quality of life? Cultivate wisdom. This is the need of today, not samadhi. If you wanted self-realization you should have taken birth about five hundred years ago; since you have taken birth now it is the search for excellence in life that has to become the aim. The journey in yoga and in life begins with this purpose.

Then tune in to spiritual life

Spirituality is an integral part of human experience; that cannot be denied. External success indicates one's achievement, mastery and command over a situation, an event, people or circumstances. In the same manner, one's spiritual drive indicates the development and the awakening of the inner

personality. The inner personality and outer intellectual personality then merge to become one awakened personality. That is the aim of yoga: the merger or conversion of the gross material mind into a positive spiritual mind. Even Sage Patanjali, in his statement on yoga, says that yoga is control over the dissipated nature of mind, *chitta vritti nirodhah*. Therefore, one must manage the dissipations, one must work to reorganize and restructure one's life from an external routine to an internal discipline through restraint, control and governance. It is fine-tuning the human nature and personality that, according to Sage Patanjali and other yoga exponents, becomes the path one has to walk in order to perfect yoga. This is the aim of yoga in the modern context; maintaining spiritual qualities in life is the practical aim of yoga.

– 18 August 2008



Birth of a Home

From Yoga and Pregnancy, Swami Nirmalananda Saraswati

Harmony in every walk of life is a rare gift of the Lord to a couple. Each partner should be to the other a true companion in every sense of the term. Grihastha ashrama is a safe rung on the ladder of evolution to Godhead. Follow the scriptural laws and enjoy infinite bliss. True union can be established on the spiritual basis. Both of you should aspire to realize the common goal of life – God-realization. Both of you should compete with each other in advancing rapidly in spiritual sadhana. What a novel competition! What a blessing it is to have such a competitor as your life-partner!

– Swami Sivananda Saraswati



The child inherits the parents' external physique as well as internal make-up, thinking pattern, attitudes and personality traits through the genetic structure. One should therefore be vigilant in choosing a marriage partner. Every woman should make sure that the man who is going to father her children is a man of good character and human values. Similarly, every man should look for a woman of good character to bear his children. It is good to know the family background not

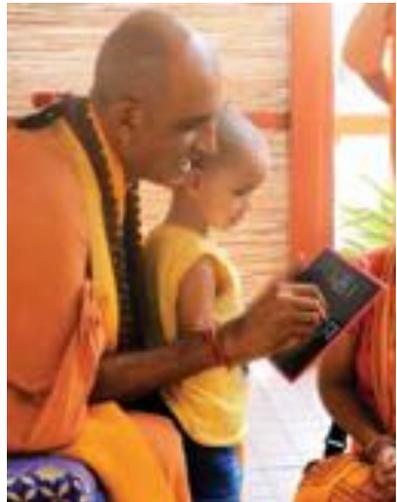
from the perspective of wealth, power or social status but from the perspective of personality and lifestyle, because family traits are inherited and may manifest in subsequent generations.

Marriage is a great event in one's life. Many things change drastically. There are innumerable minor and major adjustments to be made by both partners. Even if they have known each other for a long time, living together is different from knowing someone. Each partner needs to dissolve the 'I', the self-identity and become 'we two'. The couple has to strive for perfect harmony, perfect union by 'giving' rather than 'expecting and taking'. The couple should start living a yogic lifestyle with yogic values. Thus, the internal environment of body and mind, as well as the external environment of the home will be pervaded with sattwic qualities. Evolved souls are attracted towards a good, pure environment.

When people begin to respect the sensitive nature and desires of each member in the family, then family life becomes very full.

– Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

The positive values and habits adopted and practised in the early years of life should be reinforced and strengthened. The partners can help each other to grow by understanding, helping, cooperating, by admiring and appreciating each other. It is unhealthy to live together in the same house with disagreements, suppressions and repressions influencing each other's unconscious



minds. The key is to develop tolerance and understanding without grudges.

Peace and love should radiate in the home. In business associations, there is often an element of doubt; a lack of trust, the feeling that one has to be cautious. At home, there should be no reason for doubt or needing to protect oneself. One should be able to act openly and spontaneously. At home, there should be a deep sense of trust and intimacy which is not always possible in the world outside. An atmosphere of consideration, care, attentiveness, tolerance, patience and generosity should prevail. The only sentiment that can really change someone is love. The person who experiences love radiates love to others. One has to be sincere in loving. Sincerity in turn demands truthfulness and selflessness. The importance of these qualities is understood as love grows between two people.

Rebuild your house on the strong foundation of love, peace, unity and strength.

