

YOGA

Year 10 Issue
January 2021

Membership postage: Rs. 100



Bihar School of Yoga, Munger, Bihar, India



Hari Om

YOGA is compiled, composed and published by the sannyanisin disciples of Swami Satyananda Saraswati for the benefit of all people who seek health, happiness and enlightenment. It contains information about the activities of Bihar School of Yoga, Bihar Yoga Bharati, Yoga Publications Trust and Yoga Research Fellowship.

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YOGA is a monthly magazine. Late subscriptions include issues from January to December.

Published by Bihar School of Yoga, Ganga Darshan, Fort, Munger, Bihar – 811201.

Printed at Thomson Press India Ltd., Haryana – 121007

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Membership is held on a yearly basis. Please send your requests for application and all correspondence to:

Bihar School of Yoga
Ganga Darshan
Fort, Munger, 811201
Bihar, India

✉ A self-addressed, stamped envelope must be sent along with enquiries to ensure a response to your request

Total no. of pages: 56 (including cover pages)

Front cover & plates: New Year's Day 2021,
Munger



GUIDELINES FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

Seva

Seva is a natural expression of love. It expands the heart and widens the vision. Without waiting to be served, one has to serve with love, kindness and courtesy and look for opportunities to serve. The aspirant should serve without being conspicuous, silently, without any advertisement. He should do what is right and leave the results to look after themselves. The whole heart, mind and soul have to be given when one serves. The aspirant should think how best his energy, intellect, education, wealth and strength can be used for the betterment of others. Life is not fully lived if one does not serve and love humanity.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Published and printed by Swami Shivadhyanam Saraswati on behalf of Bihar School of Yoga, Ganga Darshan, Fort, Munger – 811201, Bihar

Printed at Thomson Press India (Ltd), 18/35 Milestone, Delhi Mathura Rd., Faridabad, Haryana.

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

YOGA

Year 10 Issue 1 · January 2021
(59th year of publication)

Contents

4	New Year Sadhana	35	Progression of Shavasana
5	New Year Plan	37	Please, Practise Yoga
6	New Year Sankalpa	38	The Ego
8	From Practice to Application	39	Substitution Method
12	The Generation Gap	41	Self-Acceptance
15	The Melody of Saraswati	44	All About Love
18	Yoga Gurukul – Seed Sown	47	Light Fire and Darkness
22	The Ultimate Aim of Yoga	52	The Bhagavad Gita
25	Yoga Kavach	53	The Plan of Spiritual Progress
32	Cultivating Awareness	54	The Process Continues

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 ॥

New Year Sadhana

Swami Sivananda Saraswati



Time rolls on. New becomes old and old becomes new again. Today is the most auspicious New Year's day. God has given you another chance this year to enable you to strive for your salvation. Make the best use of every moment of this New Year. Unfold all latent faculties. Here is a chance to begin life anew, to grow and evolve and become a super-human or a great dynamic yogi.

Forget the past.

A glorious and brilliant future is awaiting you.

Equal vision is the touchstone of knowledge.

Unselfishness is the touchstone of virtue.

Oneness is the touchstone of self-realization.

Humility is the touchstone of devotion.

Therefore, be unselfish, humble and pure.

Develop equal vision.

Be in tune with the Infinite.

Satyam, truth, is the seed.

Ahimsa is the root.

Meditation is the shower.

Shanti, peace, is the flower.

Moksha, salvation, is the fruit.

Therefore, speak the truth.

Practise ahimsa and meditation.

Cultivate shanti.

You will attain the final emancipation or freedom from the trammels of births and deaths, and enjoy eternal bliss.

New Year Plan

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

The auspicious arrival of the New Year is imminent. This is the birthday of a new perspective, new hopes and new resolves. May there be the auspicious birth of a new mind, new enthusiasm and pure desires. Draw up a year-long plan and develop the following tools:

Have inspiring human interaction

Accept the importance of others

Feel joy, happiness and friendliness towards all

Practise self-restraint in everything

Experience a golden re-birth of ideas focused on walking your path

Develop loving speech and balanced recreation

Cultivate unlimited enthusiasm for self-realization.

A new year comes, the old one goes away. New leaves sprout, old ones fall off. A new life pulsates, the old one disappears. New attitudes are cultivated; old habits are left behind. New activities are initiated; old ones are put aside. Today is a day of self-introspecting, developing and dedicating oneself. Sit, think and make a new resolve.

– 26th December 1959



New Year Sankalpa

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

This year is for progressing in yogic life. Until now many of us have been practitioners, but we have never experienced any real change or development in our life. To attain the fulfilment, wholeness and completeness of yoga, resolve to observe the following points in the coming year:

Sincerity in practice

To think and live yoga, to make yoga a part of our lifestyle, just as eating and sleeping are a part. Yoga is a way of life, not just a practice to be done for half an hour in the morning and half an hour in the evening, and then forgotten.

Discipline of the inner being

To observe our emotional, mental, rational and irrational actions, reactions and interactions and thereby develop self-discipline. Only then can we experience real freedom. Discipline is not an imposition of rules. Rules are only guidelines, but through them we learn to observe ourselves.

Inner strength

To achieve self-discipline, inner strength is necessary. We cannot attain the fulfilment of yoga in our life if we are loose and undisciplined within ourselves, if we follow the sway of the mind. We must be very strong, and for acquiring inner strength, ashram life is helpful. A regulated life is necessary to discipline and to focus the internal being.

Purity of intention

The intention, the goal of life, has to be pure and clear, then only can we progress towards it. If our intention is not pure, all of our efforts in spiritual life will be futile.



Consistent lifestyle

Our lifestyle should be based on spiritual principles, not on the whims of the mind. If we live according to the whims of the mind, we will wake up at 8.00 am and have tea in bed. That is a lethargic lifestyle. To reach the fulfilment of yoga, our lifestyle must be conducive to our mental, emotional and spiritual growth.

These are the five points which can help us in the coming year in order to experience the wholeness and fulfilment of yoga and to realize the ultimate purpose of our life.

Wishing you all a happy New Year.

From Practice to Application

Swami Shivadhyanam Saraswati

The theme of this webinar is about taking yoga from the level of practice to the level of application.

Swami Niranjanananda says knowledge by itself is not of much use, only when knowledge is applied does it become wisdom. Applied knowledge is wisdom. Today the need of the hour is to be able to apply yoga in the right and proper manner. The years of yoga propagation are now over, people know about yoga and about the benefits of yoga. Now the challenge before us is to apply yoga in our day-to-day life to see what the benefits and the potential can be in our own lives.

Personal application

There are three main levels of yoga application: the first level is applying yoga at the personal level with the two main components of sadhana and lifestyle. As yoga sadhakas we need to deepen our own sadhanas and apply the principles of yoga in our day-to-day life. This is the theme of the second chapter of yoga, launched by Swami Niranjanananda after the World Yoga Convention of 2013: to live yoga from moment to moment with seriousness, sincerity, commitment and with positivity.

For yoga sadhakas the first challenge is to integrate yoga in our life and not let it remain something that is just practised on the mat; rather we should live it from moment to moment. In the struggles and challenges that we face in our daily life, when we find ourselves becoming agitated, anxious or tense, that is the time to put a little practice of pranayama into practice. That is the time to put the raja yogic concept of pratipaksha bhavana into practice. Fine-tuning our own responses, attitudes, our awareness from moment to moment, so that each moment becomes a joyous moment, a moment of positivity, which not

only uplifts us but the people around us. This takes us to the second level of application, the social level.

Social application

We may use yoga as a system, a science, a technique which allows for the harmonious development of our head, heart and hands, but then what we gain through yoga has to be shared by the people around us. The social level is another important area of application of yoga. This means applying yoga to different sectors of society which have different needs, and tailor yoga to the needs of that particular sector. Yoga can be applied with children, youth, women, the elderly, the corporate sector, sports people, policemen, firefighters, in prisons and rehabilitation centres, the field is vast.

A lot of wonderful work has been done by both BSY and the Ghantali Mitra Mandal under the guidance of Swami Satyakarmananda. I remember when he had come for the convention and his talk was about the different programs that the Ghantali Mitra Mandal has been conducting for the young people, for the youth. He even mentioned a project that was done for people who have computer vision syndrome - people who work on a computer for long periods of time and get eye-related problems. That is an example of taking yoga and applying it for people who are in need of a solution.



For this kind of application, three things have to be kept in mind. The way to apply yoga in society has to be: 1. simple; 2. practical and 3. inspirational. We have to inspire people to take

up those practices, attitudinal changes and lifestyle changes which yoga recommends.

Swami Satyakarmananda was a genius in the way he was able to present yoga and inspire people to adopt those techniques in their lives to reap the benefits. For us who would like to contribute and improve the condition of people around us, it would be worthwhile to look at his example and the example of the work BSY has been doing whether it is for the army, the police force, sports people, children, or differently-abled people. With a degree of compassion and sensitivity to each group we should take the message, system and science of yoga and let it work its own magic.

