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Hari Om

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GUIDELINES FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

Spiritual life

The salt of life is selfless service, the bread of life is universal love, the water of life is purity. Hence, serve, love and be pure. The fragrance of life is generosity, the sweetness of life is devotion, the pivot of life is meditation. The goal of life is self-realization. Therefore, be generous, be good and do good, meditate and realize the Self.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

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(59th year of publication)

Swami Satyananda

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of Swami Satyananda 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 ॥

Become the Master

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Swami means one who is one's own master. *Swa* means one's own master. One who rules over oneself is one's own king. Now, at the moment we are not our own masters. At the moment we are servants. Our master is the mind. It is the mind that rules us. Sometimes it makes us talk, sometimes it makes us speak the truth. Sometimes it makes us practise austerities. Sometimes it compels us to steal, sometimes to do charity. Sometimes it makes us adopt the path of righteousness and sometimes the path of unrighteousness. The king is our mind and we are the servants.

When the mind becomes the servant and we become the master, then we are a swami. Swami Vivekananda and others were masters of their minds. Great people make the mind a servant, and the mind can be a good capable worker. If you can make the mind your servant, you can achieve all the subtle capabilities, *siddhis*, and all the divine blessings or *vibhootis*, which come from the mind. Now the mind is enjoying the position of the guru, and that is why it does not do anything.

– 27 November 2000, Rikhiapeeth,
published in Bhakti Yoga Sagar Volume Six

If All Is Maya

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

In Vedanta there is only one truth, called *Brahman*, the supreme being, the absolute. Everything else is called maya. *Maya* means the divine illusion, which does not really exist, but which you see and feel. That is called maya, a non-existent principle of which you have an experience, like dreams. In dreams you see an elephant but there is no elephant in reality. In dream you see a snake crawling over you or even biting you, but actually there is no snake. This is called maya, an experience which really doesn't exist, but which you experience as real.

According to Vedanta, the whole universe is maya. As such, the universe doesn't exist. The sun does not exist, the moon does not exist, the solar systems do not exist, the earth does not exist, you don't exist, I don't exist, because reality is only one; it is absolute. All else that you see and experience through your mind and senses is illusion; it's a dream.

In modern science also, they have been talking more or less on the same lines. They are coming to the conclusion that creation as we see it, does not exist. Whatever we see in any way, the sun, moon and stars, you, me, my mother, your mother; it is all time, space and object – hallucination. When time, space and object come together in a particular fashion, an experience takes place. That experience is dependent on the mind, and mind is nothing but a combination of time, space and matter.

If you can extricate time, space and matter from the mind, the mind doesn't exist, just as the golden bangle doesn't exist if you take away the gold from it. No gold – no bangle. In the same way, no time, space and matter – no mind, and if there is no mind, there is no creation. Creation, existence, according to the scientists, is an experience. They haven't said it openly as yet, but they are coming to this point and maybe after two,

three or four decades, the scientists will be saying, 'You see this bit of timber, but it's not there at all; you are just seeing it.' This is exactly what they say in Vedanta.

Vedantic philosophy, which is the most ancient philosophy of India, is based on this. There is only one reality; the absolute, and nothing else exists. Whatever you see happening, that is your own dream, your own maya, your own imagination. Vedanta is a very high philosophy.

You see it is true that everything is fleeting, everything is based on our emotions and on the error of our perception, everything is essentially not true, but then, how to get out of it? If a thorn is sticking into you, you have to use another thorn to take it out and then throw them both away. In the same way, it is through the practices of yoga that a proper vision will be restored and a proper quality of mind will emerge. When you develop that quality of mind, then you can say that this is maya and this is truth, this is reality and this is fiction, but now if you say the whole world is maya, everything in existence is illusion, it's not true. If you get cancer, how much you suffer, how much it affects you! Why can't you say that is also maya?

If the whole existence is maya, it is okay, I agree, then your agonies are maya, your happiness is maya, and your cancer is also maya, blood pressure is also maya, diabetes is also maya. Your wife or husband has divorced you – it's all maya! It's all happening in dream. If you can come to this point of realization, if you can arrive at this experience, where every happening in your life does not affect you, as in a dream, then of course, you don't have to practise yoga at all. You should not practise mantra. You should not go after gurus. You should not take sannyasa. You should not come to ashrams. You can just remain wherever you are because you are a jnani.

The man of supreme wisdom is called a *jnani*. For him, disease and death are both dreams. Prosperity and poverty are both dreams. It doesn't matter what is there and where is there and which is there. Such jnanis are not born every day. They come only once in many thousands of years. To consider the



whole of existence as nothing is so difficult, so impossible. A little dream in the night terrifies you so much. Tonight if you dream your house is burning down, tomorrow you will pack and go from there. You will say, 'My God, I saw my house burning in a dream!' Even if you know it is a dream, a fantasy created by your subconscious mind, still it has an effect.

When you are affected by the fantasy of the subconscious mind, how can you say that you are beyond maya? You are in maya. You will be in maya. You are in illusion. You are a part of illusion. In order to get out of one illusion, you have to take the help of another illusion, That is yoga.

— 22 November 1983,
Satyananda Ashram, Mangrove Mountain, Australia,
published in Teachings of Swami Satyananda Volume V

God-Realization and Modern Life

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



In this modern day and age even the latest scientific discoveries, technological progress and the well-organized social, political and economic institutions have failed to solve the individual's mental and spiritual problems. In fact, the greater the progress our civilization makes the more our suffering seems to multiply. The more we get into the realm of matter, the more disquieted we become. Tranquilizers are used by increasingly large sections of societies, and suicidal cases and juvenile delinquencies are also showing a steep rise. We cannot even understand or face these horrible facts.

When the plain truth is spoken, modern life is too much for us; we do not possess sufficient mental power and strength. We may have enormously increased the stock of our intellectual knowledge and extended it to cover the invisible realms, yet

we remain totally ignorant of ourselves. The time has come for us to make a concrete effort in the direction of self-knowledge. Only when we have learned the method of going within ourselves may the annihilation of suffering in toto be within our easy reach.

To combat sorrow, agony and suffering, we have to discover their root cause in our deeper level of consciousness. How can we do this? There is a definite method by which you can discover the cause and acquaint yourself with its contents. We know from our metaphysical studies that the root cause of all our problems, on any level, is *avidya* or ignorance. The great spiritual individuals, who had acquired and mastered the technique of penetrating into the deeper layers of the mind, also testify that ignorance is the main cause of our maladies.

Our rishis and munis experimented throughout their lives. In fact, during the entire history of Indian culture, there has been a long and unceasing effort to discover and popularize the method by which the endless and agonized sufferings of mankind may be annihilated, but man has, in the main, overlooked their dictates, often misunderstood their appeal.

You may have made some studies in Vedanta of the various categories such as the reality, homogeneous consciousness, maya, avidya, illusion and the so-called appearances, but surely it is far more important to know the method by which one gains first-hand knowledge of them. Is it enough to have mere intellectual comprehension of the truth as recorded in the Upanishads?

There are, broadly speaking, two ways of acquiring knowledge. One is indirect and mediate in which senses, mind and intellect act as media. The other type of knowledge is direct and immediate. It is transcendental in nature for it is knowing through being. Here, the services of the intermediary media such as mind are put aside and the subject has direct contact with the object.

For a long time, scholars of Vedanta have been following that path of Vedanta which consists of listening and contemplating,

and they have confined themselves to the intellectual level only, their convictions regarding the identity of the Supreme never penetrating beyond the intellect. As such they were often victimized by their personal sufferings.

In spite of all the bold assertions I make about the divinity of the soul, when I look at the world with its difficulties, the odds and trials which have become an integral part of our life, I find them hard to come to terms with. There is light, but it is a flickering light. I shall illustrate this with a parable. It was a dark night and the disciple was afraid. The guru lit a match. There was light, and the disciple was calm and quiet. The match burnt out and again there was darkness. The disciple was again afraid and another was lit which brought him temporary light and he was calm, quiet and fearless while it lasted. Again darkness came and so it continued till morning when, in the sunlight, there was no fear of recurring darkness.

In the same way, our intellectual knowledge, the bold assertions we make give us flickering light like that of a match and bestow only momentary peace and calmness. It is the permanent source of light we have to discover so that we can understand the difficulties we face and make ourselves strong in society, in the family, in economic and political life, so that we can face adversity with dignity, courage and complete understanding.

To achieve this, it is yoga we must turn to. It is a practical method, not so much to be learned, as to become a way of life. Not to be practised for hours and hours together, for even a little yoga practice brings relief, but yoga must be understood fundamentally, and not just as the practice of asanas and pranayama. I am not against the asanas and pranayama. Please do not misunderstand me, they are very good. They help the body, they bring about calmness in the system and regulate the glandular secretions. They constitute a wonderful science that our ancestors discovered, but they are not the whole of yoga.

Also, yoga must not be misunderstood as solely the development of psychic faculties, where the subconscious

mind is brought in contact with the conscious mind and the arts like telepathy, clairvoyance and clairaudience are acquired. I do not say these are not yoga, but they are only a part of yoga.

