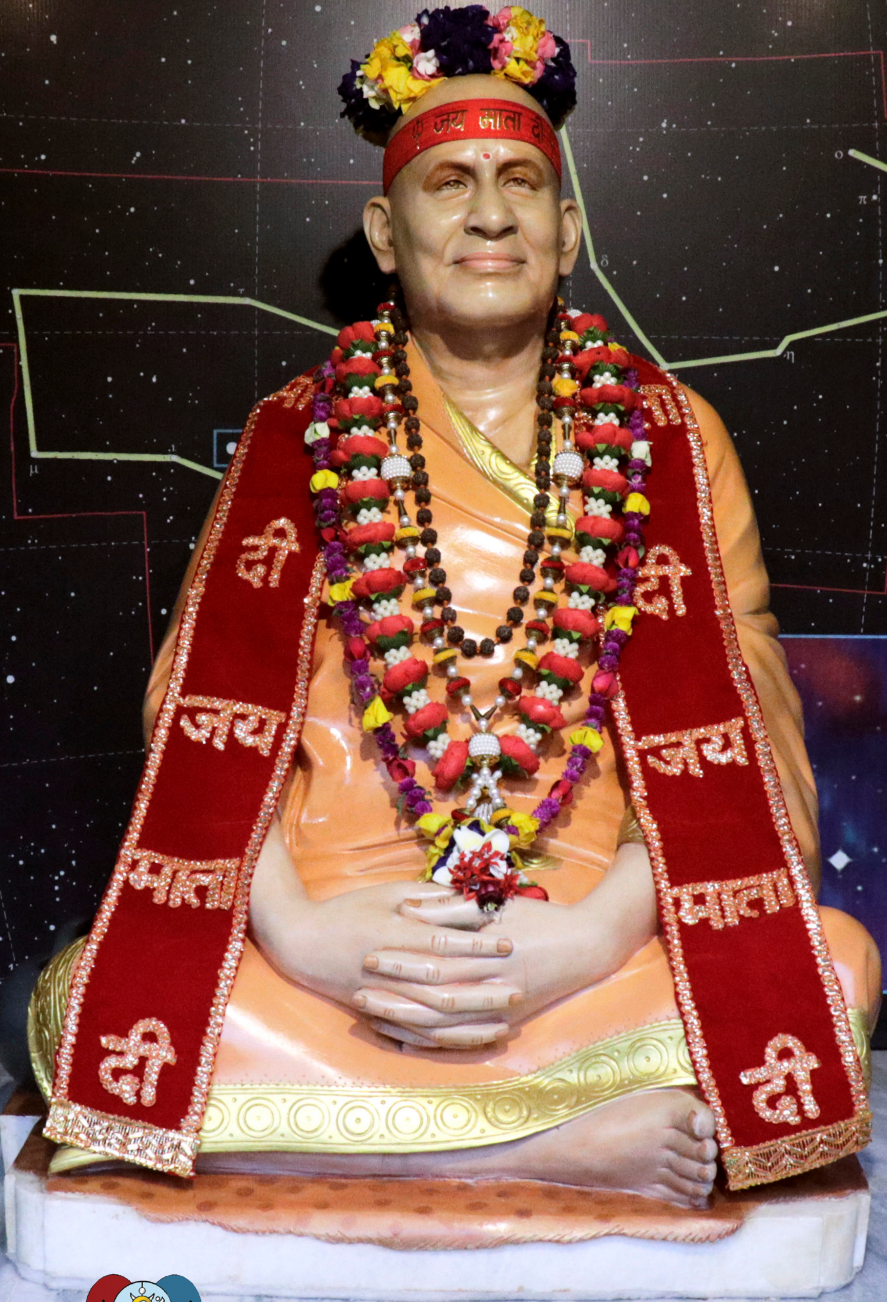


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YOGA

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September 2025



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Hari Om

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FFH (For Frontline Heroes)

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Saraswati



GUIDELINES FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

Positive interaction

Kindness is goodwill, humaneness and tenderness. Kindness is the cheapest of all things. Smile, serve, radiate joy. Speak kind and sweet words. Cheer up one who is in distress. Kind words soothe and comfort the hearer. A kind look, a kind word, a kind act, a friendly smile, all cost nothing but bring to others happiness which money cannot buy. They are priceless in their value. Kindness is the language the deaf can hear and the dumb understand. Just as little drops of water make the mighty ocean, in the same way, little acts of kindness make an ocean of goodwill.

—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 ॥

Indescribable

Swami Sivananda Saraswati

When one God dwells in all living beings, why do you hate others? Why do you use harsh words? Why do you exploit others? Why are you intolerant? Is this not the height of folly and ignorance?