This social aspect of yoga is all the more relevant in these present times of the pandemic which has brought its own share of problems, stresses upon the family and social fabric. The social connections are weakening, and it is time to use yoga in novel ways. Use yoga as a complete science for head, heart and hands: physical health, mental peace and wellbeing, emotional health and spiritual development. Yoga has different limbs through which each of these areas can be targeted.

The challenge is to be able to take these little principles of yoga and apply them in practical and simple manners. We can use them for people who are living in different situations, and we need to help them overcome whatever problems they may be facing whether it is physical, emotional or psychological. Especially the social connection needs to be strengthened. With the lockdowns and other restrictions on movement that we see now all around us, problems of loneliness, of distance between people need to be bridged. Yoga can play a very useful and important role in that.

Environmental application

The third level of the application is on the ecological level. We are a part of nature, we are not living in a vacuum by ourselves, nature around us is not just something that is there to be exploited for our own selfish utilization, no. When we talk

about yoga for ecology, for sustaining ecosystems, the nature around us, it is not just conserving nature, forest and rivers. It is much more than that. Yoga has believed and emphasized throughout our vedic traditions the interconnectedness of everything. Whether it be the plants, animals, trees, rivers, mountains, at their basic levels all are composed of the same *tattwas*, the five elements, of which we are composed. There is a synergy, a give and take between all animate and inanimate beings.

Yoga teaches us to respect that connection and respect that fundamental unity. That is why in our tradition, a river was not just a river it was considered like a mother. Forest was not just a forest; mountain was just not a mountain. We anthropomorphized them, not for the sake of giving them a name or making them a deity, it was to emphasize the connection and to know that we are connected. We are connected with the river, the forest, with all of prakriti.

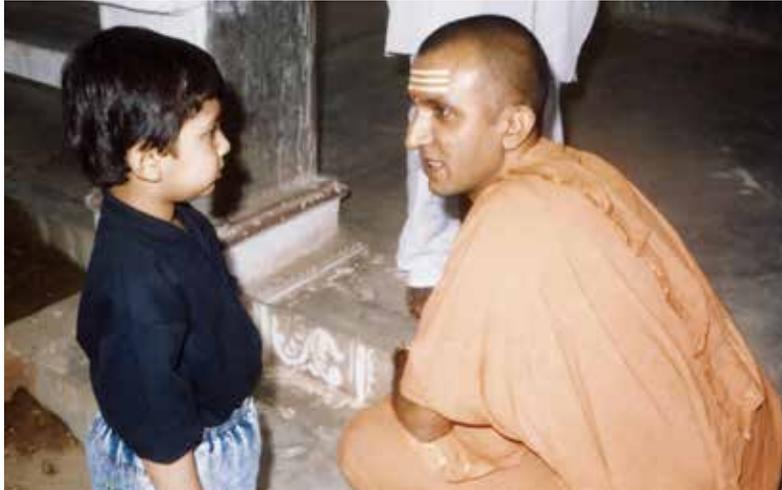
In these times when through human greed and exploitation, nature is being depleted at an alarming rate, and we are faced with environmental and ecological disasters, I think this is one aspect of yoga that assumes all the more importance. As sincere yoga sadhakas and lovers of yoga, I think we should definitely pay attention to this aspect as well.

To conclude, with these three levels of applying yoga at the personal, social and ecological levels, we take yoga from being simply a practice to becoming a sadhana to living it as a lifestyle and eventually a culture. And this is what Sri Swami Satyananda had predicted years ago, when he had founded Bihar School of Yoga – that yoga will be the culture of tomorrow and will direct the course of world events – and his words are coming true.

– Webinar given 31 August 2020,
on the occasion of the first *punya smaran*, commemoration,
of Swami Satyakarmananda, founder of Ghantali
Yog Mitra Mandal, Mumbai

The Generation Gap

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



The relationship between younger people and their elders today is a source of mental tension and conflict for the older generation.

I think this is somehow related with the social upbringing to which we have exposed our children. Parents tend to impose their own aspirations on their children, rather than allowing them to follow their own path in life. For example, a mother may want her child to become a doctor, a father may want the child to become an engineer. The majority of parents never ask the child, "What do you want to become?" They make their children in their own image according to their own expectations and then expect the children to fulfil those expectations.

In modern society there are many opportunities which people become aware of as they grow up. The younger generation feel that their parents have not given them that freedom to choose what they want to become and to lead an

independent life. In a sense, it is social rebellion that makes children distance themselves from their parents. We put the blame, the onus of guilt, on the children and also on external influences.

Parents are unable to face their own guilt in not providing the right form of discipline or education or encouragement to their children. That is one of the major causes of what we call the generation gap. Parents think in one way, children think in another way. The same children who are now trying to prove to the world that they can be independent will have the same problems with their children later.

We impose our expectations on the younger generation for our own security and sense of fulfilment. We think of children as the support for our old age, but the changing scenario in the world does not furnish that kind of situation anymore. To avoid the anxiety or insecurity or mental crisis of parents who have reached a point where they are no longer actively participating in society, we should reflect now and guide our children differently. Parents must become friends to their children instead of being the judge, jury and executioner.

Why do people over 60 still experience stress and tension?

At that age they are not actively participating in the formation of society, and that becomes a source of stress. After retirement nobody gives them any recognition. A boss who has had many people under him suddenly finds himself isolated, because now nobody is fearful or afraid of him. That form of stress is more devastating than the usual work or family stress that we face, because it hurts the self-image, and loss of self-esteem or loss of a positive self-image destroys personalities.

Even at that age they are groping for a direction. What ideals should they pursue?

The answer to that is given in the system of the ancient Indian tradition. After retirement you are supposed to take a passive role in society. Until retirement you have a dynamic role in

society: you are working, earning, a member of this club or society, participating in this charitable activity and doing many other things.

After retirement you have to concentrate on your spiritual and mental development through contemplation, reflection and meditation. You are supposed to adopt the role of the thinker so that the wisdom you have gained in life through experience becomes the source of inspiration to other people who have not had that experience. You have to be a guide and a thinker. That should be the natural transition from a working to a thinking person.

There are many ways of keeping oneself occupied. You can participate in some philanthropic activity. You can do the work instead of depending on servants. You can remain a part of society, but as a passive player. It is not just a meditative lifestyle where you sit down every day and think about God, do your pooja and read the scriptures. At the same time, during the day you are encouraged to have the role of teacher or farmer or grandparent or whatever, so that you can impart your knowledge and experience to others.

*– Published in Dignity Magazine, Mumbai,
printed in YOGA, Vol. 8, Issue 3 (May 1997)*



The Melody of Saraswati

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

When Sri Swami Satyananda established the Bihar School of Yoga, 57 years ago, it was not to propagate or teach people the health benefits of hatha yoga, asana or pranayama, as everyone is doing today, but to create a fellowship of spiritual-minded and yoga-minded people, who would live the principles of yoga and go deeper into the experience of yoga.

Bihar School of Yoga became the nucleus of the International Yoga Fellowship. The International Yoga Fellowship represented this vision of Paramahamsaji where people don't practise yoga but live yoga.

What he established 57 years ago is taking shape now. For 50 years there was the period of propagating yoga. Yoga became globally known. When we had started our yoga training, there were hardly any yoga teachers in the world. Fifty years later there were thousands of yoga teachers in practically every country and city.

Then the aspiration of Sri Swamiji to establish the International Yoga Fellowship was put into place with the emergence of the Second Chapter of yoga which allowed people to deepen their awareness, understanding and experience of yoga.

The children's message

Many people are part of that Second Chapter, yet the main recipients and beneficiaries are the children for they are adopting yogic thought in their life. For them yoga is a way of life; for you, yoga is a practice. For them, yoga is a way of thinking and living; for you, yoga is only intervention to manage some stress, anxiety and problem in life. There is a big difference between what you go through and what the children are going through. For them, yoga deals with their personality. For you, yoga deals with your body and mind.



Sonu gave a beautiful example when he explained that he travels with some inspirational sentences of Paramahamsaji. While he is travelling, he tries to live those inspirational sentences and this has changed his whole perspective, understanding and vision of life, and his interactions with people. That really made me happy, to see that the children of Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal are now becoming aware, not only of the asana or pranayama component of yoga but of something which helps them achieve a better understanding and deeper experience of life – a more integrated awareness of life.

I am happy that today the children have conducted this Basant Panchami program. Previously a few people would come to say how good the Institution is for the community and thank the Institution for its presence. That became the celebration of the Foundation Day. Today, that convention is broken. The children have realized that yoga is not a practice but a way of living. They stated, “Life is what you live in your mind. If you live with a positive mind, if you live with a happy mind, your life is positive and happy. If you live with a problematic, critical, negative mind, then life becomes

problematic, critical and negative. To manage the negative, critical and diseased life, we come to yoga.”

