

YOGA

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Hari Om

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Editor: Swami Gyansiddhi Saraswati

Assistant Editor: Swami Yogatirthananda Saraswati

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4b: Swami Satyananda Saraswati



GUIDELINES FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

Get up and 'do'

Begin by doing, then know things as you proceed; everything will come into your knowledge by itself in good time.

Wake up at 4 am

Sit in padmasana for half an hour

Do japa of a mantra with a mala at least 108 times

Perform a few asanas

Do a couple of rounds of pranayama

Observe mouna for one hour

Discipline the palate

Keep limited possessions

Study scriptures daily

Give charity regularly

Speak kindly

Avoid harsh nature

Write mantra at least one page a day

Remember God on waking and retiring to bed.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

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

तपस्विभ्योऽधिको योगी ज्ञानिभ्योऽपि मतोधिकः । कर्मिभ्यश्चाधिको योगी तस्माद्योगी भवार्जुन ॥

Jyoti Yoga

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Today is Deepavali or Diwali, known as the festival of lights. This Deepavali day has an ancient tradition from the time of Sri Rama, when he returned to Ayodhya after overcoming the demon king Ravana. To welcome him the entire city of Ayodhya was lit up with deepaks. Today, in many places of the state, in many places of the country, Diwali is going to remove the feeling of darkness and night with its luminosity with its light.

For many people this is a festival. I was thinking what it could mean for people who are associated with yoga. The thought came to me that this Diwali is a reminder for us to practise Jyoti Yoga. What is Jyoti Yoga? *Jyoti* means the little light, the little flame of the deepak, the little flame of the candle, that is the jyoti. This jyoti burns in the absence of all other light, just a small point of luminosity, just a small point of light, a source of both, heat and light. The entire creation is dependent on heat and light. If you remove heat and light from the universe, all that remains is darkness and cold. This little deepak represents the power which can remove darkness. Thousands of years of darkness in a cave can be removed in one instant of lighting a candle.

A candle represents the positive, the good, the benevolent and the auspiciousness in life. The more we try to become good, the more luminous we become. This was the teaching of Swami Sivanandaji as well – be good and do good. These are not only words, but the extract of all religions and philosophies that have existed in this world. They all advocate the same in their own manner with their own philosophy and belief systems – to be good and to do good while living in this world. It is here that most people find difficulty and obstacles in life.

Jyoti Yoga is a continuous effort by the spiritual aspirant to keep the small flame, the small jyoti lit in the gloom and darkness. That jyoti does not represent hope, no. It represents the goodness, the luminous in you. As long as the goodness is luminous within you, the effulgence of sattwa will make everything right in life, in the family, in society, in the nation and the world. There is the song of Diwali:

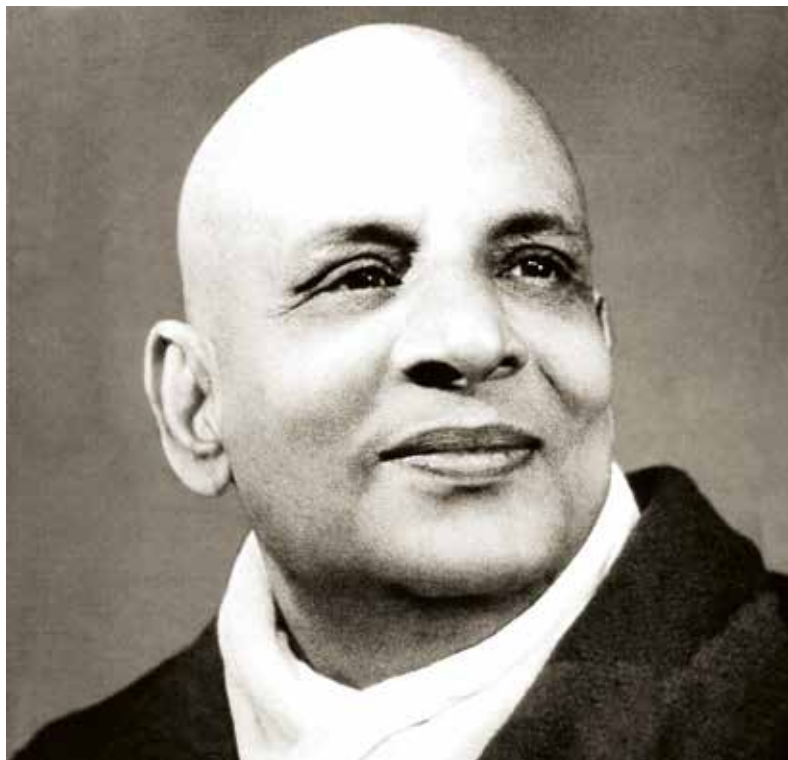
When the day is dark is dreary
And the way is hard to find
Don't let your heart be weary
Just keep this thought in mind.
It is better to light one little candle
Then to stumble in the dark.
Better by far to light one little candle
All you need is a tiny spark ...
If everyone lights one little candle,
What a bright world this would be.

This little candle is our own positivity, our strength and our own effulgent qualities in life. Darkness increases with tamas and light comes with sattwa. Maybe we can understand Diwali to be a reminder that each one of us in our life needs to follow Jyoti Yoga which is connecting and expressing the positive and the good, as many times as possible, continuously if possible and for all times if possible; then our Diwali will be complete.

– *Diwali, 4 November 2021, Ganga Darshan, Munger*

Happiness

Swami Sivananda Saraswati



The sun of suns is ever shining in you, but your blind eyes cannot behold it. The eternal sound is within you, but your deaf ears cannot hear it.

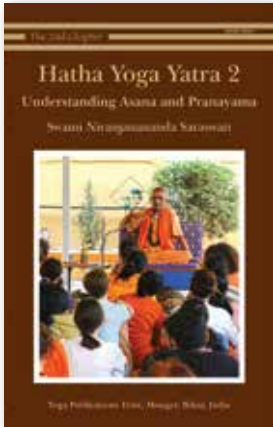
Be always cheerful, laugh and smile. Try to be happy always.

Keep the mind in a state of moderation. Never let it run to excesses. The mind always runs to either extreme depression or extreme joy. Extremes bring about reaction. The mind can never be calm in excessive joy. Let the mind be cheerful but calm.

Happiness comes from peace of mind. Real happiness is within you. It is in the atman. Happiness is your very nature.

Removing the Mask

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Being natural is a learning, for people put on different masks. Some people consider themselves moralists and are vocal about it in public. Some consider themselves reformists and are vocal about it in public. Some consider themselves to be principled, *adarsha*. They live their life in that manner and don't care about other people. If other people are inspired by that, fine; if other people are put off by that, fine, but you are living your principles in life.

People have different opinions about themselves and that is what they project to everybody externally. They don't live a natural life. In spiritual life it is important to live the natural life, where you don't have to put on a mask of any kind. For example, people connect *satya*, truth, with speech, not with life. If somebody thinks of truth, the first idea is that they have to speak the truth. You will never think that you have to live the truth. Living is more important and valuable than speech. That applies to every good quality in life.

If somebody feels kindness, they want to tell everybody, "I am a very kind person." If somebody is generous, they try to show everybody that they are generous. If somebody experiences compassion, they try to prove to everybody that they are compassionate. All this is self-projection; it is not living the quality. It is using the quality to project yourself and your agenda. This is why people are not able to understand how to live the yamas and niyamas in life.

People are so self-centred and caught up in their own projections that they fail to see the reality behind the appearance.

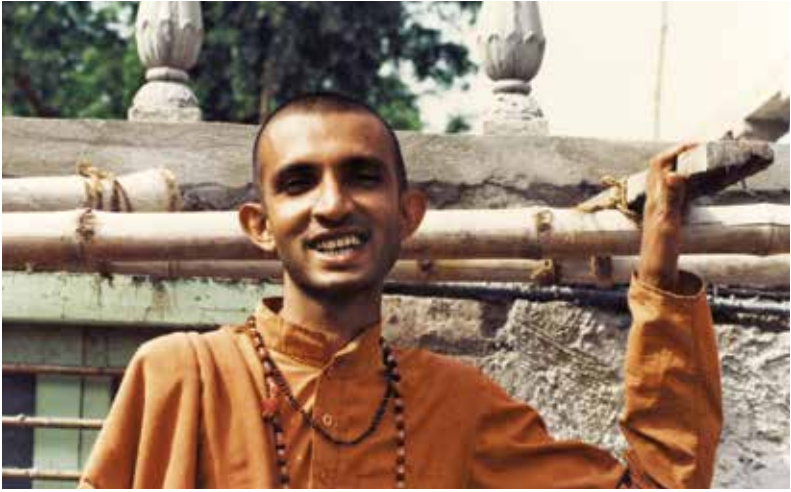
You will never be able to progress as long as you hide away from the reality and not acknowledge your shortcomings. There are people who think, 'This is too much responsibility. I don't want responsibility, I want rights.' They want rights, they don't want responsibilities. Even that is a projection of the individuality. These are the traits that everybody lives in life and therefore spirituality does not emerge, evolve or grow in anyone's life.

