

YOGA

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Hari Om

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FFH (For Frontline Heroes)

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TRIBUTES BY SWAMI SIVANANDA TO SATYAM

Most disciples are not at all devoted to their guru, and of the remaining few, most are blind in their devotion. After the guru's demise, their boat also capsizes. But Satyam is that luminous flame which will go on spreading the name of Siva and the light of his teachings throughout the entire world. Swami Satyam is satyam indeed in word, thought and deed.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

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is dedicated to
Sri Swami Satyananda's
satsangs delivered in Europe.

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Nature Our Teacher

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 ॥

Yogic Training

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



For the past few years, we have been talking about yoga and many people all over the world have been listening with great interest. To me, it appears as if a new age has begun because the inspiration and the message of yoga has awakened in the mind of people so spontaneously and with such ease.

There was a time when people were scared of yoga and thought it had little to do with life and very much to do with something like magic. Many centuries have elapsed during recent history when mankind was in a state of total confusion and misunderstanding about yoga and the yogic practices. In 1928, I attended a show in my school where a yogi sat on a bed of nails, drank nitric acid, walked on burning coals and did so many other things. When I went home my father asked me about it and I narrated the whole program. He only replied, 'This is not yoga.' He had been a keen student of yoga, the disciple of a swami, and he instructed me that yoga was something more to do with normal human affairs, with day-to-day duties.

Over many centuries, mankind and its wise leaders have emphasized the training of man, but this training has never been properly represented or interpreted. During this period, the training that was imparted to man was in the military, in a civic sense, in social etiquette. There was no training for individual progress. Man is a storehouse of different faculties and he requires integral training. We cannot neglect the training of the individual self, of consciousness or of the mind of the person. Intellectual training does not influence the deeper personality of man. Integral training has to be imparted to the individual so that he behaves in a balanced way in all dimensions of life.

The training of yoga is primarily aimed at the deeper nature of man. This deeper nature of man is mysterious to many people. This deeper nature which has been discovered anew and endorsed by the scientific minds influences all the action in the past as well as the present. It is this nature of the individual which has to undergo a systematic process of training. The system of yoga aims at the root of personality. This root of personality is the background of our existence, the basis of our actions and the background of our emotional personality - the pain and the pleasure, success as well as failure, the agony and the ecstasy. If we face an experience

in our day-to-day life, it is not from the objects outside but it is from the background of our personality, which is called unconscious. Your thinking, reactions, experiences and all that you have known and experienced through your mind originate from the very depth of your consciousness.

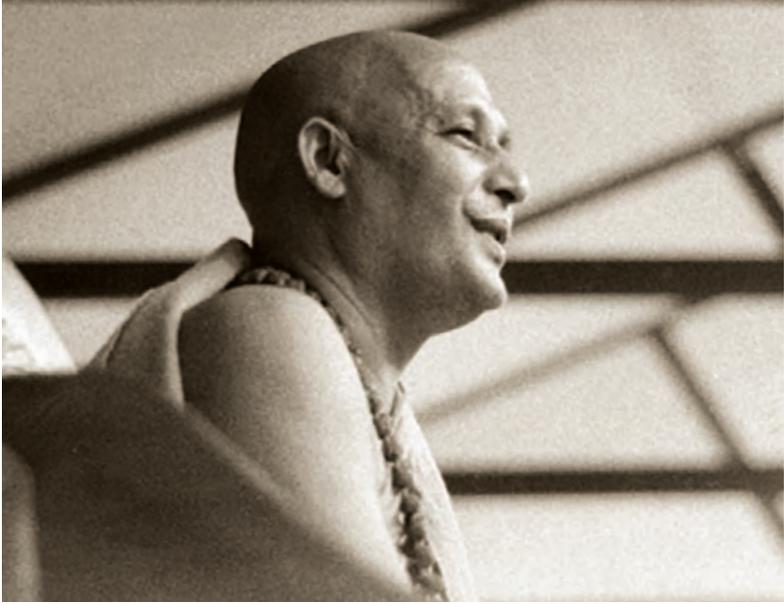
The practice of yoga gradually enables you to go deeper into your consciousness, like an expert diver in the ocean. A diver goes into the ocean exploring the depths. In the same manner, the yogi, you and I, we go into the mind. The purpose of going in is not to withdraw from life or to escape from the reality of life, but to go deeper into our being and there discover the root of life, the nucleus of life and the basis of our experience and action. The training of a yogi begins at the point when he goes into the consciousness and faces his own mind – his distractions, passions, hallucinations and his thoughts.

When we are busy with our daily life, driving a car, working in a factory, running a shop or a household, our mind is extroverted. This extroverted mind experiences external experiences like sounds, forms, taste, touch, smells. It is so busy with the external experience that it has no time to see what is happening inside. Even as we people are talking here, we do not know what is happening in the streets of Copenhagen. We are not there, we are here. Our mind is outside, it is extroverted and therefore it is completely unaware of what is happening in the field of its consciousness. It is necessary that we know what is within us, and what is happening to us. What is the mind? Emotions? Hallucination? Thought? Conflict? Emotional confusion? Mental distress? Though we experience these things in our daily life, we experience them without knowledge. That is where we are caught and that is where we suffer.

– 19 April 1977, Copenhagen, Denmark

Satsang

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Is it that every creature has different bodies or only those beings who are developed by spiritual activities?

All beings have these bodies, animals also, all creatures. As you grow in spiritual life and evolve, these bodies become manifest and clear. In other creatures, these bodies are in a dormant state, because those beings are evolving slowly. The main substance of evolution in the first stage is life. In creatures like mosquitoes, flies and birds it is the life which is evolving.

Life needs an expression, so they have one sense and two, three, four and five senses. There are creatures which have only one sense or two senses. So how is their life expressed through the senses? First comes life and then the body. At a later stage, the development in the body takes place. You have two legs and only the wings, that is all. Then you have two hind legs,

two forelegs like a horse, a cat, a lion or a tiger. That is known as the evolution of the body.

With the evolution of the body, you have the evolution of the motor organs. The five sense organs are the ears, eyes, nose, tongue and the skin. This is the first stage of evolution. With evolution, you have the five motor organs: speech, hands, feet, the urinary and excretory organs.

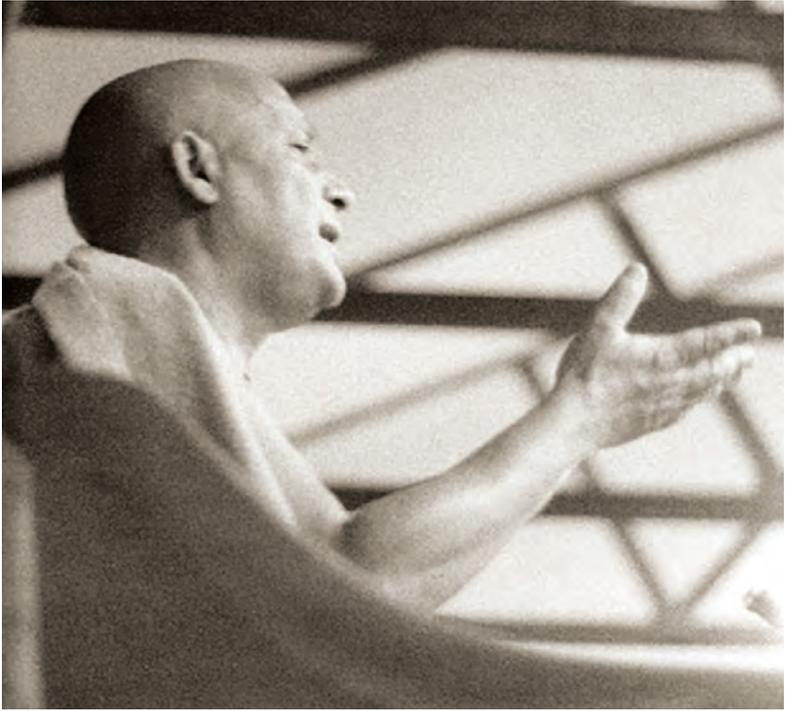
You have five sense organs and five motor organs, and then comes the mind. Man has been undergoing the third stage of evolution. We have completed the first, second and third stages of evolution and therefore we are human beings because we operate with the mind. The mind controls all the senses and the body.

The next evolution is the evolution of intuition. It seems man has stepped into that stage now. Intuition is the ultimate point of evolution for the being. Therefore, all the bodies are present in a rudimentary, seed or dormant state, even the mineral. It will take millions and billions of years before these bodies eventually manifest.

We have a mental body but we cannot transmit it, although we could do it. The mental body can leave this body and go anywhere, but it is not developed. The evolution takes place very gradually. Through the practices of yoga or kundalini yoga, this evolution is accelerated. Then you can experience all the ten bodies, or all the bodies or maybe more that we do not know about.

What is antar mouna? In connection with reincarnation, if there is such a thing, where does the self go?

Antar mouna is a technique of yoga to deal with the natural problems of the mind. By the practices of antar mouna you are able to manage spiritual life without coming in confrontation with your mind. Therefore, antar mouna cannot be compared with the higher stages that you go to in spiritual life. The practices of antar mouna take you to a certain distance and when you are able to overcome your mind, meditation begins.



Who is Self? At least not the mind. The Self is the seer of the mind. The mind is not the seer. There is the seer of the mind as well. When you have experiences in meditation the seer of those experiences is known as atman. Atman is awareness. It is not the lower awareness; it is the higher awareness. It is nothing to do with the body or name. Atman is part of a universal reality.

There is a universal soul. You can call it by any name but it has no name. In the Upanishads they call him Brahman. I would like to call him Universal Spirit. Atman is individuality of the Universal Spirit. Just like you have the ocean and in the ocean you have a drop. There is no difference between the drop and the ocean. It has the same quality, it has the same taste, it has the same density. In the same way, the Universal Spirit and the individual spirit are essentially the same but there is one difference.