Make others happy as you strive to make yourself happy. Speak a helpful word. Give a cheering smile. Do a kind act. Serve a little. Wipe the tears of one who is in distress. Render smooth a rough place in another's path. You will feel great joy.

Worship the poor, the downtrodden and the oppressed.

These are your first gods. Regard your neighbour's happiness as your own happiness, and your neighbour's pain as your own pain.

Smile with the flowers and the green grass. Play with the butterflies, birds and deer. Shake hands with the shrubs, ferns and twigs of trees. Talk to the rainbow, wind, stars and the sun. Converse with the running brooks and the waves of the sea.

Develop friendship with your neighbours, dogs, cats, cows, human beings, tress, flowers, etc. Then you will have a wide, perfect, rich, full life. You will realize the oneness or unity of life. This can hardly be described in words. You will have to feel it yourself.



My Prayer

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

I never tried evolving, moulding or developing myself. Everything has happened of its own accord, but the main reason was my guru's entry and presence in my life. Without him stepping into my life, the transformation would never have taken place. I was a hard and heartless person, but by guru's grace I began to soften.

Swami Sivananda would call all the sweepers and scavengers, feed and clothe them, give them tea, wash their feet, and ask me to do the same. My response was negative. I found it useless and irrelevant for spiritual evolution. However, being his disciple I cleaned, cooked and fed the scavengers. He also started a leper colony for about two hundred and fifty patients behind Kailash Ashram on the banks of the Ganga. I was given the duty of going amongst the lepers and the sick to narrate the *Ramayana*, but my heart was not in the work. My guru built them huts and gave them goats to rear because lepers are forbidden to raise cows. He forbade them to beg in the streets and would even send them bundles of bidis.

There were thousands of incidents like this in Swami Sivananda's life, which I saw with my own eyes. He believed that those who think well of others have soft, tender hearts. I used to accompany the doctors and distribute drugs and medicines among the lepers. I performed all the duties, but not from my heart. One who thinks ill of others has a hard heart which needs to be pounded. Prakriti breaks hardcore hearts. Your heart should be so sensitive that it responds immediately to another's pain. Before you are able to experience Brahman or the Lord, to see the light or experience enlightenment, you must be able to feel the tragedy in another's life. Otherwise you cannot attain peace. A compassionate and sensitive heart



attains knowledge effortlessly. The more distant you are from the suffering of others, the further God will be from you.

Compassion should flow from you. You should experience other people's pain as your own. Those who are unmoved by the

sorrow of others and insensitive to their feelings are unworthy of being called human. They share the four instincts of food, sleep, sex and fear with animals and their lives rotate around them. Now my teaching is that for a generous person the entire world is their family. 'This is mine, this is not mine' are the thoughts of a limited mind. The sum and substance of spiritual life, the best teaching of Vedanta, is *atmabhava*, which means feeling the pain and distress of others as if it were your own.

God is here and now among human beings. Look for Him where He is most needed, not in the temples where people are pouring wealth on His idol. That God is very rich, but the God living among the poor and the downtrodden in the guise of a lame or blind person is needy. Go and look for Him in destitution, hunger and starvation. Go to those houses where there are no hearths.

*Jale Vishnu thale Vishnu vishnu parvata-mastake
Jvaalamaalaakule Vishnu sarvam Vishnumayam jagat.*

Vishnu is in the waters, in space, on the mountain tops,
in the garland of flames, in every nook and corner of
the world.

This is a fact, not a theory. We who have enough of everything should develop the philosophy of *atmabhava* in our lives. When God inspires you to serve others, you take it as His blessing. The work being carried out in Rikhia is not discharged as social service, but in obedience to His command.

Swami Sivananda used to say that most sannyasins and sadhus were wasting their time in India. While the majority of people were dying of hunger, the sadhus ate good food and prayed for their own salvation. When I asked him what to do, he said that he had already said what he had to say. Now I fully understand his vision. When the *yajna* is being performed, I pray for the health and prosperity of everyone. Let everyone be kind and caring to one another and may no one ever experience any distress in their life.

Positive Connection

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Last year we celebrated the birth centenary of our guru, Swami Satyananda. As soon as that concluded, we started the celebration of the sannyasa centenary of our Paramguru, Swami Sivananda. On 1st June 1924, en route to Rishikesh, in the jungle between Haridwar and Rishikesh, he found his guru, while he was resting under a tree. That was a very special moment, for at that moment our great-grandfather guru, Swami Vishwananda, initiated our grandfather guru, Swami Sivananda, into the sannyasa tradition. The meeting was only for ten, fifteen minutes, between the two – the master and the disciple, yet the connection that existed within them, transcended place, time and space. The connection that Swami Sivananda had with his guru was a pure connection based on faith, trust and the feeling of oneness. That is known as *satsambandh*, the positive connection. Keeping that idea in mind, this year has been declared as the year of positive connection.