Our problem is human suffering, and here we must make a plain statement, for unless we realize our own self, not the lower self but the Supreme Self, in the depth of meditation, by withdrawing our awareness temporarily from all forms of the outer dimensions and external experiences, it is not possible for us to go beyond suffering. And it is yoga that lifts you right from the conscious, subconscious and unconscious, and leads you to the realm of superconsciousness. You may call it samadhi, or God realization, or nirvana or whatever you like, but there is an individual, personal state of awareness which is all-expansive.

A certain problem has been in my mind lately which I have spent much time thinking about. Animals move on an instinctive plane; they react instinctively and they are not aware of what they are doing. However, the human being has the faculty of awareness, which he does not use, for like the animals, he generally lives on the instinctive plane. We move, but we do not know we are moving. We must leave the instinctive plane and make use of the faculty of awareness which is the special gift to the human being. We must learn to live on the plane of awareness.

This awareness, which manifests itself the moment we are born as human beings, is termed 'jnanam'. *Jnanam* is not mere knowledge, but awareness. We are aware of what we are doing, what we are thinking what we did and what we shall do. We are aware of the fact that we are alive. If I had the time, and if this were the mode of my sadhana, of my spiritual practice, then I might sit the whole day and sing the fact that 'I am', and be aware that I am. We should intensify this awareness which has just evolved in the human being and the duration of this awareness must increase. Whatever we do, we should do it with complete awareness. Yoga is a method by which we can develop this type of awareness to such a degree that

eventually this awareness is completely separated from body awareness.

Now I am aware that I am talking about yoga. I am aware that this awareness is united with body awareness, with mind awareness and sense awareness. When I know that I am, I am also aware that I have a body. The awareness is not purified, it is not non-sensory awareness. It is awareness, but sense awareness. It is awareness, but physical awareness. It is awareness, there is no doubt about it. Now, this awareness should be separated from gross consciousness step by step, stage by stage, point by point. And this awareness should remain intact and keep on expanding. All these elements – physical, sensory, mental and psychic, must be removed from the body. In this, yoga is a process of purification. It is an act of separation by which we separate the non-self elements from this atman. This awareness is *atman* – it is unaggravated, it is always homogeneous, it is always true, it is always eternal, it is always unchanging, and it is in me, in you and in all things.

Switch your awareness for a moment from me to yourself and think, “I am aware that I am listening to a discourse.” Now separate this fraction of awareness, which is not complete in itself, and which is not pure, but is tainted and mixed with mental awareness, from other forms of awareness and from other disturbances. We can keep on eliminating all those foreign elements which have, through habit, become part and parcel of our pure awareness by practising *viveka*, or discrimination, *yama* and *niyama*, or regulations and self-disciplines, *pratyahara* or withdrawal, by *dharana* and *dhyana* or by any yogic practice. Stage by stage the mind becomes intensified and is made introverted through concentration and meditation.

There are different techniques for achieving this, like repetition of a mantra, concentration on a symbol, devotion, prayers, serving humanity with absolute unselfishness, serving a guru or following the path of knowledge. You may choose any path, *raja yoga*, *bhakti yoga*, *karma yoga* or *jnana yoga*. They



all help to free this atman from the lower turmoils, but unless the personality is purified and made free from its burdens and tensions, it is not possible to go into deep meditation. Lately there have been different spiritual movements which claim that meditation is very easy, but yoga is not as easy as is generally thought.

Through karma yoga we purify the heart and this brings mental peace. By bhakti yoga, the yoga of devotion, we bring about a spontaneous state of consciousness which is otherwise very difficult to acquire for the lay practitioner. With that concentration we move on to raja yoga. In raja yoga you penetrate deeper and deeper, and become free from physical awareness and sense experience, and finally merge with your own self, but all this is not as easy as people think.

When we sit for meditation we find it very difficult because the spinal cord does not remain erect. The lotus posture becomes difficult to maintain. We want to practise meditation in an easy chair and, when we do, sleep overtakes us. We also want to do meditation on a chair with our legs down, but this obstructs the flow of magnetic currents which are created through yogic practices, the flow of blood decreases in the spinal area and the centres of gravity are shifted. One can

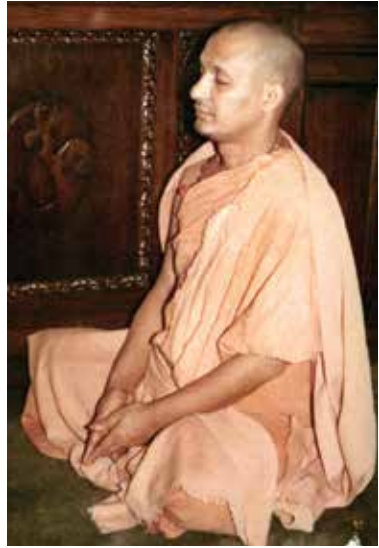
meditate on a chair, but then these obstructions will inevitably arise and they will have to be removed through hatha yoga, asanas and pranayama.

Or when we sit for meditation, inertia or lethargy (*tamoguna*) overpowers us. The moment we reach the point of concentration, unification of thoughts, either we land in the realm of visions or we sleep, which is often mistaken for *samadhi*. Or if you are asked to hold a form or an image in the mind, you begin to disagree on a religious basis, but let us not talk about these things. During meditation the light within will be your proper guide. It will carry your consciousness further and further and it will indicate whether you have slipped into *tamoguna*, or inertia, or whether you are going in the right direction.

In *raja yoga*, the yoga of meditation for finding the source of *atman*, your deepest and highest and eternal being, you will have to first shake off the temptation of psychic powers. You must not mind when I say this in all sincerity and with a little experience at my command. You must set them aside for they represent your greatest temptation and often they can bring you much suffering. This is what happens to most yoga aspirants, from fire to frying pan and again from frying pan to fire. It is true that most people take to yoga solely to achieve psychic powers and they become a medium or practise telepathy and other arts. This is all right, but Rishi Patanjali in his *Yoga Sutras* considers that psychic powers are hindrances in the path of God-realization for they make the mind restless. So, one must put aside desire for these psychic powers.

Yoga is similar to hypnotism until it reaches the point of *dharana*. An aspirant of hypnotism undergoes a process whereby his consciousness diminishes until it is completely overtaken by a state of hypnotism, but the aspirant of yoga widens his frontiers of consciousness. His consciousness assumes the form of a symbol of a deity, a mantra of sound; these are known as *ishta devata*. Whatever the symbol, essentially there is consciousness only. This consciousness keeps on expanding spontaneously.

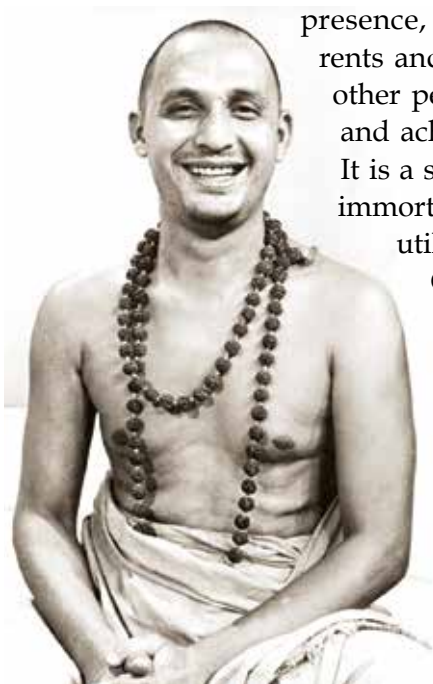
Theoretically speaking, you cannot expand your consciousness because it is eternal and infinite, and I am only using the expression to try to help you understand. Rather, it is an act of unveiling avidya, which was covering the consciousness. Then the clouds disperse, the sun begins to shine. This does not mean the sun was not shining before when it was covered by cloud. Exactly in the same way, your consciousness, atman, universal self, Brahman,



or however you call it, is infinite. It has ever been infinite. Like the sun, its infinitude was temporarily veiled by the clouds of avidya and, when avidya disappears, the infinitude of atman manifests.

Meditation is only an act of eliminating the layers upon layers of avidya. It is only an act of lifting – this is how you proceed along the path of dharana. In dharana you retain a form of consciousness within you and do not allow that form of consciousness to disappear from your mind. So, eventually, by this act of holding the consciousness, all other dissimilar forms fall away, whilst the original form always remains. Then it shines in all its infinite glory and the infinite state of samadhi dawns. This is possible through the practice of yogic techniques.