When this universal spirit is felt by me, it becomes individual spirit. The individual spirit in man or in everything has threefold attributes. The Upanishads call it Sat-Chit-Ananda. *Sat* means existence, *Chit* means awareness, *ananda* means absolute. These are the three attributes of the spirit in the individual and in the cosmos.

A lot of discussion has taken place in India on atma and Brahman for the last 30 to 40,000 years. Even now we discuss the individual spirit and the Universal Spirit. How is the spirit born? What is the basis of spirit? What are its activities? There are many questions, but ultimately an answer has not been found. Why?

The mind is finite, the Universal Spirit is infinite. How can the finite mind calculate or assess the infinite? The mind through which I am investigating the Universal Spirit is a very limited mind. It is not even one-pointed. It is full of impurities, foolishness and mistakes. All the knowledge faculties of the mind are full of errors. The quality of perception is erroneous. That mind sees one thing and feels another thing. Therefore, if you have to investigate the Universal Spirit, the mind has to undergo transformation.

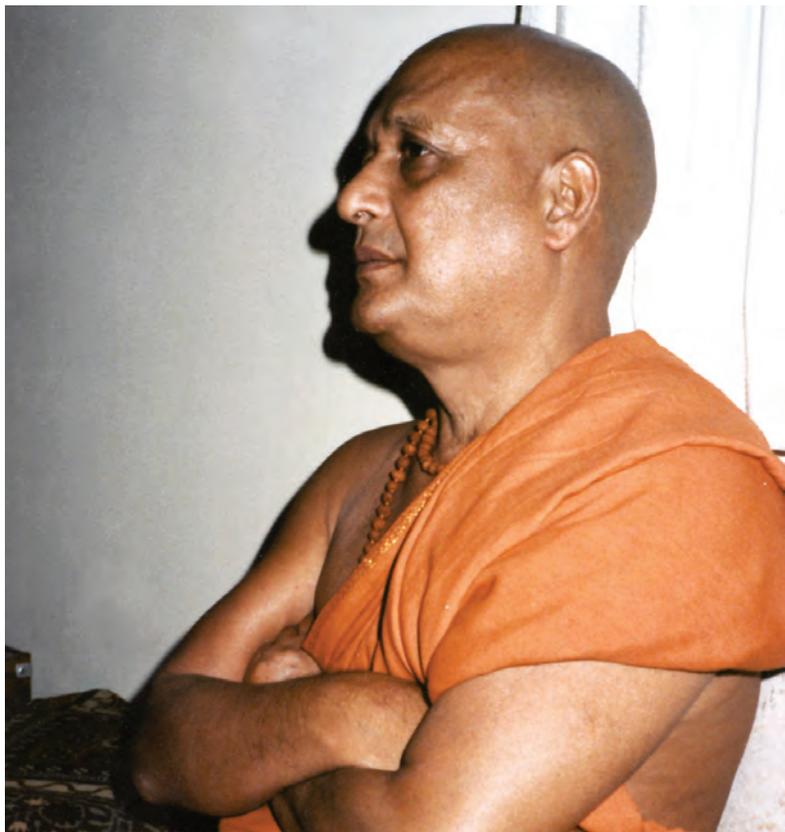
You cannot see your face in a dirty mirror, you have to clean it. So, the mind has to be transformed and when the mind is transformed, it becomes the spirit. Then who is to know whom? Who is to investigate whom? I am the seer and I am the seen. How can the knower know himself? So this is the great puzzle, but the way is experience. Investigation will not lead us anywhere because the investigator is either a little mind or a nobody.

There is a moment when the limitations of the mind drop and the ego is disintegrated. The mind becomes homogeneous, infinite, and it becomes one with the Spirit. Then self-experience takes place. What is that experience? Those who did not have it cannot say it, and those who have had it also cannot say it. So it is better to keep quiet.

– 14 May 1980, Copenhagen, Denmark

Yoga and Religion

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Do religion and tantra share any common tenets? Can a religious man practise yoga?

First of all, I want to make it very clear. Just as history is not geography and biology is not mathematics, economics is not English, religion is not yoga and yoga is not religion. A man having a religion can practise yoga, and a person practising yoga can practise religion. Just as a doctor can read a book on geography or a scientist can read a book on religion.

Yoga and religion have two different philosophical concepts. In religion everything is believed. It is hard and very difficult for one to establish that truth by any evidence. In yoga, whatever is said is an outcome of a person's experience. In religion there is a total authority behind what is said – God. God said it, so you keep quiet please. You have no right to say it is wrong because God said it. This is what is said in religion.

In yoga, it is the experience of an individual which becomes the basis of evidence. Your experience and my experience become the basis of evidence and if another person has some other experience, then my experience is not a final experience. That is to say, each and every individual's experience, his discovery, his research and his understanding cannot be considered final, but yet they can form the evidence.

In tantra, there is no concept of God as such. Shiva and Shakti do not represent an authoritarian principle. When I say authoritarian principle I always mean God, because according to most religions, not Buddhism of course, but according to all religions, God is like a policeman. He punishes everybody and he rewards everybody. This authoritarian concept is totally absent in tantra. The concept in tantra about Shiva and Shakti is exactly the same concept as you have in modern science, the concept of matter and energy.

Even the terminology that we use in English, male principle and female principle, is not written in tantra. They use the word Shiva tattwa. *Tattwa* means principle. Shakti tattwa or principle. While they are translated into English by modern people, we always write the male principle and the female principle. Matter and energy are two opposite poles of energy. You may call it male and female, it is up to you. In the same way, Shiva and Shakti represent the two opposite poles of energy. Shiva represents consciousness and Shakti represents energy. When there is union between the two, an explosion takes place. It is a principle like that.

A great scientist, Itzhak Bentov, who died in a plane accident in Chicago, was one of the most important scientists

responsible for discovering the principle of the propulsion engine. He has tried to explain the principle of Shiva and Shakti. He says, whenever time and space come together, they always have to travel in an opposite direction, and not in the same direction. If time and space have to join each other, they have to travel in the opposite direction. When they travel in the opposite direction, there is a point where they meet. The point where they meet is the nucleus, and there is a blast in the nucleus. That is the principle also in physics.

Time and space have to come to one point of collision. When they come to one point of collision, there is a blast. When there is a blast, then in yoga samadhi takes place. Awakening of kundalini takes place in you. If that happens in the external world, anywhere in creation then the blast causes thousands and millions of nebulae. The fragments are thrown into the universe, into akasha, the moving nebulae. That is how the world was created.

Time and space are the representative symbols of Shiva and Shakti. One represents the plus energy, another represents the minus energy. Plus means positive, minus means negative. They always live separate. At one moment, they come close to each other. Where do they meet? In your mind. They come closer to each other in your mind, and when they join there is a blast. So, there is no concept of God. Shiva and Shakti are tattwas, elements.

Kindly remember, tantric philosophy and yogic philosophy both academically belong to the Samkhya system. Samkhya is a system which does talk about God not at all. Even in Patanjali's raja yoga, there are only two places where the word Ishwara has been referred to. *Ishwara* in Sanskrit means God; one who governs is *Ishwara*. Only twice it has come in Patanjali's *Yoga Sutras*. Wherever the word *Ishwara* has been used, it has been used in order to denote your inner awareness, not an external God. It will be possible for me to define the word *Ishwara* because of its root. The root of *Ishwara* is to govern, to rule, the indweller, and that is inside you.

There is another important point which makes yoga completely different from religion. You can always subject yoga to any scrutiny and investigation – objective research, objective investigation. Through those objective investigations, it will come out with definite results; maybe some of the statements made in yoga may not stand the test, but we do not have any method to test religion.

How do yoga and religion differ in their respective cosmology?

The cosmology of yoga is completely different from the cosmology of religion. In yoga there is no such system that somebody created the world, and somebody created man and the mind. It is a complete philosophy which talks of evolution from matter to mind, and from mind to consciousness. That is how the whole thing has been evolving. The basis of this theory of cosmology can be found in Samkhya. The Samkhya sutras tell you how the whole picture came about. They do not say that God got up and said, 'May there be heaven; may there be hell; may there be animals.' No, it is not like that. They cannot be equated.

In most religions, God is the planner, God is the builder, God is the carpenter, God is the painter. God is everything, whereas in yoga the concepts of evolution, transformation, metamorphosis are systematically designed.

The principal theory of yoga is that every matter which you hold, it may be the mind or it may be an object, is not only that much. Within the womb of matter, within the body of matter, there is energy. Within energy, there is consciousness. You take a litre of milk and within it is cream, within the cream is butter and within the butter is fat, so the apparent form of milk is not the total quality and total constituent of milk. In the same way, matter is not the total and ultimate form.

If matter is classified, and if you can go deep into it by dividing it or by disintegrating it, you will find the ultimate form of that matter is not only energy but also consciousness.

It is better in my opinion that religion may have some similar practices to that of yoga, or yogis might practise some of the religious practices also. After all, I have a religion, you have a religion. Even if you practise yoga asanas, where does the religion come in? It is better to consider these two as separate, because in the next century, man will come very close to the reality of things, and it will be hard for the man of the twenty-first century to accept a God who is a dictator. We can accept the existence of truth in terms of what you call collective responsibility. Air, fire, water, earth, sun and moon, the stars and prana are also gods. Why should there be only one god?

The one-god theory does not appeal to me; at least it is like the dictator of some place. He does everything. He can do anything, and everybody has to be afraid of him. Yet you call him benefactor. There has to be a collective responsibility. This ashram is not run just by one swami, everybody is working. There is not only one swami, there are twenty swamis working here. My ashram is not run by one man, me. No, it is a collective responsibility. There are one hundred people working. They are also swamis; they are also builders. In this creation, there is not only one force which is in action. There are millions of powers in action. They are all gods, and therefore we must have the concept of many gods, not of one God.

What is the concept of the original sin?