What is the meaning of the words – positive connection? What is the meaning of the sentence – to develop a positive connection? From my understanding and perspective, connection with everyone becomes positive when we respect, honour, love and inspire other people to follow the right path. We are also part of that journey. Telling people about the right path and also living that, creates a connection between me and myself, and between me and other people.

That was the theme of Swami Sivananda – be good and do good. Two small words, six letters: b-e-g-o-o-d and d-o-g-o-o-d. They are only six letters, yet they contain so much inspiration and teaching that the power of these six little letters is more potent than the explosion of an atomic bomb. These words indicate the entire goal and aspiration of life.

In relation to ourselves, me and myself, the connection that has to be developed is positive and balanced, based on understanding and wisdom. Objectivity and awareness: can we analyze how we feel, what we think, and know that this is sattwic or that is tamasic. Anything that is not positive is considered to be tamasic. Where negativity, arrogance, power, greed prevails, where all the qualities of life that we express as kama, krodha, lobha, moha, mada, matsarya prevail, they indicate the tamasic nature, and they colour the human behaviour accordingly.

Humans are not able to discriminate between their tamasic and sattwic expression. Human beings are not willing to acknowledge or rectify the tamasic. Rather, they find justification for the tamasic behaviour, and that is totally uncalled for and unnecessary. That is the trait that we all live in this world. As an aspirant of spiritual life, as an aspirant of yoga, or as followers of the teachings of Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda, one can at least develop an awareness of one's own thoughts and responses to circumstances, situations and people, and ensure that they are positive and do not hurt anyone. That is a challenge. Most of the time, we are in this state of tamas, as we are also trying to justify our actions without accepting that what we did was either correct or incorrect. Our association with sattwa remains a distant dream.

If we can connect with the sattwa, then we know what our limitations are. We know how we need to behave with other people. Even the speech changes. Instead of admonishing somebody and making fun one should know the limitations of sannyasa; one should know the limitations of people who come here and the reasons for which they come here. They come here for inspiration, they come here for direction. They come here to outgrow their own limitations and tamasic nature, and to connect with sattwa. Situations created by another person puts them off. Especially if sannyasins do it, they are breaking their connection with their gurus. They are also blocking the



connection, which the other person is trying to develop, by creating a barrier of negativity which begins to flower in the course of time.

The year of connection has to be understood in two different parts: How do I connect with the positivity within me and express that? And, how do I inspire positivity in others, so that they can also be uplifted? If we can keep these two ideas in our mind, then our life will change, our ego will be more balanced and our arrogance will decrease. There will be more peace, happiness and luminosity, that we can share with others, rather than struggling and firefighting every day with situations, events and people.

Teachings have been there since time immemorial, but are we capable of understanding and following them? What makes it difficult for us, is our own tamasic nature, and not realizing that it is detrimental to our own spiritual development. Masters in every culture and tradition have expressed positivity, they have expressed hope and inspiration, which other people could follow.

The year of connection gives us a lot of points to think about – how it applies to us and to other people as well. Respect everyone, honour everyone, love everyone, inspire everyone – to walk the positive path. Do not admonish them, for mistakes are made by everyone. We are subject to the tamasic nature, and therefore mistakes are bound to happen. Acknowledging those mistakes and ensuring that they do not happen again, is our strength.

We have to connect with that strength, and inspire others to also connect with that strength. For me this is the meaning of the words Year of Positive Connection, or the *satsambandh varsh*. Try to live it, for this is a once in a lifetime opportunity. For this year, there is a focus and there is hope. Hope is an acronym, which means **H**ave **O**nly **P**ositive **E**xpectations. Can you give that hope to other people? Can you remain in the luminosity of this hope? And as it says in the poem 'If' by Rudyard Kipling, 'If you do, then you are a man, my son.'

– 28 April 2024, Ganga Darshan, Munger

My Neighbours

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

When I came to Rikhia in 1989, it was a desolate place. The people living in my neighbourhood had no hope for the future. Now the area is humming with life, and the conditions have improved remarkably. Rikhia is the tribal area of the Santhalis. This state was once called Santhal Parganas. The Santhalis are the indigenous tribe, the original residents, and live here today. They have a great culture, greater than ours.

The Santhalis are my neighbours. They are good people who suffer from ignorance, illiteracy, helplessness and disease. They are poor but loving; they have big hearts and small bank balances. I know the villagers for eight to ten kilometres around me, and they do everything for me. My neighbours have been associated with the Akhara since its inception, and over the years they have worked ceaselessly to construct the ashram.