Once this state of samadhi has been reached, through the systematic methods of an integral yoga, and the layers of avidya are completely eliminated, you can still lead a practical life. You can be a family man, you can remain a technician or an industrialist; you may not possess miraculous powers or be a healer, but you will personally be the happiest man on the face of the earth. At the same time, your personality, your



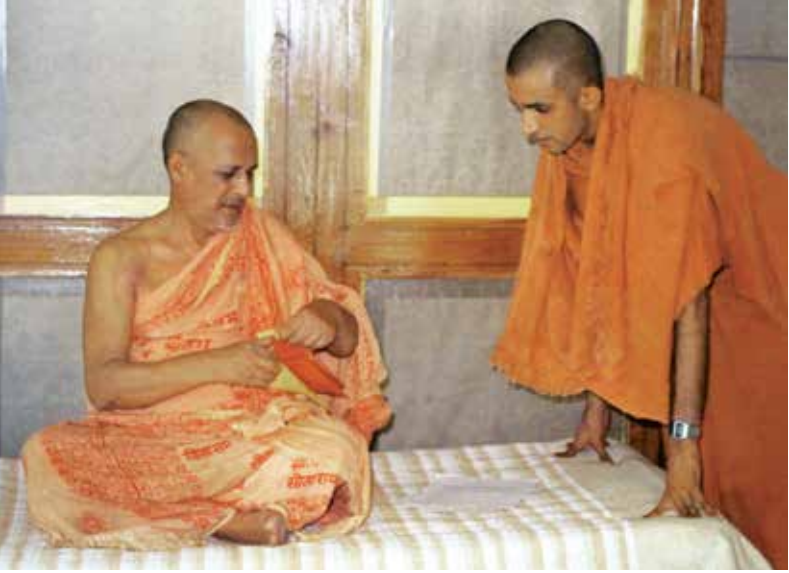
presence, your advice, thought currents and your blessings will enable other people to overcome suffering and achieve everlasting happiness. It is a state of nectar, it is a state of immortality, but from the point of utility, we must understand that God-realization is a necessity of our life. We are born with the purpose to realize God, and unless God-realization becomes our aim, our sufferings have no end and the health of society will not improve, even if it has great prosperity or the most highly developed political order.

In this great country yoga is coming with terrific speed, with the same speed with which prosperity came. When I came to America I immediately felt the thirst, the aspiration, the craving and I was especially conscious of how much the spiritual nature of man, which is eternal, is suffering from the instinctive greed for prosperity and materialism. It is not that Americans are becoming less spiritual. No, they are rediscovering their spirituality. It was there before, it is there in the present and it shall continue to exist. Once prosperity comes and man lives in abundance, his thirst for spirituality begins to make itself felt, and now is the right time in your country for the spiritual movement to grow. The industrial movement is now giving way to a spiritual movement and this spiritual movement will bring an era of enlightenment and supreme knowledge.

*– 1968, Vedanta Society, Chicago, USA,
published in Yoga from Shore to Shore*

Accomplishment Only

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Every word, statement and stanza of the *Bhagavad Gita* is important, but it has a nucleus, a seed, a basic philosophy. It is said (2:47):

*Karmanyevaadhikaaraste maa phaleshu kadaachana;
Maa karmaphalaheturbhoomaa te sango'stoakarmani.*

Your right is to work only, but never its fruits;
let not the fruits of actions be your motive,
nor become attached to inaction.

One's sphere is the fulfilment and accomplishment of the duty and nothing beyond that. The results, outcomes and consequences are none of one's business. The individual's right is only to do the work. One has no right over the result of the work, which is beyond one's control and authority.

Doing action is within one's authority, but the results of the action are not. If a person is worrying, he is an idiot. Ambition should not be the cause of the action or work, as it does not pay in the long run.

Life does not run on expectations. If one makes expectations the basis of life, one will have a nervous breakdown. People should not live in expectation of the results, but of course everyone bases their life on expectation. They should just limit themselves to the performance of karma. People who rise to the highest pinnacle of spiritual life are those who limit themselves to the accomplishment of duty, karma and dharma.

No one should be idle. A person should not renounce karma, even a sannyasin, even a millionaire or billionaire, even a master of a thousand servants, even an emperor, a king, president or prime minister. One should also not become an agent of the consequences of karma. Those who think about the results and outcomes can never rest as they are tossed like a shuttlecock from one end to another. It is the greatest mistake a person can make due to a lack of understanding of the role of karma in life.

Karma is an expression of one's total energy. It is an expression of the great instinct, intelligence and intuition that one can express in the form of karma as an engineer, painter, carpenter, shopkeeper, housewife, and as a swami! A labourer can express it. People are suffering because they work for an end. It is true that one has a physical body and, therefore, one needs to survive in the realm of matter, or *prakriti*, so one works and receives a little pay.

There are many methods of performing action without desiring its fruits. While working, one should think of nothing but the work itself and, if possible, not the fruits. One should do the work at hand to the best of one's ability, and a person who is devotionally inclined may do it as worship.

– *Published in* Conversations on the Science of Yoga,
Karma Yoga Book 5

Satyam's Chaturmas in Baandha Bazar

Dinesh Khare, Durg, Chhattisgarh

The Siddha Balajee Hanuman temple is situated on the Dongargaon-Chowki Road, in Baandha Bazar, about 40 km from Rajnandgaon in the state of Chhattisgarh. This temple was built on top of a picturesque hill of Himalayan-like beauty with shady green forests, glades, rivers, ditches, a pond and medicinal groves of trees. Our revered Gurudev, Sri Swami Satyanandaji, had done his Chaturmas in Baandha Bazar in May 1959. Here he performed his austere sadhana and blessed his disciple Ma Dharmashakti, by invoking his successor through her, the one who would carry forward the work of his mission.

The pond can be reached by an unpaved country road at a distance of about 2 km from the main road leading out of the village. The temple comes into view from here high up on the hill and can be reached by climbing the narrow stone steps. This small temple, built on top of the hill with a square in front, enshrines Hanumanji in the form of Balajee, whose mere darshan calms the mind and bestows peace. At sunrise and sunset, the greenery of the whole village below is visible from here. On coming down from the temple, a hut or *kutiya* shaded by tall trees can be seen in the garden adjacent to the





pond. This is where Sri Swamiji used to do his sadhana and give satsang during Chaturmas. This temple is reputed to be more than 200 years old according to our ancestors.

How beautiful is this house! It looks like a sage-muni's kutiya. A small hut surrounded by flowers and fruit plants. Verandas on both sides. One worship room and another room for satsang. There used to be a gardener and watchman near the front side door. There is a well in the courtyard. A little away from the well, there are tall fruit trees. Sri Swamiji used to sit and meditate under the amla (Indian gooseberry) tree. That is why the atmosphere is picturesque and peaceful, full of natural spiritual energy.

Chaturmas rule

Sri Swamiji used to observe silence, *mouna*, during his Chaturmas sadhana and did not go anywhere for four months. Sri Swamiji had done difficult sadhana in Baandha Bazar 62 years ago, yet even today there is the same solitude in that area. There is a calm atmosphere. In Baandha Bazar there is only a temple and a dam has been built in the pond so one can go to the temple. Due to the dam in the pond, the name of this village is Baandha Bazar.

The villagers consider the Hanuman temple to be a *siddha peeth*, meaning an awakened shrine. According to them, even before the arrival of Sri Swamiji, many sadhus and saints, rishis and munis of yore did their sadhana here. The poojari who has been worshipping Hanumanji for the past several years, has become very old, but he still climbs the steps with ease every morning and evening, to reach the temple on time for worship. He takes pleasure in his daily worship. This is the reason why he does not get tired of singing the praises of Sri Swamiji along with Hanumanji.

The people of the whole village would gather to listen Sri Swamiji's discourses on the *Bhagavata*, the *Gita*, the *Ramayana*. Listening to these satsangs with faith and reverence, they would even ask some questions. They were amazed how this mahatma knew so many things. They started calling him 'Pitaji' meaning father and summoned their relatives and acquaintances from other villages saying, 'Mahatmaji has come, God gives him darshan and tells him everything. Everyone come for his darshan which bestows salvation!'

Vision of the divine light

While doing his special sadhana in this holy place in the month of May, Sri Swamiji taught Ma Dharmashakti asana, pranayama, dhyana, japa, bhajan, kirtan, swadhyaya etc., due to which she had many spiritual experiences. Revered Ma Dharmashakti has mentioned these divine experiences in the book *Mere Aradhya*.

Satyavratji and Dharmashakti went to Baandha Bazar on the morning of Guru Poornima. They reached the kutiya at 9 am, where they talked for some time. Then there was talk of pooja. Swami Satyam said, 'Come, there is a temple of Hanumanji on the hill behind us, we will sit there. It is not too steep, there are about 40 to 50 steps to climb to the temple on top of the hill, and there is a square platform in front, and also a pond nearby.'

After climbing up, Swami Satyam sat down on the steps of the temple. We performed pooja while Swami Satyam sat

with his eyes closed. We also sat in front of him with our eyes closed in meditation. Dharmashakti had a unique experience, it seemed as if a bright light emerged from Swami Satyam and surrounded her, and she started sweating profusely from the heat and covered both eyes with her hands, whereupon Sri Swamiji started laughing. This divine light disappeared as soon as Swamiji laughed.

During Chaturmas, Satyavratji would reach Baandha Bazar alone every Saturday with his files and paperwork. He would stay on until Sunday and return home to Rajnandgaon on Monday morning. When asked about Ma Dharmashakti's wellbeing by Sri Swamiji, Satyavratji would reply, "Dharmashakti wanted to come but feels shy. But even during this time she does all her asanas, as well as the rest of her work."

The all-knowing Sri Swamiji understood Ma Dharmashakti's condition. He gave the instruction, "Dharmashakti now only has to do pawanmuktasana and calming pranayama, she also has to take walks in the morning and evening, read inspiring literature, and think about Yashoda's Krishna and Kaushalya's Rama."

After receiving the blessing of holy Mother Ganga and his Guru, Swami Sivanandaji, Sri Swamiji blessed his disciple Ma Dharmashakti with strong self-confidence, and completed his sadhana in order to invoke his successor, the disciple who would carry forward the work of his mission.