It is a very important point because I am not supposed to interpret the Bible; that is not my subject. I do not want to interpret any religious book. Original sin itself has to be reinterpreted. It has more to do with atma and jiva. The whole story is Adam and Eve. Adam represents *atma*, the original individual self. Eve represents *jiva*. These are the two things that exist in us: your consciousness and the ego; your spirit and ego. They live close to each other. This *jiva*, the individual self, what does it do? It involves itself with the pleasures of sense objects. What you call Adam and Eve, atma and jiva, purusha and prakriti are the same principles.

Jiva is ego, and this ego identifies itself with the objects of the senses; that is the forbidden apple. The identification and the involvement of ego with the objects of this world are supposed to be forbidden.

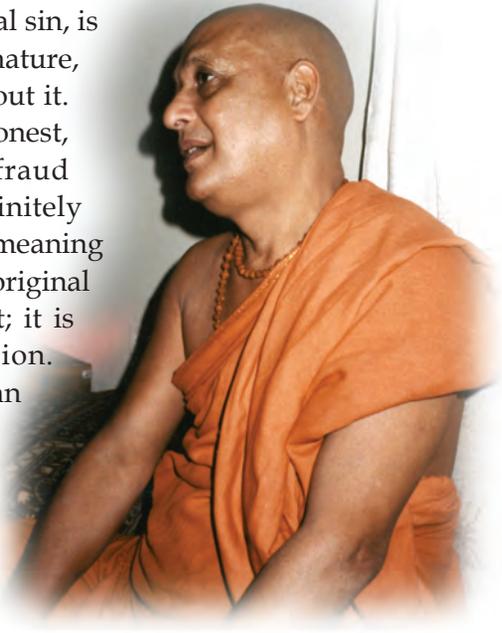
There is a story in one of the Upanishads about how they are forbidden. There is a tree and two birds are seated on the tree. One at a lower branch, another at a higher, upper branch. The bird of the lower branch is eating a fruit and spitting it out. After some time, the bird which is sitting on the lower branch flies to another tree, and the bird on the upper branch follows him. In the other tree also they are seated in the same position, and the bird on the lower branch is doing the same thing, eating a fruit and spitting it out. Oh, it is so bitter. Like this they keep changing trees and trees for many years.

Once the lower bird got frustrated because the fruit of every tree it was trying to eat was bitter and it spat it out. In order to overcome its frustration, it looked at the upper bird and said, 'Ay, why don't you eat?' The other bird said, 'You have eaten, that is enough for me. You have been eating the fruits of the trees year after year, incarnation after incarnation and you have not been eating at all, you have only been spitting under the impression or under the expectation that some day some fruit will be sweet. So, in order to experience one sweet fruit, you have been eating all bitter fruits and you had to spit, you cannot eat them.'

The bird at the lower branch said, 'Yeah, you are right. But what proof is there that I am not going to get a sweet fruit? I might get it.' He said, 'Okay, try.' So the other bird said, 'Why don't you also try?' The bird from the upper branch replied, 'No, let me be a witness. You eat and spit.' 'And suppose I get a sweet fruit.' The bird from the upper branch said, 'I will just witness it.'

This is how you have to interpret it. The relationship between Adam and Eve, atma and jiva, the fruit of the forbidden tree and the original sin has something to do with historical tradition. It has nothing to do with reality, because in reality what we

people talk about as original sin, is not a sin. It is a creation of nature, and tantra is very clear about it. If you are honest, if I am honest, if I don't want to play fraud with anybody, I will definitely say, 'No, it has a deeper meaning in life.' It is not just the original sin. It is not an animal act; it is not the outcome of passion. It is a means to explode an experience out of an act, just as there is a process of exploding energy out of a substance. As you explode energy out of a substance, you can also



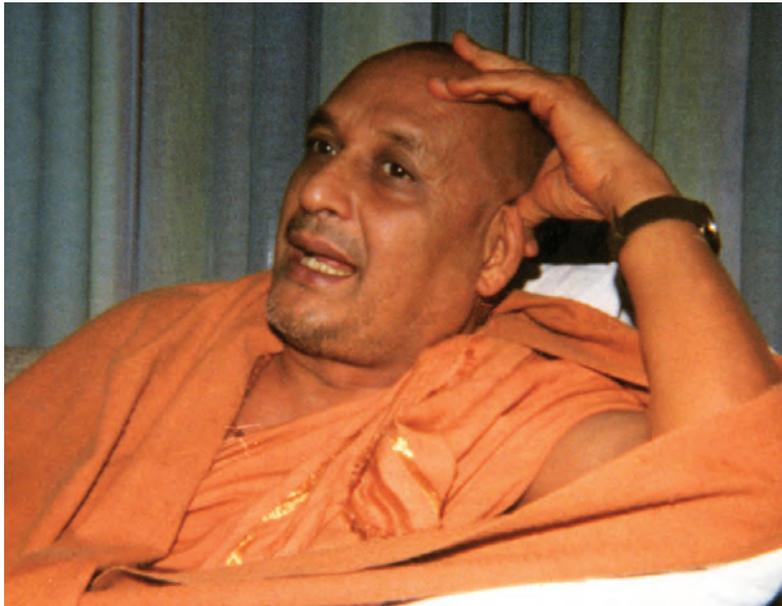
produce some experience out of an act. When you eat chocolate, you produce a taste. That is an experience. Every act produces an experience. That is called explosion.

This explosion is on account of the relationship between the senses, the mind and the object. When sense, mind and object unite, there is an experience. This experience can be had on a lower plane and this experience can be had on a higher plane. It depends on how evolved you are and where your consciousness is. If I give you one slap or maybe you give me one slap, where do I feel it? I feel it on the face. Did the pain take place on the face? No. The actual experience has taken place in the higher centre of the brain but I have felt it on the face. If I hurt my knee, where do I get the pain? I get it in the brain. Why? It is the centre of pain. It is the centre of experience. Every experience takes place in the brain. Every experience takes place in consciousness. That is also a very important philosophy of yoga.

– April 1982, Aarhus, Denmark

Satsang

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



How to maintain and reach a higher consciousness in our everyday life?

Well, that is the problem of humanity. That is the problem of every individual. We deal with the problems of our life with a small mind. In order to deal with the problems of day-to-day life, it is important to broaden the scope of our vision. I will give you a very true example.

Many years ago I was living in Rishikesh, India. The place is situated at the foot of the Himalayas. By the side of the ashram where I was living, there was a family. One day I heard so many people screaming in the family. I went there and I wanted to know why they were screaming. They told me that their old father had died. I told them, "But then why do you cry? He is an old man, he had to die. He was 85. You

should be happy he is gone." I gave them a lot of wisdom like this. For two days, three days, I gave them a lot of wisdom, but still they were crying. They were wailing and screaming. When I went to them they became peaceful, but when I left they started wailing again.

Many years passed. In the ashram where I was living, I had a parrot. I used to teach the parrot Sanskrit, and the parrot used to repeat Sanskrit to me. In a few years that parrot became a very good speaker, orator in Sanskrit. It used to wake me up in the morning at 4 o'clock, 3 o'clock, 2 o'clock. I used to tell the parrot in the evening, 'I have work and you must wake me up at 2 o'clock.' I used to put the timepiece on the table. At 2 o'clock it used to look at the timepiece and say, "Swamiji, please get up," and all in Sanskrit.

So, you can understand how much I loved that parrot. One day he died. I was very sorry. I did not go to the kitchen. I did not go to my duties. I did not cry, because that is not my nature. I have a strong heart, so I will not cry. I felt the death of the parrot, so much that I absented myself for weeks together. The news of the death of that parrot somehow reached that family. One of the members of the family came to me and said, "Why are you so sorry?" I said, "My parrot is dead." He said, "But after all he has to die." I got angry. I said, "You are teaching me wisdom." He said, "When my father died, you taught me the wisdom and when your parrot is dead, I will teach you the wisdom."

You see, this is the answer to the question. When their father died, I had a deepened consciousness. When my parrot died I did not have that consciousness, because of attachment. He had no attachment for my parrot and I had no attachment for his father. Naturally the state of mind was different. If you want to deal with the problems of your life, the first thing you have to learn is detachment.

I can make it clear by another example. There is a family of parents and children; the youngest is a girl. They have a maidservant. The maidservant takes care of the baby girl.

She looks after her day and night. When the baby falls sick, she wakes at night and looks after her. As a maidservant, she is doing all the duties for the baby. Sometimes she gets a bit tired and exhausted, that's all and nothing more. One day she receives a telegram from her family, "Your daughter is sick, come immediately." She is completely disturbed. She does not live with her daughter, but she is disturbed. She is living with the baby, she is working for her.

There is a very important point in human life, and that point is one of attachment. If you can involve yourself with your day-to-day life, without attachment, then the problem is solved. This attachment is with us because we are insecure. Because of this deep-rooted insecurity in us, we are banking on attachments. It is not difficult to remove attachment. You can run your family without attachment. You can love your husband, your children, your wife, your boyfriend, your girlfriend, without attachment. But we don't want it, because we are insecure. Therefore, the root cause is insecurity. If you reflect deep on this point you will find that the root cause is insecurity. Once you are able to eliminate this sense of insecurity, you can deal with your life with a higher mind.

What is the concept of right and wrong in yoga?

To answer this question, I will explain a little bit about raja yoga to you. Raja yoga is one of the four major forms of yoga. Raja yoga was actually founded by a great yogi, named Patanjali. He wrote a book on raja yoga and the book is known as the *Yoga Sutras*. This book is translated in almost every language. Of course, the science of raja yoga existed for a long time before him, but he formulated it. He divided raja yoga into eight grades.

These eight grades are known as the eight limbs of raja yoga. The first grade is known as *yama*, self-restraint. The second grade is known as *niyama*, regulation. The third grade is *asana*, postures. The fourth grade is known as *pranayama*, which is the breathing techniques. The fifth one is known as

pratyahara, which means sense withdrawal. The sixth one is known as *dharana*, concentration. The seventh one is *dhyana*, meditation and the eighth one, the last, is known as *samadhi* which means total awareness. These are the eight steps of raja yoga.