We utilize the services of the local people for digging excavations, installing pipes, brick laying, electrical fittings, welding, plumbing, carpentry and many other types of work. They maintain and service the vehicles, tractors, truck, cycles and motor cycles, even the UPS. We do not hire artisans or mechanics from the cities. Everything from painting to electrical work is taken care of by local artisans.

When we started construction, the Santhalis cleaned up the entire area before building began and plastered it with mud and cow dung. They are adept at using indigenous materials, and have very good technology. We call the masons *vishwakarmas*, divine architects, because they have given us so much assistance in constructing the ashram. The local people also look after the horticulture and gardening, and all live within a radius of a few kilometres from the ashram. The Santhalis are intelligent and skilled, honest and hardworking, but very independent. They do not pilfer or shirk work. Because of their character the



quality of their work is superior, neat and clean. We never have to worry whether or not they will turn up when required. That is why we hold them in high esteem.

I am aware of the problems my neighbours face in their day-to-day lives. Until I was nineteen I lived as a farmer's son in my village home. Then I spent twelve years in my guru's ashram where I led a much harder life without rest or comfort. After leaving Rishikesh I spent some years as a wandering sannyasin, including some time in Varanasi where I followed the routine of the beggars. In 1989, the people of Rikhia panchayat were living like orphans, totally ignored by the government. Many villagers around us had nothing to eat. Only when Swami Satsangi started visiting the nearby homes did we become aware of their pitiable living conditions. I thought, "My God, how do they live and survive?" She used to send rice, pulse, oil and condiments to such houses and people started arriving at her door.

My arrival has made a substantial change in their destiny. Almost one hundred percent of the children now go to school. We provide the older girls with bicycles so they can travel to the town for higher education. I have suggested that the widows wear clothes similar to normal married women and have offered them such clothes to wear.

We have established a relationship with these rural people. When I go for a stroll to the villages, the people watch out for me and the children say good morning. If they miss seeing me, the children start shouting at their parents, "Mummy, Papa, Swamiji has gone past." It is not because I give them anything. Love is reciprocal. When you give love, you receive the same amount of love in return. If I ignore you, you are bound to ignore me too.

To Succeed

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



What is seva? People say it is selfless service, but I wonder if anybody knows the meaning of selflessness. Looking at the word selfless, we think, 'Oh, I can be selfless.' Let me tell you, it is not that simple or easy. *Seva* means service, so how can this service become selfless? I will give you an example of Sri Swamiji, when he was in the Rishikesh ashram. One day, Swami Sivananda called him. There was a sick person suffering from leprosy, and he had boils all over the body, and pus oozing out of those boils. Swami Sivananda told Paramahamsaji, 'Satyam, go and clean his body.' So, Sri Swamiji goes to the leper and starts to clean his body. For many it would be a moment of great happiness and joy, 'I am doing my guru's bidding, and I am serving this poor, sick person.' However, the poor, sick person whose body was being cleaned, cried out in pain and kicked Sri Swamiji. Sri Swamiji became angry. He said, 'I am trying to help you and you are kicking me?'

He left the person and went back to Swami Sivananda, 'I am not going to do this seva anymore. I am trying to help this person and he is kicking me. He does not realize that I am helping him.' Swami Sivananda told him, 'Listen, the person is sick. The person is in pain. It is a natural reaction from him to react to pain. You are looking at the person and his body. You are not looking at the person inside him, who is suffering. You have no love for the person inside, who is suffering. You think that you are helping the person by cleaning the outer façade, which is the body. Remember that God inside that person is suffering, and it is that God whom you have to serve.'

This was the lesson that Paramahamsaji learned and later on propagated in the form of *atmabhava*, to see the divinity in everyone, to see oneself in everyone. Paramahamsaji later on described that seva is nothing but love in action. If you love somebody, then no matter what the reaction of the other person may be, the other person may lash out at you, or hit you, yet out of your love, you continue to help that person, despite every reaction of the suffering man. It is a simple thing, and many of you will now think, 'Seva is love in action.' Do you know

what love is? Without understanding anything, we try to do something to please our own sentiments. If I help somebody, it is I who becomes happy that I helped somebody. When I become happy, my ego also becomes happy. When the ego is there, how can there be love and selflessness?

In the ashram, people have different duties and responsibilities. They do not see that duty or responsibility as seva, they say, 'I have become an in-charge of an area. I have become in-charge of a department.' The ego again raises its head. If they see the work as seva and stop thinking that they have become in-charges, the whole approach to work will change. When the ego of the in-charge comes in, there is also a block to opinions of other people and of doing something in a better manner. One simply follows the ego, 'I am in charge. How can anybody tell me anything? I know what I am doing.'