You do not want to understand or change your shortcomings, you blame others for your suffering and yet you want to be spiritual. It is hypocrisy and it is a paradox. If you identify with hypocrisy, you remain a hypocrite. However, if you think of it as a paradox and try to shift from one to the other, you can change. You should be able to look at your life clearly and objectively and not hide from your shortcomings. The moment you hide from your shortcomings, you are negating spirituality.

After all, what is the teaching of Swami Sivananda? *Pratipaksha bhavana*, cultivating the positive, the beautiful in you. When you experience something negative, can you not make the effort to change that into something beautiful? That is the sadhana. That is the effort. Progress only happens if there is struggle in life. Advancement in technology happened when there was struggle. Advancement in medicine happened when there was sickness. If there was no sickness, would there be advancement of medicine? Therefore, every opportunity to discover your weakness will always take you one step further. It will give you more strength, courage, conviction and inspiration. That is the yogi's mind. The bhogi's mind is the opposite of that. Self-centred awareness projects a mask and yogi awareness removes the mask. This is the natural life.

The best quality

There are times, situations and conditions that influence and affect your thoughts, perceptions, mind and emotions. If in your house one wall is weak, would you not strengthen the



wall so the house does not collapse? In your life do you do that? In your material life you do it: 'This pillar is weak, this beam is weak, this wall is weak, it is cracking, so I must repair it and make it stronger.' When you recognize a shortcoming and weakness in life, then what effort do you make to strengthen the weak part? The weakest aspect is always misunderstanding people, situations and circumstances. This misunderstanding is the cause of human downfall.

Love is not the best quality in life or in the world. Compassion and kindness are not the ultimate qualities that one has to live. Understanding is the quality that strengthens every other positive quality. If you have understanding, love has meaning. If you have understanding, compassion has meaning. If you have understanding, seva has meaning. In the absence of understanding, these qualities are imposed conditions, disciplines and situations. The moment there is lack of understanding and the imposition comes in, your slide into darkness again begins. If you can cultivate understanding and not think of compassion and love as the qualities that you want to express to project yourself, then that understanding makes you live a spontaneous, natural life, in which luminosity shines from within you.



Never think of love as the quality that you want to attain in life. Never think of compassion as the quality that you want to attain in life. Never even think of attaining self-realization in life. Even that is useless if there is no understanding. The one and only thing that you require in this world is understanding and connection. That connection is not due to a whim of self-satisfaction. That connection is to help you walk another step. This is a vital point that people miss.

Live a natural life and try to remove the masks, one by one. Try to understand and not impose your own beliefs. Expand and enlarge your understanding. Then you will become a human being.

– *Published in Hatha Yoga Yatra 2*

Be Happy and Smile

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Mental stress and anxiety, the feeling of insecurities and psychological fears are taking the toll on the human mind. There is a lot of anxiety and irritation, phobia and worry about what will happen tomorrow. How do we manage this condition of mind? The best way to manage this condition of mind is by cultivating the quality of being happy. If you can smile for twelve hours during the day, during your waking period of time, you will avoid a lot of stresses and anxieties.

Smiling is the antidote to anxiety, smiling is the antidote to frustration, and smiling is also the antidote to depression. Therefore, smile! The art of smiling in yoga is known as *manahprasad*. *Manahprasad* means the gift for the mind and the gift to the mind. This indicates a positive and optimistic perception of the future. Today we are not so optimistic about what can happen tomorrow, and pessimism is the cause of anxiety and suffering. One has to cultivate optimism, hope and positivity in life.

Optimism, hope and positivity can be attained if you learn to extend the moments of laughter and smiling from a few seconds to a few minutes, from a few minutes to a few hours, from a few hours to the whole day. This is what I call the Niranjana Challenge. I challenge you to be happy, and I expect and hope that all of you will take up my challenge.

Remember the moment of happiness when you forgot everything – all the anxiety, tension and frustrations of life. You were just happy, joyous and bubbling, feeling free! Again it is time to reconnect with that happy and joyous self. Happiness can always be expressed through a smile.

Happiness can also become a condition of the mind, in which you are free from the stressors. You are free from the challenges that inhibit and restrict the creative performance



of the body, the senses and the creative expressions of the mind and emotions. So the act of being happy is an important aspect in life. You may not understand or realize it today, yet do make the effort to be happy and smile.

*– 22 August 2021, Online Message delivered to
the Forest Department, Bihar, India (Extract)*

Yoga is the Answer

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



People have very strange notions about yoga. Some think that only sannyasins can practise yoga and that it is taboo for householders. This is a fallacy. In the scriptures there are many stories of householders who were yogis, King Janaka, for example. Some people believe that yoga means a few asanas and pranayamas, but yoga is actually much more than that. In the *Bhagavad Gita* mention is made of *Brahma vidya*, the science of the Self, and *yoga shastra*, the yogic scriptures or texts. These two are interlinked, the former relating to theory and the latter to practice.

Yoga is a practical science. Remember that the knowledge of yoga was imparted by Lord Krishna to Arjuna right in the midst of the battlefield. It was not given to a sannyasin, but to a person who was living in the world, a warrior who was confused about the problem of right and wrong. Yoga is actually meant for people in the world who are faced with the day-to-day problems and realities of life.

Liberation in life

There are different branches of yoga which can help you in your individual and social life. Yoga is a form of mental therapy. Asana, pranayama, ajapa japa, nada yoga and all the other practices of yoga help to rid the mind of the accumulated *samskaras*, the impressions and unconscious memories. Once these *samskaras* are removed, your neurosis, mental conflicts, complexes, frustrations and tensions also go. They are a legacy of psychological problems. Man identifies with the body and then becomes a victim of all sorts of psychological neuroses. Even when there is no external cause for neuroses, he creates them – fear of death, fear of ill health, fear of monetary loss. He imagines all sorts of foreboding situations and worries without rhyme or reason.

If you want to change your personality, to remove your mental complexes, then yoga is the answer. Liberation does not mean going into seclusion. Liberation means remaining steadfast where you are and overcoming your limitations. It means destroying the chains that bind you. It does not mean, as some imagine, going to some unknown region, high up in the sky, from which there is no rebirth. It belongs very much to the world. It is a matter of here and now.

If you cannot shake off the *vasanas* or deep-rooted desires which bind you in life, if you cannot overcome your personality deficiencies which are entrenched in your unconscious, how can you get happiness, bliss and liberation? Yoga will liberate you from the shackles that bind. Through yoga you can fathom your unconscious and remove layer after layer of the *samskaras* which hold you back and block your natural self-expression. When these *samskaras* are removed, the power and wisdom which lie dormant within you begin to manifest.

Master your mind

In an ultramodern drawing room, furnished in the best taste, if there is some highly decomposed, stinking matter hidden from the eye, no one will want to enter that room despite its

elegance. The same principle applies to the human personality. If there is rot within, people will keep away from you. Yoga is a broom which makes a clean sweep of your internal rubbish.

Our daily life is full of tensions. There are tensions between husband and wife, employer and employee, friend and friend. Nobody wants tensions, but somehow they are there making life miserable. Tensions are there because of our accumulated samskaras. Modern psychology does not believe in rebirth and karma, but this is an important aspect of yogic philosophy. The soul has been changing residence from one body to another from time immemorial, and in the process it has accumulated many samskaras. That is why people act as they do and at times are at a loss to know why they did a particular thing in a particular way.

Everyone wants peace and harmony in life. In fact, only after you have attained peace and harmony within yourself can God-realization be attained. Once you attain peace, all of the tensions, complexes and frustrations vanish. Then you will know God. Mind-realization and God-realization go hand in hand. Therefore, first try to understand your mind. A yogi never overlooks his mind. He synchronizes his psychic consciousness with his mind. He withdraws his senses from their objects and joins them with his consciousness, his atma. This is yoga.

Poorna yoga

When your mind becomes introvert and begins to meditate, then you get supreme peace, *paramananda*. You become one with your Self. This is meditation on the Self. There are various methods whereby you can attain this state, such as nada yoga, kundalini yoga and jnana yoga. Some say these yogas are too complicated for them to understand. They find it easier to practise bhakti, and that too is yoga. The saints have said that bhakti, karma and jnana are all paths of yoga.