Out of these eight, the first two are supposed to be the foundation. The first one is called discipline. It is fivefold: truth, non-violence, continence, non-stealing and non-aggrandisement. It is very easy to understand these five. Everybody knows that truth is necessary for spiritual evolution, as are also non-violence and continence. In the same way, non-stealing and non-aggrandizement. If one practises these five, one will find one's spiritual path much easier.

Then comes the second grade of raja yoga, which means the rules and regulations. The first rule is purification, purification in every respect. Hatha yoga comes in here. Then comes contentment and the third one is self-enquiry, looking into your own light. The fourth one is austerity, penance. And the fifth one is surrender to God. These are five rules which are helpful for one's spiritual life.

Everybody understands that total purification of the body is essential. At the same time, contentment is no less important. A person, who is not contented in life, will have to face frustrations. The third one is self-enquiry. Most people do not understand and realize their own faults. It is easy for me to see your faults, but it is difficult to see my own faults. This is man's greatest tragedy in life and therefore he does not make any progress in his life. Just as you study others, you should study yourself. Then in the course of time, you will be able to pick up the negative elements of your personality.

The fourth rule is austerity. What is austerity? To get out of the luxuries of the day-to-day-life. Get out of your comfortable life a little bit. Get out of your luxurious food habits a little bit. Get away from your lovely friends a little bit. Whatever is pleasant in life, you should try to avoid for a little time. That is austerity. Austerity is a little bit uncomfortable, but it reshapes

your mind completely. It makes your mind and your nerves very strong. Those who are victims of luxury are very weak people. Therefore, in order to elevate your mind, you should rip it off from luxuries for a period of time.

The fifth rule is surrender to God, because the fact is that we are a very tiny part of an infinite creation, but on account of ignorance we have a very big ego. We think we are responsible for ourselves. If you go deep into the reality of things, you will find that there is a greater power than ourselves which moves us all throughout, from the womb of the mother up to the grave. Once you know how to surrender to God, your mind becomes so peaceful.

These two steps of raja yoga are necessary to be practised for better and faster speed. If you practise other forms of yoga, without doing these, you are likely to encounter a lot of difficulties in your mental life.

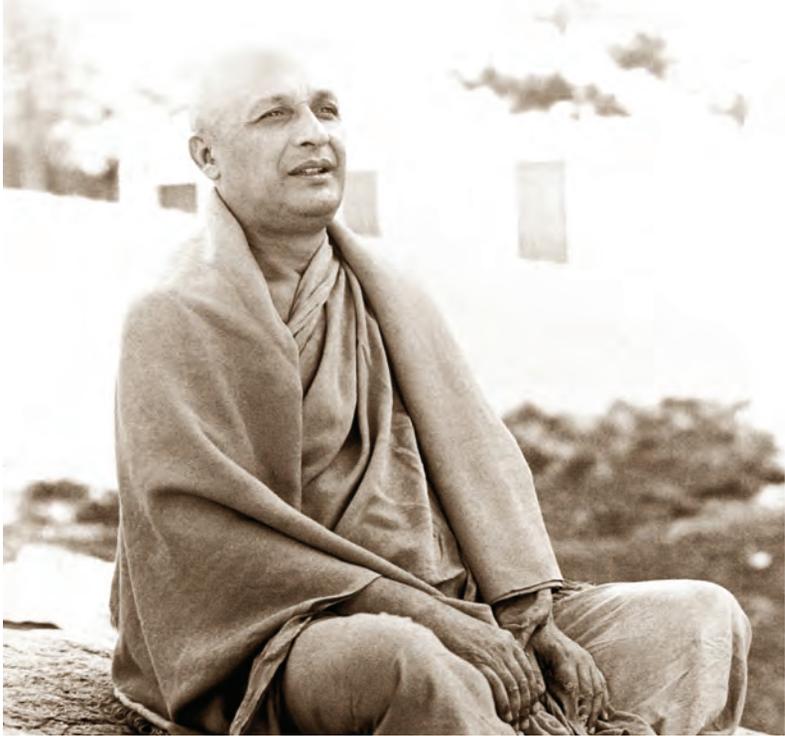
Imagine that you are practising yoga and you have murdered somebody. What will be the state of your mind? Can you make any progress in meditation? Imagine that you are practising yoga but you are very greedy. All the time you want to acquire things. Do you think you can make progress in meditation? Imagine that you are practising yoga, but you are always dissatisfied. Can you make any progress? Therefore, these two steps are the foundations of yoga. And this is the concept of right and wrong.

What is conducive to inner peace is right. What does not disturb your mind is right. What does not cause fear and anxiety in your mind is right. And what does not distract your mind from the path of yoga or life is right. But what disturbs your mind, what causes fear in your mind, anxiety and animosity, passion and excitement, or depression that cannot be right. Definitely, that is wrong. Therefore, according to yoga, the concept of right and wrong is very much based on its effect on the mind.

– July 1981, Finland

My Conclusion

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

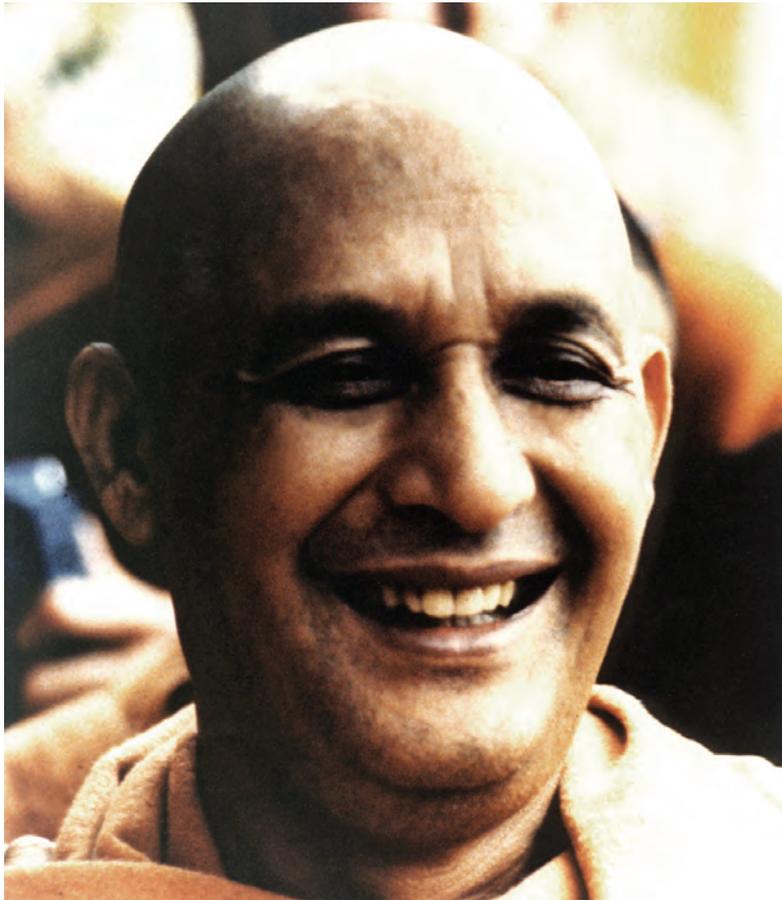


I have come to one conclusion in life. It is a privilege for me to be born as a human being: I am able to think of higher things in life; I am able to see the lower things in life. I can see the ditch, I can see heaven and I can realize and I have realized the grace of God and Guru. Therefore, the purpose of life is to realize that infinite reality within yourself.

Nature has worked hard on us. Through different incarnations, today I am born as a human being, and I have become aware of the purpose. The purpose is to realize the infinity within myself. So this is my presentation. If it is acceptable to you, then do it. If it is not acceptable, then find it out for yourself.

Satsang

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



How can one know who is the right guru? How to find out the right or wrong one?

How to find a right husband or wrong husband? Chance. It is a chance. You see, it is a peculiar situation. Suppose he is my guru – for me he is everything but if you look at him you say, “Who’s that?” If you do not like a guru, he is the wrong guru.

If you like him he is a good guru. Our assessment of a guru is personal. Our assessment of a guru is not free from personal prejudice, and that is why most of us are making mistakes.

If you go to a shop to purchase meat, you do not look at the man's nationality. You do not look at him whether he has divorced his wife. You want to purchase the meat and see the quality of the meat and get out. If you want to learn asanas you go to a guru who you are sure knows the 'science'. If you want to learn kriya yoga you go to a guru who you think knows the science. If you want to take sannyasa, you go to a guru who you think you can live with.

In my opinion, it is time for us to stop seeing the difference with good guru and bad guru. If you are good, the whole world will be good for you. You cannot be cheated if you are pure and if you are innocent. It is only the cunning, crooked and over-cautious people who are cheated. The innocent, the pure and faithful can get the best out of the worst guru. This I have been telling for the last so many years to everybody wherever I go, 'Stop making judgements.' You like me, so I am good for you. For him I might not be a good man.

Your assessment is relative and wherever we go we must take this philosophy with us. Go to all wise people, whether they are swamis or non-swamis and get the best out of them. You should be like a honey bee. Go to every flower, take the best out of it, the nectar. You should not be like a fly. It always goes to dirty things; not a good thing. We should be like the honey bee, we should not be like flies. A fly will always pick up the dirty thing first. A honey bee will take the nectar first. This is how every guru, every teacher, every master will bless you.

What about female gurus. You don't see many?

Oh yes. There are female gurus but our social situations are such that they are not in the open like male gurus. In India we have many female gurus. In my ashram in India I think there should be at least thirty or forty swamis who are undergoing training. They are Indians, Australians, Americans, Danes, Germans.