Seva is thrown into the trash, and the ego of, 'I am something', comes to the forefront. This is the seva which everybody does. You have to understand that selflessness is something that has to be worked on. It is not an idea that you can express, it is a lesson that you need to learn and live. Love is not something that you can think about and express, it is an idea and experience that you need to live.

Sahayog

This seva is supported by *sahayog*, cooperation. People get too entrenched in their own selves and forget the idea of cooperation. I have seen people who go to somebody for help, and the other person simply says, 'Sorry, I can't help you. I am too busy doing my thing.' I do not understand this type of attitude or behaviour. When I was working for the Bihar School of Yoga, looking after the ashram, departments and people, I do not recall that I have ever said 'no' to anybody. If people would come to me, 'Can you help me translate this sentence?' I would take five minutes from my time and help the other person translate a sentence, as the other person was in need

of that support and cooperation. If I say, 'Sorry, I cannot and will not', I am denying that cooperation.

What harm is there if we are able to give five minutes to help somebody? We are not able to due to our entrenchment in our own mind. Somebody would come to me and say, 'Swamiji, this is the magazine. Can you look at it?' I would never say no. I say, 'Listen, right now I am a bit busy. You can leave the file. I will look at it when I have free time, and I will return it to you.' Paramahamsaji used to joke many times that Niranjan did his work in the toilet, as that was the only place where nobody would disturb me, and I would go there with my books and files and do my work. Paramahamsaji used to tell people that in the toilet, I had set up my computer, my library, my files. He used to laugh about it, but that was the reality.

I never refused helping anybody, no matter how busy I was. If I could take time off for five minutes from my work, I would gladly do it. If I had to see something which would involve me thinking about the subject, I would say, 'I will finish the job and then return the work to you.' I never denied anyone any help, support or cooperation, and that was me. Today, due to their entrenchment into their own mind, people deny cooperation to people who need it, and that negates the whole idea of seva.

Common sense

Another aspect of seva is common sense. Some people may think, 'I have to cooperate with everybody, so I am going to kill myself doing it.' That is lack of common sense. An example: a few months back, a girl came to me and said, 'Swamiji, I have been seeing the children of Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal, and I am inspired to work with children.' I said, 'Wonderful.' She said, 'I want to bring the training and teaching of Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal to different schools.' I said, 'Very good.' Then she said to me, 'I want you to help me make the syllabus and tell me how I can train them.' I said, 'Forget it! That is not my mandate. I am not going to sit with you and help you and prop

you up on the pedestal.' Like that many people say, 'Swamiji, I want to teach yoga.' I say, 'Very good.' Then they say, 'Can you tell me how to do teach?' I say, 'No, I can't. If you want to do it, you think about it, you plan it and give me the proposal. I will only say Yes or No. Nothing more than that. I am not going to help you in any other manner. It is your project. It is your plan and project. It is your brain thinking about what you want to do in life. Do market research, develop contacts, plan how you are going to approach the subject, how you are going to approach the people. Give it to me. I will look at it. If it is appropriate, I will say, 'Go Ahead.' If it is not appropriate, I will throw it in the trash, and you will have to rethink again.' That is common sense.

Then there are many people, who will say, 'Oh, such wonderful work. Yes, I will help you.' They will sit down, talk for hours and work out something, which is not the vision of the person who wants to do the work. You do not know the limitations of the other person outside. You do not know anything about the other person's plans and projects, yet you become the guide. Later on you discover that the paper which you had made was simply kept in the folder, and the person forgot about it once they left the ashram. You are wasting your own time and not doing anything constructive or qualitative. This is where common sense comes in. When do you need to get involved and when you need to back out? It is not just a mental whim wanting to do something, without understanding or even seeing the whole picture.

Seva, sahayog and common sense come together to make the result positive and effective. If you understand this you will succeed, and if you do not understand it, then, despite all your best efforts, you will fail. If you do not think of these aspects, your effort is not going to succeed. If you can bring all the aspects together, with simplicity and clarity of mind, then you will definitely succeed.

– 29 January 2023, Ganga Darshan, Munger

The Philosophy of Love

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

Swami Sivananda's life was an example of compassion and generosity. He was simple, devout and kind. His life was very different from most of the sannyasins I have come across. His heart was very large. He was happiest when he was feeding and giving to people. His philosophy in life was that God is real and everything else is unreal. His heart was completely open, without any doors or windows. He was not at all interested in accumulating wealth. He would say, "Spend more than you have. Feed the poor. Give them medicine. Give blankets to the pilgrims. For drinking give water during the summer and extend all possible help to the sadhus and sannyasins."