– Swami Satyananda Saraswati

To be able to impart happiness and love to others, one needs to tap the endless source of happiness within. That is the true secret of happiness. Once one is able to do this, happiness flows. Knowing the source and how to connect to it, one becomes an elevated person in thought and action. Happiness is within everyone's reach and one can hold it firmly through incessant and noble effort. The practice of *manahprasad*, the conscious effort to develop, cultivate, maintain and radiate happiness, is the first *yama* or discipline of a yogic lifestyle. The aim is to gradually increase the time of happiness every day, every week and month and at the same time develop the ability to be happy without a cause.

The relationship between husband and wife is multifaceted. They play complementary and supplementary roles to each other in every sphere of their lives. In the vedic era the concept of the ideal wife was:

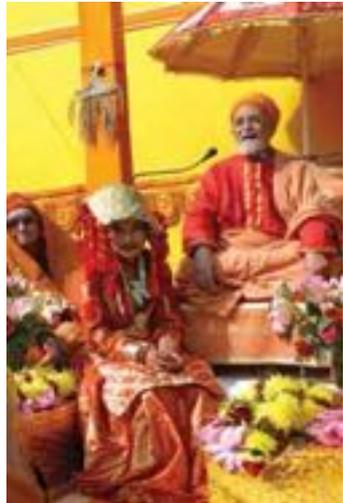
At home she takes care of the domestic work,
In her appearance she is beautiful like goddess Lakshmi,
While preparing and serving food she is a mother,
In official work she is a secretary,
During the sexual act she is sensual,
In sorrowful times she is a friend,
In difficult times she is a navigator,
In righteous activity she is supportive
And in tolerance she is like Mother Earth.

In modern times these qualities and attitudes apply equally to the husband as to the wife.

Wife is Shakti, and husband is not husband; he is Shiva. Shiva and Shakti represent two opposite polarities in two individuals. These two opposite polarities are not only between husband and wife, they are anywhere: soil and water together create something. In the same way, in the chemical, mineral, botanical universe, anywhere there are two distinct opposite polarities and they must work together to produce, what I would say, a first class genius.

The only point of unity I see in husband and wife is when both are sincere and aspiring for higher spiritual experience. Shakti holds the superior position in spiritual life - not the man. To become an ideal husband and wife I can only give you one suggestion or advice: go deep into yoga and practise.

– *Swami Satyananda Saraswati*



Impressions – Progressive Yoga Vidya Training 1, 2019

It has been enriching and humbling to be a student of one month under Swamiji's guidance. Swamiji imparted the yoga classes with a combination of childlike joy, a slight pushing to extend our abilities, and light humoured teasing combined with so much love. His energy was infectious. At the same, time Swamiji removed some clouds so that new light on the practices could shine through and be imbibed by us.

The satsangs were a highlight; profound wisdom, some never spoken before concepts and truly inspired understanding were imparted with simplicity, clarity and depth. It will take some more months to process them. I take away more inspiration to extend and deepen my commitment to my own transformation and sadhana. I strengthened my connection to myself, my Guru and the amazing lineage and am grateful that this path of yoga has found me and is guiding my life.

– Swami Karma Karuna, New Zealand



Impressions – Progressive Yoga Vidya Training 2, 2019

The first impression of the PYVT 2 was the smiling, warm, friendly welcome we all received. This established a wonderful positive state which promoted a relaxed and caring atmosphere connecting students from many different countries and cultures.

It was a great privilege and blessing to have personal instructions from Swamiji, sharing his vision of taking yoga forward to developing a true yogic lifestyle and ultimately leading to an enlightened fellowship to help balance world order.

One of the main focuses of Swamiji's teaching seemed to be on the subtleties of the mind and the importance of pratyahara and pranayama to clear the blocks and limitations that prevent deeper understanding and experience of yoga. I will try and integrate the knowledge offered into my daily practices and not waste the opportunity given.

– Swami Shantamurti, UK



Yoga and Health – Effectiveness of an Ancient Practice Between Tradition and Science

Swami Ishananda Saraswati, Italy

Abstract

An increasing number of people turn to yoga in order to cope with problems related to stress - musculoskeletal tension and pain, insomnia, anxiety, mild mood disorders, and so on - obtaining considerable benefits. Yoga is a complex and articulated practice that acts on the physical, energetic, psychic, and spiritual dimensions of the person. In spite of its millenary tradition, only in recent years scientific studies have been carried out with the aim of understanding and explaining which yoga practices work and how. The aim of this article is to illustrate what the different components of yoga are, on what they act and - supported by recent researches on neuroscience and psychoneuroendocrinology (PNEI) - to explain which are its mechanisms of action.