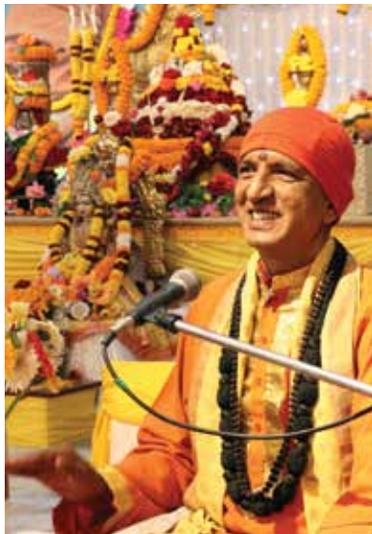
If we can make the effort to cultivate the positive, like the children are doing at present, we won't have to face the negatives or the big impact of the negatives, rather we shall sail through life with happiness, wisdom and clarity. That is the message of the children – yoga is not just for our emancipation, enlightenment, health and mental peace, it is also a connection with the environment, with nature and how we interact with our environment, nature, society and the universe.

Positive steps have to be taken to improve not only the quality of ourselves but also the quality of our environment and society. For this everybody has to take a *sankalpa*, a resolve, a firm determination. The choice of taking this firm resolution is up to you. It has to come up from your own inner depth and you have to have a feeling for it, to achieve the best, the purity, simplicity, wisdom and clarity. Not only to achieve it, but also to apply it in your interactions and behaviour to make your immediate world a little bit better.

In this manner, keep increasing the percentage of positivity one percent at a time. Don't try to spread positivity ten percent, twenty percent or one hundred percent. One percent, if attainable on a daily basis, will make you ultimately win the race.

So, I wish all the efforts of yoga all the best, and wish all the efforts of all the aspirants in yoga all the best on this day of Basant Panchami where wisdom and action come together to create a beautiful melody of Saraswati.

– 30 January 2020, Basant Panchami, Ganga Darshan



Yoga Gurukul – Seed Sown

Mrinmayee Belsare (Minoo), USA



What is the image that conjures up when you hear the word ‘yoga’? Some may visualize it as an old person sitting utterly steady with eyes closed, trying to keep his/her back straight for hours at end. A few may think of it as twisting and turning of their bodies in the most impossible postures possible. While some, may visualize it as going away from the pleasures of civilization into the wilderness in search of peace! Conventionally, a Yoga Gurukul flashes before our eyes, a forest with snakes, tigers, scary wild animals and amidst all this we stay and practise asanas and pranayama.

But would you believe if I tell you that I experienced 30 days of pure bliss and joy without engaging in any of the above stunts? Those 30 days which I cherish even today, have been the best part of my life which I enjoyed during my summer holidays while in elementary school. Sounds awesome, right?

The Bihar School of Yoga, founded by Paramahansa Swami Satyananda Saraswati, in Munger, Bihar, India, is the

best school of yoga where yogic teachings are imparted by resident 'sannyasins' based on their experiences and not by bookish pedantic. In 1983, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati conducted a pilot residential camp for kids between the ages of 6 and 12. The kids were to stay in the ashram for a month, without their parents, and learn yoga. "What? No Parental Supervision?" I had my initial apprehensions on learning about all this and wondered what was in store?

As we gathered for our first meet, we were introduced to a young, smiling and charming sannyasi, Swami Niranjanananda, who was the President of Bihar School of Yoga and the in-charge of this camp. I couldn't stop noticing his wide ears and his long arms and hands that reached beyond his knees. As he explained our daily schedule, I realized that his smile had captivated everyone in the group. The daily routine that was announced seemed very simple and sounded like fun. We were grouped by age for all the classes. The medium of instruction was mostly in Hindi; which some of us did not comprehend, so we were clubbed with sessions which were in English.

Ashram routine

As the camp began, I was up every day at dawn, all excited about what the day holds in store. During this camp, I learnt to start my day with a prayer to request the grace of all the divine powers. Yogic postures and practices starting from the basics and progressing to advanced were all included in the day's routine. Our typical day started at 5.30 am with one full hour for yoga exercises, followed by a breakfast, then the ritual of cleaning karma yoga for 30 minutes. We then played various games in the playground for an hour. A good luncheon was very refreshing after these activities.

Afternoons generally were quite hot, so it was time for some indoor activities. Reading some good books in the library, a few indoor games and a session of guided yogic sleep called yoga nidra was followed by an hour of independent time. After enjoying a snack, we were allowed to play games and

indulge ourselves in nature. Dinners were early at 5.30 pm. An hour after dinner, we gathered for Satsang (thoughts of wisdom to reflect upon), some bhajans and kirtans which was accompanied by some singing and dancing. Lights were turned off by 8.00 pm.

Every day we had to take care of our bed, clean our own dishes, wash our clothes and keep our rooms clean. Initially all this seemed like formidable tasks but very soon all of us got adjusted to these chores and started enjoying. There was no “time out”, no homework, instead we were encouraged to take our own decisions and behave responsibly. We enjoyed two field trips outside the campus and got an opportunity to swim in the holy river Ganga!!! I thoroughly enjoyed all this and had already made-up my mind to come to this place every summer.

We were taught about the various breathing techniques and the shatkarmas (different cleansing techniques like neti, kunjal, shankhprakhshalana). All these practices would be very useful if practised regularly in life. How to relax and maximize our energies through the conscious relaxation practice of yoga nidra, was a daily practice which we learnt. I distinctly remember my instructor describing the most exotic cakes imaginable and some mouthwatering treats during this practice. Time flew by fast and the four weeks went by in a jiffy.

The learning

Back home, it was impossible for me to forget all that I learnt at the ashram during the camp and I was very eager to demonstrate all that I had learnt to my parents. They were very supportive and allowed me to practise what I learnt. I was transformed into a more disciplined and a responsible kid. That one month of my ‘Ashram Life’ has really become a turning point in my life. Increased awareness, unwavering focus by tuning out the noise, concentration and the ability to memorize were a few immediate effects that were obviously evident. Self-discipline and accountability were ingrained at a very young age during the camp, which led to independent

thinking. Decision making became easy. Setting the priorities was second nature. How to experience joy in every activity we do is something that I cultivated through various teachings.

Over the years, I returned to the ashram many times with my family and recharged myself with the positive energy and the valuable teachings which have enriched my life. A few years later, I was very lucky to get diksha from Paramahansa Swami Satyananda Saraswati. Today, I wanted to take this opportunity to share my amazing experience of the 'Bal Yoga Camp' where I did a lot of active learning, valuable for life.

Some key takeaways which I wish to highlight

It is very important to align with the divine forces as we start our day. This creates a positive aura around us, generates tranquillity of mind and resonates with our inner self.

Peace and happiness are within us. We should not waste our time searching for them outside. Every act, when done selflessly generates joy and peace.

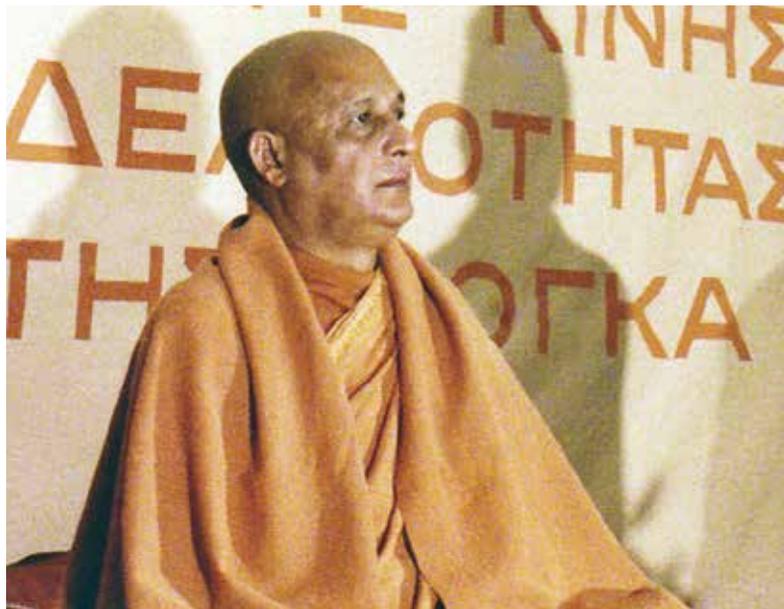
It is important that we allocate time and manage it effectively to achieve goals. One of the most important habits I developed was to set priorities, make small goals and divide the time to achieve them. As a child, the goals gyrated towards completing homework, playing games and studying for exams. Over time, these have immensely helped me in effective management of time in accomplishing my tasks.

Without any doubts, I can say that the seed of *samskara*, the blueprint of impressions, was sown during that one month, which I am successful in nurturing all this time because of the teachings. I hope children get the same opportunity to experience the pure joy at the ashram as I did.



The Ultimate Aim of Yoga

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



It is true that through the practices of yoga you can attain physical health. Throughout the world, in hospitals, drug rehabilitation centres, mental hospitals and prisons, yoga is being taught for the welfare of humanity, but that is not the aim of yoga. Yoga therapy is a by-product, mental peace and relaxation are by-products, a disciplined life is a by-product, it cannot and should not be the ultimate aim of yoga.

Our generation is suffering from infirmity of understanding. It talks about spiritual things but it is rooted in matter, we are rooted in matter and sensuality; we are rooted in the mind. It was precisely because of this that the psychology of Freud could become international. Only a civilization which is suffering from poverty of intellect can talk about Freudian psychology.

