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Hari Om

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Yoga Chakra Online satsang sessions



GUIDELINES FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

Hatha Yoga

By the practices of hatha yoga a perfect physical body and a perfect mind develops. With hatha yoga one can combat diseases of the body and mind and attain radiant health and God-realization. By the practice of hatha yoga, one can become a spiritual hero, full of physical, mental and spiritual strength.

The yogi has the ability to laugh heartily and he radiates joy, strength and vigour. He always accomplishes his aims, succeeding in all his attempts. He looks very young even at the age of sixty. He is endowed with a peculiar glow in his face and eyes and possesses a peculiar charm in his smile.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

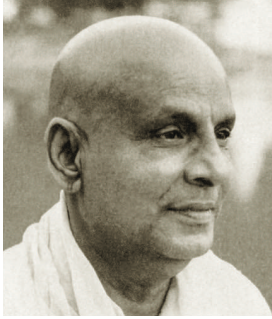
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Owned by Bihar School of Yoga **Editor:** Swami Gyansiddhi Saraswati

Transformation

Swami Sivananda Saraswati



The round of domestic duties has to be transformed into a spiritual process and become part of one's sadhana. By making one's essential attitude spiritual, one can divinize any work. The same framework of external physical attitude continues, but the work idea disappears and worship remains in its stead. Work is transmuted into worship through the

spiritual approach and attitude towards it. Every act can be spiritualized when the motive becomes pure, and one is able to work for the wellbeing of the world, *lokasangraha*.

A doctor working in a hospital should think that all the patients are manifestations of God. The body is the moving temple of God and the hospital is a big temple. He should say, "I am doing all my actions to please God, not to please my superiors." He should say, "*Om Tat Sat Krishnaarpanamastu*, offering to Krishna, or *Om Tat Sat Brahmaarpanamastu*, offering to Brahma," at the end of the day and at night when he retires to bed.

A person should think and feel that he lives, works and breathes only for God every second of his life, and that life is absolutely useless without Him. He should feel pangs of separation if he forgets Him even for a fraction of a second while at work and think that his hands are the hands of Lord Siva. In the beginning some actions may be selfish and others unselfish, but, in the long run, he can do all actions in an unselfish manner, though continuous scrutiny of his motives is necessary.

Acts like eating, walking, talking, breathing, sleeping and answering the calls of nature become yogic activities and work becomes worship.

Foundations of a Yogic Lifestyle

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



The foundation of ideal life, from the spiritual perspective, is *sadvichara*, *sadvyavahara* and *satkarma*: appropriate and correct thinking, appropriate and correct behaviour, appropriate and correct action. Once appropriateness comes into your thinking, behaviour and action, then you can begin to think of what to acquire and what to let go of in order to find harmony, peace and balance in life, away from the distractions of material life. Remember that by nature human beings are not spiritual beings, by nature they are tamasic beings.

A tree cannot say, “By nature I am fire;” it has to say, “By nature my form, my quality, everything is that of wood,

although fire is contained in every grain of my body.” A tree has to recognize that it is a tree and not fire. In the same manner, you have to recognize that you are a conditioned, tamasic human being and not a transcendental divine being. Although that transcendental-ness and divine-ness is ingrained in each and every pore of your body, still you are made up of material, tamasic, sensorial stuff, and that is why everything happens at that level. You have to recognize that. This perception is what takes you towards sadvichara, satkarma and sadvyavahara.

As you exist in the conditioned state of tamas, all your expressions are also conditioned by the agents that fuel tamas. These agents are the tamasic expressions of mind. If you look at a child, you will see the manifestation of tamasic nature. When children fight, the expressions of jealousy or anger are manifesting naturally, nobody teaches them to feel these qualities. Without logic they become jealous of each other, that is *matsarya* spontaneously manifesting. One can see a little baby shaking with anger. From where did that anger come? It is the natural expression of *krodha*, which is inherent. This is the tamasic nature spontaneously manifesting and also growing along with the child.

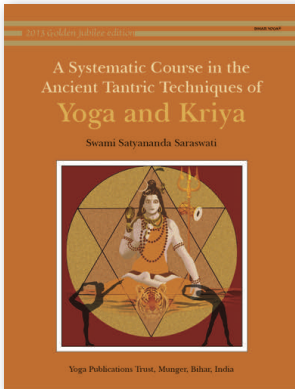
The yogic perspective says that from tamas you have to evolve to sattwa. In order to cultivate sattwa, you have to know yourself. The practice of five or ten asanas and two or three pranayamas every day does not make you aware of yourself. They are done as exercise, rarely with the purpose of becoming aware of yourself. You do not access the purpose of yoga with this practice of asana and pranayama, rather you entertain the body.

The purpose of yoga is attained through imbibing yoga as a lifestyle. The movement has to take place from tamas to sattwa, and sattwa has to become a lifestyle. For this, the three foundations are: appropriate, correct and truthful thinking, behaviour and performance.

– Published in Yoga Chakra 4

Learn to Relax

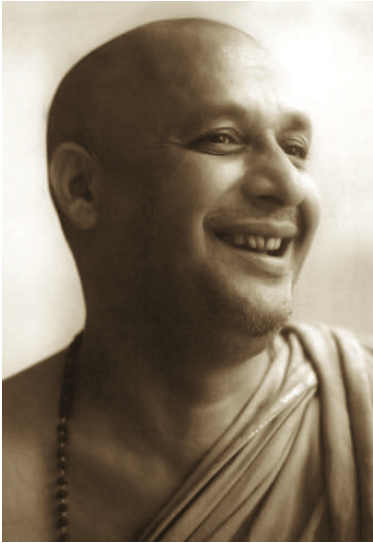
Swami Satyananda Saraswati



The root cause of mental and physical tension is faulty thinking in relation to other people and to our surroundings. Our way of thinking does not harmonize with our external environment. This results in conflicts of interest between ourselves and other people. Our internal environment does not match our pattern of existence. In other words, we live in the same way that a fish would out of water – continually fighting our surroundings instead of merging and flowing with life.

Consider life as a jigsaw puzzle. If each piece of the puzzle fits and is in the right position, then the picture is complete and in balance. But if some pieces don't fit or if they belong to a different jigsaw puzzle, then there is no unity. It is the same with people in the world: when there is conflict with their outer surroundings, there is dis-harmony. Generally, there are few changes that an individual can make to the external environment, and so the change to bring harmony must come from the internal environment, one's attitude to life and other people. When you peacefully coexist with your surroundings, and no longer separate yourself, then tension is removed; you begin to relax.

The factors that prevent somebody from fitting in with their surroundings are fear and the six friends: *kama*, *krodha*, *lobha*, *moha*, *mada* and *matsarya* or desire, anger, greed, attachment, arrogance and jealousy. These are accumulated since birth and cause disruptive interactions with others. They remain mainly in the subconscious layers of the mind, but have an enormous



influence on our daily life. Here is a simple example. Perhaps one person is scared of the dark because as a young child he was accidentally left alone in the dark. The resulting fear continues into adulthood, so that now he is always afraid of the dark. Whenever he has to walk in the dark he becomes tense and fearful. Other people have inferiority complexes, others a fear of heights etc., all because of previous unpleasant experiences. Our minds are full

of such fears and complexes, and these are the major causes of tension in our lives.

Physical manifestations of mental tension

Normally, the body's muscles are supplied with a continuous weak influx of nerve impulses from the brain. This is known as muscular tone and maintains the muscles in a healthy and prepared condition for instant action if required.

Every psycho-physiological disturbance, every negative and destructive emotion causes conflict in the brain. This interferes with the normal tonic rhythm of the muscles and keeps them in an abnormally high state of tension. This over-activation of the muscles without the corresponding muscular activity results in a continual drain of prana from the body. This is like leaving the car lights on – after some time they drain all the power out of the battery. If you turn the lights off when they are not needed, then the energy of the car battery will be conserved. It is the same with the muscles – if you turn off the tension in life then you can conserve your body prana.

Why does this drainage of prana through muscular contraction occur? The reason is simple. When you think something,

the body automatically prepares itself to transfer the thought into action. The brain and body are two parts of the same unit; they are not separate.