Raja yoga is common to all these yogas, just as salt is to different types of food preparations. Ultimately all the above yogas become one with raja yoga. Without raja yoga you

cannot control the dissipation of your mind. Karma yoga is difficult because you have to act with total awareness, treating pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat, all alike in your daily life. Jnana yoga is easier and bhakti is the easiest to practise.

You will see therefore how all embracing our scriptural concept of yoga is. The practice of yoga transforms a rank pessimist into a robust optimist. The science of yoga can no longer be kept away from humanity. We have to propagate it because it can do tremendous good to the weary world.

Sri Ramakrishna Paramahansa was a great believer in bhakti yoga. All surplus emotions, uncontrolled and unfulfilled desires are exhausted by the practice of bhakti yoga. Human beings are emotional beings. They try to channel their emotions in their love for their wife, husband, children, relatives, friends, etc., but love for worldly objects cannot give fulfilment, and unfulfilled love creates complexes. Instead of controlling your emotions, your emotions control you. This results in all sorts of maladjustments and evils.

Bhakti yoga takes care of all surplus emotions. It can transform your mundane neuroses into sublime neurosis. But along with bhakti yoga, you should also practise karma and jnana yoga. Having established yourself in poorna yoga, go into meditation and by and by you will attain samadhi. You don't have to take sannyasa for that. Stay where you are and practise.

There are various methods of doing meditation and attaining samadhi. But for all practical purposes, you will have to seek answers to two questions One is whether yoga can help you to improve your everyday social life. The second is whether you can overcome your personality deficiencies by the practice of yoga. As you will soon realize, the answer to both questions is in the affirmative.

*– 1 November 1964, First International Yoga Convention, Bihar
School of Yoga, printed in YOGA, January 1965 and 2006*

Jnana Yoga

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Speaking about jnana yoga is easy, but practising is not so easy, as it requires you to be continuously aware. It requires moment to moment awareness of everything. That is the type of mind which yogis try to cultivate, in which there is moment to moment awareness. It is not enough to say, “Live in the present.”

It is important to be aware of every moment that you live, so that you can experience the beauty, *Sundaram*, of that moment. You can experience the truth, *Satyam*, of that moment. You can experience the beneficial qualities, *Shivam*, of that particular moment. This is the process and attainment of jnana yoga.

Conversation on Yoga

Swami Shivadhyanam Saraswati

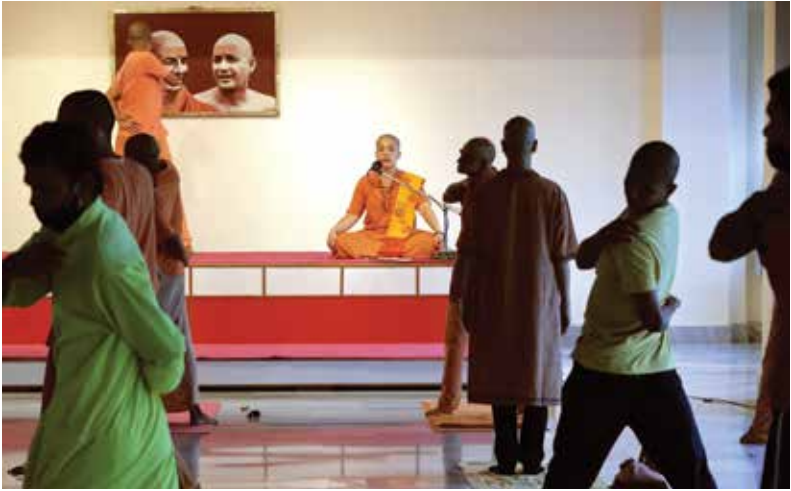
Swamiji, nowadays people think of yoga either as physical exercise or spiritual sadhana or sometimes even as a form of gymnastics. However, what is yoga in reality? We would like to know something about this from you.

This is a very relevant question for today because undoubtedly people have many different ideas, thoughts and concepts about yoga which are far from what it really is. Our paramguru, Swami Sivananda Saraswati, always saw yoga as an integral science which relates to the entire personality of a human being.

We are this body, of course, we are this mind, these emotions and there are many subtle planes of existence as well. Certainly yoga has a definite physical component which is essential for a healthy body. Physical health is a core necessity and it is even more so in present times. While this is an important aspect of yoga, unfortunately it is only this physical aspect which is highlighted in society today. In reality, the physical component of yoga is not more than five or ten percent of the entire body of yoga. As a matter of fact, the basic and most important aspect of yoga relates to the mind.

Our happiness, peace and contentment depends entirely on the state of our mind. While physical health is our primary requirement, our happiness is equally important and it relates to the realm of the mind. Yoga can make a considerable contribution towards a healthy mind in managing its behaviour and expressions and also in managing emotional behaviour.

Apart from our identity as individuals, there is another aspect of our lives which is important. Though we are concerned with our own health and happiness, we do not exist in isolation. We belong to a family and society as well. What are our interpersonal relationships like? Is there understanding and cooperation between us? Harmony is an essential element



for smooth social interactions and yoga can address this need and give us tools to develop this quality. We can confidently say that yoga is a body of knowledge and science which addresses the entire personality and helps to create a complete and beautiful life at all levels. It will benefit us greatly if yoga is not seen only as something that we 'practise', rather it is something that we can also understand and assimilate. Apart from practices, yoga is a lifestyle which we can live from moment to moment, and that is when we can truly experience the benefits of yoga in our lives.

You have spoken of yoga as a lifestyle. The present Covid pandemic has affected the entire world and caused a lot of distress. Some people have started to do yoga and have become aware of and are attracted to yogic practices. However, the overload of pranayama, asanas and other practices on social media has also caused some confusion as to which practices one can or cannot practise. Swamiji, can you please shed some light on this area?

There are many different methods and styles of teaching and it is not our place to comment on them. However, we can express our point of view. We firmly believe in the importance

of learning yogic practices under the guidance of a teacher and if this is possible in person, all the better. A one-on-one class session allows the teacher to observe whether the practices have been correctly understood and are being performed in the right manner. The other point is that when we perform higher and more complicated practices, there are some safety aspects and contra-indications which have to be watched out for. If the student is practising in the presence of the teacher, then individual limitations can be taken into account and the practices can be modified accordingly. This is not something that is possible in classes that are conducted on social media or over a television program. This deals with one aspect of your question.

As you also mentioned, we are experiencing the effects of the Covid pandemic in all spheres of life and movement is restricted, so being able to attend classes is not an option or is very difficult. In such a situation, there are many simple yogic practices which can be understood and applied using common sense so that they can be easily incorporated into one's daily routine. Here the stress is on the appropriate application of a few simple practices as it is not necessary to learn many practices. These few practices, when practised with regularity, can yield many lasting benefits.

Swamiji, do you have a special message for our viewers on the occasion of International Day of Yoga?

In present times our special needs are of health, happiness, peace and understanding – Health, Happiness and Harmony. Yoga is eminently capable of bestowing all three upon us. We should not limit our understanding of yoga to an hour or so when we participate in a class, as something that we can only perform when we are on our yoga mat or blanket and forget about for the rest of the time. No.

Yoga relates to every element of our lives, every interaction, reaction and response. After all, what is our life? Whatever we think, what we feel, what we experience and express,

our priorities, our relationships, our career or profession – everything is a part of our life and if we use yoga and yogic teachings in the appropriate way, our whole life will be enriched.

This is our message to all your viewers that they may view yoga through an integrated perspective, try and incorporate its many aspects in every area of their lives. In so doing they will not only find health, happiness and harmony in their own lives, they can also inspire and encourage people around them to adopt yoga in their lives as well.

The popular belief is that yogic life is one of strict discipline and that one has to forgo all of life's joys. Today work schedules often run into late evening or late night shifts. In such cases, how do we start our yoga practice, and what is a solution according to you?

As far as discipline is concerned, we should not be afraid of it. In a sense, discipline is a synonym of yoga. It is even said in the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali, *athah yoganushasanam* – yoga starts with yogic discipline. People are afraid of discipline because they think that they will have to give up *bhoga* or enjoyment. Yoga does not contradict *bhoga*, in fact, yoga can enhance your experience of enjoyment through balance and moderation. With discipline you can have a complete or full experience of enjoyment.

Let us take the example of a kite. A kite will fly while it is attached to the string. You may say that the string is actually restricting its flight, not letting it go higher. So let's cut the string and see what happens! The kite will flutter and fly for a while and then come down. It is wrong to think that the string was stopping it, it is because of the string that the kite was able to soar high.