Unless your culture has gone down you can't talk about it. Can sensuality give you happiness? Do you believe it? Oh, you may believe in sensuality, because we are all sensualists, but sensuality cannot give health or peace of mind, sensuality cannot give normal human behaviour.

If you talk about treating your mind by sensual methods, you are going from darkness to death. Unless a culture is perverted and misguided, unless a culture has become absolutely idiotic, it cannot accept that sensuality can be the road to enlightenment and better health.

It is due to this background that today we teach yoga to everybody for physical and mental health. Our culture is suffering from hypertension, stress and anxiety. In order to bring this culture to a point of resilience, to a point of tranquillity and one-pointedness, we have to drag the people to yoga.

Two forms of yoga have been accepted: exoteric and esoteric. The exoteric forms of yoga are related to this physical body, to this mind and to the emotions, but exoteric yoga is only a stepping-stone. If you need it you should practise it, but the esoteric practices of yoga are more important. In the basic philosophy of yoga, it is said that if you can handle your consciousness, if you can handle your ego, if you can handle experiences, then you can handle your body as well, because this is not the only body.

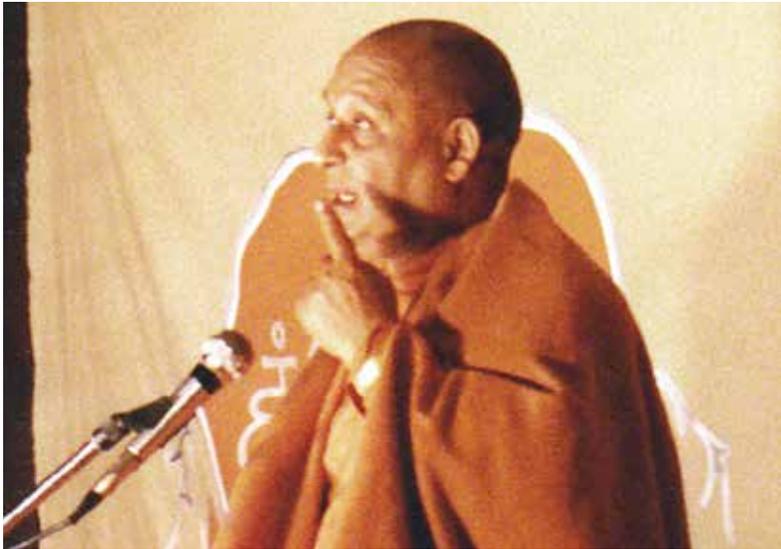
Know the Self

In the esoteric science of yoga there are basically and primarily three bodies: the gross, the causal and the astral. These three are further divided into ten bodies. To consider this body to be ultimate is, therefore, a philosophical error. During one's lifetime of fifty or eighty years, one should try to realize the greater and deeper and finer bodies. In order to realize these, it is important to have what we call the proper frame of mind.

In yogic philosophy we talk about the seven stages of consciousness which relate to seven final, ascending states of

mind. If you like you can compare them to seven heavens, it's up to you, but these seven stages of mind are inherent in you, not outside. You have to know how to transcend one state of mind and go on to another, and again transcend that and go on to the third and finally reach the seventh. The yoga which is known as kundalini yoga talks about the ascending states and ascending behaviour of consciousness.

You must also understand that there are two forms of consciousness: one manifested, the other unmanifested. The manifested consciousness is in the form of the mind, ego and emotions. It is through this manifested consciousness that you have cognition, but this is not the only consciousness, it is the tip of the iceberg. The unmanifested consciousness is known as 'purusha' in yoga, it was also spoken of as the Self. When the Upanishads, Buddha and Socrates told us to know the Self, they wanted us to know this unmanifested consciousness.



– 26 April 1984, Heraklio, Greece,
published in History of Satyananda Yoga in Greece,
Volume One with Swami Satyananda Saraswati

Yoga Kavach

Sri Dilip Mehta, Kolkata

3rd October 2020 came as a bombshell when I tested positive for Corona virus with viral load of 18. Strangely I had no symptoms and was confident that the result would be negative, which was unfortunately not to be.

It's then that the Mind Game started thanks to the hysteria created by the media and the public at large which had instilled a mortal fear in humanity. I immediately isolated myself in the domain of my bedroom with an attached toilet. The detailed prescription of the doctor involving seven supplements, two medicines and two processes – steaming and gargling was duly charted out and I meticulously went about following the instructions.

To allay the mental disharmony, thanks to my deep association with Bihar School of Yoga, I immediately took to chanting of Mahamrityunjaya Mantra, Gayatri Mantra and 32 names of Durga as well as practising yoga nidra and antar mouna, all under the remote direction and guidance of the omnipresent Swamiji. Thankfully all content was readily available on biharyoga.net, Satyam Yoga Prasad and Youtube. It was like interacting with Swamiji on a realtime basis.

As a natural corollary all members of my home were put through the same RT-PCR test despite showing no visible signs of the much publicized symptoms of Covid-19. The second major shock came on 6th October when, apart from Aneesha and Surendra (her assistant), all reported positive. Considering their age and the lack of facilities to handle any emergency we admitted three elderly members of the household to Nursing Homes, retaining others at home as their viral load was over 31 and they showed no alarming signs (obviously all under doctor's advice).

The silver lining was that now being birds of the same feather we were free to flock together. A photograph of Pujya



Gurudev shared by Aneesha got immediately installed on our bedstead and we went into constant care under his watchful eyes in our confinement.

Aneesha and Surendra managed to ward off the virus probably due to Aneesha's continuous and close guidance from the ashram, regimented workouts and yogic kriyas including jal neti and kunjal. Surendra also informed us that he had been practising jal neti and the beauty is that I am supposed to have trained him while doing my workouts and mantra chanting coupled with my parikrama walk on the heavenly patch of green on our terrace during the lockdown period.

My middle ear problem prevents me from doing jal neti but thanks to my physical regimentation of sporting activities, breathing kriyas, asanas, mantra chants, etc. I was able to stay healthy and able to sustain myself through this torrid period.

The *Yoga Kavach*, the protective shield of yoga, as prescribed by Swamiji in the various capsules on the App meant for prevention of the dreaded virus, protection in the event you got afflicted and preservation post recovery, started taking over our lifestyles.

I am sure, like many others, we are living examples of the significant role played in our recovery and wellbeing of the yogic kriyas, meditation and mantra chanting. We have









not realized how time flew over this period from 3rd to 18th October. It was as if we were enjoying rediscovering ourselves with complete time at our disposal and bereft of any stresses.

Fortunately, those who were moved out suffered from only mild symptoms and were able to come out of the Nursing Home to finish their quarantine period in the confines of dedicated rooms, and with guru kripa are back on their feet.

Being deeply and closely associated with Bihar School of Yoga, thanks to the initiation through my beloved father Brahmamurtiji, yoga has been a part of my life and lifestyle. I do not think I have benefited more now than ever before, but it is all thanks to the blessings of our Guru, Paramhansa Niranjanananda Saraswati and the blissful institutions both at Munger and Rikhia. How our lives have internally transformed has not always been otherwise visible; it has been felt in its enormity only now. This makes me resolve to continue following the methods with more conviction and belief that tomorrow and the time after will be spent in spiritual wellbeing.

Truly speaking, the Yoga Kavach is not only meant to 'prevent' from such disastrous episodes but also to 'protect' in the event one is afflicted and thereafter 'preserve' your original self through posterity. This is guru kripa overflowing from the distance and reaching out to all of us as an armour to overcome distress.

As a victim of this dreaded virus which hit me and my family despite all possible precautions, only one message has been thrown up in my mind: It's going to happen to almost everyone but the intensity of its virulence can be checked to a great extent by following the doctrine of the Yoga Kavach as pronounced by Pujya Swamiji. We can overcome the misery in the shortest possible time and regain normalcy in all aspects.

All members of our family are privileged to enjoy the blessings of Pujya Swamiji as also the legacies of knowledge and learning passed on by Pujya Gurudev through the aegis of the Bihar School of Yoga.

Cultivating Awareness

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



How should we observe ourselves? How can we begin to cultivate the faculty of observation? Let us start with a simple practice. When you go to bed at night, you review the whole day: What time did you wake up? What did you do after that? What did you have for breakfast? What clothes did you wear? With whom did you talk? What did you read? What kind of news did you hear and see? How did you react and respond to people and situations?

In this way at night, see the entire day as a movie. Identify those moments where you have reacted to people, situations, expectations, desires or the environment. Observe

your reactions: negative, positive, aggressive, destructive, selfish, friendly. Then think back for a moment and reflect: If I encounter similar or same situations again tomorrow, how can I deal with that in a better way?

Keep on doing this practice day after day, night after night, week after week; ultimately within a month, if you are regular and persistent with the practice, you will cultivate a state of mind, which will be the observer mind. It is a training that you have to give yourself.

Unfortunately, we have never received training to manage our mind from any place, any school or any college. Society has not given us that training, our culture, our family, our school has not given us that training. Our culture, our society, family and education have conditioned us and defined different rules for us to succeed in the material life. Our education is a job-oriented education, skill-oriented education; it is not a person-oriented education.