For example: after a hard and particularly tense day at work a man returns home, feeling angry and looking for a way to relieve his frustrations. As a result, he may become angry with a dog for no apparent reason, but just as he begins to walk towards the dog to kick it, an inner order from the brain centres warns him that the dog will bite. This causes indecision and the muscles remain in a state of tension, ready for action. This kind of emotion, with or without translation into physical action, results in dissipation and wastage of prana. The result is chronic fatigue.

For many people these emotional disturbances and their corresponding detrimental physical effects are a regular part of life. People are continually feeling anger, fear, jealousy, etc., which makes them perpetually tense in mind and body and ultimately leads to disease, either physically or mentally or both.

With certain emotional responses, adrenalin is automatically injected into the blood stream from the adrenal glands. It is an instinctive mechanism which prepares the body for maximum efficiency and readiness during emergencies. The adrenalin causes contraction of the muscles, constriction of blood vessels, increases the heart and respiratory rates, speeds up the thought processes and so on – all the things that are necessary to resist danger.

As is to be expected, its continual presence in the blood-stream leads to continuous muscular general body and mental tension. It is impossible to relax with adrenalin being continually pumped into the blood. This adrenalin response system is absolutely necessary, but only during emergencies.

An example would be if a car suddenly and unexpectedly appeared around a blind corner where you were walking. It is the adrenalin which is almost instantly released into the blood, which makes you afraid and jump to the side of the road to avoid injury. But its use is only intended for emergency

situations. In the fast modern world of today this emergency response system is abused, for most people view every situation in life as a crisis. They are continually tense and on their guard. The adrenalin is pumped into the bloodstream almost as fast as it can be manufactured. How is it possible for them to relax? The whole endocrine system is forced to operate at a high level, to cope with the corresponding high level of body functioning.

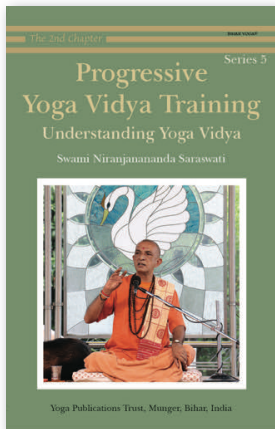
As a body becomes weaker through tension, it simultaneously becomes less and less able to face the onset of bacterial infection. When a body is strong and healthy, it has a very powerful autotherapeutic strength to resist bacteriological disease. This power is weakened in a body that is unhealthy or tension ridden. The body becomes a target for the onset of disease. The body is like any other machine, even though it is infinitely more complex. If it is misused or made to work abnormally it starts to develop faults. These are in the form of arthritis, heart trouble, constipation, diabetes, asthma, etc. These ailments are so prevalent today, even children of just a few years of age are starting to manifest disease symptoms.

Removal of most ailments, their prevention, a happy life and a flight into higher consciousness is impossible unless we can learn to completely relax. Easier said than done you might say. Well, to be permanently relaxed takes time and effort. Permanent relaxation is a very advanced state of yoga called *sahaja samadhi*, spontaneous and natural equanimity which automatically implies higher consciousness. But systematic relaxation for a few minutes when one feels tired can be easily carried out. The tranquillity that you gain will give you a new, more relaxed platform from which to continue your daily life, even if this sense of wellbeing only lasts for a few hours.

– *Published in Yoga & Kriya*

Pranayama

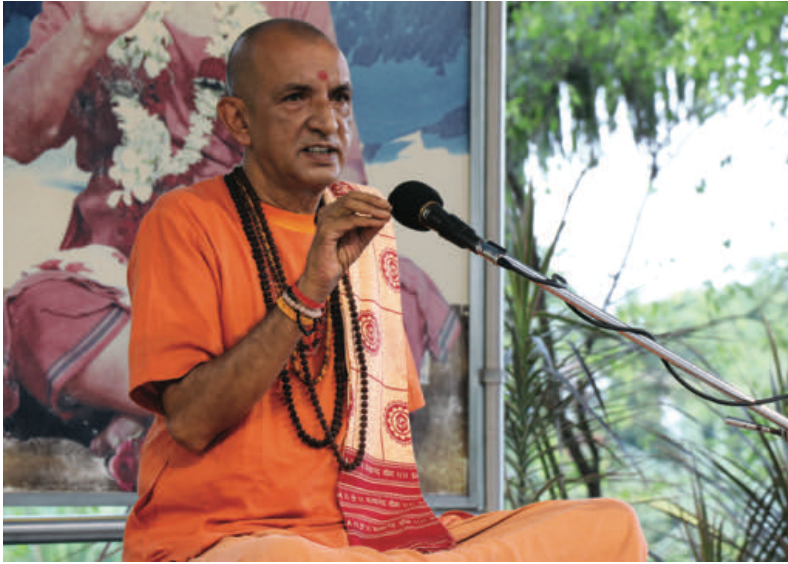
Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



With the physical practices you are able to fine-tune your body, remove the blocks, the stiffness, the tensions, free your body, promote circulation of blood and vitality. Once the body has come to its optimum state of wellness, then you move into the practice of pranayama.

The subject of prana has to be understood first by controlling and regulating the breathing process. The total capacity of your lungs is about six litres of air. However, in a normal inhalation, you take in only about 500 millilitres of air. The vitality, health and stamina of your body depends on these 500 millilitres. Therefore, the first practice in pranayama is learning to take deep breaths, to breathe in more than 500 millilitres, maybe 1,000, maybe 1,500. You increase your ability to utilize the existing capacity of the lungs. This is the first result of pranayama.

When you begin to utilize your lung capacity, much more air enters your system. At present you are surviving with what you receive from 500 millilitres of air. If you begin to use even half your lung potential, two or three litres, it is a big improvement. Everybody knows that respiration should not be shallow, and emphasis is always given on long and deep breathing. Psychoanalysts advise people to take long and deep breaths for anger management. Common sense says that when you are under stress and tension, the breathing is rapid and shallow. When you are rested and relaxed, the breathing is long and deep. Nobody will accept this commonsensical fact until a doctor says so, for then it is medically and scientifically confirmed. This is the state of our understanding of life.



There is no commonsensical understanding of life. There is no natural living. There is always a projected lifestyle. For people who live a projected lifestyle it is difficult to imbibe the yogic lifestyle, as in the yogic lifestyle you have to work with yourself. You have to re-tune and refine yourself, and the training begins with the breath.

A longer and deeper breath reduces nervous, cerebral and muscular tensions. If you are nervous before taking an injection, the doctor says, "Look the other way. Take a deep breath in," and then he sticks the needle in. Breathing is used by everybody to create a condition in the body. While it is an important aspect of life, people do not fully utilize this ability. Therefore, the shakti which would normally be in you if you utilized the full capacity, is reduced to less than one-fourth.

Your stamina, strength, vitality, health and buoyancy can be much more if you breathe in more. Your body can be buzzing with energy as it is receiving more. So the first stage of pranayama is always important, for it is here that you learn to regulate your breathing, increase the capacity of the lungs and master the process of inhalation, exhalation and retention.

Kumbhaka

In yogic scriptures, you will come across the term *kevala kumbhaka*. It means external retention of breath for as long as possible. In that state you experience prana. When you practise internal kumbhaka, inner retention, the filling of the lungs creates pressure on your heart. With internal kumbhaka the heartbeat increases as the heart has to pump harder and faster to compensate for the pressure of air from the lungs. When you practise external kumbhaka there is a bigger gap. There is no pressure and your heartbeat will not increase until you begin to gasp for breath. Then your heart will begin to beat faster. This is a physiological activity: while inhaling and holding the breath you will be able to feel your heartbeat increase. Holding the breath out you will feel much more comfortable and the heartbeat will increase much later. According to yogis, it is when you are in external kumbhaka that you experience prana shakti vibrating in your body.

Sri Swamiji says that the actual experience of pranayama takes place in the gap between inhalation and exhalation. There is a break between inhalation and exhalation, and it is during that break that you can experience prana shakti. There is no inhalation and no exhalation at that time. That is the state of *kevala kumbhaka*.