This metaphoric string of balance and discipline enters our life through yoga. We have to fly the kite of our personal life in the sky, so to speak. It will fly only if there is some balance and discipline in our lives. This is the lifestyle aspect of yoga.

Even if we bring a little balance into our waking and sleeping routine, it will definitely positively influence our life and health. Similarly, we can fix regular mealtimes by exercising a little control over our irregular eating habits. We are not saying, 'stop eating or change your diet'. Just exercise a little restraint during mealtimes, in your waking and sleeping routine, and in your other activities and behaviours.

People overuse digital media. Our Guru, Swami Niranjan-ananda, tells us to practise digital fasting in the same way that we periodically abstain from food while fasting. Once a week, or at least for one hour during the weekend, restrain yourself from using your digital devices, or at least during mealtimes. If the family is sitting together for a meal, why is it necessary to check your mobile phone? At least switch it off during mealtimes with your family. You will immediately perceive a direct influence on your behaviour and in your relationships. This is all a matter of common sense. We should start incorporating these small changes in our lifestyle, one at a time.

– 20 June 2021, extracts from an interview conducted by the national television channel on the occasion of the International Day of Yoga



Experience Heaven on Earth

Swami Sivananda Saraswati



Bread, butter, jam and nice biscuits cannot give you everlasting peace. Comforts are enemies of spiritual life and peace. They pull a man down. After all, man wants very little on this earth. You will think of God only when you are in adversities. What is wanted is spiritual wealth which is inexhaustible. Happiness does not come from wealth. Spiritual life alone can give real, everlasting peace and happiness.

The mind is the substratum behind pleasure or pain, happiness or misery, success or defeat. Rise above the pairs of opposites by resorting to a guru and his instructions. Study the lives of saints who underwent various trials and read the books by realized souls. Develop the spirit of true surrender wherein you have no thought of body or bodily needs or self-protection even in the slightest degree and wherein you forget the idea of life and death altogether. Serenity is merely mental. Therefore, cultivate mental equipoise by gaining spiritual knowledge.

If you want to enjoy heaven on earth, go on purifying yourself by controlling the lower mind, the desires and cravings. All is bliss, all is joy, all is happiness then.



Thank You

Hari Om,

I would like to thank Swamiji for always being the guiding force, even though I have never met him. I just received diksha from him many years ago in Mumbai.

Yoga has been something that is so fast to discover that I will never get bored of it.

And on this Guru Poornima I felt like sending Swamiji a mail to thank him for silently guiding and inspiring me.

Thank you

– *Nekshan, Mumbai*

Hari Om,

I watched a Door Darshan program on TV where a panel of doctors gave expert advice on home management of Covid symptoms. Dr Raheja, in that panel, clearly mentioned doing yoga nidra twice a day to ensure that inflammations are reduced in the stressed-out bodies of Covid patients. This indicates that yoga has indeed come out as a ray of hope in a turbulent time.

– *Sannyasi Devjyoti, Delhi*



This is My Goal

Evelina Kukudova, Bulgaria

Dear Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati, I address you with the utmost respect and good feelings.

I want to express my gratitude for your Message of Bihar School of Yoga on the 7th International Yoga Day 2021. For me personally, it has had a great impact, an impact on my thoughts, my choices and my actions.

My daily life is simple but dictated by the rhythm of the modern world. The day is hectic and dynamic, work, children, family responsibilities. It is accelerated by the expectations of the employer for rapid growth and implementation, with a growing desire to gain market share and make a profit; the school requirements for increasing intensity of the curriculum and extracurricular activities for children; the whole society's greater aspirations for possession and pleasure. The world around me is changing so fast that my world is spinning.

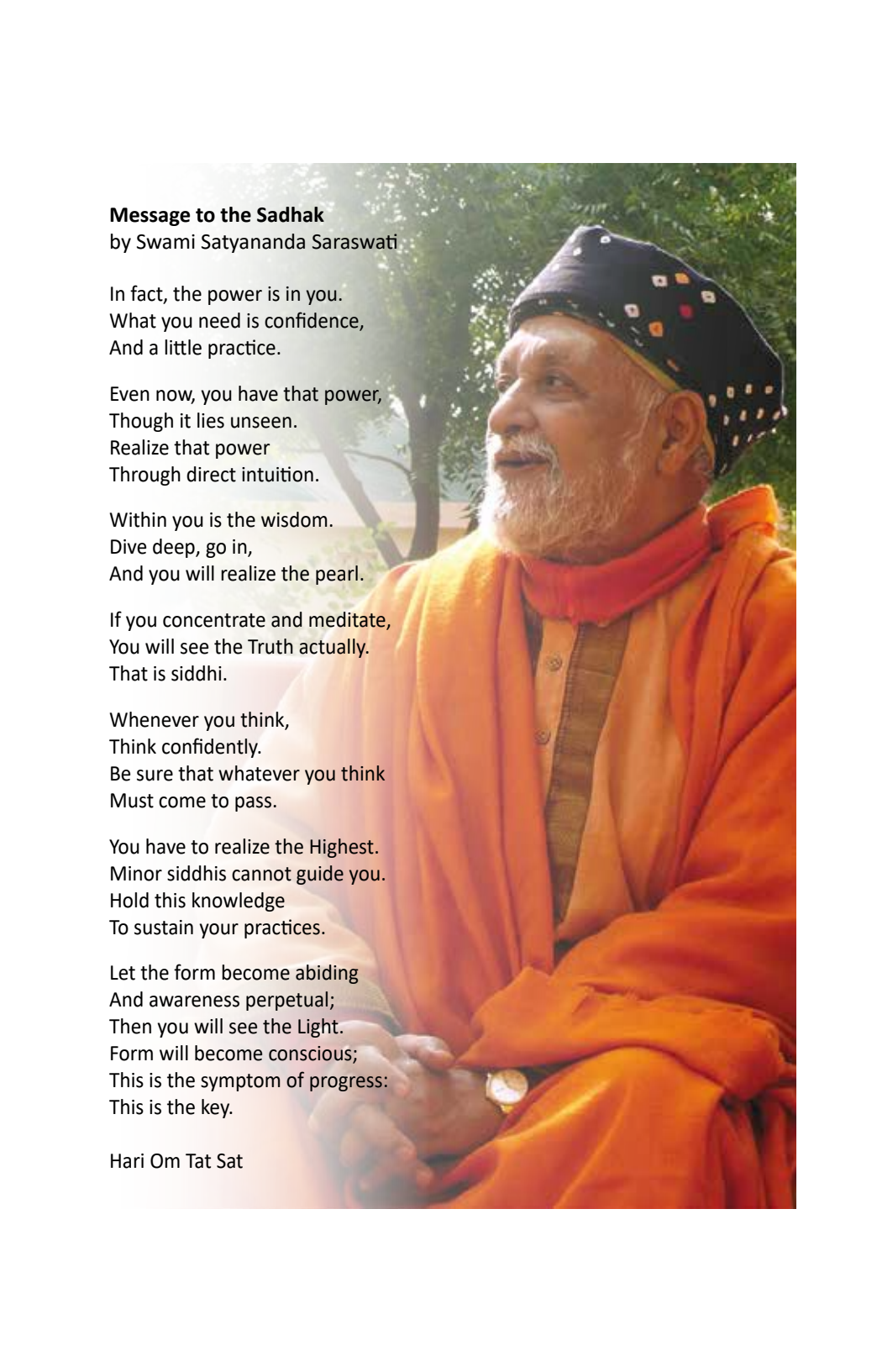
When I was little, famous people developed services and products and worked to provide them to more people. That made them rich over the years, very rich. Nowadays, famous and rich people have other goals – to invest in space development and to cross the boundaries of the planet Earth, expanding their holdings by putting their brand on other planets.

It changed everyone's lives completely. Now I am quite grown up, I have my own family, home, enough food and I make efforts to raise and educate my children, and for all of us to be healthy. Written like that, it should make me a happy person, but I can't say such a thing. I feel that something in my life is missing and I'm restless – something is wrong in the society in which I live. The pace that is imposed on our everyday life by the employer, by the media, politics, by the public frame of mind is not in the right direction. Years ago, I stopped following the media, but that didn't help much because society is soaked with them.

And here I can say that my salvation is yoga. Yoga, which has been going deeper and deeper into my world for more than a decade and ennobles my mind. It sets aside nooks in it that become an oasis of salvation and stability of emotion.

It is precisely in this world of yoga that I make an effort and strive to get a balance within myself, in my perceptions of the world, in my understanding of what is happening around me, to find a way to maintain my health and sobriety of mind given to me by the Lord. I don't know if I will be able to develop it, but at least I'll try not to make it worse.