Swami Sivananda always used to think about others. Whenever he met people, he did not give spiritual lessons as I do. He would always say nice things and he would give them clothes, food and medicine for their illnesses. He could remember the names of each one of his acquaintances from thirty-five to forty years back. If a man had become old, he would then ask, "How is your grandson? He was in the eighth class. Where is he now? What is he doing?" You should know about the



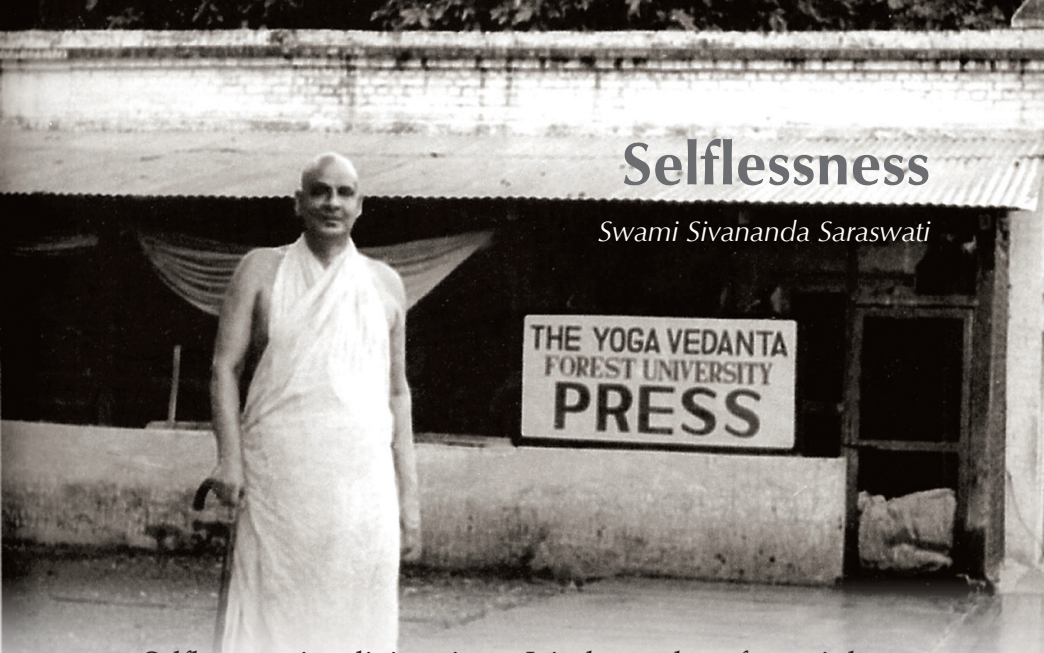
person you love. If I love you, I should know everything about you, especially your difficulties, ambitions and desires. If I know nothing about you, if I don't want to know anything about you, then I can't care for you.

The best thing you can do to help people is to love them from your heart. True love has no conditions at all. Even if a person talks negatively about you and harms you, still you should love him. I am not talking of love between a man and a woman, but of that love which is an expression of compassion for all beings. Love has to be defined in a wider perspective.

Although you may understand this principle, it is still very difficult to practise. True love is an act of unconditional giving, not taking. What Christ, Buddha, Mohammed, Zoroaster and other saints and sages have said about love is not easy to practise. The most difficult thing is to love your neighbour. You may have experienced your neighbour as your worst enemy. However, the saints did not say, "Love your distant neighbour," they said, "Love your neighbour," because they knew that he is the one who is always creating problems for you in the neighbourhood.

Love is an art and a science that you will have to learn. You prepare yourself for love by little acts of kindness. Whenever anyone came to ask Swami Sivananda for something, he would say, "Go on, give it to him." Once he completely cleaned out the whole ashram. We had no blankets because he had given them all away. The first thing he used to say was, "Namo Narayan, are you all right? Do you like chocolate?" The reply would come, "Yes, Swamiji, I do like it." So he would say, "Okay, Swami Satyananda, give him some chocolate." Then to another he would say, "O Buddhiiji, how are you? I have a shirt for you."

The day the philosophy of love and bhakti is understood by humanity, the world will become a place for the gods to visit. All the gods who are supposed to be in heaven will say, "Let us go to this blessed Earth. There is plenty of love there." But today they say, "No, no, no. We don't want to go there. They may take our luggage or purse, they may set off a land mine or we may get shot somewhere." When mankind learns how to love and serve one another, to be kind and tolerant to one another, to help one another and to share the problems, worries and ideas of others, then your family, your society and the world will be a better place to live in.