However, there is a difference between regular external kumbhaka and *kevala kumbhaka* after exhalation. The first is a practice of breath control where you are deliberately and consciously holding the breath after exhalation. *Kevala kumbhaka* is a spontaneous, effortless suspension of breath when the pranas have awakened and reached a certain level. In the regular external kumbhaka, the exhalation and the next inhalation are the supports of the kumbhaka, but *kevala* is supportless – it is *kevala*, which means ‘only’ kumbhaka, ‘kevala’. There is an experience of total relaxation and ease after emptying out completely with the exhalation and the breath is held out naturally. Of course, to come to this experience requires not only years of practice in pranayama



but also a higher state of mind which is able to connect with that experience of emptiness or space. That is why kevala kumbhaka is equated with samadhi.

Most practitioners find internal retention easier than external retention as they are working only with the breath, and the desire to inhale again during external retention overrides the ease of emptying out. The body systems and the heart are also at ease only in that gap where the desire to inhale does not arise. The moment you feel you need to breathe, the sympathetic nervous system kicks in and if you try holding any longer you will turn black and blue. Nevertheless, you can get a glimpse of kevala kumbhaka in external retention by forgetting about the ratio, count etc. and instead practising exhaling, holding, and connecting with the experience of emptiness or space while holding. If you do this, you might discover that the kumbhaka extends naturally.

Kevala kumbhaka can also take place after inhalation. You inhale, hold the pranas in a higher centre, and the breath just stops. For as long as the pranas are held, the desire to exhale is not there. However, in internal kevala kumbhaka the pranas come to a standstill, there is no movement of prana at all, whereas in external kevala kumbhaka the pranas become more vibrant.

– *Published in Progressive Yoga Vidya Training, Series 5*

Revive the Gurukul

Swami Sivananda Saraswati

If you compare the present system of education with our ancient gurukul system, there is a wide gulf between the two. Mark the difference between the secular education in universities and spiritual teachings of seers. Note how the rishis have given instructions to their students when they had finished their course of study:

Speak truth. Do not neglect the study of the Vedas. Do not swerve from truth. Do not swerve from duty. Do not neglect your welfare. Do not neglect your prosperity. Do not neglect the duties towards God and forefathers.

May the mother be your God. May the father be your God. May the preceptor be your God. May the guest be your God. Do such actions as are blameless, not others.

Every student in the gurukul had knowledge of pranayama, mantra, yoga asana, the code of morals, the *Bhagavad Gita*, *Ramayana*, *Mahabharata* and the Upanishads. Every student possessed humility, self-restraint, obedience, spirit of service and, last but not least, a desire for acquiring *atmajnana*, knowledge of the self. Every student in the gurukul was pure. Every student had perfect moral training. This was the predominating feature of ancient culture.



Education must be based on a sound philosophy of life. If there is no right understanding of the ultimate aim of human life, if there is no clear idea of what one is meant to become through the process of life, no scheme of education will be satisfying and beneficial.

Education is training for life, in which ethics has the most dominant role. Education of the intellect, without moral discipline, is injurious to human progress. Intelligence without character is a source of danger, both to the individual concerned and to his fellow men. Development of the body and the intellect alone, without moral discipline, will produce selfish men and women who will have no feeling or sympathy for the poor, or reverence for the elders and the wise, or respect for life. Education must help to form a strong, pure and beautiful character. There is nothing in our present system of education that will teach our young boys and girls how to form a stable character.

India's educational ideals are in a ferment today. Our schools and colleges have become shops of profit and loss. Our graduates run after money, power, comforts, honours and titles. The mind of the youth is corrupted by much undesirable literature.

Education has lost its value today. It is now becoming fragmentary. It is not integral, rich and full. The different intellectual sciences which are taught in the universities of today are a feeble apology for the integral education which is necessary for the attainment of perfection. Degrees like 'Master of Arts' mean nothing. It is the wisdom that matters. Sri Shankara graduated himself, not at some foreign academy or university, but in the lore of Govindapada and his predecessors Vyasa, Vasishtha, Suka and Parasara.

The present system of education in India needs a thorough, drastic overhauling immediately. The ancient gurukul system should be revived and adequately revised according to the needs of the time, so that the students might be able to derive the maximum benefit from it.

Littlebug, the Little Jnani Yogi

Sannyasi Bhaktichittam, Uruguay

Objective – While enjoying a simple story and adequate narration, we can introduce several aspects of the Yoga Chakra. The topic of this story addresses the jnana yoga branch.

Age level – 4 to 9 years approximately.

Asana – While narrating the children perform the asanas. It is a beautiful morning in the big forest. The sky is blue and the sun is shining, it is neither too cold nor too hot. Near a lake (stream, river, etc.) there is a large tree with branches reaching high into the sky – **tadasana**.

In its trunk there is a hole from where a Littlebug peeks out and looks around, it looks up and down, to one side and the other side – **greeva sanchalanasana**.

Littlebug is amazed at what it sees and with a heavy sigh says, “But who am I? What am I doing here?”

No one answers, so Littlebug leaves the hole. On its right side there is a beautiful butterfly – **titali asana**. Littlebug watches the light, soft, slow flutter of the butterfly. It goes towards the butterfly wanting to ask, ‘Who am I?’, but the butterfly flew away. Littlebug could not ask, but thought, ‘Maybe I’m like the butterfly’. So Littlebug tried but could not fly like the butterfly and said, “So if I am not a butterfly, who am I? What am I doing here?”

Suddenly, at the edge of the forest, on his left side some branches start cracking and a lion appears right in front of Littlebug’s eyes – **simhasana**. It is a big lion, paws anchored to the ground, chest projected forward, proud and fierce. After overcoming the surprise and seeing the lion so firm and confident, Littlebug thinks it could also be a lion. With joy it

approaches the lion and says, “Do you think I am a lion like you?” There is deep silence, then the lion opens its mouth to respond – **simhagarjanasana**. Littlebug is so scared and it quickly leaves without waiting for an answer. Littlebug unhappy and almost crying says, “I can’t roar like a lion, so who am I? What am I doing here?”

Lowering its head Littlebug sees in the grass near the lake a crocodile – **makarāsana**. The crocodile is absolutely still, not moving, just still. Littlebug thinks, ‘This could surely be me, it does not roar, it does not fly. I can be still’. However, time passes, and passes and more time passes, and the crocodile still does not move a bit. Littlebug is getting bored being still and asks the crocodile, “Do you think I could be a crocodile too?” “Oh no!” says the crocodile, “you can’t be still.” Littlebug agrees that being still for so long does not suit it, “But, who am I? What am I doing here?”

As it wanders around aimlessly in the forest, it sees a turtle – **kurmasana**. It is completely tucked into its shell. Littlebug thinks, ‘This is a very old animal so it must be very wise’. Littlebug gently knocks on the shell, and watching the turtle, Littlebug also stretches one leg, then the other leg, one arm, then the other arm and then slowly stretches out the head. Littlebug



is happy and tells the turtle, "Look, I can do everything you do, so do you think I am a turtle like you?" Gently nodding, the turtle replies, "Maybe, maybe, maybe." So Littlebug begins to move like a turtle, but soon is simply moving too fast. "So I am not a turtle either. Who am I? What am I doing here?"

Pranayama

Tired, Littlebug closes its eyes and sits down in the grass – and wakes up to the sound of something buzzing and the delicious smell of honey. Littlebug looks up and sees a big bumble bee – **bhramari**. "I know I cannot fly and I cannot make honey, although I love honey very much. I am not a bumble bee, but who am I? What am I doing here?"



Pratyahara

Tired of trying to be someone, Littlebug lies down near the lake – **shavasana**. The beautiful butterfly returns and sees Littlebug lying on the grass.

Introduction to relaxation: feeling the warm air, heat from the sun, listening to the sound of birds, water flowing, and so on. If possible: rotation of consciousness according to the ages of the children and experience of the group; use the image of a butterfly gently touching each body part.