Divine grace and the blessings of the great Guru Swami Sivananda resulted in the birth of the long-awaited child on the morning of 14th February 1960. When Ma Dharmashakti asked for the name of her child, Sri Swami Satyanandaji gave the baby boy the name 'Niranjan' and said to him, your mahamantra is:

*Mantra Satyam, Pooja Satyam, Satyam Devo Niranjanam.
Gurorvaakyam Sada Satyam, Satyamevam Param Padam.*

Hari Om, At the feet of my beloved Guru.

A Sadhana Retreat

Swami Dharmashakti Saraswati

Bhagawati Babu's village, Pathan Dhodgi, was finally chosen for the retreat. His family were old landlords of the region and Satyavratji had visited his place many times. It was situated in a desolate jungle, but only the first four miles were hard to traverse. In the summer one could go by bullock cart but in the rainy season one could only go by bicycle or on foot. Bhagawati Babu had requested Swami Satyam many times to visit his place. It had everything one could ask for – a huge house, a big retinue of servants, and all the necessary amenities.

Swami Satyam would be accompanied by only seven people – Vishwaprem and her uncle, Harsinghani, Satyavratji and his sister Annapoorna, and Basanti, her younger sister Ratna and her friend Bharati. Swami Satyam did not want a big crowd there, although local villagers would be welcome for satsangs on the weekend.

Swami Satyam came to Nandgram in April, and in May we went to Bhagawati Babu's village. We travelled thirty miles by bus till Bandha Bazaar. There two bullock-carts had come to pick us up. Traversing four miles through dense jungle, we finally reached Pathan Dhodgi. We had a tour of the entire house and after lunch we settled ourselves into our rooms. Then we went for a walk in the jungle. The hills and the streams reminded us of the Himalayas. Away from the hustle and bustle of the city, this place seemed to be a haven of peace and tranquillity. In the evening, the villagers would chant the *Ramayana* and other bhajans and kirtans.

Everyone's sadhana began progressing along paths directed by Swami Satyam. I would practise most of the asanas, including *sirshasana*, the headstand. Swami Satyam took a good look at my headstand and told me to practise it for five minutes. Then he instructed me to perform *purashcharana*, mantra

sadhana. I had to complete japa of one hundred and fifty malas daily. He gave me detailed instructions for the purascharana – how much time to spend in japa, how much time in rest, and so on. He anointed me with a chandan tilak and, giving me his blessings, told me to begin my purascharana.

On the first day, the japa finished by 10 pm. I continued the japa the next day. On the third day, an intense, flaming light emerged from the meditation picture. The light periodically increased and subsided in intensity. Soon the heat became unbearable and I could no longer continue my japa. On the fourth day, the light became stronger. I experienced great heat and discomfort. Suddenly a wave of fear swept through me. I started crying and went to tell Swamiji about it. He told me to rest for an hour and then recommence my practice. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn't finish even one mala that day.

Then Swamiji told me to practise japa in the company of others, not by myself. Even then, the moment I would close my eyes, I would begin to experience strange things. Finally, Swami Satyam said, "Terminate your anushthana. Just do *likhit japa*, mantra writing, and *swadhyaya*, self-study." Even that proved hard to do. I would begin to cry uncontrollably as soon as I started any practice. In the end he told me to stop everything.

The fifteen-day retreat finally came to a close and everyone returned to Nandgram.

– Published in Mere Aradhya



Memories

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

For twenty years I was a farmer's son. My family had fifteen hundred acres of land plus one thousand acres of forest acquired through a deed of gift. We had no right to dispose of it according to the land laws prevalent in the Kumaon division of Uttar Pradesh. The ownership and the title of the property went to the eldest son. The property could not be divided. So we were cultivators.

On weekdays we would go to town to pursue our studies. We had a small house in the town also. On Saturday we would return to our village by pony and stay at home on Saturday and Sunday to look after the domestic work. We had a large number of oxen and cows and five hundred sheep from which we procured wool. The sheep used to roam freely in the forest. Besides this we had twelve large dogs, which we had purchased from Tibet. These dogs took care of the sheep in the forest and protected them from fierce animals. The forests were very dense and infested with lions and tigers. I used to wander about in the forest and enjoy the forest life.

When I came home on holidays, I would play sport. I was fond of cricket, but I hardly ever played cricket because it is a whole day affair and took up too much time. I was a farmer's son and if I wasted my whole day playing cricket, then who would supervise the domestic work? Cricket is the passion of those who have too much money. It is a luxury. Football is the ideal game for India. You finish the game in one hour and can then attend to your domestic work. Who can afford to play for the whole day? Only those with money, who do not have to go out and earn a living. Only the white collared babus can afford to do it.

I wish to emphasize that I too come from the same class as the villagers. For twenty years I also used to go to the fields with



a tin pot. Then I spent twelve years in my guru's ashram and I led a much harder life there. In the ashram I had no place of my own to sleep. I had no plate. I had to beg in the villages for rotis to eat. There was no money to purchase food. The only mission was to serve my guru, and this service to Guruji opened the doors to my fortune.

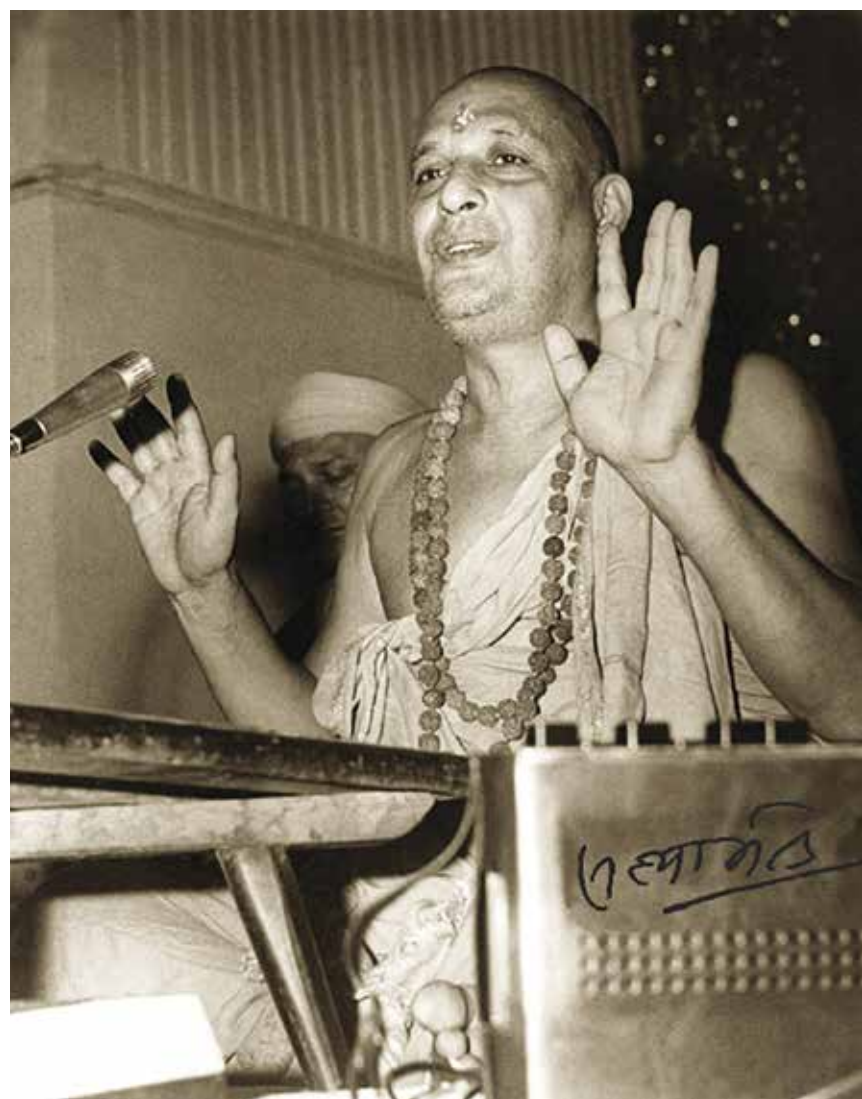
Whatever I had learnt at school was of no use in the ashram. I did not remember the names of Aurangzeb's or Akbar's wives and sons. Suddenly the names of Shankaracharya, Lord Buddha, Mahavir, Tulsidas, Kabirdas, Surdas, Meera, Keshavdas and other saints and ascetics flashed into my mind. I forgot Akbar, Jehangir and Aurangzeb and Noor Jehan. These names will not serve any purpose for you either. Even if you have committed them to memory, it won't help you in life. The sayings of sadhus and mahatmas may help you. The words and discourses of scholarly and saintly persons like Meera, Tulsidas and Shankaracharya will come to your rescue. The sayings of Lord Krishna in the *Bhagavad Gita* will help you to fashion your life. These things helped me a great deal to work out the course of my life.

During my twelve-year sojourn in my guru's ashram, I toiled very hard. I worked so hard that my bones were visible and could be counted. I became so lean and thin that people used to ask if I ever got anything to eat in the ashram. One gentleman asked, "What kind of brahmachari are you? All your bones are visible?" He thought that a brahmachari should look plump. I retorted, "No, a brahmachari should not be plump; he should be light and slim, not pot-bellied!" As Yogi Gorakhnath has said in *Gorakh Vani*, "If a disciple is fat and flabby, it means he has not encountered the right guru."