Yoga, union and health nowadays

Yoga was born in India about 5,000 years ago. We can translate the term yoga with 'union' and joining or connecting is actually the purpose of this discipline. To unite body, mind, heart, behaviour, that is to unite the physical dimension with the mental, psychic and emotional dimensions. To unite the innermost and most profound self with the outer self - the one shown in relationships, strongly conditioned by contextual factors. And finally to unite the individual self with the universal Self, as each of us is a piece of a cosmic reality.

When the union between these dimensions is not there, or is lacking, people can manifest discomfort, fatigue, and disorders up to developing conditions of illness of the body, the mind, the psyche or of body, mind and psyche together, as evidenced by recent PNEI studies. Modern western culture spurs productivity and consumption, efficiency and success. With its frenetic rhythms and new means of communication it fills life up with experiences, information, and contacts with multitudes of people. But it suffocates spaces of deep connection with oneself, with other people and the environment, which are fundamental for an authentic wellbeing.

Initially the fatigue, the discomfort, the malaise - resulting from the external demands which exceed the individual energetic resources and from the lack of connection with oneself - are manifested in the form of stress, which can evolve into real pathologies.

Stress and neurophysiological correlates

Stress is a physiological system activated by an external pressure. To a certain extent it is a fundamental mechanism for ontogenetic and phylogenetic development, but when external pressures are excessive and exceed the personal capacities and resources one has to cope with, the physiological activation instead of being functional becomes pathological (to be precise, it is a distress). In fact, our physiological system of responding to stress has evolved much more slowly compared to the rate of change in the world and it is more adapted to the stimuli and environmental pressures of the primitive world than to that of the modern era. A disproportionate stress activation for long periods of time causes negative effects on the overall health of the organism (as underlined in the Sipnei Conference 'Knowing the human being in its entirety' - Turin, Italy, 30-31 October 2015). The most evident manifestations of distress concern both the organic level (muscular tension, back pain, cervical pain, gastritis, colitis, headaches, dermatitis, food intolerances, etc.) and the psychic level (difficulty in concentration, insomnia,

difficulty in memorizing, anxiety, panic attacks, depressed mood, etc.)

Due to the fact that by choice or circumstances people persist in having unhealthy lifestyles (hectic rhythms of work and life or inactivity through unemployment, a few hours of sleep at night, unhealthy nutrition, excessive exposure to noise, social isolation, etc.) ignoring the signals sent by the body, it can happen that the body and emotions do bypass the mind by directly communicating the discomfort through psychosomatic illnesses, anxiety disorders, mood disorders.

What are the mechanisms that, from excessive external stimuli prolonged over time, lead to a state of un-health?

Neuroscience, especially in the last decade, has unveiled that in human organism the stress response is modulated at the cerebral level by the HPA axis (Hypothalamic-Pituitary-Adrenal axis). Faced with continuous stress, HPA responds with a mechanism that leads to increased levels of cortisol (stress and anxiety hormone) and with the production of cytokines (protein molecules which are the main cause of the immune system inflammation). Cortisol and cytokines cause an inflammatory state of the immune system in the body, which gives rise to a series of diseases such as headaches, food intolerances, obesity, depression, and so on, as shown by recent studies on stress and the brain (McEwen, 2012; Sapolsky, 2012; McEwen & Morrison, 2013); stress and immune system (Kiecolt-Glaser, 2010); stress, hormones and metabolism (Chrousos, 2012).

Furthermore, if the stress is chronic, the changes also occur at the level of the brain structure: in short the activity and the size of the amygdala increases (the 'fire-raiser' which triggers stress) while the hippocampus and the frontal cortex are reduced (the 'firemen' who defuse the stress responses) thus activating a circular effect. In order to break this vicious circle it is necessary to act holistically and not only on the final symptom or on one of the aspects of the problem.

With specific yoga practices this psychosomatic destructive tendency is efficiently alleviated thanks to a positive and inverse direction, which is the 'somatopsychic' one (Swami Satyananda, 2001).

How yoga promotes the physical and psychological dimensions of wellbeing

Many centuries ago the Cartesian dualism stated that *res extensa* and *res cogitans* are two ontologically separated substances among which there can be no causal influence. Only in 1948 the western culture has regained a concept of global health, thanks to the constitutional Charter of the World Health Organization (WHO). Since then the concept of global health recognizes the biological, psychological, social dimensions and recently also the spiritual one. However, this holistic conception still struggles to enter into clinical practice.

On the contrary, yoga tradition has always considered the human being as a multidimensional creature formed by five dimensions of existence: physical dimension, energetic dimension, mental dimension, psychic dimension, and spiritual dimension. According to yoga, good health is the result of balanced functionality, connection and interaction among these five different dimensions.