Yama and niyama – Manahprasad and Namaskara

Littlebug begins to move, sits up and sees its reflection on the calm waters of the lake, like a mirror it sees itself. Littlebug finally sees, “I am that. This is me. I am me.” Littlebug is happy, it has the answer to its questions. “I am happy to be me, a Littlebug and to be friends with the sun, the river and trees, the beautiful butterfly, the proud lion, the still crocodile, the slow old turtle and busy bumble bee. This is the best way to be.”



As a way to externalize and capture some aspects of the experience, each child is given a sheet of paper or similar and materials to draw and paint. Who is Littlebug for you? Children draw what they think Littlebug is, then you can add them to a paper craft tree.

Observation: we are all different, we are all worthy and knowing this brings happiness and acceptance of oneself and others, so we can greet everyone respectfully every day.

Based on the story El Mausito by Lolo Rico de Alba

A True Jnani

Swami Sivananda Saraswati



A jnani has got all-round development. He has spotless or unblemished character. All sattwic virtues shine in him. He is an embodiment of mercy, sympathy, love, patience and serenity, and is absolutely free from worries, difficulties, troubles, sorrow and anxieties under any circumstance or condition. He is always cheerful and happy. He is not a slave or victim of different moods. All divine attributes are fully awakened in him.

A full-blown jnani has a different angle of vision. There is absolutely no personal element in him. He has not a bit of selfish interest. He lives for serving all. He thinks and feels and works for others.

Viveka

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Viveka means right understanding. Right understanding will create a positive result in the personality by providing a new dimension to one's understanding and interaction with the world, the senses and objects. Proper application of *viveka* alters behaviour, desires and interaction.

Spirituality is an inner unfolding, it is not something which one attains from outside. Spirituality is a symptom of an integrated and awakened personality. Only when the personality is awake and balanced can spiritual awareness dawn.

In yoga, *viveka* is considered to be a faculty of higher vision. From ground level one can see the horizon only up to a certain distance. As one climbs a mountain one gets a wider view and a greater perspective. When one goes up in a helicopter or an aeroplane one can see much further still. Therefore, the higher up one goes, the broader the view becomes. The more one internalizes, the more one discovers oneself and the more one's views about life change. Actions and performance change; behaviour, attitude and emotions all change.

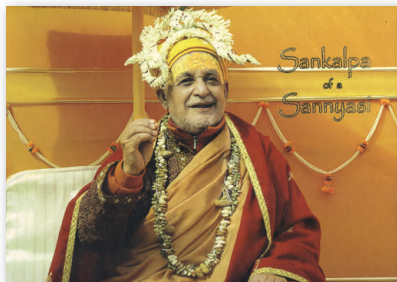
Yoga has always considered the mind, body and spirit as an integrated unit. The body cannot survive without the mind. It cannot survive without the spirit. The mind cannot survive without the body, nor can it survive without the spirit. The individual spirit cannot survive without the mind or the body. This is the realization that one must attain: the unity and integrity of these three expressions of creation. The body is one expression, the mind is another expression and *jivatma*, or soul, is the third expression. When these three expressions are combined, that experience is known as life.



Human beings work and function in the world through the body and mind, and this is about the limit of their expression, but when the state of viveka dawns, the spirit begins to manifest. Viveka is not the intellect; it is higher awareness. It is more than right knowledge, as it has been described in many books. Viveka is an awareness of every action, reaction, thought, desire, motivation and ambition. One is aware of one's limitations and capabilities.

Spiritual Education

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Spiritual education must be imparted to children from the very beginning of life. Imbibing good *samskaras* or impressions has to start from the moment of conception. The mother is the first guru, teacher and inspirer. Until the child is seven years of age, she is entirely responsible for his destiny, for qualities such as love, compassion and intelligence. This education is maternal, internal or emotional. After the age of seven, society takes over the child's education.

Samskara is a seed sown in the depths of consciousness. We are a bundle of *samskaras*. Everything we experience in life and after remains embedded as a *samskara*. Just as a seed sprouts when the time is right, so too these *samskaras* sprout at the favourable time. Depending on the quality of our *samskaras*, we remain savage like an animal or are transformed into a human being, fit for higher births.

When a child is innocent, an imprint planted in the mind becomes permanent, which affects the intellect. When understanding develops, children are influenced by suggestions such as not telling lies, and this has an effect. During pregnancy, after the individual soul, the *jivatma*, is implanted in the foetus at four months, the education received in the womb is most influential. Everyone, father, mother or any other household member, should understand this reality. A soul in the mother's womb is very sensitive and is influenced by the surrounding vibrations.

In the gurukul tradition, knowledge is imbibed rather than imposed. It is believed that knowledge is already within, and if the child is provided with the proper environment,



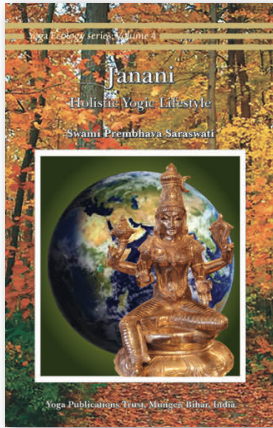
the knowledge will unfold. Traditionally, after twelve years in the gurukul, the child returned to his family and was married. Marriage was also a samskara. Culture depends upon a person's samskaras. Money comes and goes but good samskaras abide. Compassion, discrimination and the ability to make correct decisions come with good samskaras. If good samskaras disappear from your family, what is left? Will you cherish television? No, we want good samskaras, the progressive refinement of personality, stage by stage.

The vedic tradition of samskaras has been passed down through the generations. It has been developed, practised and maintained only in India. If we want to improve the quality of our children and, in the course of time, society and the world we live in, then the samskaras, the impressions, we expose our children to are of the utmost importance.

– *Published in Sankalpa of a Sannyasi*

A Ray of Hope – The Caring Nature

Swami Prembhava Saraswati



Plant seeds of happiness, kindness and friendship; it will all come back to you in abundance. This is the law of Nature.

—Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Swami Niranjan says that within all of us there is a very special quality – *samrakshan*, the caring nature. *Sam* means ‘complete’, and *rakshan* means ‘to protect and preserve’. It is this innate nature that takes us out of our self-centered ego and puts the comfort and happiness of others first. This soft quality is also known as the maternal instinct or motherly nature. It is a quality most often found in mothers of nearly every species on earth. It is this quality that allows an untrained female to know exactly how to give birth, hold, protect, feed and nurture her young. It is this instinct that gives strength and courage to protect the young and loved ones against all possible threats. A mother will starve herself to ensure her child has food.

Professionals such as nurses, paramedics, gardeners, school teachers, national park rangers, environmentalists, old age carers and many more have developed their caring nature and express it daily through their work. It exists within us all and can be encouraged and expressed by one and all.

According to science, the maternal instinct is a response to the release of oxytocin which creates a feeling of love, care, bonding and connection to one’s family and friends. Oxytocin is released in the mother’s body during pregnancy; it assists

There is no need to escape life. Live it, live it fully, Live it blissfully, Harmonize it, Awaken your ineffable potential. This is the essence of sannyasa.

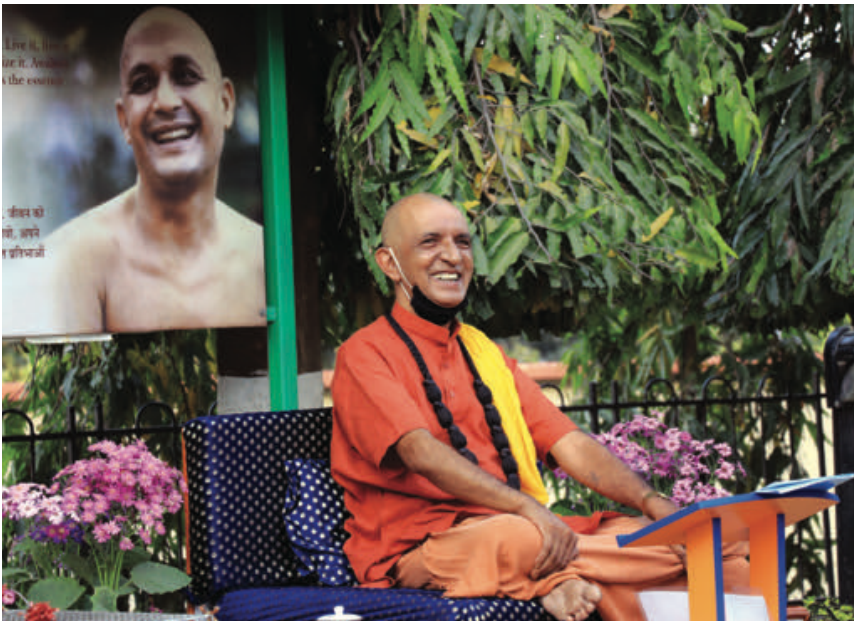
जीवन से पलायन की आवश्यकता न
जीयो, पूरी तरह जीयो, आनन्दपूर्वक जी
जीवन में सामंजस्य लाओ, अपनी प्रभुता
को जगाओ, यही संन्यास का सार है.