– 16 December 2001, Rikhiapeeth,
published in Bhakti Yoga Sagar Volume Seven









(५५) कृतज्ञः
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Play and Have Fun

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Children do not become great through study or qualifications. They become great through the quality of their mind, intelligence and receptivity. This is based upon how much they are able to receive, retain and give. After all, what were Newton's qualifications? Was he a university graduate?

I don't mean that one should not study. One must have qualifications because today this is the system throughout the world and we must respect it. But when children are continually asked, "Have you done your homework?" they become scared of not getting first class marks in their exams. They worry about what Papa or Mama will say, because if they fail they know they will have to face the music.

School children are always afraid that they might fail in their exams. What does it matter if they fail? Parents should tell their children, "Never mind, if you fail you can try again." But parents do not have the courage to say such things, so their children think, "Other students are fighting for a first division. If I get a second division, what will Daddy say?" This idea, which is drilled into the minds of children, ruins their entire personality. Instead, the child should be told, "Go and study if you like, but do not bother too much about it. You will not get a job by doing your BA anyway. It is more important that you play every morning and evening. I am just sending you to school. It does not matter if you pass or fail."

The popular notion is that if children play and have fun, they will fail in their studies and in life. But I say that if they play and have fun, they will be successful, and if they study too much, they will spoil their lives. Playing balances the muscular and nervous energies of children and it circulates blood throughout the system many times over. You should feed your children a rich diet with milk, butter and eggs if you can afford it, and then ask them to run two miles every day. The child who does not run and play sits in front of the TV all day or studies with one leg up on the table. His blood circulation becomes very sluggish like a choked drain. His studies suffer and a tutor has to be called in to help him.

If a tutor has to be called to help the child study, it is better that the child is not taught at all! If a mirror is clean, your reflection will be clearly visible, but if you are not able to see your reflection, of what use is the mirror? The power of children to grasp new things is normally so strong that the teacher needs to teach something to them only once. Children listen to a song from the cinema just once and they are able to memorize it, yet they need a tutor to help them learn from the school books. No! Children should be left free to play.

– 30 November 1994, Rikhia,
published in Bhakti Yoga Sagar Volume Two

Creating a Spiritual Tradition

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Spiritual development belongs to the realm of awareness and experience. A spiritual experience is a quality of your mind. It does not matter what is happening in society, because that is an external situation. In our modern times people have become oversensitive about certain social matters which do not really relate to them. Industrial or political upheaval will make no change in one's spiritually harmonious state.

We have to create a very strong spiritual tradition. This is important because many countries in the world which do not have a spiritual culture are undergoing a lot of pain and suffering. Political accidents, wars, problems of industrialization and epidemics will continue to occur because they are in the nature of life. We have to create a culture in which, consciously or unconsciously, individuals are led to spiritual unfoldment. If we completely ignore the elements of modern culture, the economic situation of our society will fall and there will be more unemployment and a disproportionate economic order.

Therefore, the people who practise yoga and spiritual life should not speak out too much against the modern culture and modern systems. They should not denounce the realities upon which they are subsisting, upon which they are standing. They should just concentrate on their practices and their science, that's all. Try to take the message of yoga to the factories and industries because the people working there need it.

– *Published in Teachings of Swami Satyananda Saraswati*
Volume I

Bhagavad Gita

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



I want to tell you something about the fundamental philosophy of Indian people which involves not only one hour but the whole of life. All of you must have heard the name *Srimad Bhagavad Gita* which is known as *Gita* in short. It is a part of a great epic which is known as *Mahabharata* literally meaning the great India. I shall use the word *Gita* instead of *Srimad Bhagavad Gita* although that is the full name of the book. This book has ruled over the minds of Indian thinkers and statesmen for many centuries, and as a matter of fact it has been the book, the thought and the philosophy which the Indian mind understands very quickly, and I am also sure that the people of this western world will also understand it the same way.

The *Gita* starts in a very dramatic way. Five thousand years ago there were two tribes belonging to the same origin but

which grew apart and could not get along with each other and became enemies of each other. So they ultimately prepared to fight a great war in order to resolve very insignificant but quite deep problems. These two families are known as the five brothers and the hundred brothers. The five brothers wanted their legitimate rights respected, but the hundred brothers, who were the ruling authorities and who were in power, would not allow the five brothers to have their legitimate rights, so eventually the five brothers became desperate and said that the issue should now be decided by a war, face to face. When the day came, the two sets of brothers met each other on a great battlefield, which happened to fall quite close to New Delhi in the west of India, and came face to face with their great armies.

The commander in chief of the army was one of the five brothers, whose name was Arjuna. The commander in chief of the army of the hundred brothers was a very grand man, a very powerful and noble man, whose name was Bhishma. Arjuna was the third of the five brothers, but by virtue of his being a great warrior he became the commander in chief of his own army and his charioteer was Krishna who was known as one of the great incarnations of the Lord.

Krishna

When we talk about the *Gita* we must make a direct reference to Sri Krishna because it was Sri Krishna who was the pronouncer of the *Gita*. Sri Krishna was respected in India as the direct incarnation of God. Sri Krishna is the speaker of the *Gita*. Unless you know the life of Sri Krishna right from his birth up to the point of his death you cannot understand anything about the *Gita*, and the meaning of the *Gita* will be obscure to you. Right from the time when his mother conceived him up to the point when he died, he faced nothing but problems, nothing but difficulties; there was not one day in his life when he did not fight, when he did not face the problems. Remember, right from the day he was born up to the day he died there was not one day that he did not laugh.

In the Indian mythology relating to Krishna, you can find Krishna as a child playing with sweets, as a boy playing with the cowherd boys and girls, as a statesman giving expert advice, as a warrior fighting tough fights, and as an advisor giving perfect advice, diplomatic or otherwise. As a guru he gave absolutely superb lessons on yoga and other sciences. This man Krishna was the speaker of the *Gita* to this commander in chief Arjuna. When both the armies were facing each other, this virtuous commander in chief Arjuna happened to feel despondent. He refused to fight because he thought that he would kill many old associates and he preferred to renounce participating in the war. It is at this time the philosophy of the *Gita* begins.

Lord Krishna tells Arjuna that a man has to face life, a man has to accept life, and a man has to fight every step of his life. People who expect or wish that life should only be beautiful, that life should only be comfortable, that life should only be according to their liking; will never find such a life. It is these people who suffer and it is these people who have difficulties in life. It is always good to accept life in whichever way it comes to you and try to get the best out of it by way of philosophy, by way of understanding, or by way of wisdom.

Every man desires, he has great ambitions, and he works in order to fulfil these desires. When the desires are fulfilled he is very happy, but at the same time he is afraid of losing what he has. If his desire remains unfulfilled he is completely broken. With this begin the problems that are mental, the problems that are psychological, and the problems that you call the problems of life. It is not only a battle which you have to face and fight; it is the eternal battle which everybody is fighting, birth after birth.

These five brothers belonged to one group and the one hundred brothers belonged to the other group - these are the two great conflicting forces in every individual. If the individual is to progress, conflict is necessary, fight is necessary. Without conflict, without fight, without facing the

conflicting and opposing forces you cannot evolve, you cannot progress. Comfort and pleasure are death and they do not give any kind of push to the individual to go ahead in life. You have to create a conflict, you have to realize a conflict, you have to face the conflict, and you must continue that conflict, and then the forces evolve and something new will come.

Spiritual knowledge, or higher knowledge or experience comes to one who accepts the conflict, understands it, and continues that conflict and does not evade it. Between these two conflicting forces, these two conflicting parties within ourselves, you and I are included, there is one, the charioteer who is the driver of the chariot. He is the inner source and he is the guru, he is the teacher. The body is the chariot, and the individual soul has to face the fight, he is the inner soul is, the guru, Krishna, who is helping the individual, who is helping you and who is helping me in this conflict. He is not directly involved in the conflict, he is outside the conflict. But in any case he is behind the conflict, he is creating the conflict, because he wants the soul, the *jiva*, or the individual self, or the individual consciousness, to evolve.

Now it is in this context that we have to understand the *Gita* which tells us about the two conflicting forces in human life, out of which one force has to be subdued and the other force has to come up. How to continue this conflict? This conflict has to be continued with an aspiration or background of yoga. Another name of *Gita* well known to us is of a book on yoga, a scripture on yoga, a yoga shastra, and now that the conflict has started in you, the only step to take is to understand and to adopt yoga.

Starting point of yoga

Now, therefore, yoga is concerned with the evolution of individual consciousness from the lowest base to the highest level of fructification and blossoming. Where does yoga begin and where does yoga end? Some people say of course yoga begins with hatha yoga. I do not disagree because I myself teach

hatha yoga. But let me be very clear philosophically, without causing any kind of disappointment to anyone of you – yoga has a beginning and it proceeds or progresses, according to the evolution of the consciousness. At various points yoga comes to a point of culmination but not termination.