There has to be a balance: one form of education through which we can develop better skills to survive in society and another form through which we can learn to manage our own responses, reactions. This integration has to take place soon – either today or tomorrow. Children have to be taught the personal skills to manage their mind.

Our main work is with children. We don't work much with grown-ups, for they are too conditioned, and come with their own set of problems. Once their problems are over they leave yoga and do not carry an impression, a *samskara*, of their interaction with yoga or spiritual life. Grown-ups have this particular habit that no matter what they are involved in, they are always trying to see how their involvement can make them more fulfilled and contented.

Children don't have any expectation at all, nor are they conditioned by anyone. When we teach them yoga they respond very well. They take to yoga like fish to water and they are able to develop appropriate *samskaras* which are personal and social in nature.



It is the cultivation of awareness which allows children to imbibe the right and appropriate impressions and skills which can help them later in their life to manage their own problems and deal with them. This is an important aspect that we need to consider – how can we train ourselves to deal and manage our own mental, emotional response.

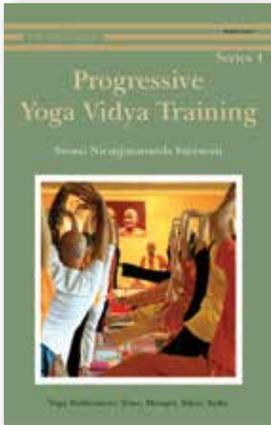
Do not classify anything into good or bad. After all, the world is a balance between good and bad. Just as day and night create a balance, happiness and suffering, positive and negative, good and bad also create a balance. In the ocean of bad and of negativity, good is like an island where we can go and rest. We are surrounded by an ocean of negativity with islands of goodness distributed all throughout the ocean. We have to swim through the negative and we have to find our ground, our footing, in the positive.

This is one education, one skill that we can impart to our children and we should try to understand this concept, for only then can we also imbibe the correct samskaras to survive in life.

– June 2008, South Africa

Progression of Shavasana

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

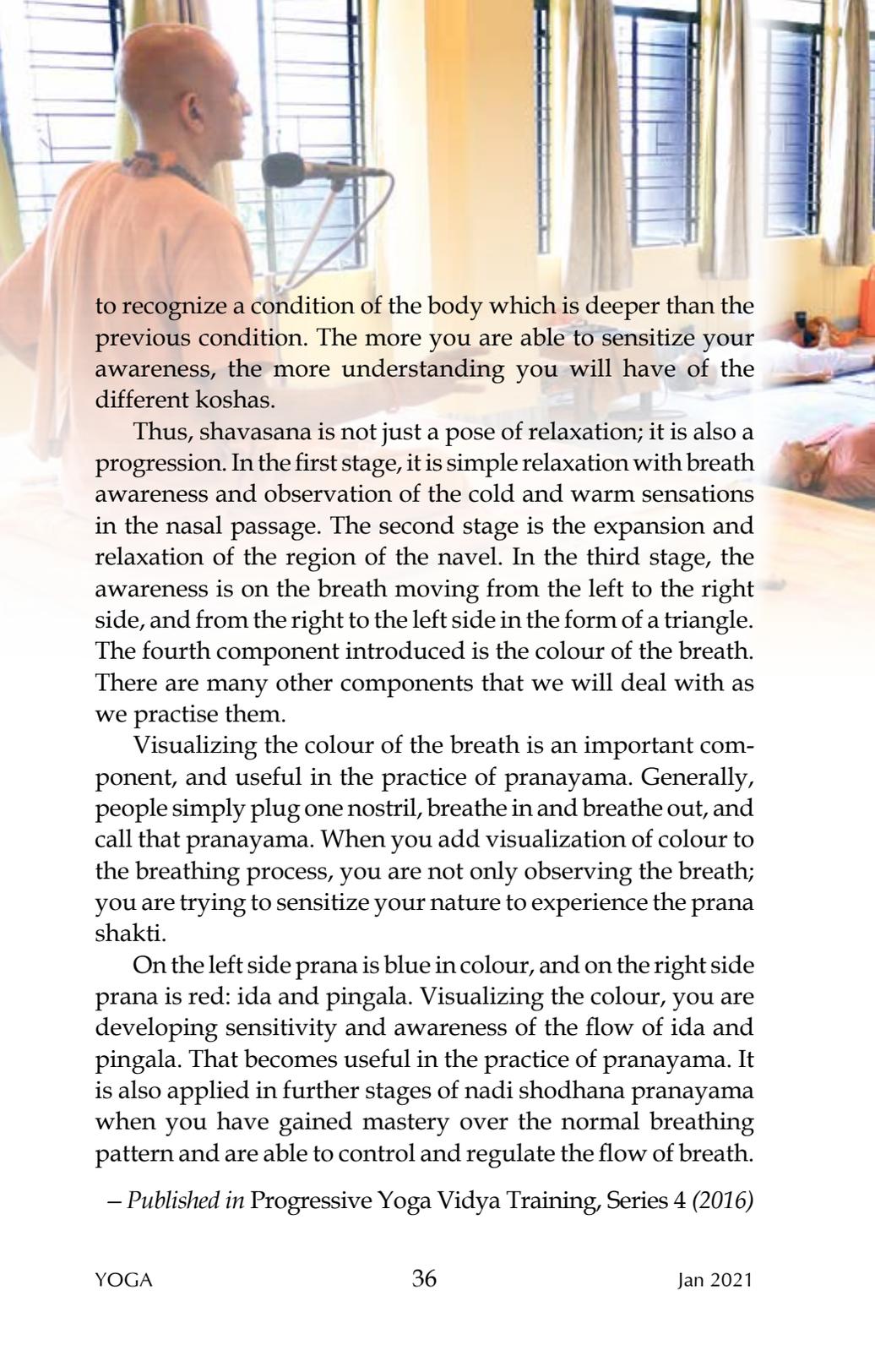


There is a sequence to the practice of shavasana. Generally, people simply say, “Lie down and relax,” calling that shavasana or the relaxation pose. Lying down and relaxing can be the pose, but it is not the experience of shavasana. It is not the pose which is important, but cultivating a deeper experience in shavasana. Therefore, shavasana has a progression.

For example, when we practise the first form of shavasana, the breath is experienced in the nostrils. In the second shavasana, the breath is experienced as expansion and relaxation in the region of the navel. In the third shavasana, you breathe up from the left foot through the left side, down through the right, up through the right, down through the left. In the fourth progression, the breath is visualized in the colour blue on the left side and red on the right side.

An arrogant yoga teacher starts straight with the advanced colour visualization. The simple yoga teacher follows the progression. I want you to be a progressive teacher and for that you need to control your own desire to teach. You should recognize the need of the people you are teaching rather than what you want to teach. This is a crucial point in teaching.

People like to teach what they themselves enjoy practising and not what the student needs. You might feel happy doing a particular asana, but that asana is not for the other person. You have to follow the progression in your teaching. The same applies to a simple practice like shavasana for with each experience of shavasana, you are sensitizing your awareness

A man with a shaved head, wearing a white t-shirt, is seen from the side, speaking into a professional microphone on a stand. He is in a bright room with large windows in the background. The windows have metal grilles and light-colored curtains. In the background, there are some people lying on mats on the floor, suggesting a yoga or meditation class setting.

to recognize a condition of the body which is deeper than the previous condition. The more you are able to sensitize your awareness, the more understanding you will have of the different koshas.

Thus, shavasana is not just a pose of relaxation; it is also a progression. In the first stage, it is simple relaxation with breath awareness and observation of the cold and warm sensations in the nasal passage. The second stage is the expansion and relaxation of the region of the navel. In the third stage, the awareness is on the breath moving from the left to the right side, and from the right to the left side in the form of a triangle. The fourth component introduced is the colour of the breath. There are many other components that we will deal with as we practise them.

Visualizing the colour of the breath is an important component, and useful in the practice of pranayama. Generally, people simply plug one nostril, breathe in and breathe out, and call that pranayama. When you add visualization of colour to the breathing process, you are not only observing the breath; you are trying to sensitize your nature to experience the prana shakti.

On the left side prana is blue in colour, and on the right side prana is red: ida and pingala. Visualizing the colour, you are developing sensitivity and awareness of the flow of ida and pingala. That becomes useful in the practice of pranayama. It is also applied in further stages of nadi shodhana pranayama when you have gained mastery over the normal breathing pattern and are able to control and regulate the flow of breath.

– *Published in Progressive Yoga Vidya Training, Series 4 (2016)*



Please, Practise Yoga

Kabir, USA

My name is Kabir. I have been coming to the yoga class for the last two years. About seven years ago, I was diagnosed with sleep apnoea due to my narrow breathing tunnel, but I was not satisfied with the answer. I was forced to use a sleep apnoea machine. Still the problem was that I was waking up in the middle of the night.