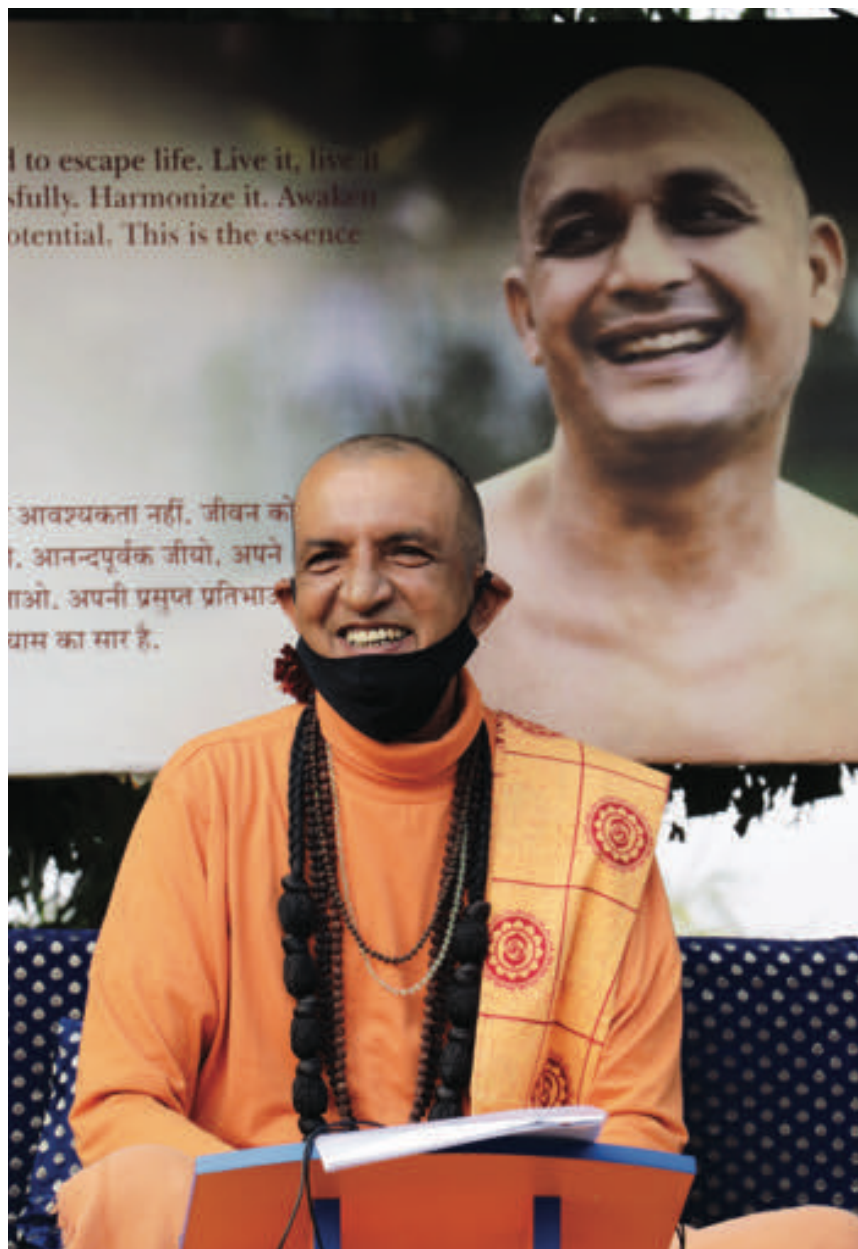
tully. Live it blissfully. Harmonize it. Always
your ineffable potential. This is the essence
of sannyasa.

जीवन से फलायन की आवश्यकता नहीं. जीवन को
जीयो, पूरी तरह जीयो. आनन्दपूर्वक जीयो, अपने
जीवन में सामंजस्य लाओ. अपनी प्र
को जगाओ. यही संन्यास का सार है



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potential, This is the essence

आवश्यकता नहीं. जीवन को
। आनन्दपूर्वक जीयो, अपने
। आपो. अपनी प्रसन्न प्रतिभा
ध्यास का सार है.





with childbirth, breast feeding and encourages the connection and care between mother and child.

This release of oxytocin takes place when we are connecting or interacting with other people, sharing, feeling cared for, during sexual intercourse and orgasm, as well as through positive experiences of the senses, such as taste, touch, sound, sight and smell. Oxytocin is a feel-good hormone and is released when our external situations are positive, loving and caring. The more we love and care the more oxytocin is released. It is therefore possible to increase the quantity of oxytocin in our bodies by being more caring which, in turn, increases the strength of our caring nature. Swami Sivananda always said that the more we care and give to others the more we receive.

For it is in giving that we receive.

—St Francis of Assisi

The essence of Mother Nature is the maternal or caring nature. She has provided everything needed for life and the health of all species. Nature cares and gives selflessly to one and all, like a tree which provides fruit, shelter, shade and oxygen to any creature which comes her way.

Biophilia, a term coined by biologist E.O. Wilson, is the innate affinity of humans towards nature and other forms of life. Biophilia is our love of life and nature. It is a part of our genetic design. We need to live with and care for nature and other life-forms to be happy and healthy. Many households around the world have pet dogs, cats, birds and fish. These creatures are loved and cared for like other family members, and it has always been that way for the human race. We need this connection to other life-forms for happiness. Think of the love and care that animals have shown in helping people lift themselves out of loneliness and depression. It has been found that dogs in retirement homes and hospitals bring joy and calmness to patients. People find just to pet and touch a friendly dog can lift their mood and bring happiness.

We are made of this caring nature and it sustains us. It exists within us all in different degrees and can be encouraged and extended to all areas of life. The more we give and care for others, the more we receive, the happier, stronger and more content we become. This has been the teachings of spiritual teachers, saints and sages of all times.

It is this nature that is the need of today and could provide solutions to many of the problems we face as a species, society and civilization. It provides hope for the future of our civilization. The caring nature has the power to pull the human race out of the self-centred greed-based civilization that is causing so much destruction, and make it a civilization that can care for, protect and nurture our environment for future generations.

Sanyam of caring

The caring instinct can be enhanced in simple ways in daily life through a caring awareness of ourselves, our surroundings and people. We must first care for ourselves through a healthy diet, routine and lifestyle, then we can extend our care outwards to the environment and people around us. This will improve our own life and increase happiness and joy through simple acts of kindness. For example:



- Learn to care for your own body and mind through the yogic practices of asana, pranayama, yoga nidra, mantra japa and a natural yogic diet.
- Care for your family, share time together, come together at dinner time and share life's adventures and stories.
- Having a dog or cat around will help to express the caring nature and you will receive so much love and affection in return.
- A garden helps you connect with nature and with other species, such as plants, trees, insects and birds. Caring for a garden awakens our love and respect for nature. Even a small pot plant in the kitchen can awaken this caring nature.
- If you see some rubbish when walking down the street, pick it up and throw it in the dustbin just as you would in your own house or garden.
- Assist strangers, the elderly and people in need just as you would a family member.
- Whenever you feel depressed or lonely, take yourself out of the self-centred awareness by helping and caring for others.
- Karma and seva yoga encourages our caring nature. When we do action with the awareness of service we offer our help and abilities to the yogic mission.