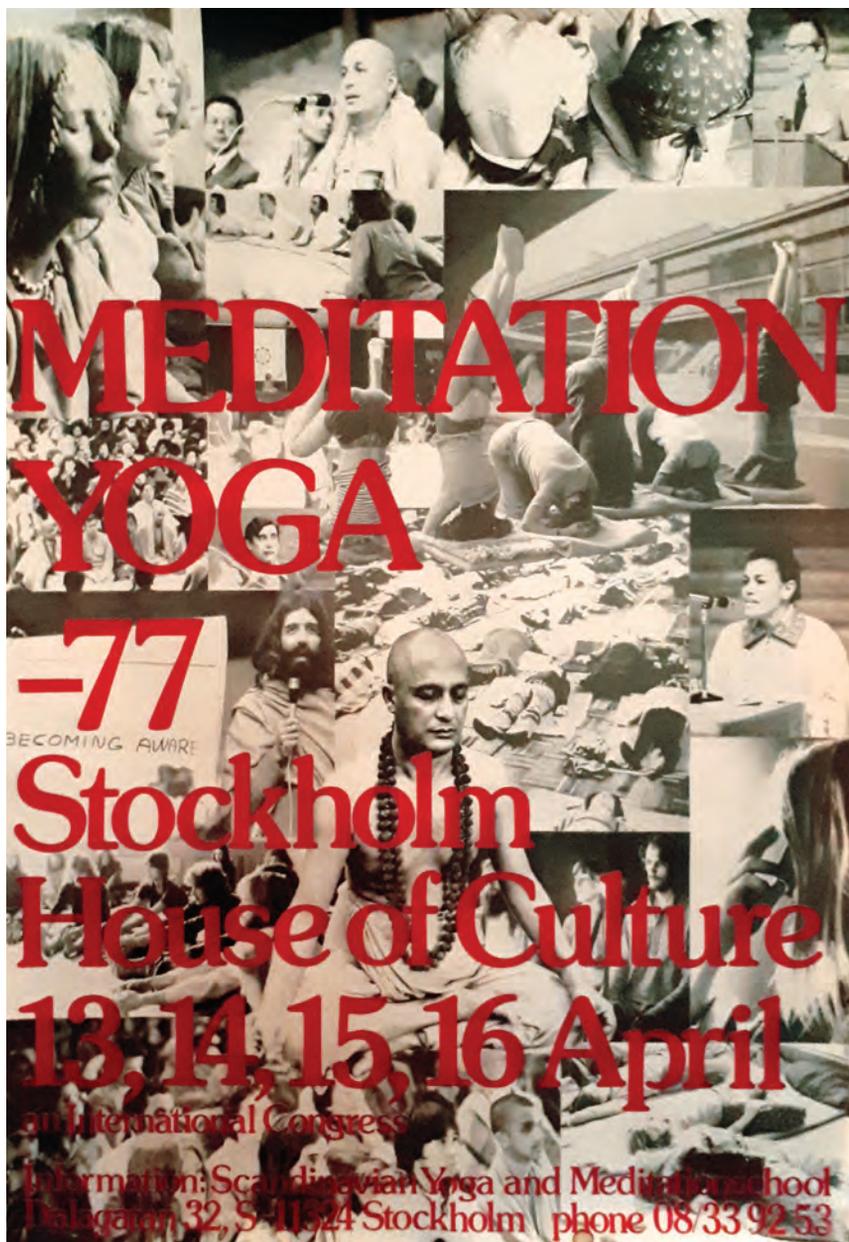
There seems to be a similarity between telepathic contacts, transmissions and transmission of energy. How does one find out that it was true and not only imagination?

Telepathic communication is a reality. Just like telephonic communications are a reality. All the minds are interconnected and we can mentally speak to each other. Most men are not yet aware of that state of mind. Therefore, we are losing the sense for communication. If I have to tell you something, I have to speak. I can do it even by thinking, but you are not prepared to receive it, because you do not know how to receive it. Therefore, both the power of transmission and the power of reception must be developed. As you grow in spiritual life, these faculties will also grow. Although telepathy should not be used, it is good to have some experiments about it. If you are able to read anyone's thought, you do not go and tell him what he is thinking. Telepathy and transmission work on the same principle. When your mind becomes quiet, automatic telepathy takes place.

Psychic Discovery Behind the Iron Curtain is a very famous book. There is an experiment; two persons tried telepathy on each other. First it was at a distance of about one or two metres. When they succeeded, they increased the distance. Finally, the distance was one thousand and six hundred miles. Then one of the individuals was put into the sea in a Faraday's cage. Even there the telepathic transference became successful. Like this there are many experiments, which are recorded or have gone unrecorded. These things should be practised, should be accomplished, but they should be renounced. They should not be utilized for any purpose.

Is hypnosis similar to energy transmission and how do you use hypnosis as a means of influence?

In my early student's life, I did practise hypnosis and even after I became a swami I practised it. Even now I can practise it, but I have no time for it. I think hypnosis is a completely different science altogether. In hypnosis, the mind undergoes a



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process of regression. In yoga, the mind, the *chitta*, undergoes a process of evolution. Of course, hypnosis and yoga both are links between the two poles of time. Hypnosis creates a system of what we call regress. During this period of regression, the person is amply or sufficiently influenced.

There are many diseases that can be managed by hypnosis and I have even tried to hypnotize animals. I trained my dog through hypnosis. It is a very time-taking job but then I had enough time those days. I succeeded in treating epilepsy through hypnosis. I had a chance to treat tuberculosis also, but I had to give up the practice in between. When I was a student I used to treat the children, the bed-wetting babies. In ten sessions, I used to stop their bed-wetting. Sometimes I used to make my little class fellows speechless, they were not able to speak. I used to say, "You can't speak. You can't speak. You can't speak," and they stopped speaking.

I will give you one example. In my class there was one boy who was very brilliant. During the examination time, he was very close to me. I told him, "Very difficult questions." He could not reply to one of the questions. So hypnosis is to create a process of retrogression in the brain principles.

Another important experience I had, but it could be purely personal I don't know. Whomsoever I hypnotized after say six or nine months, used to go against me. I created more people to hate me than to love me. The dog which I trained I had to shoot him. After about six or eight months, he was so angry with me that whenever he saw me he used to jump on me. I had to tie him with the chains and the moment he looked at me he wanted to tear me off. I did not know what to do and I did not know how to dehypnotize him. Finally, I had to shoot him. A very cruel act, but I had to do it. With a dog whom you love, how can he know it? After killing him he used to come in my dreams for months. Hypnosis is a science or therapy and I know that many psychologists try this science.

– 8 May 1980, Frankfurt, Germany

Totally Honest

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Yoga is our ancient culture. If you study your ancient history, you will find that yoga flourished all over the world as an international self-culture. Not a political culture, but an international self-culture. Humanity has needed governments.

Humanity has needed society, but much more than these, it needed a process, a way through which it could express its own creativity. Ask yourself tonight if this is in fact so, and I am sure that you will endorse my views.

Every individual, both consciously and unconsciously, is trying to be creative, right from childhood to the moment he dies. This is known as culture. We use the word culture in the sense of self-expression towards creativity, and therefore humanity has always been talking about creative intelligence, a creative faculty and about intuition. Therefore, yoga is a common world culture. I do not like to accept the basic assumption of most people that it is only Indian. India has been able to preserve the knowledge of yoga, while most of the countries of the world faced social, political and historical upheavals and cultural damage. India was able to protect this science of humanity through the help of the great tradition of swamis. We preach this science during the periods of crisis and times of trial, and impart it to our disciples. Today your culture is coming back to your home through all of you who are here today. This message applies to the whole of the nation, to everybody we shall meet, and with whom we shall communicate.

It is your own lost heritage that is coming to you; and this you must realize. For example, kriya yoga is one of the most fascinating sciences of self-evolution. Kriya yoga is one of the most powerful, simple and practical of systems that was created by your ancestors and practised by them. They felt that the evolution of the brain and intellect alone could not solve the problems of total and eternal existence. Brain and intellect form just one layer of our existence, which may be likened to an iceberg, with most of the potential hidden below the water. How then are you going to investigate and explore that hidden part of consciousness?

Many ways and means have been tried throughout history through which people could create, express, materialize and manifest these hidden forces in man. Inherent in matter is

energy, behind or inherent in energy is reality, behind reality is existence, and behind existence is what? According to tantra, there is bindu which is the origin of creation, the origin of man. It is the origin of the total cosmos, the ultimate manifestation. To explain it differently - inherent in milk is curd, inherent in curd is butter, inherent in butter is cheese, and so on.

In the same way, this mind through which you live, and this intellect through which you understand, is not the ultimate basis of knowledge. The beautiful paintings of Rembrandt, Goya and Picasso, and the great literature of the past and the marvels of science are not born of the intellect. They are not born of the mundane mind; they are explosions of a greater mind. To bring the mind of an individual to that stage where the limited mentality exploded into a greater mind is a system for which yoga alone has an answer, and which no other science has an answer for.

There are not just a few, but there are a great many practices which have been expounded upon during this congress by the speakers, and we have been learning many things from them; but perhaps the greatest thing or the most important thing which I have contributed has been in reference to the awakening of prana. Awaken your pingala nadi, awaken prana and heal your body, heal your mind, and then realize the pranic centres and the pranic being pervading the whole universe. You can transmit your prana through the ether, through distance, to any object you wish. You can transmit your prana to a flower, or transmit your prana with benevolence, compassion, mercy and good wishes to whoever you want. How many thousands of people could you rid of fears, agonies and pain in this way? This is tantra. This is yoga, and what we are talking about is a very honest science. We have never been dishonest in any of the claims.

Whenever we talk about yoga or tantra, we are being totally honest. I can give you one example to illustrate this. It is in reference to how sex should be understood. Sex cannot be suppressed, and the desire cannot be fulfilled. You know

this better than I do. There is no fulfilment, because you cannot extinguish the fire by throwing more petrol on it. It simply increases more and more. There is no cessation and no fulfilment. There is just no end to it. So, there are many people who cannot resolve their personal conflicts, and their solution is to commit suicide. Is that the best way to resolve sexual conflicts? No.