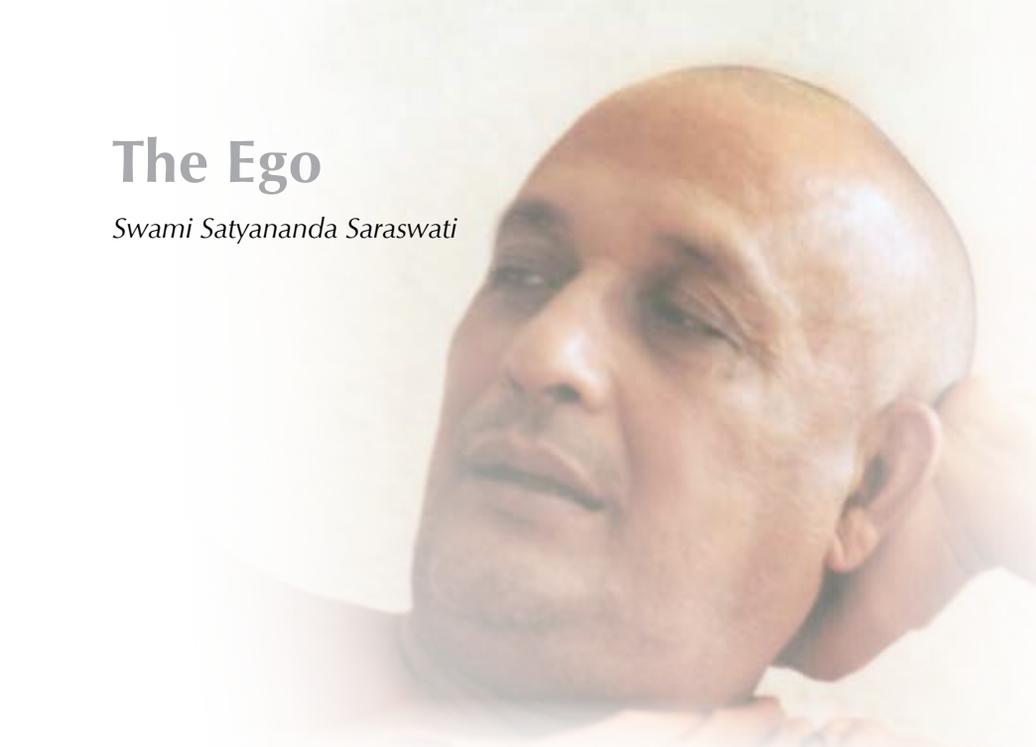
Since then I have started yoga two days a week and after doing it for two years, I now can say that I do not wake up in the middle of the night anymore. Also I have been practising yoga nidra one hour after lunch time.

All I can say is that wow! The lethargic feeling that I used to get after lunch has gone. Also I have been sleeping much better. I am fully cured, so I am planning to increase my yoga practice.

Please practise yoga, it will change your life for good.
Thanks.

The Ego

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



The best way to progressively reduce the power of the ego is to combine the ida and pingala paths: to integrate your duties and work in the world with meditational practices. This will help you to gain understanding of the inner world which will automatically reduce your egotistical tendencies in the outside world. Your new relationships with the outside world will in turn help you to go deeper into the realms of the inner being. The ego will slowly be whittled away.

Perfect, unreserved and wholesale surrender of egocentricity is the key to unlock the hidden gates of sadhana.

The ego dies when meditation is born.

The ego dies when bhakti is in her full bloom.

The ego dies when awareness becomes overwhelming.

Out of the death of the ego is born darshan.

Out of the death of the ego is born *atmanubhuti*, spiritual perception.

Out of the death of the ego is born *aparoksha jnana*, direct knowledge.

Substitution Method

Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Positive always overcomes the negative. This is the law of nature. Negative evil thoughts cannot stand before positive good thoughts. Courage overcomes fear. Patience overcomes anger and irritability. Love overcomes hatred. Purity overcomes lust.

The very fact that you feel uneasy now when an evil thought comes to the surface of the mind during meditation indicates that you are growing in spirituality. In those days you consciously harboured all sorts of negative thoughts. You welcomed and nourished them. Persist in your spiritual practices. Be tenacious and diligent. You are bound to succeed.

Even a dull type of aspirant will notice a marvellous change in himself if he keeps up the practice of japa and meditation for two or three years in a continuous stream. Now he cannot leave the practice. Even if he stops his practice of meditation for a day, he will actually feel that he has lost something on that day. His mind will be quite uneasy.

If you place a big mirror in front of a dog and keep some bread in front, the dog at once barks at its reflection in the mirror. It foolishly imagines that there is another dog. Even so, man sees his own reflection only through his mind-mirror in all the people but foolishly imagines like the dog that they are all different from him and fights on account of hatred and jealousy.

The substitution method is very easy and effective in the destruction of negative thoughts. Cultivate positive virtuous thoughts such as mercy, love, purity, forgiveness, integrity, generosity and humility in the garden of your mind. The negative vicious thoughts such as hatred, lust, anger, greed, pride will die by themselves. It is difficult to destroy the evil thoughts by attacking them directly. You will have to tax your will and waste your energy.



Examine your character. Pick up the defects in it. Find out its opposite. Let us say that you suffer from irritability. The opposite of irritability is patience. Try to develop this virtue by meditating on the abstract virtue of patience. Regularly every morning, sit down at 4 am in padma or siddhasana in a solitary room for half an hour, and begin to think on patience, its value, its practice under provocation, taking one point one day, another on another day, and thinking as steadily as you can, recalling the mind when it wanders. Think of yourself as perfectly patient, a model of patience and end it with a vow: "This patience which is my true Self, I will feel and show from today."

For a few days probably there will be no change perceptible. You will still feel and show irritability. Go on practising steadily every morning. Presently you see an irritable thing, the thought will flash into your mind: "I should have been patient."

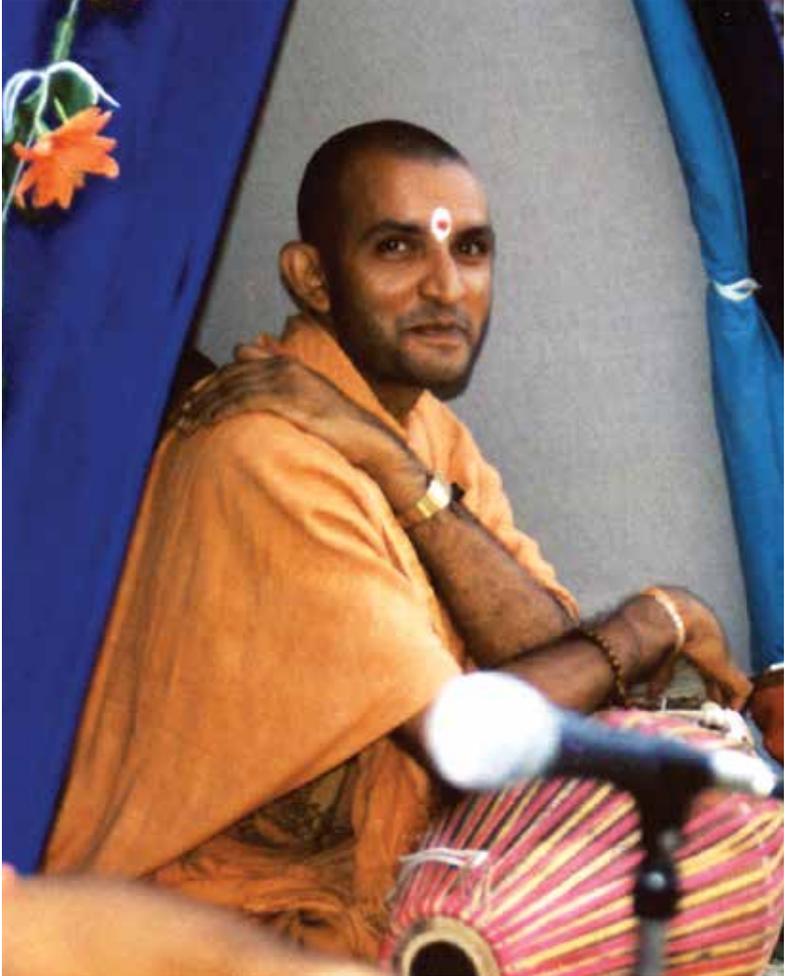
Still go on in practice. Soon the thought of patience will arise with the irritable impulse and the outer manifestation will be checked. Still go on practising. The irritable impulse will grow feebler and feebler until you find that irritability has disappeared and that patience has become your normal attitude towards annoyances.

In this manner you can develop various virtues such as sympathy, self-restraint, purity, humility, benevolence, nobility and generosity.

– *Published in Easy Steps to Yoga*

Self-Acceptance

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



The desire to change and improve is inherent and self-acceptance is a process. Self-acceptance and the desire to improve are not contradictory. Self-acceptance means knowing or realizing our nature as it is at present and fine-tuning that nature.

We have our traits, our unique personality and way of expressing ourselves. If we feel a need to improve, it is because we feel there is something lacking or missing inside, something that needs tuning. If I feel that I need to improve myself, I am creating a target, a goal, to express myself more creatively, positively and efficiently. So the desire to change or to improve is natural in every human being. Such desires become incompatible with the idea of self-acceptance only when we turn a blind eye to our own nature and to the reality in which we live.