- Practise Ashwattha Aradhana daily. Fully connect and care for the tree, nourish it with compost and nutrients, trim and clean the old leaves and branches, water it daily. Learn about the species of tree. What country does it originally come from? What is its natural habitat and environment? What other species live with this tree? How much sunshine does it need? How much water does it need? What soil does it like? Observe everything about the tree and learn to communicate with the tree.

Learn to give, give in plenty, give with love, give without any expectation, one does not lose anything by giving, on the other hand you get back a thousand fold.

– Swami Sivananda Saraswati

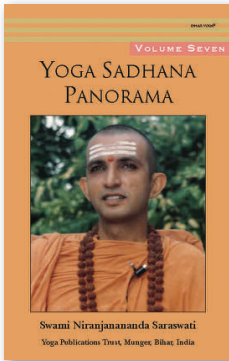
The caring instinct can be used as the tool to shift us into a new beginning, a new identification and a new civilization based on love, connection and care. It is up to each one of us to establish ourselves within this caring awareness and within nature. We must begin now.

– *Published in Janani – Holistic Yogic Lifestyle*



Spirituality

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



The most important part of a tree is not the trunk, but the root. One has to nurture the root more than any other part, for once the root becomes weak, what kind of life will the tree have? You may prop it up but with one small storm it will fall, as it lacks the strength to stand upright. From the time of our birth till the time of our death, we care for our trunk, branches, leaves, flowers and fruit, but neglect our roots.

Our body represents the trunk. The branches represent the different organs, karmendriyas and jñanendriyas of the body. The leaves, flowers and fruit represent the mind and the different experiences of the total mind. However, the roots are somewhere hidden and we have never looked deep inside to find them. The roots are the spirit that is dormant within and unknown to us. As we have not looked after our spirit, we are weak physically, mentally, emotionally, psychically and spiritually.

When the body becomes sick, we try to care for it. The body is the medium for experiencing the higher realities of life, but we have neglected to care for the inner structure, the inner spirit. When the mind becomes infirm, we try to heal it with the different therapies that are available. This has been the greatest folly of humankind and it is the reason why we have been unable to find enjoyment, contentment, happiness, health and our place in life. It is the state of total wellbeing that we have to aim for.

Wellbeing of the human personality

The wellbeing of the body, mind and emotions, the sense of ethics and morality, represents the concept of health, and not

necessarily the absence of disease. According to tradition, once we become life members of this club of prakriti, we have to go through three experiences: *janma*, birth, *vyadhi*, disease, and *mrityu*, death. Janma, or birth, is our admission into the club of prakriti. Once we become members of this club, it is natural that we will experience vyadhi, or disease.

The definition of disease is 'disturbed ease'. The natural harmony of the self becomes disturbed due to the attractions of the senses and the world, due to the diversion of the mind from the inner self to an imposed outer identity. This creates an imbalance in the structure of the mind, body, psyche and emotions. Later, that imbalance is reflected in our behaviour, performance, thought processes, and mental and emotional expressions.

When we are happy and content, everything seems to go smoothly, but when we are unhappy, when we struggle to attain something which is lacking in our lives, then we tend to lose our equilibrium and clarity of mind. These are the things that both modern and ancient therapies try to treat. However, it is not the symptom but the cause of the disturbance that has to be treated. Some therapies can do this and others cannot. We need to realize that there are ways to regulate our lifestyle. Regulation of lifestyle is the keyword here for the wellbeing of the human personality.

Tree of life

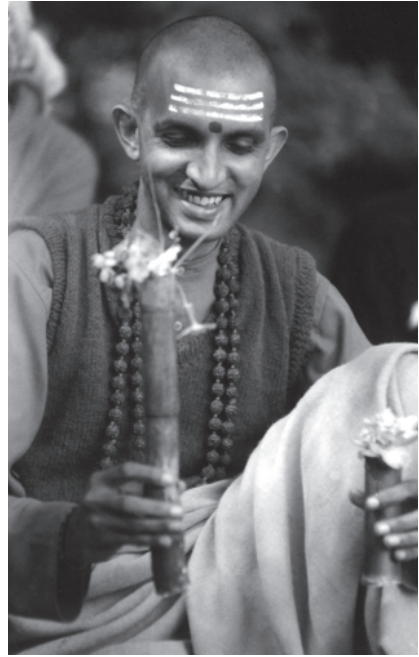
Spirituality is awareness of the root of the tree of life. This has been clearly stated in the 15th chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* which is *Purushottam Yoga*, the yoga of the supreme spirit. Here it says (15:1): *Oordhvamoolamadhaahshaakham* which means that life is like an inverted tree, with the roots above and the branches below.

The roots represent the spirit. The trunk is the manifestation of the human nature, identity, personality and individuality. The branches, which are at the lower level, represent the many expressions of the gunas in human nature, in the form

of knowledge, creativity, energy, feeling, attitude, positivity and negativity, which we express in our lives.

In the same chapter, it has also been said (15:3): *Asangashastrena dridhena chhitva*, which means that, ultimately, we have to cut the trunk of the tree, so that the physical and mental experiences are isolated from the spiritual experiences.

There are different *astras*, or divine weapons, such as the Brahmastra, Agneyastra, Vayavyastra. Here, Lord



Krishna has defined another form of astra to cut the trunk at the root. The instrument is the axe of *anasakti*, detachment. Those things we cannot leave are *asakti*, our attachments. When we hold the axe of detachment in our hands, we can cut this tree of life at the root. Then we are free from attachment to the physical and material life and can experience spiritual life. This is *viveka* and *vairagya*, discrimination and non-attachment.

Yogic view of spirituality

The combination of the four purusharthas, kama, artha, dharma and moksha, is spirituality. Spirituality does not require us to isolate ourselves from society, to close our eyes, concentrate, meditate and try to have different divine experiences. Yoga teaches us spirituality, not by running away from life, but by running into life with total awareness, total conviction, total faith, total belief in the completeness and the fullness that 'I am'.

In order to change our view of spirituality, we will have to differentiate between spirituality and religion, between the



practical experiences we can have of spirituality and of religion. Science is a global concept. Science remains the same whether it is taught in English, Hindi, Chinese or Japanese. Physics, chemistry and mathematics are the same whether in the East or the West. Religion, on the other hand, is a social concept. Every *jati*, or caste, has its own line of thought; every *sampradaya*, or sect, has its own line of thought; every culture has its own line of thought.

Therefore, religion is a social concept; it can change from society to society. However, spirituality is not a social concept; it is an individual concept. At the same time, it is a universal concept, because spirituality takes birth and unfolds from within, and it unites us with the universe by providing a sense of total fulfilment, and the experience of the effulgent personality. Yoga has always aimed for this.

Non-attachment – anasakta bhava

One more thing remains to be explained, which is *asanga bhavana* or detachment. There is a passage in the *Yoga Sutras* which states (2:7-8):

Sukhaanushayi raagaha, we are attracted towards the things that give us pleasure;

Dukhaanushayi dweshaha, we are repulsed by the things that give us suffering.

Attraction is known as *raga*, attachment, or *asakti*. Repulsion is known as *dwesha* or *anasakti*. These two are opposing concepts. Attachment means we are stuck to something, and detachment means that surgery is performed in order to remove that.

Anasakta bhava is not detachment, for it has the faculty of discrimination. Once we have the ability to discriminate, then non-attachment arises. Non-attachment means we have everything, but we are not attached to it. Detachment means that we make an effort to cut ourselves off. In anasakta bhava, we are not making an effort to cut ourselves off, because we have *viveka*, the faculty of discrimination.

So anasakta bhava is actually non-attachment rather than detachment. There are many examples in history of anasakta bhava and anasakta yogis who lived in the world and, at the same time, were non-attached. King Janaka ruled a large empire and yet was totally non-attached to it. He fulfilled his duties, role and obligations as a king, but at the same time, he was always in a state of internal harmony and peace.