Selflessness

Swami Sivananda Saraswati

Selflessness is a divine virtue. It is the mother of cosmic love, a friend of spiritual progress, a herald of saintliness and an arch enemy of egoism. It is the jewel of the aspirant. Harmlessness is the offspring of selflessness, because man does harm only due to selfishness.

Selflessness is not merely self-denial or service done without reward. The experience of selflessness is achieved through beholding one's self in each and every being, including the wicked and the ungrateful.

Selfless service

Karma yoga is the yoga of selfless action, without the idea of agency and without expectation of fruits. It is only through selfless activities, unattached work and loving service that one can acquire the precious gems of purity, patience and humility. Wherever there is distress share what you have and alleviate human suffering wherever possible.

Selfless service expands the heart, breaks down barriers and helps to develop divine virtues such as kindness, tolerance, patience, self-restraint. There is a particular joy and bliss in vigorous selfless service. You get inner spiritual strength and power by performing motiveless and selfless service. If you

really want to grow on the spiritual path, you must do all sorts of selfless service daily, until the end of your life. Only then are you safe. Do not stop serving when you become a famous yogi. May we all work unselfishly with perfect harmony and healthy cooperation for the wellbeing of the world and for our own upliftment.

Half-hearted service is no service at all. Give your whole heart, mind and soul when you serve. Always analyze your motives. Selfishness contracts the heart. Selfishness clouds understanding. Selfishness is petty-mindedness. Selfishness is the root cause of human suffering. Real spiritual progress starts from selfless service.

Purify the heart

It is the selfish motive and not the work itself that binds a person to samsara. Prepare the mind. Unselfish work is worship. What is the object of selfless service? By serving others you purify your heart. Egoism, hatred, jealousy and all the negative qualities vanish. Humility, sympathy, patience, tolerance, kindness and pure love are developed. Selfishness is rooted out. You develop a broad and liberal outlook on life. You begin to feel oneness and unity.

When you serve others, remember that you work for God. You are only an instrument. On account of egoism you think that you do everything. So you get bound. Do every act as an offering to God and you will progress spiritually. Work will not bind you then.

Help and serve. Create harmony and goodwill. Pocket insults. Be absorbed in your work and give your full heart, mind and soul to it. Do not think of success or failure. Practise self-reliance. Keep a cool, balanced mind. Work for the sake of work. You are then bound to succeed.

When work is done as worship, it is transformed from karma into yoga. If selflessness becomes the religion of the world, there will be heaven on earth. Rekindle the light of love in the world.

A Model of Connection

Sannyasi Purnima, Bulgaria



What inspired me the most during our visit to Ganga Darshan was the transformation I witnessed – the depth of communication, creativity and humanity. If humanity is moving towards a new model of connection, collaboration and social significance, the ashram way of life is a living laboratory where these values take form as a vision of the future in practice. I leave with my heart overflowing with gratitude, love and joy. My inner treasury is filled. The ashram is a home for everyone willing to open themselves, to trust the process and to surrender to the wisdom of the tradition.

Your Mirror-Mind

Swami Satyasangananda Saraswati



Your mind is the mirror through which you see the world. Whatever your mind perceives becomes the truth for you, as you see it that way, but that may not be the ultimate perception. As your mind grows the perceptions change, and they keep changing all the time. Perception is actually a quality of the higher mind. The mind that perceives is pure awareness. Knowledge filters through it easily, as there are no barriers of time, space or object to hinder the free flow of knowledge. In fact, it can be said that pure knowledge is nothing but homogenous, unbroken awareness. Based on perception, the awareness keeps sending information to the mind to guide you.

On the conscious plane the mind has another source of information, the *indriyas*, or organs of knowledge and action. Sometimes the two sources contradict one another, and at other times one source of information is clearer or more

convincing than the other, so that becomes your perception. Sensory perception is severely limiting and often an inaccurate way of perceiving things. This is because the senses are finite; their existence depends on time, space and object. The senses cannot exist if these three factors are absent. The senses have limitations because of their finite nature. Moreover, they are not independent sources of knowledge; they need the cognizing powers of *manas*, the rational mind, to understand the information they receive and the discriminative powers of the intellect, or *buddhi*, to determine truth from falsehood. Apart from the mind and intellect, the senses are also governed by the ego, or *ahamkara*, which assesses the knowledge in relation to oneself.