In order to promote the balance between the different dimensions, yoga (if it refers to a method of transmission that has remained faithful to tradition and adopts an integral approach, such as Satyananda Yoga) uses an integrated series of practices belonging to the branches of the Indian yogic tradition: hatha yoga, raja yoga, kundalini yoga, and so on. Each traditional branch emphasizes a particular aspect (corporeal, meditative, energetic perspectives) and uses different practices: physical postures or *asanas*; practices to control/expand breathing (*pranayama*); practices to disconnect from the senses or *pratyahara*; practices to develop awareness and concentration or *dharana*; practices of deep relaxation or *yoga nidra*; and practices of meditation or *dhyana*. The balanced



integration of such different practices produces a synergetic effect that develops, strengthens and integrates among them the five dimensions of existence.

Physical dimension: It is the most material and tangible aspect of the human being, it consists of skin, bones, muscles, organs, etc. The health of this dimension is reinforced thanks to the practice of physical postures (asanas) that tone up the muscles, improve the elasticity of the joints, and enhance the functionality of the organs and the main glands. A healthy lifestyle (self-control, self-regulation) also contributes to the health of this dimension.

Energetic dimension: It is the vital energy that rules the biological processes of breathing, digestion, blood circulation, and so on. This energy (prana) is essential for carrying out any psycho-physical activity. If this energy is missing, the physical body ceases to function. The health of the energetic dimension is reinforced thanks to the practice of control/expansion of breathing or *pranayama* and to the practices of the previous point as well. Both the body and the mind depend on prana and an excess or deficiency can cause physical or psychic illnesses. By acting on prana with pranayama it is possible to restore a balance and consequently obtain good health.



Mental dimension: It is responsible for sensory activity and it controls motor activity. It receives inputs from the five senses. It is a very instinctual dimension that rules human behaviour by employing an action-reaction mechanism guided by the senses. The mental dimension is nourished by 'stimuli/impressions/images' that come (or that we select and choose) from the external environment or from our psyche. For example, watching bloody movies and violent video games increases anger, aggression, irritation and irritability. The health of the mental dimension is reinforced thanks to the practice of sense control or pratyahara and deep relaxation, in addition to the practices of the previous points.

Psychic dimension: It consists of all the higher functions of the mind, including awareness, judgment, and discernment. It is the dimension that allows one to create a connection between the stimuli/demands of the environment and the inner requests which helps not to react on an instinctual level but to discern and make ethical choices. It is the dimension that distinguishes human beings from animals. The health of the psychic dimension is reinforced thanks to the practice of meditation and the practices of the preceding points.

Spiritual dimension: It is the transcendental dimension that allows one to give a higher meaning to human existence. In

most cases this dimension is ignored or little considered and looked after.

Neurophysiological correlates of yoga

Through which neurophysiological mechanisms does yoga promote the physical and psychological dimensions of wellbeing? Neurosciences and neuroimaging techniques (EEG, PET, MRI, etc.), developed in recent decades, start giving some answers to this question. There are several systematic reviews and international scientific researches that have demonstrated the relevant clinical, physiological, emotional, and psychological effects of yoga by measuring biological indicators and images of brain functionality and structures.

In this paper we do not deal with the aspects and effects of the practices related to physical positions or asanas as they are more known and have more evident effects. Whereas we take into consideration the three practices on which most recent scientific studies are focused: deep relaxation, breathing control/expansion, and meditation.

Deep relaxation with inner awareness (called yoga nidra in the Satyananda Yoga method) is a practice that relaxes the mind by relaxing the body. Awareness is directed to different parts of the body (awareness rotation) thus obtaining not only physical relaxation but also the cleaning-up of the peripheral and central nervous network, by inducing the brain to produce alpha, delta, and theta waves (Swami Satyananda, 2001). Such cerebral waves respectively correspond to: the state that precedes sleep; deep sleep; REM sleep. Several studies report that biochemical tests during the practice of deep relaxation show an increase in the level of BDNF (brain-derived neurotrophic factor), vagal tone, GABA (gamma-aminobutyric acid, inhibitory neurotransmitter) while HPA axis is deactivated and cortisol decreases (Janakiramaiah *et al.*, 2000; Kamei *et al.*, 2000; Streeter *et al.*, 2007).