Spiritual enlightenment

The expression of spiritual awakening manifests in the form of genius. It is experienced as a total change in viewpoint and ability to act in life. Interactions, behaviour and attitudes change as the vision becomes more universal. Spiritual enlightenment, the last stage of yoga, is the outcome of having attained physical health, mental wellbeing, emotional harmony and psychic awakening. It is the result of these attainments, and that is how we can look into or look towards our roots.

Spiritual enlightenment is the totality of experience, fulfilment and knowledge, which can only be attained by developing all the aspects of our personality. In order to experience spirituality, we must live a complete life and attain total health in all aspects of our personality. In order to attain total health and development of our personality, we must bring yoga into our lives.

– 10 October 1995, *Doctors Conference, AIIMS (All India Institute of Medical Sciences), Delhi, published in Yoga Sadhana Panorama Volume Seven (Extracts)*

One Year After the Yogic Studies

A year ago at the end of January 2020, I left Bihar School of Yoga. I spent 93 days learning yoga and ashram lifestyle with students from all over the world in the Yogic Studies. This time completely changed my life and my attitude to everything.

I had been dreaming about this spiritual journey for two years. I remember the moment when I finally reached Munger. When I saw the green gates of BSY, my heart was trembling in anticipation of something big and genuine. As I knew later, many of my classmates had felt the same!

I was wondering, would the inner transformations change the world around me after the course. Surprisingly, the world has changed by itself. It might sound strange but for me the lockdown year has become a year when I have been learning to be closer to people. Ashram life, karma yoga and Swamiji's satsangs have cultivated the idea of serving, loving and giving. Moreover, I feel how it is changing my relationships with family, friends and people who practise yoga with me here in Russia.

I miss the ashram and the chance to take a gasp of its blissful air again. All this year I have been telling stories about my ashram life experience, so many Russians are waiting for a chance to get in touch with a real yogic lifestyle and to see the Bihar School of Yoga with their own eyes.

The pandemic has become a challenge and an examination of our ability to apply all the knowledge, techniques and experiences we received in the ashram, even in the fickle flow of life. I asked my classmates by email how the ashram life had helped solve the difficulties of this year 2020.

– Elena, Russia

One year after the Yogic Studies course, I feel like my perception of life has changed a lot. The moments are a mix of positive things and challenges. Good news or an event comes with a challenge, and the challenge ends with good news or a positive event. I feel like I have to be always focused to manage the things I have to face and adapt to. At the same time, I am more able to identify the qualities that I have to develop and it is starting to be easier to manage my emotions and to remain optimistic. The challenges bring less problems and many solutions or different ways to manage them do appear. I am more patient, self-confident. I feel like I am becoming more faithful in something. Even if it is hard sometimes, I am grateful to experience all these things. This course brought me more than I expected.

– *Orphee, France*

BSY has changed me and my life. I continued the mantra japa practice I learnt in the ashram. It has been more than a year that I have been regularly practising japa. It has changed me dramatically. I used to be short-tempered but now I am calm, and I am working on developing patience. Life's ups and downs don't disturb me as much. I am able to stay much more aware. I am more balanced in my approach to life, and have clarity of thought, more positivity, inner peace and happiness. The japa practice has simplified me and my life! All this would not have been possible without the stay in BSY, which changed my perspectives and my lifestyle completely. And for the better!

– *Sumiti, Delhi*

The changes I see in myself and the way I perceive things has totally changed. Now I feel like I can differentiate between what is needed and what are my desires, yet I am still in a learning phase. It is interesting to know what saves time and helps in bringing myself close to my own nature. Swamiji used to say that life itself is a process where learning never stops. I



try to make that process beautiful in whatever I do. Secondly, earlier I was ignorant of what I was doing which seriously was building many karmas. Now I feel like I should have a purpose and faith in everything that I do. It feels that my perceptions are born again blessed with Swamiji's blessings.

– Isha, Rajasthan

2020 was a very difficult and challenging year for me. I have lost many close family members and a few acquaintances. The corona year was not at all easy or pleasant. When I look back I find that my studies at BSY were actually a training for this year. For a whole year I have continuously done my raja yoga practice every evening without a gap. Thanks to God and BSY for teaching me raja yoga for without it I would have been crushed in this 'jail time'.

– Tanmay, Indore

After a year, my joy and happiness has increased for no reason. I am a happy person. I enjoy and love doing the basic work like washing clothes, vessels, cleaning, shopping for vegetables. I am able to connect it to breath awareness too. The list of things and food items which used to give me comfort is reduced, and I am happy with whatever is available. *Sundarkand* chanting has become part of my bhakti sadhana and it gives me immense power to deal with circumstances. I experience the continuous blessings of Guru. I am more flexible mentally to adapt to circumstances.

– Hetal, Dhanbad

Message of Light

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



There are two aspects – the good and the evil. In Satya Yuga, good and evil used to live in different *lokas*, in different dimensions, in different worlds. For good people, it was the *deva loka*, the divine dimension of light; and for bad people, it was the *asura loka*, the demonic dimension of darkness. In Satya Yuga, they all had their own worlds. Then came Treta Yuga in which both coexisted in the same world, good and evil did not have two different worlds. For example, Rama and Ravana both existed in the same world, there was no *deva loka* and no *asura loka*. After Treta Yuga came Dwapara Yuga when the good and the evil became part of the same family. There were some good people and some bad people in the same family, like the Pandava and Kaurava brothers.

Now we are in Kali Yuga, when the good and the evil exist within one person. The change has been from *deva loka* and *asura loka*, to the same world, to the same family, to one individual, one person. Today the *asura vritti* is much more dominant than the *deva vritti*. The *deva vritti* is soft, positive,

luminous and sattwic, the asura vritti is hard and rigid. We are seeing now the rise of the asura vritti around the globe.

There is something called consciousness and people say that it is individual as well as collective and global. When a member of the family feels mentally imbalanced and agitated, that person is experiencing imbalance, agitation and crisis one hundred percent. However, other family members are also feeling it, not in the same intensity as the person who is suffering, not one hundred percent, yet they will be affected at least ten, fifteen, twenty or thirty percent depending on their association with the person. This happens at the individual level.

There is also a global consciousness where we are all connected to the same source known as the collective consciousness. In that collective consciousness, all the responses of the seven billion people are present and we are bombarded by that all the time. Unfortunately, as individuals we are not strong enough to stop that torrent of bombardment.

Asuric vritti

This year we have seen the rise of the asura vritti, the destructive and negative, all over the world. It is not coming from anywhere outside, but from within oneself. Nations are buying arms and ammunition in great quantities. Instead of thinking how they can live properly in the world, people are thinking of how they can use this opportunity to dominate the world. That is an asura vritti.

People had barely staggered out of the first lockdown during which everyone had suffered economically, financially, at all levels - and by the time they try to get back on their feet again, there is a second lockdown. There is a drain of resources again. Then unlock happens and again they struggle. By the time, they are getting back on their feet, the third lockdown happens.

This creates a lot of uncertainty. Instead of addressing issues to make people more confident, secure, safe and optimistic,

we, as humanity, are using our resources in an asuric manner. That is part of the collective consciousness and no matter where you are in the world, whether you are at the border or not, that collective consciousness will have some effect on you.

Only those who remain connected to positivity are able to survive it. It is the only way to survive. If you can remain connected to positivity and remain connected to the deva tattwa within you, the asura vritti will have no attraction or power to pull you. This is something you should think about. It is not good enough just to say that globally and individually human behaviour and society is deteriorating. Yes, it is, we see it every moment of every day. We should ask ourselves, 'How can we survive in such a situation?'

Connecting to light

I had told you a story during Diwali: As the sun was setting, it sent out feelers around the world as to who could spread light while the sun was absent. The call was heard by a deepak whose wick was not burning. It said, "Well, I will burn and as long as I can, I will bring light, but you have to give me the strength, the courage and the shakti." The last ray of the sun came and ignited the wick which became the flame. The last ray of the sun transmitted its own shakti of fire and energy to the wick and to the deepak which had never known fire before. Only after transmitting its own shakti into that wick and seeing the deepak become luminous did the sun set completely.