What is the meaning of self-acceptance? Self-acceptance is not saying to oneself, "Okay, I am what I am and I enjoy being as I am." Self-acceptance is recognition of the different traits of our personality as they manifest. It provides a direction for achieving and maintaining harmony. The purpose of self-acceptance is to become harmonious in life.

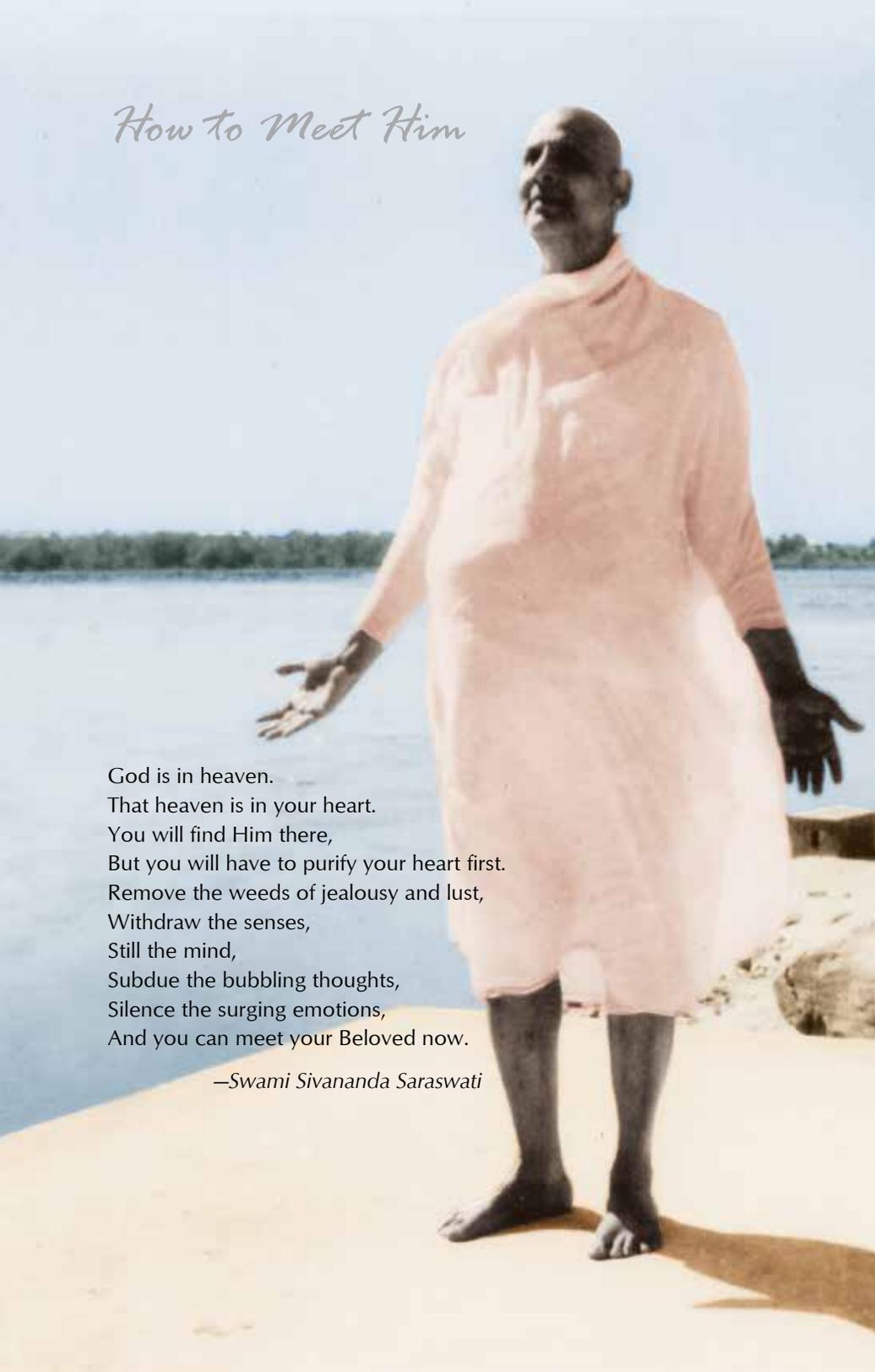
Self-acceptance is a process by which we can look at ourselves, not get uptight about the situations we face, not get frustrated by events or people, but have the ability to maintain our inner peace and tranquillity. One who can maintain harmony, optimism and happiness in all of life's adverse, conflicting and disturbing situations can be said to be a sadhaka, a practitioner who has learned to accept himself/herself. When we are not able to accept ourselves, then there is conflict, confusion, problems and difficulties.

So self-acceptance is recognition of the human nature and maintaining harmony during the natural spontaneous expressions of our personality. The desire to change, to grow, to evolve, is inherent and provides us with motivation, inspiration, willpower, stamina and energy. This has to be the aim of yoga.

If at all there is any achievement in yoga, it is not samadhi, not moksha, not freedom, but the development of one quality – understanding. This quality of understanding leads to self-acceptance and to the expression or experience of harmony in life.

– 9 September 1999, *Ganga Darshan*

How to Meet Him

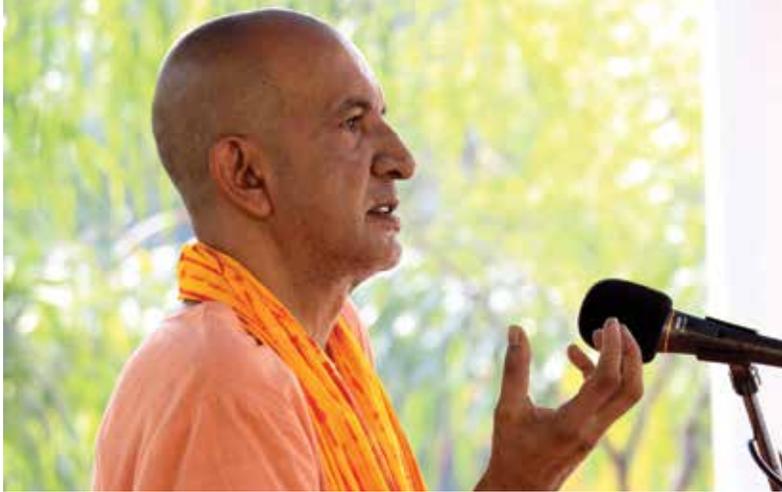


God is in heaven.
That heaven is in your heart.
You will find Him there,
But you will have to purify your heart first.
Remove the weeds of jealousy and lust,
Withdraw the senses,
Still the mind,
Subdue the bubbling thoughts,
Silence the surging emotions,
And you can meet your Beloved now.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

All About Love

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Many people have asked me if a questioning attitude is detrimental to guru bhakti, and I have given some answers. Then I was also thinking about whether the answers which I have given were correct or not. The connection with guru is not an intellectual connection, and to bind that into one intellectual, logical connection and relationship is not really the connection that these two people look for.

Intellectual connection, rational connection, questioning, you can have with anybody. A student does that with the teacher anyway, and there is nothing wrong with it to clarify your own doubts. To clarify your own doubts, you have to listen also. But then you have to listen also, not only speak. And accept the wrong and the right both, in order to come to the correct path.

So logic is always applicable, questions are always applicable, but then my question is – do you have the wisdom to ask the question? A student of second year, third year in school is

asking questions about atomic theory and nuclear theory – and wanting to learn that is impossible. Asking questions about that is futile. In the same manner even in spiritual life and in yoga, you have to apply the wisdom to ask the questions which are relevant for your class, not for something that will come ten years later – chakra and kundalini, and everybody is asking about that. If you have the wisdom to ask the right question, Guru will give you the right answer. And if you don't have the wisdom and you ask inappropriate questions, you will be shut off, the door will be closed, simple as that.

The relationship between Guru and disciple transcends logic and intellect, it's a connection of knowing that I belong, a connection of knowing that I trust, a connection of knowing that I am supported and guided and inspired by the Master. When that feeling comes in, I never asked my guru any question. Till today I don't think I recall myself asking my Guru anything; due to that inner connection, logic was bypassed, so no problem.

What is *ishq haqiqi*?

The Arabic word. *ishq* means love, and there are two words associated with love in Arabic. *Ishq mizazi*, love that comes from the head, and *ishq haqiqi*, love which is our birth right. Now see the difference between the two.

What is *ishq mizazi*? I decide I like somebody, but who is deciding? It is logic, buddhi, saying, "I like this person, I love this person." Love is not in the jurisdiction of buddhi. The choice which you are making out of your intellect, not out of your feeling, that is *mizazi*. Love which you think about, and want, desire and strive for, to attach yourself, to gain it. Friendship, relationships, in all our interactions when we are looking for that input of love, that is the head-trip. If in the morning somebody smiles at you, you feel happy that I am liked. In the morning somebody looks at you with fiery eyes; then you know that something is wrong. That is an intellectual interpretation of a feeling which you desire, and then if that is

not as per your expectation there is dejection and there is lack of love also.