The first chapter of the *Gita* is called the yoga of the dejection of Arjuna. Hatha yoga, bhakti yoga, karma yoga, mantra yoga, raja yoga, etc., you have heard of, but have you ever heard of anyone desiring the yoga of dejection, the yoga of disappointment, yoga of gloom, yoga of frustration, yoga of breakdown, yoga of nervous breakdown and heart attack? Seriously speaking, yoga begins not when you start the *mala* or the rosary, yoga begins when the scales are heavily loaded against you and when you are facing problems in life. Unless your soul faces difficulties, disappointments, problems, conflicts, it will not become active; it will just remain asleep and totally satisfied. Difficulties and problems are actually accelerators of human evolution. These difficulties and problems should not be considered as only external ones. There are external and internal problems.

The *Gita* is not talking about material problems. The *Gita* is not talking about those problems which are the basic necessities of human life like food, clothes and shelter that communists talk about. The *Gita* is talking about those problems that are deep rooted in man and about which psychologists have been talking; the difficulty is that sometimes you may not even know that you are having difficulties, but you are having them. There are problems concerning your personality, not only your external personality but also the personality which is as deep as the subterranean planes of the ocean. You may say that you have no problems, but I cannot believe it.

You may say that you have no difficulties, but I cannot believe it. You may say that you have no conflicts, but I cannot believe it, because it is impossible to exist without them. In everybody, except perhaps the most enlightened individuals, there are two contradictory souls working side by

side. Mankind is leading a dual life on the mental plane, not one single life. Everyone is living a dual life, and this duality is present in everybody, in you, in me, and in all, and this is what is called the starting point of yoga.

Sadhana

When we have become aware that there are the two great conflicting forces in us, what should we do now? Should we try to annihilate them, should we hate them, should we criticize them, or should we scream or cry over them, or should we just feel sorry for them, or should we analyze them? We should not put a cover over the conflict, over the struggle, over the battle, whatever that might be in us. Whether you are a good man or a bad man, or a man full of excitement or a man with criminal mindedness, anything – you must know what is inside you. Modern psychology, as you may be aware, has brought this fact to our notice that there are thousands and thousands of people on this blessed earth who do not want to know what they are, because the moment they know what they are they cannot believe that they are like that and they do not want to know what they are. This is the greatest thing that is holding us back.

Each and every item of your consciousness, each and every item lurking in the depth of your consciousness must become well known to you. This is the second advice given in the *Gita*. Whether it is birth or death, loss or gain, praise or criticism, love or hatred, like or dislike, conflict or peace, dullness or excitement, passion or anger, you have to know it, absolutely in detail, and as it is.

Remember that if you know your own conflicts, if you know your own problems, you do not get rid of them by knowing that. You have to start a sadhana, in order to get rid of them; you have to start the practical side of yoga.

In the *Gita* the practical side of yoga begins with karma yoga, the yoga of action. You have to convert, you have to transform and transmute your karma, your daily activities, in



such a way that they are conducive to your spiritual progress. By *karma*, by actions, you are expressing yourself; you are giving yourself out and thus unburdening your soul. Side by side with karma yoga one should practise raja yoga also. Then comes bhakti yoga and then comes jnana yoga. In one's sadhana these are the practices one has to do in order to be victorious in the battle, and to get rid of the conflicts that are lurking in your personality.

When you have been able to remove the influence or effects of conflicts from your mind, and when your mind is

completely free from the infection, or the strangulation, or from the association with these effects, then you are a liberated individual, you are a *jivanmukta*, or you are a *mukta*. The concept of liberation according to the *Gita* is not the concept where you close your eyes and you enter into the great void. The concept of liberation according to the *Gita* is to live the life but not be affected by it at anytime, at any cost, and all the time without any conditions. The *Gita* is giving a new dimension to liberation. The *Gita* gives a new dimension to *mukti*, complete freedom, and that should be understood by all of us now.

If you close your eyes, practise meditation, withdraw your mind completely, with great force, you enter into a great void. But this experience of the great void is not experienced in actual life because when you face the peculiar and illogical life, then you know that the great void is completely eliminated, you do not know what *samadhi* means in life. In the higher stages you experience the *maha sukha*, the great pleasure. I am Brahman, full of bliss and everything is all right, I am part of that consciousness, I am Brahman, I am Shiva. Then you come down to normal life and fight with the wife. The complete freedom, the *moksha*, should be brought upon earth. The freedom, the *moksha*, should be brought into one's daily life.

Freedom should not be restricted, freedom should not be confined to the meditation room, freedom has to come into the kitchen also. The freedom has to be experienced when you are working in a shop. The freedom has to be experienced when you are driving your car at 50 or 70 miles an hour, and the freedom has to be experienced when you are about to face an emotional crisis in your life. Renunciation is not freedom, but freedom should be practised during your association with the whole of life and not just with half of life. According to the *Gita* and according to Krishna, renunciation is half of life, is partial life, paralyzed life; abstention, refrainment, giving up this and that, is called half-life, partial life, paralyzed life. Therefore, one should try to attain and one should try to experience freedom in every walk of life. To experience freedom you have to train your

mind, you have to train and culture or refine your philosophy, and you have to imbibe new dimensions of awareness.

Purna yoga

In order to experience freedom at all times it is not enough to meditate for just one hour. You have to have a completely oriented philosophy and a completely healthy mind and a cultured way of thinking. Please correctly understand this *mukti* or freedom that is talked about in the *Gita*. This *mukti*, this liberation or freedom has to do with life, it has to do with your love, it has to do with your hatred, it has to do with your frustrations and accomplishments and it has nothing to do with renunciation. In the *Gita* it is said that one does not become a renunciate by renouncing the actions, or by renouncing the duties, or by renouncing the responsibilities, or by evading problems. One has to understand everything in the true light, not in the light of one's limited vision.

Therefore, the philosophy of the *Gita* or the yoga of the *Gita* is known as *purna yoga*, which means complete yoga. If you stress *karma yoga*, that is you do only *karma yoga*, no *bhakti yoga*, no *raja yoga*, no *jnana yoga*, this is called *apurna yoga*, incomplete yoga. If I say no smoking, no drinking, only *asana*, *pranayama*, eat only fruit, milk, do not put on all those nice clothes, put on *geru dhoti* only, this is not *purna yoga*, it is *apurna yoga*, it is not complete yoga, it is incomplete yoga. At the same time, if someone were to tell you, no *hatha yoga*, no *karma yoga*, no *jnana yoga*, just *bhakti yoga*, singing the name of the Lord, with *tabla*, the drum, and dancing, that is enough, that is also incomplete yoga. It is good yoga but it is incomplete, it is one-sided, lopsided. If you say no *karma yoga*, no *bhakti yoga*, it is only for small people, no *raja yoga* which is for *swamis*, no *hatha yoga*, it is only for sick people, only *jnana yoga*, *aparokshanubhuti*, direct perception, I am Brahman, nothing else, that is also incomplete yoga.

Even as you have a nice mixture of people, a nice mixture of colors, in the same way you must have a nice combination

of yogas in your life because you are not one, you are four. Just like this body needs calcium, iron, phosphates and many other things, in the same way your personality, your life, needs four essential elements. These four elements are dynamism, emotion or devotion, mysticism and respite. That is called complete nourishment complete nutrition for life. Therefore, according to these needs, please remember for dynamism karma yoga, for emotions bhakti yoga, for mysticism raja yoga or mantra yoga or tantra yoga and for respite jnana yoga or Vedanta. This is the philosophy, the approach to life advocated in the *Gita*, regarding the great conflicts that everybody in every part of the world is facing today.

If you want to bring the philosophy of the *Gita* into your daily life just remember a few points. First of all, work hard, expect things, but if they do not come, remember that you should not break down, you must have courage. Again go on with your new ventures and enterprises. The second point is that the mind must be balanced, but this balance of mind should be a spontaneous affair. It should be spontaneous; the mind should not be dragged. It should be a spontaneous culmination of the process of karma yoga. Whatever yoga you practise, karma yoga or bhakti yoga, you should never forget the central consciousness, the *paramatman*, the perfect consciousness, the great Atman, the nuclear consciousness, the *Atman*. If you remember that consciousness within you which is cosmic, which is infinite, which is eternal, then all your yogas will be successful. Finally, as a practitioner of yoga you must imbibe two great cultures, first, dynamism and second yogic life. Both must be practised side by side. Dynamism, that is to say, work, accomplishment, fulfilment, ambition, etc. and secondly also the practices of yoga, hatha yoga, raja yoga, bhakti yoga, jnana yoga, one hour or two hours, whatever amount of time you can dedicate to it.

A yoga practitioner should not condemn any phase of life. Whether you are a yoga teacher or a yogi, or a swami, or a yoga practitioner, or a yoga devotee, you should never

condemn any phase of life, because all the phases are the phases of consciousness and not devoid or bereft of consciousness. If you condemn any phase of life, whether it is the life of a householder, or a sannyasin's life, or a drunkard's life, anybody's life, you are creating a sickness in your own mind. If he is a sick man, or a limping man, a stammering man, or a weak man, or a great man or a hopeless man, or a criminal, or a liar, or a debauch, whatever he may be, it is said in the *Gita* by Krishna, that they are all my phases, they are my different points of evolution, they are different parts of my great picture. With this broad and liberal attitude to life, if you practise your hatha yoga or karma yoga or bhakti yoga, I can assure you that you will not only be successful in life but it will give you enlightenment.