Tantra says that you should sublimate the urge, if you wish to control it. I think you would agree. We, the yogis and tantrics, have never said that sex is a bad thing. I say that it is a thing; that's all. We are saying that whether it is good or bad, it is left to you to decide, but you will not be able to fulfil it. You also cannot suppress it. You will have to find a third way, which is sublimation, transformation, conversion, diversion, transmutation, channelling. How does one channel it? How does one transform it? This energy is a very great Shakti. It is the most powerful force and it has not spared anyone from its power. We call it *kama*, we call it sex or the sexual drive.

Mooladhara chakra is the seat of kama. The desire to have sexual union is called kama, and this desire is a part of the universal Shakti. This drive can only be sublimated by the practices of yoga. There is no other way. There may possibly be a few medicines that can suppress the hormonal levels, or there may be medicines that tranquillize the sexual attitude. What these medicines do however is to interfere with the natural processes of hormonal secretion, and ultimately they could render damage to the brain itself. Religion cannot kill the sexual drive; it is impossible. History has served as a witness to this fact.

I am a student of world history and I have read in detail the history of the Scandinavian countries. There is only one way in which this most abused and misused force can be fully utilized, and that way is sublimation. Sublimation of kama takes place by means of a great resolve or sankalpa. From mooladhara chakra, mentally you draw the force up to swadhithana, and from there you take it up to manipura, and once it reaches

manipura, you are out of danger. Because, up to manipura, it can again return to mooladhara to the beginning. The kundalini energy 'wakes up' and goes to swadhsthana but it can again regress. It is something like a baby. You say that the baby gets up at five o'clock, again he goes back to slumber, again wakes up later, sleeps again and so on.

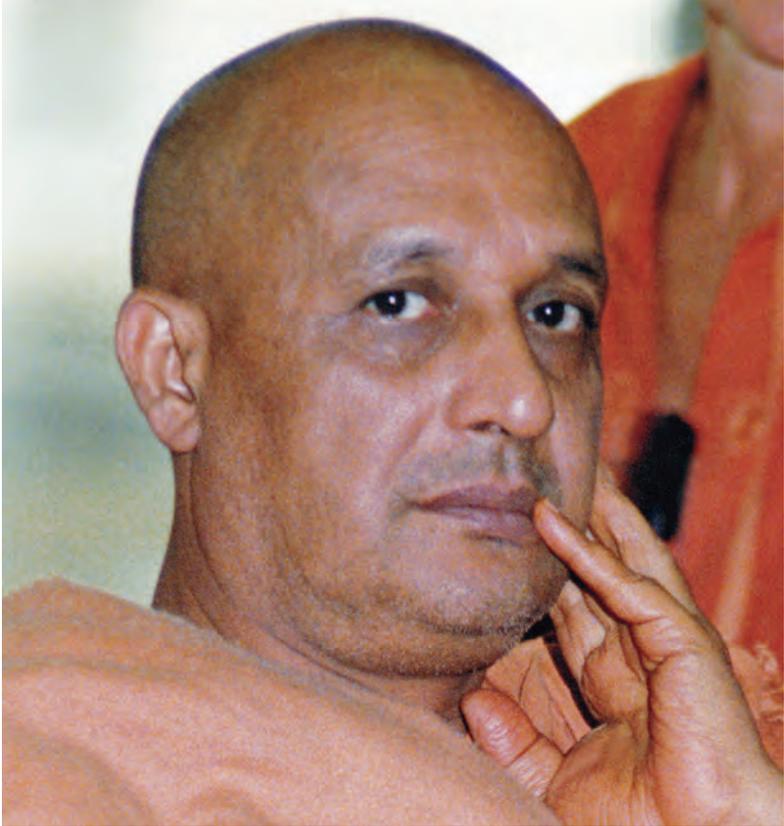
The sleeping kundalini in mooladhara is activated by pranic force, through pranayama, maha mudra or other related spiritual techniques, and for a moment there is an experience of heat and cold; a tingling like an electric shock, a quietness and tranquillity, a vision of beautiful swirling colours, of brightness, peace and bliss – then again it goes back to mooladhara. Up to the time when prana shakti has driven kundalini to manipura, you have to work very hard with yoga, your guru and with the practices. Once kundalini is established in manipura, the yogi never falls in his spiritual evolution. The consciousness does not alternate, nor does it regress. It progresses rapidly like an electric current.

This is just one example to show that yoga and yogis have always been truthful, honest, optimistic and positive. We have never been negative about anything. We do not say that sex is bad and we have no use for it. Nor do we say that such and such a thing is bad, horrible, ignoble or deplorable. No. The scientist has utilized every material on the earth; even the mud from which iron, copper or aluminium is extracted. Scientists have been creating one material after another, because for a scientist, every material is important. In the same way, for a yogi everything has a potential.

– May 1977, Stockholm, Sweden

Satsang

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Does the awakening of kundalini enable one to heal or predict things?

If there is this special awakening in prana shakti, in pingala, one becomes a healer. When there is special awakening in ida, one can predict things. Many people predict things but that does not at all indicate the awakening of kundalini. Healing the sick is definitely a very important thing, and for that purpose simple pranayama will do.

In religion they say healing is God's power?

I am completely ignorant about religion. I know very little about it and I don't believe in religion. I think that God is not a person. God lives at different levels of the universe. God is all-pervading and lives in different realms of the universe. As such any shakti, any energy, represents God. This is my concept but I have not thought about it, because I know there is no use thinking about God within the mind.

God is infinite and this mind is finite. How can the finite mind think about the infinite God? If I am blind you might put me before the sun, and say, "Look, the sun." What can I see? I have no eyes. God is beyond the mind; God is beyond the senses. This is what is written in the books which say the same thing, 'God is beyond the mind, beyond the senses. It is a transcendental state.'

So what is the use of thinking about it? Let Him think about us because we are very poor creatures. We are very humble souls, and we are very powerless. We are suffering mentally, physically, morally, spiritually, ethically, emotionally. Why should He not think about us? Why should we think about Him? If we think about Him is it not egocentricity? Is it not a psychological problem in us? Is this thinking about God a mental problem in us? I have been thinking along these lines for the last 55 years. Finally, I have come to the conclusion that we talk about the little things rather than the things that are beyond the mind.

I think a healer is utilizing his prana shakti. I also did healing for about ten years. I was a hypnotist. Even now I am a hypnotist but I don't do it. I did this healing for full ten years, with my hand, with water, plants, herbs, mantra or with a slap. I used many methods. I know what it was. I left it because I did not have time. I left it because the crowds grew too intense. I left it because once myself I fell seriously ill. I took over the illness of a few people, it became so difficult for me to throw it out so I said, "Nothing doing now," so I stopped it.

Do you think we can all develop those powers like healing?

There are certain types of people who can develop the power of healing more than others. There are some people who find it very difficult to become healers. In some people the pingala nadi is very powerful and predominant. Whilst in others ida nadi is more powerful and predominant. Therefore, people with predominant pingala nadi can be healers. It is also true that people born under certain zodiac signs can become healers very easily. Not everybody.

For physical and spiritual healing there are different types of people required. Spiritual healing can be done but that needs a greater amount of practice and a lot of dedication to the purpose. It is not merely the awakening of the pingala nadi. It is awakening the inner force in man that is responsible for spiritual healing.

Do you think that the American Indians have the same scientific ideas and religion as the yoga in India?

There is a big history about it. It will be too long a discussion on this point. When I have gone to the South American countries, to Mexico and many other places, I have seen great similarities between the Hindus and the people there, like the architecture, the symbols. In one temple I have seen Tamil script, I know Tamil script which is from the South of India. The Ganesha of the Hindu pantheon, the elephant God, and Garuda, the eagle God, and the style of the stupa and the type of the pillars is the same.

In English it is called Mexico, but the correct pronunciation by the Spanish people is Mehico. Mehico is from the Sanskrit word, mayaiko. The civilization of Mexico according to history is called the Maya civilization. The word Mayaiko has become Mahico, Mehico and in English people say Mexico.

This Maya civilization has a reference in Hindu mythology. The people who built the temples in Mexico, let us say, were the same people who built the old Delhi, Hastinapur. These are some of the comparative references we can find.

When we study the different tribes, like the Aztecs, Incas, Chibchas and many other people, we find a great similarity in their worship. For instance, among the Incas there were women, young girls consecrated to the sun. They used to live in a big temple in a monastery and follow exactly the same rules and regulations which they follow in India today. Since their society was completely destroyed and disrupted by massacres and wars, they could not manage to continue that organization. In India we could manage to organize it. There is definitely a little difference.

I have extensively toured the Caribbean Islands and I have met people there. I teach them yoga and initiate them into mantra. Many consider me their guru and they are my disciples. The way they behave is just like a Hindu. On the very first day, it seems my way of thinking and their way of thinking is not two, it is just one. I asked them, "How are you able to communicate with me on an emotional and mental plane, an intellectual or philosophical plane?" They say, "Our forefathers were Indians. But we came here, we lived here and although we follow Christianity as a religion, as a race we are Hindus." Their religion is Christianity, but their race is Hindu. There has been a link of yoga throughout the world, and sometimes in a few centuries it was lost.

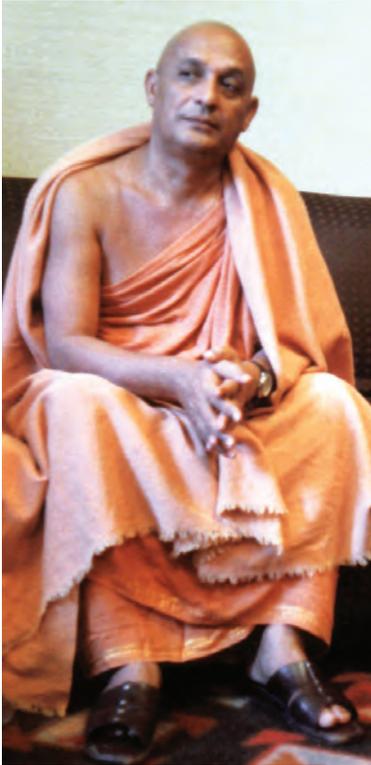
Would you say we have lost something since those times when they could concentrate and now we can't? Have we gained anything through time?