The paths of yoga and Vedanta are very deep and all-encompassing to my simple human mind, and it is impossible to read all the scriptures within one lifetime, let alone understand them. But it turned out that my mind feels calm only when devoted to yoga and ancient teachings. Spirituality gives meaning to my life. This is the moment to express my great appreciation to you, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati, as a guru who inspires energy and life for us humans, so that we can perceive and apply the teachings of Swami Sivananda,



Message to the Sadhak
by Swami Satyananda Saraswati

In fact, the power is in you.
What you need is confidence,
And a little practice.

Even now, you have that power,
Though it lies unseen.
Realize that power
Through direct intuition.

Within you is the wisdom.
Dive deep, go in,
And you will realize the pearl.

If you concentrate and meditate,
You will see the Truth actually.
That is siddhi.

Whenever you think,
Think confidently.
Be sure that whatever you think
Must come to pass.

You have to realize the Highest.
Minor siddhis cannot guide you.
Hold this knowledge
To sustain your practices.

Let the form become abiding
And awareness perpetual;
Then you will see the Light.
Form will become conscious;
This is the symptom of progress:
This is the key.

Hari Om Tat Sat







developed and synthesized by Sri Swamiji in the Bihar School tradition.

The Yoga Capsule given to us by you during the pandemic and lockdown, in these difficult times, has become a blessing! The daily practices conducted in the system and the sequence you provided gave us perseverance, discipline, strength to control at least a little bit of our perceptions, understanding of our actions and confidence that we make an effort to follow the right path. Following the Yoga Capsule, yoga ceased to be just a practice and grew into something more. It grew into a little seed that nested in our daily thoughts and began to develop. This little seed began to change me, to lead me to the next step, to another stage – another moment. Daily sadhana turned me inward, deep inside me, revealed a different world of light, turned off the earth's noise, and captivated me for life.

The articles in the monthly magazines that you provide so generously, e-books, e-prasad, for me is an invaluable treasure – a source of knowledge and wisdom. Mahamrityunjaya havan gives us a chance to follow the tradition maintained by the inhabitants of Ganga Darshan, thus strengthening our connection with the spiritual home thousands, millions of kilometers away, sitting in our homes.

All this leads us to internal changes, fundamental changes. Tapping into ancient knowledge made me restless and turned my views, feelings, emotions, and my perception of the world. It awakened a desire in me to bring together the Five Divine Nectars of distinction, detachment, balance, determination and clarity of mind. Please Guru pour them into me.

I am very grateful for the article *Basant Panchami* published in the May 2021 issue of YOGA magazine. It shed a light on the material human nature of our desire for success, on our individuality, our ego, and how much we need Saraswati to handle and manage our materiality. The article helped me realize how all knowledge must be managed with the help of Saraswati and it must grow into wisdom so that knowledge can flow into wisdom. Applying knowledge has often been spoken



about, but it is still not applied enough, somehow its importance has not been acknowledged.

I want to express my sincere and heartfelt thanks to you, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati, my Guru. But words, even well-arranged beautiful words with colour and aroma, are trivial and cannot convey everything I would like to express. Daily with a lighted candle, I thank the deities for having you. I thank Swami Satyananda with all my heart and soul that you specially are his 'Manas Putra'. The covenant that Satyananda has given us is becoming more and more difficult. *"Whenever there is darkness in your life, when you do not find the way, he will guide you successfully and bring you back to the light. I have full confidence that he will come as a light in your spiritual life."*

And yes, I can't find more appropriate words than Swami Satyananda, but I am here in the darkest moments of our time, in Kali Yuga leading to the deterioration of everything: physical, psychological, emotional, humanistic, benevolent . . . I have full confidence that YOU, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati, are the light that has come to guide us successfully through this difficult stage of darkness in the life of mankind! And the only thing I can do (as an imperfect human being) and that flows from the bottom of my soul and heart, is to surrender completely into your hands, to follow your words and writings, and to make daily efforts to be loyal to the Guru and the teachings. This has become MY GOAL. The times are such that this struggle won't be easy, but all my life and spiritual forces will be directed to pursue this goal.

*Oh, Guru!
I bow at your feet.
Lead me on the path of truth.*

Coloured Glasses and Progress

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

I work in a negative, gloomy environment, and with colleagues who have strong personalities. How do I not let this situation drag me down?

At this time, you have to become a yogi. Do your duty as karma yoga, without any expectation and deep association. If you do that, you are free from this problem, and this question. If you can't do it then this will be the cause of worry for a long time to come. The obvious answer lies in how you are able to perceive the world around you.

On a sunny day, when everything is glary, you put on dark-coloured glasses. That cuts out the glare, and it is easier to see. However, while you put on the dark glasses, everything begins to look dark. If you put on yellow glasses, everything will look yellow. If you put on red glasses, everything will look red. The choice of what type of glass you want to put on when you are looking at the world is yours. If you want to cut down the glare, put on the dark glasses. If you want to see better, put on the yellow glasses. If you want to be noticed, put on the red glasses.

This is the skill of being a yogi. I have been tempted to put on a different-coloured glass many times, yet I always try to hold myself back. I can wear the clear glasses. There are difficult situations in life, and some situations can be short-term, some can be long-term situations. The real ability is how we are able to manage our environment and different situations.

How can you be at peace without letting thoughts like these bother you day in and day out? Bad colleagues, bad boss, destructive and negative environment, yet you have to survive in it, so why not survive with a smiling face and be

happy rather than cry for years about how to change your workplace or work environment. Use the same principle that people use when they drive in the fog: put on the yellow lights and you can see better.

Are there indications of progress in spiritual life?

There are indications of progress in spiritual life. They are not what you would normally expect. There are people who wake up very early in the morning, 2:30 am, 3 am to do their asanas, pranayamas and their meditation. I do not consider this to be an advancement of spiritual life. Advancement in spiritual life begins with the application of common sense, with the recognition of the condition of body and mind, and working with the limitations of body and mind. The moment you cultivate awareness to recognize the limitations of body and mind, and begin to work with them, certain things begin to happen naturally. The cultivation of awareness brings about greater perception of the outside dimension, the outer world. There is more involvement and more objectivity as well.

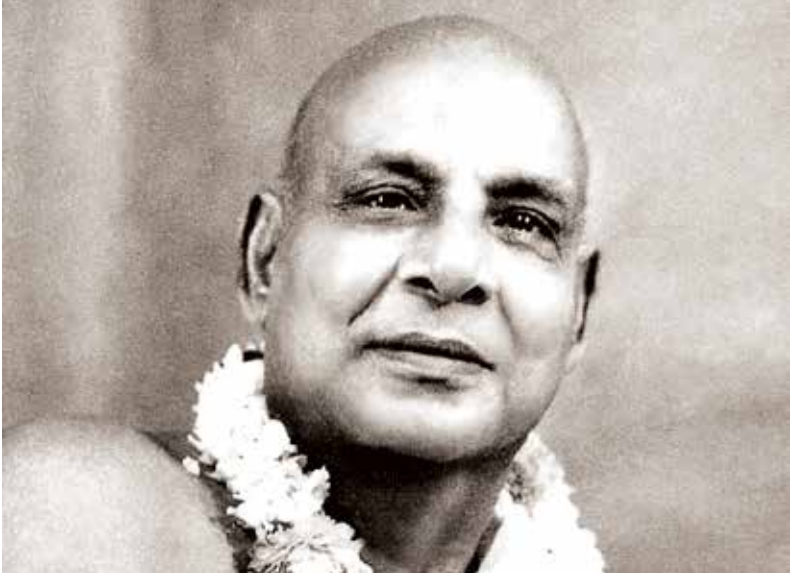
In spiritual life there is no isolation. With the cultivation of awareness, there is more advancement, more connection, more objectivity. This objectivity gives birth to a certain understanding about the natures and the qualities of everyone around. The personal desires, personal expectations diminish. In the beginning everything was centred around me and myself, and that gradually becomes less. These are some basic indications and symptoms of spiritual development. These are the milestones.

Buddha was once asked the same question, and he gave the same answer: "Lessening of desires is an indication. Lessening of subjective participation and more aware action with objective realization of the situation are the hallmarks of the person who is advancing spiritually." This is it in a nutshell.

– 9 November 2011, Ganga Darshan, Munger

Better Than an Apple a Day

Swami Sivananda Saraswati



The world is now flooded with multifarious injections and tonics. People are carried away by pompous advertisements. Money is wasted enormously in paying doctors' bills. They immediately run to find relief in outside objects and from physical doctors, who despite their qualifications and degrees, are still ignorant of many things, who are still groping in darkness, who are yet not able to diagnose when there is a complication, who have no real genuine specifics to cure diseases like asthma, malaria, lumbago, phthisis, cerebrospinal meningitis, typhoid, diabetes, blood pressure, who are still only experimenting on the patients.