– March, 1971, Copenhagen, Denmark,
published in Satyananda Yoga in Europe Volume 2



A Blend of Reason

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



If sometimes your teacher is not able to satisfy you, you should not mind it. Maybe the teacher is not efficient, or maybe you have a fat ego. It can be anything or it can be both, because many times a man who has a fat ego considers the other person to be an idiot. So you have to come to a point of compromise with yourself and with your acceptance. Taking it for granted that your teacher is inefficient and that you have a fat ego, what should you do? It is better and safer to think, "I am egoistic and he is not inefficient."

This is the approach to rational humility. Anybody who claims to be rational should also know how to be humble. By a rational process you can create humility in yourself. Humility is not inferiority. I am repeating it, humility is not inferiority, especially rational humility; it is a noble quality. A man who can think and analyze, if he can become aware of his rational limitations, he can accept that he has rational limitations. If he can accept, if he can believe that he also has rational limitations, he can become humble. "I can think very well, I know many things," that is one way, called rational conviction. "But I don't know everything, there are many things which I don't know," that is called rational humility. Rational conviction and rational humility must be blended together, then you become softer and more flexible.

– 16 May 1984, satsang at Hotel Nepheli, Thessaloniki, published in History of Satyananda Yoga in Greece, Volume One



Awareness in Daily Life

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

It is not sufficient to develop inner awareness through meditation. It is necessary to apply it in day-to-day life, otherwise it is like making a bomb and keeping it in your room without making use of it. Through meditation, you heighten and purify your awareness, but when it comes to applying it in day-to-day living, you don't do it. Therefore, daily life and spiritual life become two different and contradictory realities. If you want your developed awareness to help you in your spiritual life as well as your material life, you must learn the method of taking a little energy from that fundamental source of awareness and putting it in touch with your daily activities, or you will never realize your full potential. In yoga, and other sciences pertaining to yoga, there are methods by which the supreme awareness can be applied to daily life.

The visions, the psychic experience seen during meditation are not everything. They are just indications of a growing concentration. They prove that your consciousness is transcending different dimensions and different stages of your being. Many spiritual aspirants, renunciates or householders, have gone deep within during meditation. Some of them lose complete awareness of the outer body. Yet they have not been able to accomplish anything. They have not been able to understand anything in life. If you tell them something, they forget. They lack the power of memory and the faculty of understanding. They have completely dimmed the power of constant awareness.

This happens because their day-to-day life: the life of the senses and the world, and their spiritual life, become two

different lives. Side by side with the practices of meditation there should be the practices of hatha yoga, bhakti yoga, jnana yoga and especially karma yoga. It is wrong to say that one has to practise karma yoga first and when one becomes expert in this, one takes to bhakti yoga or raja yoga. No, it is not like that. All these aspects of yoga should be practised together. It must also be understood how to practise them at the right time and in the right amount. The right duration, depth, intensity and emphasis has to be placed on each one.

If you are an emotional person and you do not know how to use your surplus emotions, you will take more to bhakti yoga. If you are predominantly psychic, greater emphasis will be on meditation. If you are rational by temperament, you will have to lay emphasis on jnana yoga. In this way karma yoga becomes important for all spiritual aspirants. It is not only because karma is necessary in order to earn one's livelihood, but karma is necessary to express the formless awareness, that pure awareness, in actual work.

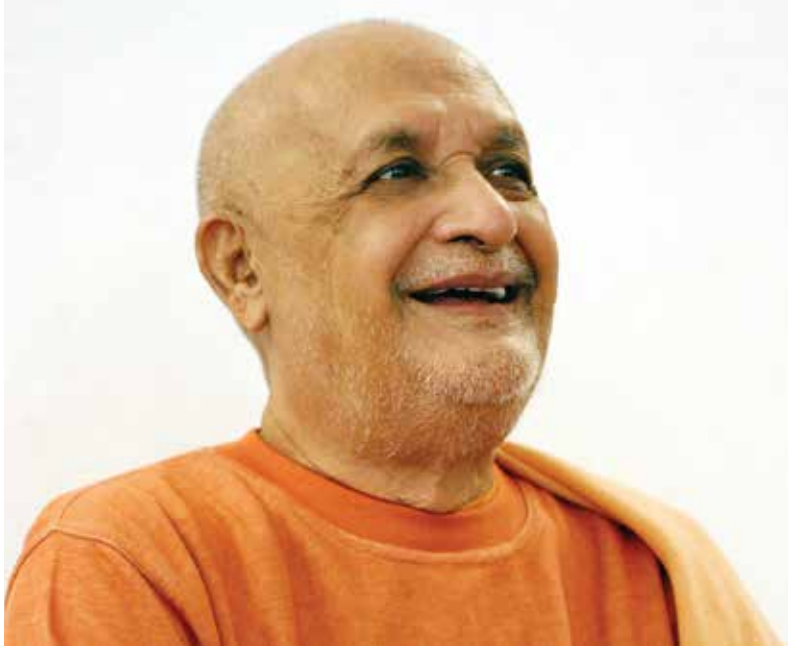
I would like to convey to you that the root of power in man is awareness. If that particular awareness can be developed by gradual practice and effort, it will be possible for you to circulate, operate and correspond with the different spheres of reality: physical, mental, psychic and spiritual.

It sometimes happens that people develop a greater spiritual personality, so much so that they see divinity everywhere. They see oneness everywhere. It is a stage in spiritual life when they become aware of the oneness of everything. You may call it hallucination or a subjective idea, but it is pure consciousness. One does not find any difference between oneself and others. At that moment, the distinction between man and man fades away. One does not see the distinction between religions, races, colour, sex, groups, and so on. This is a great achievement for man and the greatest power that we can bring to this earth.

— 1974, *Sivanandashram, Munger*
published in Early Teachings of Swami Satyananda Volume II

Jnana Yoga

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



The three paths of personal evolution are karma yoga, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga. In each of these paths you deal with yourself, but the methods are different. In the path of karma yoga, you deal with yourself through enactment of *karma*, action. In bhakti yoga, you deal through emotions, feelings and devotion. In jnana yoga, you deal with yourself through *buddhi*, intellect. When I use the phrase 'deal with yourself', I mean dealing with your mind. Throughout life, that is what you are doing: dealing with the mind. Your life is just a play of the mind; therefore, to deal with life you have to deal with the mind, or vice versa.

When I speak of dealing with the mind, I do not just mean the conscious mind or the gross material awareness. In fact,

I mean that all dimensions of the mind have to be dealt with, from the conscious to the unconscious. In order to deal with the mind at all levels, you have to remove the *avarana* or covering, in the form of karmas that prevent your access to those deeper realms. This refinement of mind from all extraneous material is enhanced by karma yoga or the yoga of perfection.

The refined mind then begins to perceive the reality, and the process of knowledge begins as the second barrier of *avidya*, ignorance, that prevents access to the deeper realms is slowly removed. This is accomplished through jnana yoga. This is why all yoga books begin with the sentence, "Now, therefore, I teach you yoga." This is the first line in all yoga texts that expound the system of yoga. In the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali, the sage starts his exposition by saying, *Atha yoganushasanam* – "Now, therefore, the disciplines of raja yoga."

So, in order to learn jnana yoga and practise jnana yoga, first of all, you have to fulfil certain conditions. Otherwise, your foray into jnana yoga will only be intellectual and not experiential. Intellectual knowledge is not experience; intellectual knowledge is just information. If you have not eaten a particular sweet, but have read about it, you may be able to say everything about that sweet, but your knowledge will be incomplete because you have not tasted it and have no experience of it. Experience is personal knowledge and this applies to jnana yoga, which provides personal knowledge of the Self.

The prerequisites for jnana yoga are a peaceful and balanced mind, restrained senses, disenchantment from worldly pleasures, endurance, faith in guru and God. They are defined as *sama* or balance; *dama*, control of the senses; *uparati*, indifference to worldly pleasures; *titiksha*, endurance; *shraddha*, faith in the unseen; *samadhana*, the final realization. These six conditions are the prerequisites for a jnana yogi. Following these principles makes you fully prepared for the experience of jnana or knowledge of the Self.