Then there is love which is birth right; do you ever think on how a child loves the mother? Does the little child ever think, 'Oh! I should love my mother?' The feeling is natural, spontaneous, and it is the rightful feeling. That is *ishq haqiqi*, my right, *haq*, which is natural. How to cultivate it? There is no need to develop anything, there is no need to do anything except make sure that your intentions are always positive, correct and proper. Then these expressions get the right direction in which to manifest their positive power.

What is the difference between emotion and bhakti yoga?

I think the person who is asking the question doesn't know the difference between emotion and devotion. They are one and the same, yet the only problem is that in devotion you are sublimating, and in emotion you are binding. In emotion, there can be demotion; in devotion, there is always promotion.

What is devotion? You think of devotion from the religious perspective, yet the essential quality of the mind in bhakti is one-pointed. Forget what you are thinking of, whether it is God or Guru, or an abstract or concrete object. Remove that religious connotation from the word 'devotion,' then what is the state of your mind? It is *dhyana*, *ekagrata*, one-pointedness, and that is meditation too, conscious meditation, wakeful meditation, eyes-open meditation.

No matter what we say about bhakti yoga, no words do justice. You are only asking me about the two states. Now there is a third one. Bhakti yoga is neither devotion or emotion, but the expression of positive love. That is the latest definition of bhakti yoga. Here, we change the definition practically every month. Nothing remains constant, everything has to evolve. Last year I made the proclamation that bhakti yoga would not be known as the yoga of devotion or emotion, but as the yoga of higher love.

– 12 May 2019, *Ganga Darshan*

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 1 – THE DILEMMA

“I face a dilemma,
Lord, please guide me.
This battle is for truth
against evil.
It is not of my choice
but forced on me.
My duty is to fight,
but I have no will;
for facing me are friends
and relations.
Seeing them I shudder,
my limbs go numb,
my head reels, my hands sweat,
and my weapon
slips away as my ears fill
with a deadly hum.
I do not seek kingdoms,
no bloodstained crown.
I do not want pleasure
From burning pyres.
Those for whom I seek happiness
may not be around.
What joy is there in killing
one’s kith and kin?
I must slay those
who side with evil.
But I prefer the life
of a hermit,
than to sit on a throne
smeared with the blood
and stained with the tears
of near and dear ones.”

CHAPTER 2 – A GARMENT TO DISCARD

Sentiments cloud
your reason,
do not be weak.
The wise do not
rejoice or mourn
over birth and death,
for they know that:
the soul is not born,
it does not die,
it feels neither
heat nor cold,
pain nor pleasure.
You have no birth
but are born
again and again;
you have no death
but will die
again and again.
One who is born
must die, and
one who dies
is born again.
The body is
a mere garment
which the soul
outgrows and discards
to wear a new one.

Truth is eternal,
falsehood must perish.
Your duty is
to battle
with love for truth.
Desist now and you will
Invite contempt and evil.
Seek not the yield
of your labour.
One who cares not for reward
Remains untainted.
Such a person is determined,
And of one mind.
The indecisive
is of many minds,
filled with fantasy,
and conflicting desires.

One who is content
and defies desire,
one who is untouched
by pain and pleasure,
who is free from passion
envy and emotion,
and who is fair and just
regardless of result,
is the wise and steadfast
philosopher and saint.
The tortoise recoils
into its shell
at the sight of strangers;
similarly let desires be
strangers to you.

Conquer appetite,
not through repression,
but by surrender
of yourself to me.
Let not the winds of desire
blow your boat
off its course.

Pursuit of pleasure
starts with attachment
and leads to lust;
unfulfilled lust
arouses anger,
causes confusion
and this results
in loss of self-respect,
eclipse of reason
and self-destruction.

Control your mind and senses
and you achieve serenity.
Your sorrows will disappear.
You will be composed
and able to meditate.
When the world sleeps
the wise are awake.
An ocean remains undisturbed
even though many rivers
rush into it; so must you
be calm and undistracted.
Be selfless
And without pride
and you shall find peace.

The Bhagavad Gita

Swami Sivananda Saraswati

The *Bhagavad Gita* is the most beautiful and the only truly philosophical song. It contains sublime lessons of wisdom and philosophy. It is the Song Divine. The teachings of the *Gita* are broad, universal and sublime. Its teachings do not belong to any cult, sect, creed, particular age, place or country. Its teachings are meant for the people of the whole world at large. The teachings are based on the Upanishads, the ancient wisdom of the seers, rishis and sages. It teaches a method which is within the reach of all. It has a message for the solace, peace, freedom, salvation and perfection of all human beings.

The study of the *Gita* alone is sufficient for the purpose of daily swadhyaya. You will find a solution here for all your doubts. The more you study with devotion and faith, the more you will get deeper knowledge, penetrative insight and clear right thinking.

None but the Lord can bring out such an unprecedented and marvellous book which gives peace to the readers, which helps and guides them in the attainment of Supreme Bliss, which has survived up to this time.

The message of the *Gita* is the message of sacrifice, love and duty. Love is knowledge in diffusive expression. Knowledge is love in concentrated essence. Service is love expressed through action. Love, knowledge and service are equally necessary in setting up of Divine Life. Head, heart and hands must be completely developed. The *Gita* prescribes the methods to develop the heart, head and hands.

May you all live in the spirit of the *Gita's* teachings. May the *Gita* guide you and lighten the burden of samsara. May you all become like the warrior yogi Arjuna! May the blessings of Lord Krishna be upon you all! Glory to the *Gita*!

The Plan of Spiritual Progress

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

More than 5,000 years ago, there was a great civil war between two dynasties in India. During the famous battle, Krishna was placed in a very difficult situation. The chief commanders of both sides came to seek his patronage. It was not possible for him to patronize both, so he said, "Here is my army and here I am. You choose one of the two." One party chose his army and Arjuna chose Lord Krishna himself.

Krishna told Arjuna that although he would join him, he would not handle any weapon. So he became Arjuna's charioteer. When the battle was about to begin, Arjuna became nervous. He saw his own uncles, brothers, teachers, relatives and friends before him among those he would have to kill. He decided to withdraw from the war.

Then Krishna came and instructed Arjuna, and these instructions are known as the *Bhagavad Gita*. The instructions are divided into 18 chapters and the title of each chapter refers to one kind of yoga.

The title of the first chapter is 'The Yoga of Mental Depression'. The title of the second chapter is 'Samkhya Yoga'. In this way, each chapter has the title of a different yoga. One theme is running through the 18 chapters, which is 'renounce the ego and live in the world'. If you can renounce your ego, you can live in the world like the lotus in water.

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, life as a whole is accepted within the plan of spiritual progress. This means that whatever you do is part of your spiritual progress and nothing in your life is extra-spiritual. This you have to realize.

The Process Continues

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

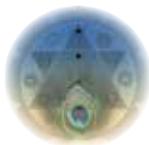
The *Bhagavad Gita* begins with the story of a person in grief, who finds it difficult to decide what his dharma is. His difficulty and indecision have arisen due to attachments and desires. These have given birth to grief, dejection and depression.

Before him stands Sri Krishna, who sees this person forgetting his dharma, falling into a depressive and grief-stricken state of mind, and undergoing a nervous breakdown affecting his entire personality. Sri Krishna has no choice but to try and bring Arjuna out of this physical and psychological condition, so that he can follow his dharma and discover the appropriate understanding which will lead him towards success in life.

Sri Krishna continuously inspires Arjuna the warrior, to become active and involved in the performance of his duties. He repeatedly reminds Arjuna to perform his duty with detachment, perfection and creativity, and to express and give his best.

In the early days, when I came to the ashram, one of Sri Swamiji's instructions was to give my best. He said, "Niranjan, believe that every day is a new day and that there is always something to learn in that new day. The day that has gone does not come back again. Always be alert to learn whatever you can every day."

Sri Swamiji inspired me to become active mentally, to keep my eyes open and my awareness expanded to see the new lessons I could learn and imbibe every day. That process continues even today. It is one way of understanding involvement in karma. This is also a learning from the *Gita*.





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126 pp, soft cover, ISBN : 978-81-946102-0-5

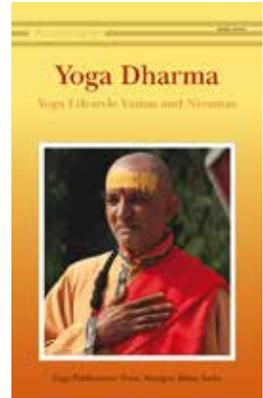
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- Registered with the Department of Post, India
Under No. MGR-02/2020-23
Office of posting: Ganga Darshan TSO
Date of posting: 1st-7th of every month
- Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers, India
Under No. BIHENG/2002/6305

issn 0972-5717

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You will be notified from time to time regarding the magazines and any new developments.

In the meantime, continue to enjoy the message of yoga and to live the teachings of Sri Swami Sivananda Saraswati and Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati to improve and better the quality of your life.

With prayers and blessings of Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati for your health, wellbeing and peace.

Om Tat Sat
The Editor