In olden days, an ordinary Vaidya would cure a disease with some bazaar drugs worth about two pies. In these days of modern civilization and scientific advancement, allopathic medical treatment has become very costly. Poor people cannot

afford to have this. The patient has to get his blood, urine, faeces, and sputum examined. He has to visit the Saptarishis of the medical profession. He has to go to a bacteriologist first for this purpose and has to jingle something on the table. The bacteriologist directs the patient to go to a dentist to remove the tartar and treat his pyorrhoea which is believed to be the root cause for all diseases. He has to pay for this Rs. 10/. Then he has to go to the radiologist for taking a skiagraph. He has to pay him Rs. 25/. Sometimes he has to pay a board of doctors for expert diagnosis. He finds no real relief even after spending so much money.

Vedanta for health

The best medicine or tonic for any complaint, physical or mental, is constant thinking: 'I am the Spirit, the Atman which is independent of the body and the mind, which is Anamaya, diseaseless'. Repeat this formula mentally several times daily. Meditate on the meaning. Chronic incurable diseases that are declared to be hopeless by boards of eminent doctors can be cured by this method. This is an unfailing infallible divine remedy. Sometimes you will have to wait patiently for results.

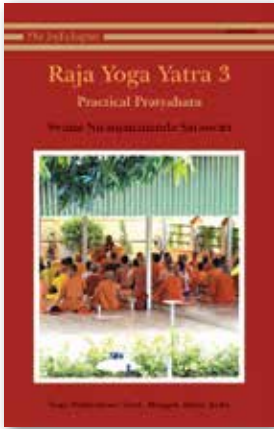
Autosuggestion is only an offshoot of Vedanta. The formula of this school – *By the Grace of God, I am becoming better and better, day by day, in every way* – is only a vedantic assertion and affirmation.

People say, 'One apple a day keeps the doctor away'. This is costly. This is doubtful. I say, "Live in the spirit of the vedantic formulae. This alone can keep the doctors away. This is dead cheap. This is a sure sovereign specific and a sheet-anchor and a cure-all. This is a potent, easily available medicine that lies at your command, that is very close to you, that is within easy access or approach. Doctors' bills and money can be saved. This will give you Self-realization as well."

Believe me. Give up doubting. I assure you, my dear brother! Thou art not this perishable body. Thou art the immortal, all-pervading Soul. *Tat Tvam Asi* – Thou art That.

A Life in a Moment

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Habits are difficult to change, and something that is far more deeply rooted than habit is even more difficult to get rid of. You think that you can change these impressions with logic and thinking? You cannot change a basic habit through continuous effort, despite your debate and discussion on 'What should I do', 'What is the method?' You apply all the aspects of logic and make effort the entire day, yet the habit is not changed. Therefore, do not think that fifteen minutes of meditation at night will bring dramatic change.

You do not even know what lies within. You cannot even control the external factors, so how can you manage the internal factors? You cannot control your sleep; in every yoga nidra you drift off into sleep, so how can you control and manage pranic pratyahara? Do not have high-flaunting ideas about yourself. You are unable to deal with the most basic components in the appropriate manner, and yet you expect to reach pratyahara. That is the unfortunate plight of spiritual aspirants.

The yogic and spiritual systems are clear; it is the aspirant who uses them wrongly. You may think, 'Why did we not know all this before?' Well, because previously you were not connected to vidya, you were connected only to the practices. You were too self-centred and engrossed in your own feelings and expectations from the practice. This is the reality, therefore do not have high expectations of yourself or anyone.

You are not aware of your strengths, let alone the flaws. In pratyahara all these things are seen and also how they are

coloured by sattwa, rajas and tamas. People say that managing sensorial and psychological traumas are difficult. They are peanuts compared to what you encounter as rajas, tamas and sattwa in manas, buddhi, chitta and ahamkara. A trauma indicates a moment in your life; this indicates your entire life in a single moment. Pratyahara is an entire life in a moment. It is a big shift, therefore do not think of it in a light manner, 'Oh, wonderful, from tomorrow I can call myself a raja yogi and advertise myself on Facebook.'

Prana has to be withdrawn even from Facebook so that the attraction or the pull to Facebook is gone. Instead, try to open your Heartbook. Facebook is sycophancy and narcissism at its best and Heartbook is connection and compassion at its best. So, close the Facebook, open the Heartbook. Take away the prana from the Facebook and bring prana to the Heartbook. Then you will become a yogi, not through withdrawal of the senses, but by withdrawing the prana from the gross and the material and placing it where your true human nature lies. Then you will discover that by being a true human you have also become divine. This is what our paramguru Swami Sivananda says.

– Published in Raja Yoga Yatra 3



Avoid Accidents

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Yoga means karma yoga, bhakti yoga, raja yoga and jnana yoga. Each yoga has something to complete in your life.

Bhakti yoga channelizes your emotions. It should be practised before raja yoga or with

raja yoga. Karma yoga helps you to balance the impurities of mind, the distractions of mind. If you practise the yogas systematically, then you will never come across the problems created by the mind and emotions in your practices of meditation.

We face the mind in meditation because we have not treated the mind through bhakti yoga and karma yoga. In yoga, meditation is considered to be the highest point, but still I think that in the modern countries meditation is overemphasized and incorrectly emphasized. Meditation is a very high stage and therefore it needs a lot of preparation. If you do not practise the other forms of yoga, then you will have to face difficulties in meditation.

Karma yoga is the philosophy of your relationship with life. What is your relationship with everything around you and what should be your attitude to your work, family, children, problems, enemies and everything else? How should you react in success and failure, love and hatred, victory and defeat? This is very important. Karma yoga is the philosophy which fixes your relationship with everything else in the world in such a way that nothing disturbs your mind at any time, no matter what has happened to you.



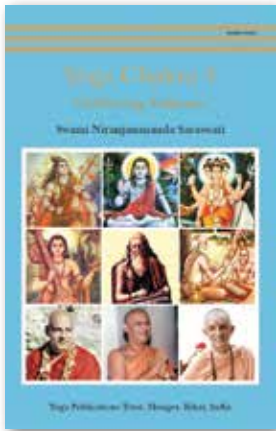
In the same way, bhakti yoga is so important that without it you cannot properly balance your emotions. Therefore, we have to find out who to love, who can accept all our love without reacting in a negative manner. Most problems which people suffer from today are the problems caused by love or the absence of love. Therefore, it is as necessary to know how to train your emotions, as it is to train your mind. Untrained mind, untrained emotions and untrained drivers cause accidents. Therefore, in bhakti yoga the emotions are channelized to divinity, in the form of God, a deity or guru. If I love someone, he should not exploit me. If he will not exploit me, I will love him more and more. God does not exploit his devotee. In the same way, guru also should not exploit his devotee.

When you have practised karma yoga and bhakti yoga, and then you practise raja yoga, the mind automatically becomes quiet. It is because we do not practise bhakti yoga and karma yoga that there are emotional and mental problems in meditation. You must say, "Okay, let them come." Don't stop them, because stopping them will be the greatest disaster.

– *Published in Satyananda Yoga in Italy, Volume 1*

Work With Your Life First

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



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

The first requirement: yama and niyama

All yamas and niyamas develop from these three foundations. They counteract the expressions and responses of *tamas*, and change them into *sattwa*. Out of the hundreds of yamas and niyamas, certain selections can be made according to individual choice, the aspirations of the teaching, or the goal that one wants to achieve. Maharshi Patanjali made his choice, and selected five yamas and five niyamas, which fulfilled his aspirations of *raja yoga*. Similarly, in *hatha yoga*, where different conditions need to be created, other yamas and niyamas emerged. In *jnana yoga* and in *bhakti yoga* too, there are different sets of yamas and niyamas. Each system, according to its needs, adopted some branches of yama and niyama from the main trunk of *sadvichara*, *sadvyavahara* and *satkarma*.

The sages placed the yamas and niyamas as the first components of the yogic system. This is important, as it indicates that they believed that the purpose of yoga is in relation to developing a better quality of life, a better condition of mind and expression. It is for developing a better way to inspire, encourage, support, assist and grow. Therefore, they said, first



start working with your life. Asana and pranayama are secondary, as they are more body-related. Pratyahara and dharana come third: mind-related, and so forth. The sages emphasized that you must start working with your life first. You must start with fine-tweaking, adjusting, modifying your life, thought and behaviour first. Begin the process with that. Connect with the idea of positivity, and while you do that, spend a little time, half an hour or one hour, for your physical health:

asana and pranayama. Spend a little time, half an hour or one hour, for your mental health: pratyahara and dharana. Spend a little time, ten minutes or half an hour, for your spiritual health: meditation and samadhi. The emphasis is on working with your life to improve it, and therefore yama and niyama are placed first in yoga.