– October 2007, published in Rikhiapeeth Satsangs 2

Japa

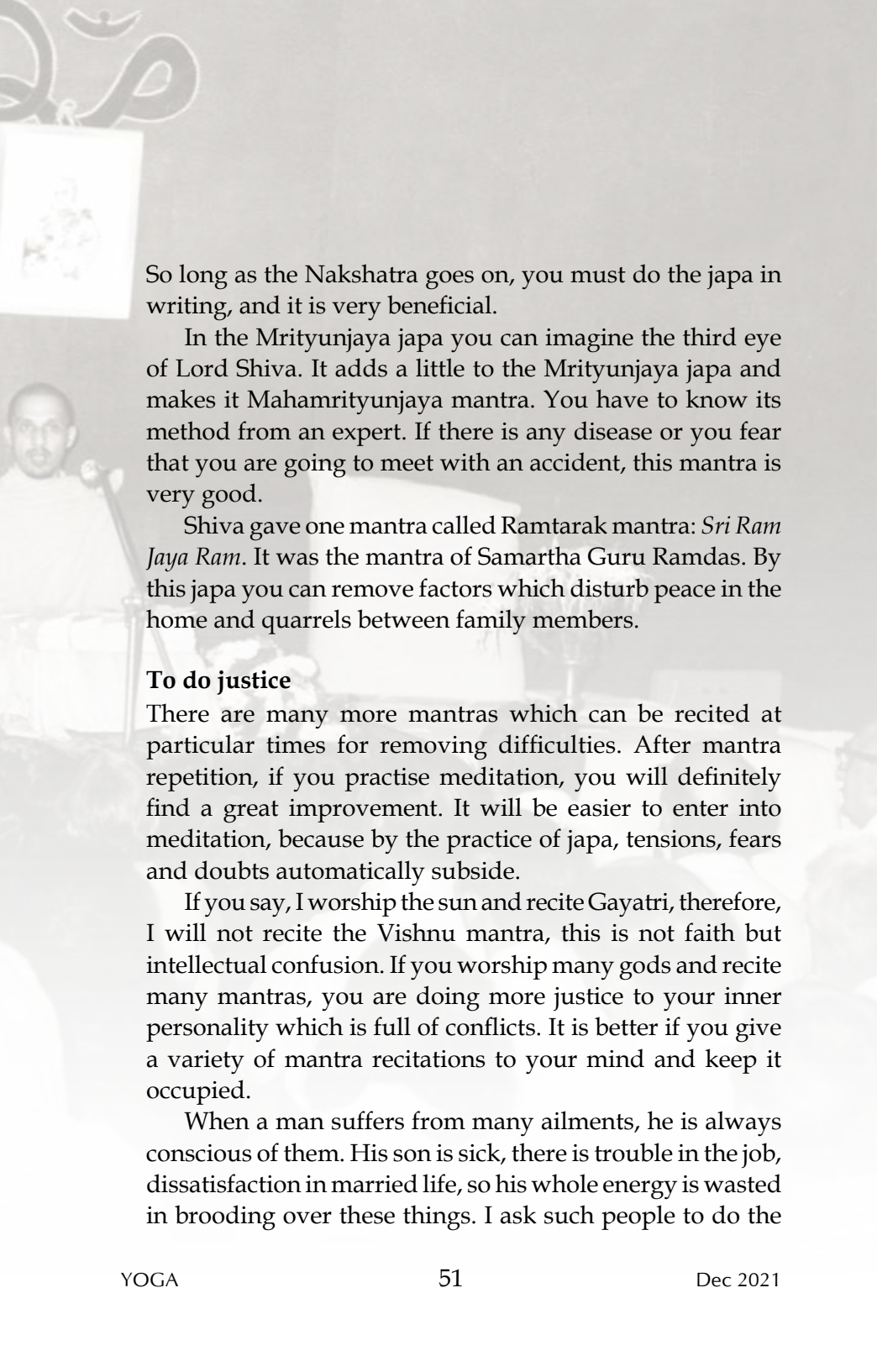
Swami Satyananda Saraswati

Mental japa is nothing but introspection. In order for it to be effective, however, you must know the power in every mantra. Those who suffer from mental dullness and want to brighten their intellect should practise Gayatri japa. At first this japa was said to be for brahmins only, not even ladies could recite it. But now it is accepted as a suitable mantra for all. Gayatri is the oldest of all mantras. You can find it in the ancient books. The times for doing this japa are at dawn, noon and dusk. You can also practise it together with nadi shodhana pranayama.

There are many Gayatris. Brahma Gayatri has its parallel in every religion. There is also Surya Gayatri which is good for skin diseases, allergic dermatitis, leucodermal patches etc. Then there is Rudra Gayatri and Vishnu Gayatri. You invoke the gods through these mantras. They are objective experiences, not subjective. All this is explained in the *Mahanarayana Upanishad*.

Another mantra which is very powerful is the 32 names of Durga. It has cured and solved many difficult problems which have perplexed even me. Beginners will take 5 minutes to do one round of this japa, but later on it takes about 3 to 4 minutes. It is never done verbally, mentally or in whispers. You have to chant it loudly and pronounce each name clearly.

Then there is the Mrityunjaya mantra. One mala takes 15 minutes. It can be chanted aloud or repeated mentally. Except for the Durga Path, all mantras can be done mentally and verbally as convenient for you. *Devi Atharva Sheersham* is the only japa to be written and not repeated. However, it is only written when there is Satavisha Nakshatra, Bhauma Vara and Amavasya, which comes only once in many years.



So long as the Nakshatra goes on, you must do the japa in writing, and it is very beneficial.

In the Mrityunjaya japa you can imagine the third eye of Lord Shiva. It adds a little to the Mrityunjaya japa and makes it Mahamrityunjaya mantra. You have to know its method from an expert. If there is any disease or you fear that you are going to meet with an accident, this mantra is very good.

Shiva gave one mantra called Ramtarak mantra: *Sri Ram Jaya Ram*. It was the mantra of Samartha Guru Ramdas. By this japa you can remove factors which disturb peace in the home and quarrels between family members.

To do justice

There are many more mantras which can be recited at particular times for removing difficulties. After mantra repetition, if you practise meditation, you will definitely find a great improvement. It will be easier to enter into meditation, because by the practice of japa, tensions, fears and doubts automatically subside.

If you say, I worship the sun and recite Gayatri, therefore, I will not recite the Vishnu mantra, this is not faith but intellectual confusion. If you worship many gods and recite many mantras, you are doing more justice to your inner personality which is full of conflicts. It is better if you give a variety of mantra recitations to your mind and keep it occupied.

When a man suffers from many ailments, he is always conscious of them. His son is sick, there is trouble in the job, dissatisfaction in married life, so his whole energy is wasted in brooding over these things. I ask such people to do the

Durga Path, Gayatri japa, Mrityunjaya japa, Ram Nam japa and recitation of the *Gita*. You may argue that you believe in one god and not in many gods, but is your faith strong? Will it give relief from the tensions of life? I know the truth behind many gods. I am not advocating faith, I am advocating that which is best for you.

When college boys come to me and complain of certain diseases, I ask them to read *Hanuman Chalisa*. The results are very positive. After reading it, a change comes in them, in their body and mind. Many people come to me and ask about the marriage of their daughters. I prescribe Katayani mantra japa. Mental or subjective changes come about in the girl thereby. It is controversial how it happens, but the results are positive.

Many people complain of quarrels in the house, the wife does not listen, the in-laws cause trouble. If you fear that you have many enemies, do the Devikavach path. This japa brings about a subjective change in the practitioner. Whether he is freed from the idea that he has enemies or whether the mental vibrations change the idea of the other party, one does not know. But I am very clear about this – holy, loving and peace-making thoughts travel, and evil thoughts also travel. If you think ill of a person for 15 days, he will develop suspicion of you. If you think well of a person, he will develop trust in you. Therefore, by japa mantras, your bhavanas also travel and it works.

So remember these important points in japa. First, japa has a devata. Do not doubt or try to reason. You have no authority to deny this unless you can logically prove that it is not so. Second, the mantra can be awakened. Third, by awakening the mantra, we can fulfil our desires. After the mantra provides you with peace and prosperity, can you forget God? No, bhakti grows slowly. People come to me with selfish desires. I realize their difficulties. But after their difficulties are solved, they develop attachment for me.

– 1963, Mumbai, India

Advice to Aspirants

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

Aspirants should keep the mind pure and life disciplined and restrained. In family life they give full scope to peace, tranquillity and cooperation. They are benevolent and of service to others. They should be forceful in their karmas, sweet and soft in their speech. They should be balanced in food habits, simple in dressing up and above all they should be highly knowledgeable. These aspects should be thoroughly taken care of. They are fundamental elements and secrets of success in day-to-day life.



Aspirants should be blissful, full of joy and exalted in spirit, learn to live in happiness and contentment and allow others to live that way. This is the perception and realization of 'satyam'.

Aspirants should neither do back-biting nor listen to it; not think evil nor do harm to anyone. They should avoid harshness and help the sick, poor, helpless, aggrieved and widows. They must stop extravagance, and instead write the personal Ramayana of their own life, not Tulsi *Ramayana*. People should do pooja of human qualities instead of worshipping temples; learn to respect and worship restraint, instead of involvement in *bhoga*, enjoyment.

Aspirants should display calmness and mildness instead of harshness. The world is brimming with crores of sermons, but what I have mentioned is enough for this life. Oceans have an immense amount of water but just a little bit is good enough to live by.

What I Want

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



No man earns all by himself, he earns because of society. If this society did not exist, then I could not earn either. We are all indebted to society. Whatever we possess today really belongs to society. Society has as much right to it as you. This thought came to me here and gradually it has become clearer. That is why I am gathering only such people around me who will live for others. I do not care if you are a sannyasin or a householder, married or unmarried, young or old. Only live for others. Eat twice a day and work for others. I don't have any other requirements. I do not want followers. I want a person who can live not for himself, but for others.

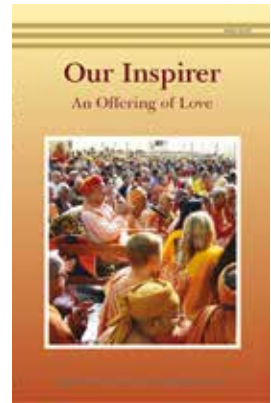


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Om Tat Sat
The Editor