How was that possible? The *agni*, fire, in the deepak and the agni of the sun are the same element, the same *tattwa*, there is no difference. It is the same fire, the same *tej*, luminosity. It is that little contact with positivity and selflessness, the motivation and the intent which ignites the fire.

As that deepak had become imbued with the power of the sun, it was able to burn and it shed light throughout the whole night. When the sun rose the next morning and saw this little deepak burning brightly, he said, "I'll give you a boon - Wherever you go you will always dispel darkness, darkness

will never be able to stand up against you.” And that is true. A thousand years of darkness can dissipate in one instant the moment you strike a match.

It is that positive deva element which is important, not the asura element. There has been a transformation of human nature from Satya Yuga, when the distinction between righteousness and unrighteousness was clear and the devas and asuras lived according to those principles, to what we see today in Kali Yuga. In Satya Yuga, whenever the balance was broken, whenever the borderlines were crossed, there were conflicts, however each one adhered to their own dharma. Today the same thing is happening within one individual, not just between two separate factions. Unfortunately, it is the individual who is failing today and lacks wisdom, understanding, sympathy, kindness or compassion; only the self is primary and foremost

If we are able to maintain a connection with luminosity, there is always faith and advancement. If we cannot maintain that connection with the sun and with its essence, fire has no meaning. It is the sun which has to manifest in the fire of the deepak, it is the atma which has to manifest in the individual jivatma.

Today, good and evil are within us, however if we can maintain positivity that may become an example and a method for others. They will see that the rope of positivity will guide us out of this gloom of the asura vrittis. This has been the teaching and training of Sri Swami Sivanandaji and Sri Swami Satyanandaji. It is our asura vritti which does not allow us to see our own defect and flaw in us because we don't have the strength and the courage to face it, but we love to observe the same defect and flaw in others. This is asura vritti. We have to change that. It is the spiritual learning of the time, if we want to survive and overcome the asura vrittis. This is also the message of Diwali for there is never any darkness where there is light.

– 4 November 2020, Diwali, Ganga Darshan, Munger

Over the year 2021, YOGA magazine will publish the poem *Light Fire and Darkness*, written by Dhiru Desai (1932–1991)

Light Fire and Darkness

*A modernized version of the Bhagavad Gita,
by Dhiru Desai*

A Word from the Author

In the ancient Hindu epic called the *Mahabharata*, the Pandavas, five brothers who epitomize good, go to battle against their one hundred cousins, the Kauravas, the forces of evil. Before the battle Arjuna, one of the Pandavas, hesitates to fight against friends and relations. Sri Krishna then expounds his philosophy, which came to be known as the *Bhagavad Gita*. In *Light Fire and Darkness*, Arjuna becomes the devotee and Sri Krishna becomes the divine voice. Chapters 1 and 11 are spoken by the devotee and the rest of the text is the divine message.

This is not a translation of the *Bhagavad Gita*. This is a modernized version. I am not a scholar of Sanskrit and in this work I have not used any Sanskrit words, nor have I linked it in any way to Hindu philosophy. I have tried to write in a way that is likely to appeal to one not familiar with vedic culture.

– Dhiru Desai, May 14 1987, Memphis, USA

CHAPTER 7 – ONE IN A MILLION

I am the universe,
the universe is in me.
The external me is
in earth and air and space,
in fire and water and
in mind, reason and self.
The invisible me is everywhere,
in everything.
I am the light of the sun
and the coolness of the moon;
I am the beauty in the rainbow
and the fragrance of jasmine.
I am faith in prayer
and the wisdom of sages,
and I am the beginning
and the end of all things.

Truth, desire, and ignorance
all proceed from me.
I am not in them
but they are in me.
The illusions they project
pervade the universe.
Blinded by them
people do not see me.
But those that take shelter in me
see beyond the false images.
Of those taking refuge in me
most do so to fulfil a wish,
some do so from sentiment,
some in pursuit of knowledge;

and there are those who do so
striving for the good of their people.

With my blessings all of them
may achieve their ends;
but the perfect devotee,
one in a million,
is one who knows me;
finds me everywhere,
in everything and every being;
who knows that I am the past,
present and future;
who sees me in young and old,
in the poor and wrongdoer,
in lotus and serpents,
in the cow and the lute.
Such a one, devoid of delusion,
with knowledge, finds harmony in me.

CHAPTER 8 – REALIZATION IS REBIRTH

I am the spirit,
and the creator
of the universe,
and also of your soul.
Within you is your soul,
without are desires,
and between the two
is constant battle.
The soul that prevails
finds a home in me.

The road to me
is paved with knowledge
and selfless actions.
The soul that strives
along this path
all through life, will at death,
dwell in me,
and attain me;
for the thoughts on one's deathbed
are the fruits of
one's actions in life.
The end of one life
is the start of next.
One who is lifelong
immersed in desires,
at death is filled
with thoughts of desire,
and returns to a life of misery.
Realization is rebirth.
Repent your wrongs,

turn a new leaf,
and you can still attain me.

This life is but a moment
in the divine calendar.
Waste it not in vain desires.
This day will soon
be followed by a dark night;
you will die to be reborn,
again and again.
One who attains me is not reborn.
One whose work glows
like a forest fire,
one whose mind shines
like the bright sun,
one whose faith grows
like the ballooning moon,
one who is free of desires
like the clear blue skies
will find a home in my heart.

Constant Remembrance

Swami Sivananda Saraswati



The secret of reaching the Divine Being is to constantly practise unbroken remembrance of the Lord at all times, in all places and even amidst one's daily activities.

By constantly remaining in tune with the Divine through pure love, everything is made auspicious. If one can remain united with God through deep devotion, constant remembrance, regular meditation and continuous communion, the times, places, conditions and situations become auspicious and blessed. This is the secret of invoking His Grace and attaining Him and becoming eternally free and blissful.

Ishta is the Nucleus

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

Unite the mind with the ishta devata. Lean the mind towards the ishta, just as when cooking for loved ones, one is always aware of them – children and husband. It is not the act which is important, it is the awareness of the person for whom it is being done.

The sadhaka should realize that his meditational object is not merely a photograph, but a platform for the descent of the Divine. He should understand throughout everything that the more he concentrates on the picture, the clearer his ishta will become. Let it become a truth of his mind that his ishta is everywhere, even though he is encased in a body for the favour of his bhaktas.

Time and space meet in the ishta devata. Time and space meet in the symbol. It can be anything – a flower, wife, husband, the guru; it doesn't matter. Christ can be a symbol, Sri Rama can be a symbol, guru can be a symbol, any object can be a symbol provided it can hold the mind. Anything that can hold the mind is the best symbol. If it can't hold the mind, the mind runs away. When the symbol is there as a nucleus, time and space are moving closer to each other, and when they move closer to each other at some point they should meet. The point where they meet is the symbol, and the moment they meet there is an explosion. When there is an explosion, that explosion charges the kundalini.

Whatsoever form any devotee desires to worship with faith – that (same) faith of his I make firm and unflinching. (7:21)

Four Kinds of Devotees

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Sri Krishna says that there are four kinds of people who worship him: *artha*, *jignasu*, *artharathi* and *jnani*: “An *artha* devotee prays for relief from calamities which have befallen him. A *jignasu* is one who wants to know Me in earnest. An *artharathi* is one who worships Me with a desire or intention for fulfilment in mind, in order to attain something. A *jnani* is one who accepts Me as the reality which I am. It is the *jnani* who is dear to Me.”

All these are noble, but the man of wisdom I regard as my very Self, for with the mind steadfast, he is established in Me alone as the supreme goal. (7:18)



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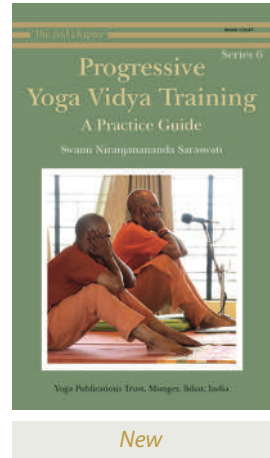
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Om Tat Sat
The Editor