The expansion/control of breathing or pranayama includes balancing techniques that, by means of the breath, enable

one to bring into equilibrium the activity of the right and left brain hemispheres. It also enables one to restore the correct alternation of activation between the sympathetic nervous system (excitatory-activating) which generates muscular, nervous, psychological tension, and the parasympathetic nervous system (relaxing-calming) which reduces breathing frequency, blood hypertension, and heart rate. The balance produced by this breathing technique favours the production of wellness neurotransmitters: endorphin, serotonin, dopamine, and oxytocin.

Last but not least, meditation is a technique which increases the synchronization among the areas of the brain, which leads to a better state of self-awareness, ability to focus attention, concentration, clarity of thought. In general, it improves the cognitive activities of learning, creativity, and intuition. Meditation helps to restructure the perception of a traumatic event or situation and, above all, the perception of oneself in relation to such event/situation, its neurophysiological effect being the reduction of cytokines which are the main cause of inflammation of the immune system. Furthermore, taking into consideration the central nervous system, meditation influences the regulation of arterial pressure and of water balance and also acts by increasing wellbeing neurotransmitters such as endorphin, serotonin, dopamine, and oxytocin (Jacobs T. *et al.*, 2011).

Conclusion

Yoga is therefore a holistic system that develops and integrates every dimension of human being. In addition to the well-known effects of improving skeletal muscle function and enhancing cardiovascular and respiratory systems, yoga is also able to modulate the activity of the central nervous system and of the immune system, to promote psychological balance, to increase the resistance to stress and last but not least, it allows one to develop greater resistance and resilience to physical and psychic illnesses.

– www.yogasatyananda.it

Peace

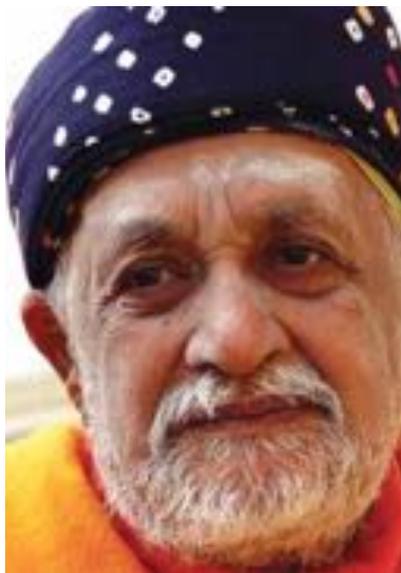
Swami Satyananda Saraswati

Peace has to be achieved within life, and life is based on matter. There is no possibility of withdrawal from life. You may be able to withdraw from the external aspects, but you cannot withdraw yourself from awareness of matter. This problem has confronted the great thinkers from the beginning.

In India it has been under discussion for the last five to ten thousand years – ‘Withdraw yourself and inner peace will come to you’. Then what is the fun of having inner peace?

Some thinkers have said, ‘Live in life, and think that it is inner peace.’ How is this possible? Peace within disturbances? This is what they have been discussing, and as a result, religions have arisen one after another.

Finally, a note was struck in the *Bhagavad Gita* – the philosophy of renunciation within action, inner peace during fulfilment of your duties. It is not possible to achieve inner peace by the renunciation of all karmas. So long as the mind broods over the material pleasures which it does not experience, it is hypocritical. If one is living life in all its fullness, meaning the senses, the mind and matter, and at the same time has defined one’s relationship with the material life and has classified everything properly, then one knows how far one can go. This particular yoga is the yoga of active detachment.





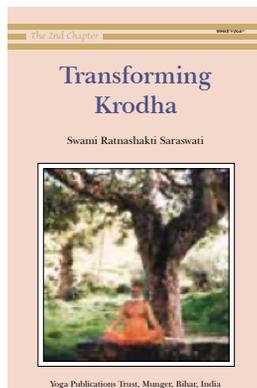
Yoga Publications Trust

Transforming Krodha

162 pp, soft cover, ISBN: 978-81-940805-2-7

The six conditions of the mind are *kama*, desire; *krodha*, anger; *lobha*, greed; *mada*, arrogance; *moha*, infatuation; and *matsarya*, envy or jealousy. These conditions prevent the free flow of positive emotion and your expression of the best human qualities.

Transforming Krodha explores the many expressions of anger from impatience to aggression. Krodha is a reaction of mind to fear or a threat. As a condition of mind krodha is based on unfulfilled desire and ambition. This destructive force needs to be transformed in the life of the individual, in society and the environment to experience positivity and creativity in all spheres. Practical sadhanas are given to manage any form of anger in our day-to-day life.



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Yoga Peeth Events & Yoga Vidya Training 2020

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)
Feb-Mar	Yogic Studies, 2 months (Hindi)
Mar 14-20	Hatha Yoga Yatra 1, 2
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

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