Today people think of yama and niyama as nothing. They believe that the important aspects of yoga are asana, pranayama and a little bit of meditation. However, in the vision of the sages, life comes first. The body is a part of life, the mind is a part of life, and the higher experience is part of a better life. So start with working with your life and then move into the other aspects. If you follow this sequence, then yoga does not become an add-on or fad. Instead, it becomes a journey, the human journey of discovery and attainment.

– *Published in Yoga Chakra 4*

Sakshi Bhava

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Sakshi bhava or *drashta bhava* is the ability to observe yourself and maintain that state of awareness continuously for a long time. It is the state where you are able to say, 'I am observing myself, I am observing my behaviour, I am the witness of my karmas, I am the witness of my thoughts, I am the witness of my ambitions, I am the witness of every experience of mine'.

Again, the mind has to be trained to observe itself. There is a trick here. When you think, 'I want to become quiet', who is the one doing the thinking? It is the mind that is thinking. It is the same mind which is agitated and which desires peace and quietness. It seems to be a paradox that the nature of the mind is to be active and move all the time, but the desire of the mind is to be still.

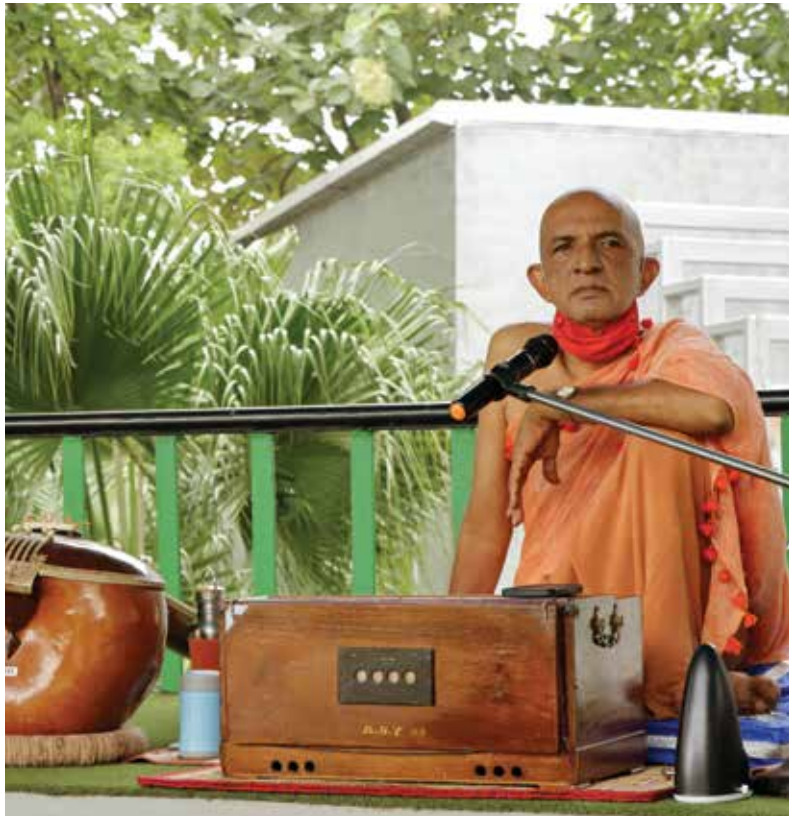
You have to pick up on the desire of the mind, not the nature of the mind. That is the secret. If you identify with the mental movement, you will follow the trains of thought, wherever they take you. If you identify with the idea of peace, you hold yourself back and remain connected to that idea. You can observe the movement of the mind by being at one place. That is the *drashta bhava* or *sakshi bhava*.

Take every opportunity

Every action is followed by a reaction. You have to learn to accept both the action and the reaction by learning how to develop the *drashta* within, by becoming aware of the observer, the seer inside. Then experiences will cease to have any effect on the mind. Just as you can see the effects of something happening outside, in the same way you can also experience the internal, unseen effects of the same events taking place, without becoming a victim to them. A gross example will convey the meaning. Eating is an external action: hand to

mouth, the mouth chewing, and the food being swallowed. Here the external action stops. Then the internal action begins, the process of digestion. How it happens, you do not know. You might be doing anything, sleeping, jumping up and down or travelling, but the digestive process is going on. No matter what you do, digestion goes on and there is no way you can stop it.

When you become the sakshi, the observer of yourself, and that faculty of observation is continuous, constant and does not dissipate or fluctuate, then you become centred. Everything should be taken as an opportunity to observe and reprogram the mind. Your mind becomes centred and there is an experience of peace and harmony.



Message of Light

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

There are two aspects – the good and the evil. In Satya Yuga, good and evil used to live in different lokas, in different dimensions, in different worlds. For good people, it was the deva loka and for bad people, it was the asura loka. In Satya Yuga, they all had their own worlds. Then came Treta Yuga in which both coexisted in the same world. For example, Rama and Ravana both existed in the same world, there was no deva loka and no asura loka. After Treta Yuga came Dwapara Yuga when the good and the evil became part of the same family, like the Pandava and Kaurava brothers. Now we are in Kali Yuga, when the good and the evil exist within one person.

The change has been from deva loka and asura loka, to the same world, to the same family, to one individual, to one person. Today the asura vritti is much more dominant than the deva vritti. The deva vritti is soft, positive, luminous and sattwic, the asura vritti is hard and rigid. We are seeing now the rise of the asura vritti around the globe.

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

There is also a global consciousness where we are all connected to the same source known as the collective consciousness. In that collective consciousness, all the responses of the seven billion people are present and we are



bombarded by that all the time. Unfortunately, as individuals we are not strong enough to stop that torrent of bombardment.

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

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

This creates a lot of uncertainty. Instead of addressing issues to make people more confident, secure, safe and optimistic, we, as humanity, are using our resources in an asuric manner. That is part of the collective consciousness and no matter where

you are in the world, whether you are at the border or not, that collective consciousness will have some effect on you.

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

The rope of positivity

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

How was that possible? The agni in the deepak and the agni of the sun are the same element, there is no difference. It is the same tattwa, the same fire, the same *tej*, luminosity. It is that little contact with positivity and selflessness, the motivation and the intent which ignites the fire. As that deepak became imbued with the power of the sun, it was able to burn and it shed light throughout the whole night. When the sun rose the next morning and he saw this little deepak burning bright he said, "I'll give you a boon - Wherever you go you will always dispel darkness, darkness will never be able to stand up against you." And that is true. A thousand years of darkness can dissipate in one instant the moment you strike a match.

It is that positive deva element which is important, not the asura element. Today in Kali Yuga, there has been a transformation of human nature from Satya Yuga, when the distinction between righteousness and unrighteousness was clear and the devas and asuras lived according to those principles. In Satya Yuga, whenever the balance was broken, whenever the borderlines were crossed, there were conflicts, however each one adhered to their own dharma. Today the same thing is happening within one individual, not just between two separate factions. Unfortunately, it is the individual who is failing today, and there is no wisdom, understanding, sympathy, kindness or compassion, only the self is primary.