Materially we have, spiritually we have not. Materially we have gained a lot: beautiful house, nice roads, cars, nice systems, lots of guns and fighting arsenal. We have got much better. Our forefathers used bow and arrows. They were not advanced in that sense, but they were very close to the spiritual reality of life. They were much closer to the inner mind and inner soul. They were much closer to the reality of the entire universe; and we are far from it.

– 14 May 1980, Stockholm, Sweden

For You and Me

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



I thank all of you for giving me an opportunity to speak to you on a very important subject, necessary for this century. I came to Yugoslavia in 1973, when I visited Zagreb and Belgrade. Yoga has fascinated humanity for thousands of years. When you go to different parts of the world and study their culture and civilization, you come to know that yoga has always been an integral part of their culture in the past. It is only in the last one or two centuries that yoga received a terrible setback. Otherwise in every century and in every period of history, yoga has been with people in some form or the other.

In the last thirty years, hatha yoga has received prominence. Before hatha yoga received prominence, intellectuals were very sceptical about yoga because they thought yoga diminishes man's evolution. It was true also in some way or another, because those who taught yoga taught renunciation, abstinence and indifference to life.

Religion and Puritanism crept into yoga for many hundreds of years. Scientists, intellectuals and social thinkers thought rightly, that yoga was out of place. Thanks to the scientists, who are the intellectuals of our century, the effects of hatha

yoga have been thoroughly investigated in the last three or four decades.

In many countries in Eastern Europe, America, Japan, India, and some parts of Western Europe, teams of scientists, doctors, psychologists and psychotherapists have been studying yoga. In the middle of the century, or even a little before that, when hatha yoga came to the western world, it was only considered to be physical exercises. Therefore, in many countries they consider yoga as a part of physical education. Even now, in Czechoslovakia and many other countries, they relate yoga to physical education. In the same way, pranayama or breathing practices were known as the breathing exercises. But the picture has completely changed.

In 1962, a team of scientists, under the leadership of Dr Romonowski, Dr Alexandrovitch and Dr Tajukpasak in Poland conducted an extensive study of the effect of *sirshasana*, the headstand pose. This extensive research was conducted on a wide range of subjects. Not only a few people, but hundreds of people were exposed to *sirshasana*. Its effects were studied on various organs, processes and influence on the body, and a detailed report was published and printed in medical journals throughout the world. This article was amazing and very encouraging. The age-old belief of people that the headstand pose is not good for health and not good for the head was completely exploded.

It is not necessary for me to put those technical details before you because you are not medical men, but it is important for you to know something of their findings. First of all, they found that in the headstand pose, the ventilation in the brain becomes greater and the scope is much greater than when you stand on your two feet. That means that in the headstand pose the circulation in the brain is much more efficient than it is while standing. An efficient circulation in the brain means a good brain. They also found that the consumption of oxygen in the headstand pose was minimum. This means that in the headstand pose your body needs minimum fuel.

When you worry, when you fear, when you are scared, when you are shocked, your body consumes maximum fuel. The body has a limited scope for oxygen generation. Therefore, it is necessary to maintain proper consumption of the fuel necessary for life and the life processes. Not only in sirshasana but in other yoga postures also, it has been seen that the consumption of oxygen is minimum, which means you conserve oxygen for other times.

They have also found that in deep meditation the consumption of oxygen can be brought down to nil. It means when you are in deep meditation, you do not need oxygen to survive. That is why saints and yogis lived in caves without being affected by the carbon dioxide there. It was also found in the studies on the headstand pose that the respiration in the body was also minimum. This proves that in the headstand pose, the heart and the lungs are not at all exerted.

These results found by scientific investigations were directly opposed to the effect of exercises on the human body. When you do jogging, you use maximum oxygen. Any exercise you do is good, but you use maximum oxygen and maximum respiration. It does not mean that you should not do exercises. It is only to tell you that yoga and exercises are not the same. By external manifestations, they appear to be the same, but by scientific observation of the effects on the human body, they appear to be totally different.

In recent years, medical science has come to this conclusion: thought controls a physical symptom; thought creates a physical symptom; and a physical symptom can also create a thought. There is an inter-relationship travelling from one point to the other. The physical symptoms travel to the mind and the psychological symptoms travel to the body. Finally, diseases are not only the diseases we know. Man's behaviour is also a diseased condition. Your philosophy can also be a diseased philosophy. Your behaviour with your husband, wife and children can also be a sick condition.

Diabetes, blood pressure, hypertension, sciatica are physical diseases. Anger, greed, jealousy, fear are psychological and emotional diseases. Yoga takes care of both, but yoga is not a therapeutic science. In ancient days, people were very healthy and happy. They did not have ecological problems. They did not have social problems. They had a vast world and vast resources. They practised yoga for the development of their inner consciousness. They practised yoga in order to know the realities behind appearance. They practised yoga in order to know the world beyond time, space and object. Today, you have no time for this. If I tell you all that you will not like it. A few of you will like it, but not everybody.

Today yoga is being used for treating the sicknesses of the human body and mind. Yoga is basically, fundamentally and totally a spiritual science. Therapy is its by-product. Psychotherapy is its by-product. Philosophy is its by-product. Today we are utilizing these by-products.

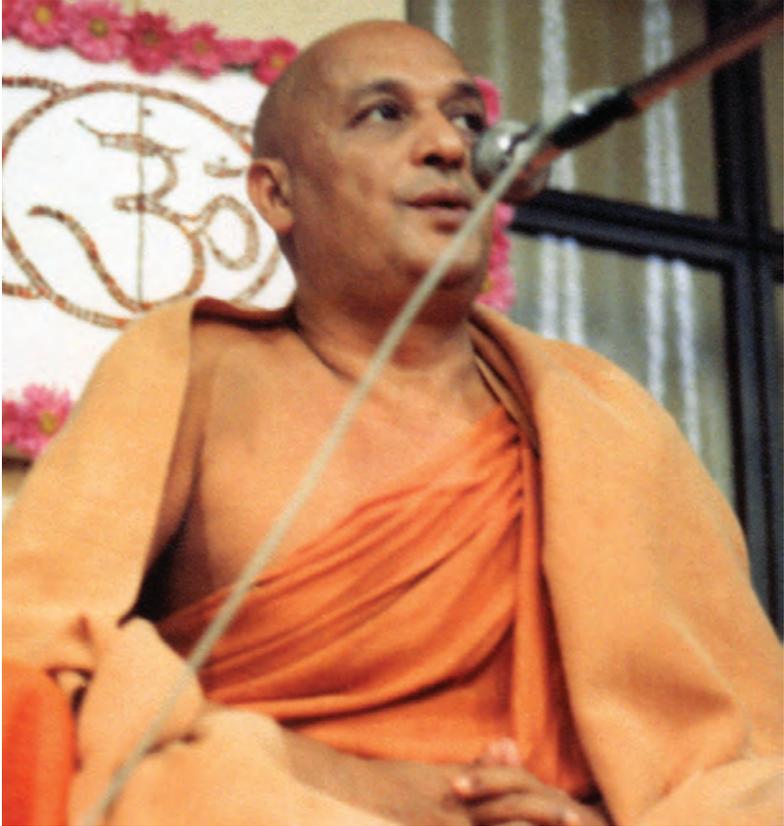
Before I conclude, let me say that man is a man, whether he is black or white, short or tall makes no difference. Whether you are very rich or very poor, makes no difference, whether you speak English, French, Italian or Yugoslavian, makes no difference. You have the same natural problems, and do you know what these problems are? Restlessness, lack of concentration, lack of faith in one's own self. Many people do not sleep well, many people are frustrated with their love affairs and money affairs, family affairs and job affairs. They have a fear of death. They are afraid of so many things.

Therefore, yoga is not only for Indians. Yoga is not only for religious people. Yoga is not only for pious people. Yoga is not only for old-fashioned people like me. Yoga is for a swami, a businessman, for a politician, an old lady, a ballerina, for a dancer, for everybody, for you and me.

– 21 September 1982, Lipica, Yugoslavia

Satsang

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



How do we resolve the paradox between the freedom of choice and the determination of karma?

One should improve the quality of mind and perception. Man has the potential of freedom. He will have to discover the laws. Scientists discovered the laws of nature and matter. In yoga you will have to discover the laws of the mind and supermind. In tantra you will have to discover the laws of the extra-terrestrial force. Then you know how to deal with the subject.

When man lives in his animal body, he has no freedom of choice. We are homo sapiens, and we have a consciousness. We do not exercise and improve that consciousness. Even though we have the possibility of awakening our consciousness, we do not do it. We live as animals do. Animals eat and we also eat. Animals sleep, we also sleep. Animals are impelled by insecurity and fear. Animals have sexual urge, we too have it. Then, where is the difference?

Why should you have freedom of choice if you live like animals? It is only when you transcend the instincts which control life, that you can have the freedom of life. Through your willpower, you can influence the child in your womb. Through your willpower, you can change the situation in your family. Through your willpower, you can change your nature overnight. Through your willpower, you can change any attitude, any habit that you consider bad. If you do that you can have freedom of choice.

Life is in your hands. You will become a master and life will become like a puppet. So, first change little things in your life, then big things in your life. Then change the course of your life. Life is not just eighty years. These seventy or eighty years is just one act of your life. There have been many acts which you have gone through, and there will be many more acts which you will have to go through. You may not believe in the infinity of life, but that is your problem. If a man is blind and he denies the sun, that is his problem.

This is, in short, the science of karma. What I have said is nothing; you will have to study this. Everything that you think is karma: your working in the factory, in the office is not karma. Your interaction with your children, wife and society is not karma. Every thought, every desire and every passion is karma. You drink one bottle of whiskey that is not karma. The desire to drink whiskey is karma. Passion, anger and greed are karma. It is very difficult to stop this chain of endless karma. The actions and reactions are equal and opposite.

Man has thought for many thousand years about how to become free from karma; he has not yet become free. He finds it easy to renounce the external karma, but he finds it difficult to renounce the inner karma, the cause of karma. Therefore, there is one way – try to realize your own self, and then the karmas will cease to affect you.

What does detachment mean? How is it possible to obtain it with the emotions, poison and western way of living which poses as a barrier?

It is a very difficult subject you are asking me. If you can get it, you are the master of yourself. In India, we have been thinking about this for many thousands of years. How to live a detached life? Why not renounce everything and go to the mountains? We realized that does not serve the purpose.

There is a very good book which most Indians study every day, known as the *Bhagavad Gita*. This book deals with this basic problem. It is neither the western society nor the eastern society, but it is in the nature of man to live a life of attachment. This instinct of attachment is so peculiar that it cannot only bind you by a big property, but it can also bind you through a small needle.

You may have attachment for a very big property and I may have attachment for a little gold, but the sufferings are the same. Therefore, you will have to analyze the whole situation. There is no use fighting with the items of attachment. There is also no use practising detachment now and here. There are certain procedures, preparations of the mind which bring you to a point of detachment.

Detachment does not mean disassociation with the objects, your people and property. Detachment is a philosophy, an outlook, a way of dealing with the matters of your life. Even if you renounce your duties and obligations, even if you renounce your family, friends, beloved and relatives, even if you renounce your present situation of life, even if you renounce your country and everything, or you remain half

clad in the mountains living on a little food, still you may be attached to your ego.

This external attachment to the object is an expression of your attachment to your ego. If you can detach yourself from your ego, it does not matter where you live, with whom you live and whom you love. This detachment is called *sannyasa*.

In the *Bhagavad Gita*, the dialogue takes place between Krishna and Arjuna and this is a constant dialogue on the nature and the after-effect of karma on man. After all, your suffering comes from the karma, your interactions. You think if you did not have family and obligations you would be very happy. If you had a lot of money in the bank and did not have to work, you think, 'Ah, how nice it would be,' you would be the happiest person. You think, 'I have to work for my family, my parents, my children that is why I have so many sufferings.' The *Bhagavad Gita* deals with the problem. The essence is, 'Work is not the cause of suffering; interaction between two individuals is not the cause of suffering. The consequences of the karma are not the cause of suffering. The cause of suffering is man's involvement with his own ego.'

Ego is *ahamkara*. This is your real personality; this is what you are. You must offer this ego either to God, guru, or a higher purpose in life. If you do not dedicate your ego, you can never practise detachment. Whether you have a family, or you are a monk or mendicant, it makes no difference unless you have dedicated your ego to somebody.

In the eighteen chapters of the *Bhagavad Gita* this is discussed and it is really a very wonderful discussion on the philosophy of practical life. The *Bhagavad Gita* is a book in Sanskrit which has seven hundred verses. It has been commended by great scholars of the world. Throughout the spiritual history of India, all the great people received inspiration from the *Gita*.

– 22 September 1982, *Lipica*

Vriksh Sankalpa - Nature Our Teacher

Prasiddhi Singh

Vriksh Sankalpa - Nature Our Teacher is an eco-yogic series talking of nature, culture and learning to inspire everyone not just to think but also to act.

A lesson from the Peepal Tree

Hari Om. I am Peepal, also known as Bodhi tree, Pimple tree, Peepul tree, Peepal tree, Pipala tree (in India and Nepal). In Sanskrit I am known as Ashwattha tree. My botanical name is *Ficus religiosa* and *F. religiosa* for short. I am known for my oxygen generating efficiency. I have a huge family called Moraceae with 38 genera and about 1,100 species. We are native to the Indian subcontinent and Indochina. I have been widely introduced elsewhere in Asia especially Gulf Asia and Central and South America. We are evergreen trees and are considered as perennial trees. We are fast-growing trees, our height ranges between 25 to 30 metres. We are tolerant to several climatic conditions. My family and I can live up to 2,500 to 3,000 years. I originated on the Indian subcontinent.

Now let me share my Top 5 benefits:

1. Health benefits from root to fruit: I have a treasure trove of health benefits to offer. My leaves can be used to extract medicinal juice, which is useful for various ailments. They can also serve as ear drops for ear-related discomfort. My bark has remarkable wound-healing



properties and can help reduce inflammation. As for my roots, people chew them to prevent gum diseases and find relief from oral health problems. Additionally, my fruit acts as a natural laxative, aids digestion and provides relief from heart diseases and asthma when consumed in powdered form. These valuable properties have been harnessed in the field of Ayurveda and continue to pique the interest of modern science.

2. *Economic potential*: I hold vast economic potential. My leaves, bark and roots are cherished in the realms of traditional medicine, pharmaceuticals, cosmetics, and eco-friendly dye production, offering opportunities for thriving markets. Beyond that, my deep-rooted cultural and environmental significance fuels tourism and conservation efforts, fostering sustainable economic development and safeguarding biodiversity in the regions I inhabit. I also draw investments in urban greenery by my air-purifying and oxygen-generating qualities.



3. *Environmental support*: Being considered as the Tree of Life let me share with you how I support the environment. My canopy purifies the air, offering fresh oxygen 24/7. I provide shelter and sustenance to countless creatures, thus nurturing biodiversity. As my leaves fall and

decompose, they enrich the soil, fostering lush greenery. My extensive roots combat soil erosion, preserving landscapes.

4. *My cultural essence*: I hold a profound cultural significance that transcends boundaries and traditions. I am the symbol of unity, community and togetherness, often the chosen gathering spot for social interactions and storytelling. You will find my presence in art, literature and folklore, where I represent themes of wisdom, growth, and the intricate interplay of life. During traditional festivals and rituals,

people encircle me with threads to convey their wishes, reinforcing my role in cultural celebrations. My serene presence fosters spiritual practices, encouraging introspection and a deeper connection to the natural world and our heritage.

5. *My connection with God:* I hold a deep connection with the Sanatan Trinity of Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. I symbolize this Trinity, with my roots representing Brahma, my trunk symbolizing Vishnu, and my branches signifying Shiva. Believed to be a divine council chamber, as detailed in texts like the *Brahma Purana* and the *Padma Purana*, I have been a refuge for Vishnu during a celestial battle. Lord Krishna himself acknowledges my importance in the *Bhagavad Gita* (10:26): “Among trees, I am the ashwattha.” As described by Adi Shankaracharya, I am seen as a representation of the entire cosmos. Additionally, it is believed that Goddess Lakshmi resides within me, and it was under my branches that Gautama Buddha attained enlightenment. References in texts like the *Skanda* and *Brahma Puranas* further underline my enduring cultural and spiritual significance, with the belief that deities inhabit every leaf, solidifying my status as a genuinely sacred and spiritually meaningful entity.



I worship Tulsi and peepal every day by lighting incense and lamps. Why should I not believe in this God? Where is the harm in it? Just because you cannot see God, you say He is formless! No, God has a form, but I cannot see it. That is why there is a symbol for Him. One should worship Rama, Shiva, Ganesha, Dattatreya, Tulsi, Peepal, Ganga, Yamuna, Himalaya, *Ramayana* or *Srimad Bhagavatam*. These are sattwic gods.

—Swami Satyananda Saraswati

Sankalpa - MEDITATE



So that was the Peepal Tree sharing its economic, environmental, sacred, cultural essence, and of course its health benefits. I hope you had a mind-boggling time while reading about the Peepal Tree. The Peepal Tree also holds a deep association with meditation. Two great examples of the Peepal's relation with meditation can be found in our culture; for instance, Gautam Buddha attained enlightenment under the Peepal Tree and the fact that our Hindu god's and goddesses conducted councils under the Peepal Tree shows how valuable meditation is especially under the Peepal Tree. Let Peepal's essence inspire us to meditate, promote kindness and work towards creating a cleaner and more compassionate world for ourselves and future generations.

The Peepal tree supported Lord Vishnu, Gautam Buddha, other saints and gods in their meditation below its branches. Meditation helps our mind, body and soul become more pure which is why I believe we should also do our best to meditate whenever possible for a happy lifestyle and positive world.

Now I will request you to please recite the pledge as you read; don't forget to fill in the blank.

I _____ promise to Meditate for myself and the the planet and help in protecting the Peepal tree. I will hereby take good care of the environment and protect planet Earth by planting more trees, spreading environmental awareness and living a yogic-sustainable lifestyle.

I hope you are following your Eco-Resolution Diary for the Palm, Neem, Sandalwood and Bael. To help you, here are



some questions for you to check how well you understand the importance of the Peepal Tree and its sankalpa MEDITATE in your life and how well you fulfil your pledge. Remember, you should not only think but also act. This is a weekly tick box for your Eco-Resolution Diary:

- Did I plant, water or take care of a tree?
- Did I talk about the environment to friends and neighbours?
- Have I been practising meditation to live a yogic-sustainable lifestyle?
- Have I told 3 people about the importance of the Peepal Tree or meditation?
- Did I spend enough time under the Peepal Tree every day?
- Have I started to include the Peepal Tree in my cultural tradition or worship?

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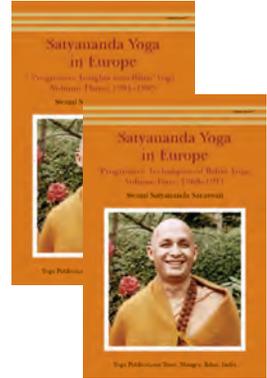
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