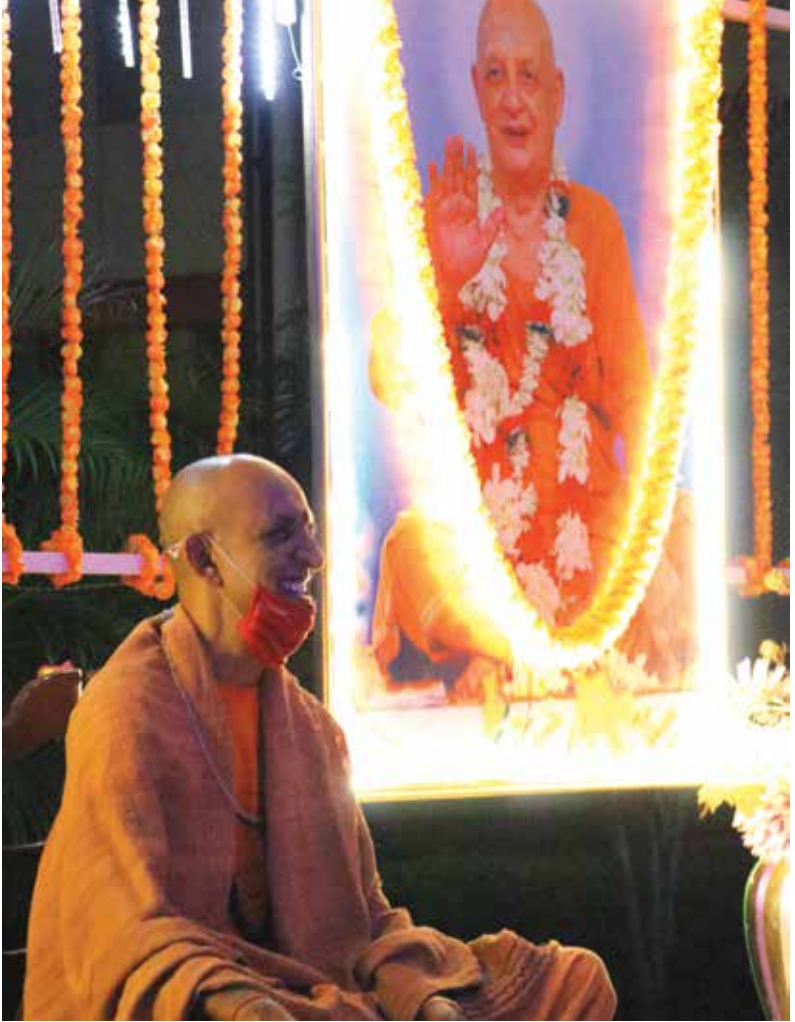
If we are able to maintain a connection with luminosity, there is always faith and advancement. If we cannot maintain that connection with the sun and with its essence, fire has no meaning. It is the sun which has to manifest in the fire, it is the atma which has to manifest in the jivatma. The greater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

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

– *Diwali, 4 November 2020, Ganga Darshan, Munger*

Dharma and Bhakti

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Dharma is not religion; it is that which is constructive, creative, positive and conducive to one's growth. Bhakti is the channelling of one's inner expressions and emotions towards

an experience of inner harmony. Thus, on the one hand the aspirant is channelling human faculties with the aim of experiencing inner harmony or bhakti, and on the other hand, the aspirant is imbibing those qualities which can give an understanding of human relationships or dharma. These two should go hand in hand if life is to be lived fully and the goal of life attained.

Everyone seems to be thinking along one track only: take birth, become educated, get a job, rise high on the ladder of name, fame and status, have a family and educate the children so that they can continue the rat race, and die. This is the most prevalent social system in the world today. In this form of life, there is little scope for fully realizing or expressing either dharma or bhakti.

Yogis have always maintained that dharma is the highest expression and bhakti the highest attainment. As spiritual aspirants, no matter how involved you are in spirituality, whether superficially or deeply, you should try to be aware of the qualities that you can develop and express for the betterment of the family, friends, society and the world. That is dharma. You should learn how to channel your mental expressions so that your mental energies are not dissipated and confusion does not occur. Once you learn to do this, you can then ultimately experience purity of heart.

When you combine dharma and bhakti, you can experience a natural life, be one with nature and the divine, with the manifest and the transcendental. Therefore, you should move towards an application and understanding of dharma and bhakti in your life through whatever method or process you can adopt.

This is the natural urge in every individual, especially when people are feeling a need to express themselves in a different way. If you can combine dharma and bhakti, that is the best way to see a new dawn and find a positive direction in the 21st century.

My Conversation with God

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



During Navaratri, on the night of Ashtami, when I was lying on my bed, I was thinking of Lakshmi and one statement of Swami Sivanandaji about Mother Lakshmi. While thinking about that statement, I heard a voice which said, 'Talk to me.' In my state, I recognized it to be the voice of Lakshmi, yet it was not a feminine voice, it was a neutral voice.

I addressed that voice, 'You are God.' The voice said, 'I am neither masculine nor feminine. I am just energy. I am just consciousness. I don't have a gender.' This is a conversation that is happening, so I said, 'You are all pervasive, you are omniscient and omnipotent. How does it feel to be that?' The voice said, 'It is tiring.' I said, 'Yes, I can understand it. You are here from the beginning of creation and you'll be here at

the end. You will also see the beginning of a new creation and the end of that new one. You will continue.'

The voice said, 'Yes, but it is exhausting.' I said, 'What do you mean?' The voice said, 'You see, in my omniscience, in my omnipotence, in my omnipresence, I am connected with everything, every aspect of creation, including the speck of dust which you walk upon, for everything is made of energy, nothing is devoid of energy. I am everything. Because of my connectedness with everything and everyone in this entire creation, I also suffer like you suffer in your body when there is an imbalance.'

The thought came to my mind that this is the concept of *vibhu* or interconnectedness, Paramahamsaji has spoken about many times. I again asked the question, 'How do you feel tired?' The voice said, 'In order to know how I feel, look at yourself. When your body is functioning well, you don't feel tired, but if any part of the body becomes deficient in any manner, in any form, then tiredness sets in. Although each part of the body has its own function, yet if they are not together they cannot function. The body is realized only when all the parts and all the organs of the body function in synchronicity and in harmony with each other. When that does not happen in the world, then I get tired, I get sick.' So I said, 'Can you explain that a bit more? It is quite intriguing for God to feel tired and sick.'

So the voice continued, 'Imagine your own body. If there is something wrong with the stomach your whole body will suffer. If there is a pain in your little toe, the whole body will feel it. If there is an itch in the arm, the whole body will react to it. Although these are all different functions of different organs, still the whole body is affected by the performance of each organ and system. Just as pain or swelling of a little finger can cause pain to you in the brain and stop your optimum performance, in the same manner when words and nature become destructive and tamasic, I feel that pain, I feel the swelling, I feel the suffering and that is my own.'

The voice continued, 'Everybody goes through this, not only me. The example is in front of everyone, especially if you look around, whether it be a family organization, whether it be a commercial organization, whether it be your own ashram, if all people function together, then there is never going to be any problem. However, if each one goes their own way, nothing will function ever, and the whole purpose of coming together is defeated. When the purpose is defeated, then stress, anxiety, tension is what I feel.

Fortunately, my life is long. I live continuously, forever, so I am aware of each and every suffering from the first dawn of the sun to the last dawn of the sun. I am the experiencer, but that is me. It is not I which is enough, it is others too, who have to rise up to be with me. I cannot come down to the level of humanity all the time. People are going deeper and deeper into the abyss and I cannot go down that far, yet if they want they will have to rise up to come to me. The only way that can happen is that they remain healthy – physically, mentally, psychologically and spiritually. When the whole personality, when the whole of nature is healthy and happy, I am healthy and happy. If the personality and nature are unhealthy and unhappy, I also feel the suffering of un-healthiness and unhappiness.'

I said, 'What can one do?' The voice said, 'The more people understand each other, the more people support each other, the more people appreciate each other, the more strength I will get, because positivity will prevail and negativity will diminish.' That is the message that Swami Sivanandaji has been spreading – to become positive in life.' The voice said, 'Swami Sivananda did not teach systems or a path to emancipation or *moksha*. Swami Sivananda did not teach techniques to awaken kundalini or to attain silence in the mind. He only taught how to understand, how to love and how to live in service of others. Swami Satyananda too, after fulfilling the mandate of his Guru, taught the same. How to live, how to laugh, how to love, how to connect with everyone, how to develop the positive and the beautiful in you.'



The voice continued, 'Even if one is able to understand a portion of this teaching, the strength of God will increase manifold, the health of God will increase manifold, and the happiness of God will increase manifold. This is the message that we have to remember, we have to be healthy and we have to be happy. The way to become healthy and happy, is to look not only at yourself, but also to the need of the time, the place and the environment.'

I said, 'Yes God, I understand that very well. We all have to make the effort to understand how we can live in harmony with nature, with people, with the environment and express the positive and the beauty that is inherent within us. Why does the negative always have to come out? If the negative can come out, something very beautiful can come out also. You don't make an effort to bring out the negative, but yes, you have to make the effort to bring out the positive and that is the challenge. It is easy to say 'no', it is easy to be disgruntled. It is difficult to say 'yes', and it is difficult to be happy. It is easy to express dissatisfaction, is difficult to be satisfied in life. To be positive is the challenge and the sadhana of every individual in life.

– 15 October 2021, Ganga Darshan, Munger



Hatha Yoga Yatra 3 Understanding Mudra and Bandha


Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

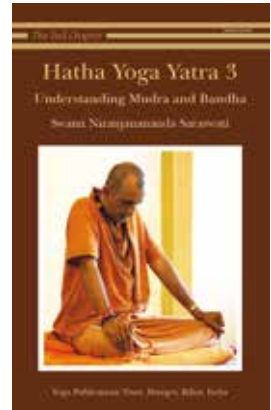
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Om Tat Sat
The Editor