Awareness, on the other hand, is infinite, having no beginning and no end. It is totally independent of the mind, senses, intellect and ego. The awareness, or *chetana*, is present in each and every one of us. How to develop this awareness is the subject matter of *Sri Vijnana Bhairava Tantra*. This is a very important subject because our performance in life depends on it at every level, whether physical, emotional, intellectual or spiritual. If you analyze carefully, you will discover that the sum total of life is not the number of years you have lived, but what you have perceived of it. Your awareness of life is, in fact, the reality of your life, more so than your muscles, bones and body. Without awareness or perception, the body would be of no use to you at all.

So then the question arises: if this awareness exists independently of the body and mind, where does it reside and what is its link with the body and mind? The abode of awareness is best described through a beautiful analogy of the lotus flower that is born and lives in muddy water, yet remains unsoiled and untouched by it. Awareness is all-pervading within and without you. It exists in each and every cell, atom and molecule that you are made up of. It is present all around you too in each and every form. Nature is sentient and ripe with awareness.

Bhakti

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

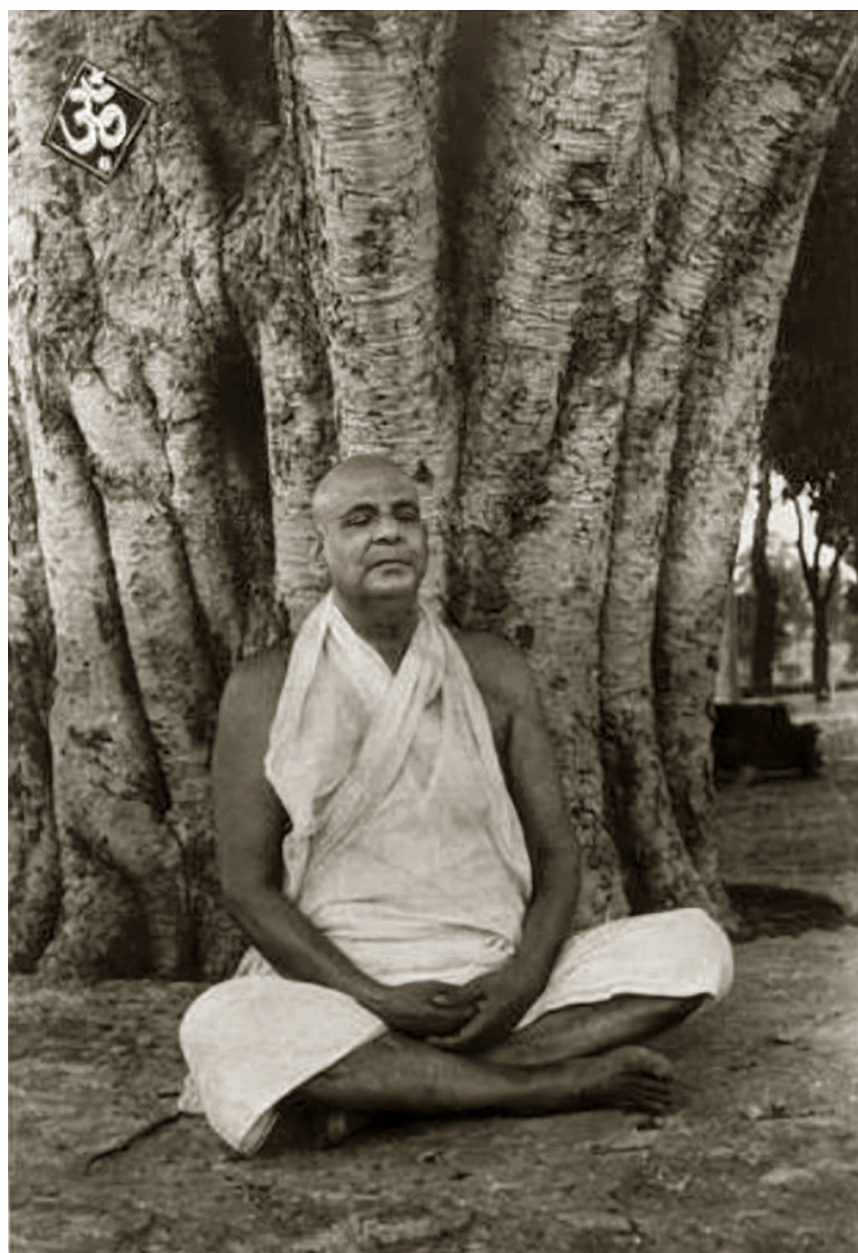
Bhakti will be the science of the twenty-first century. Scientists will change their focus from research into matter to investigating feelings, emotions, devotion and bhakti, and their effects on the chemistry, behaviour and experience of the human body and mind. Emotions are far more powerful and meaningful than matter. Faith and trust are the basis of bhakti. You cannot see them, but their effects can be felt on the body, because they are emotional qualities. You can know the cause through the effect.

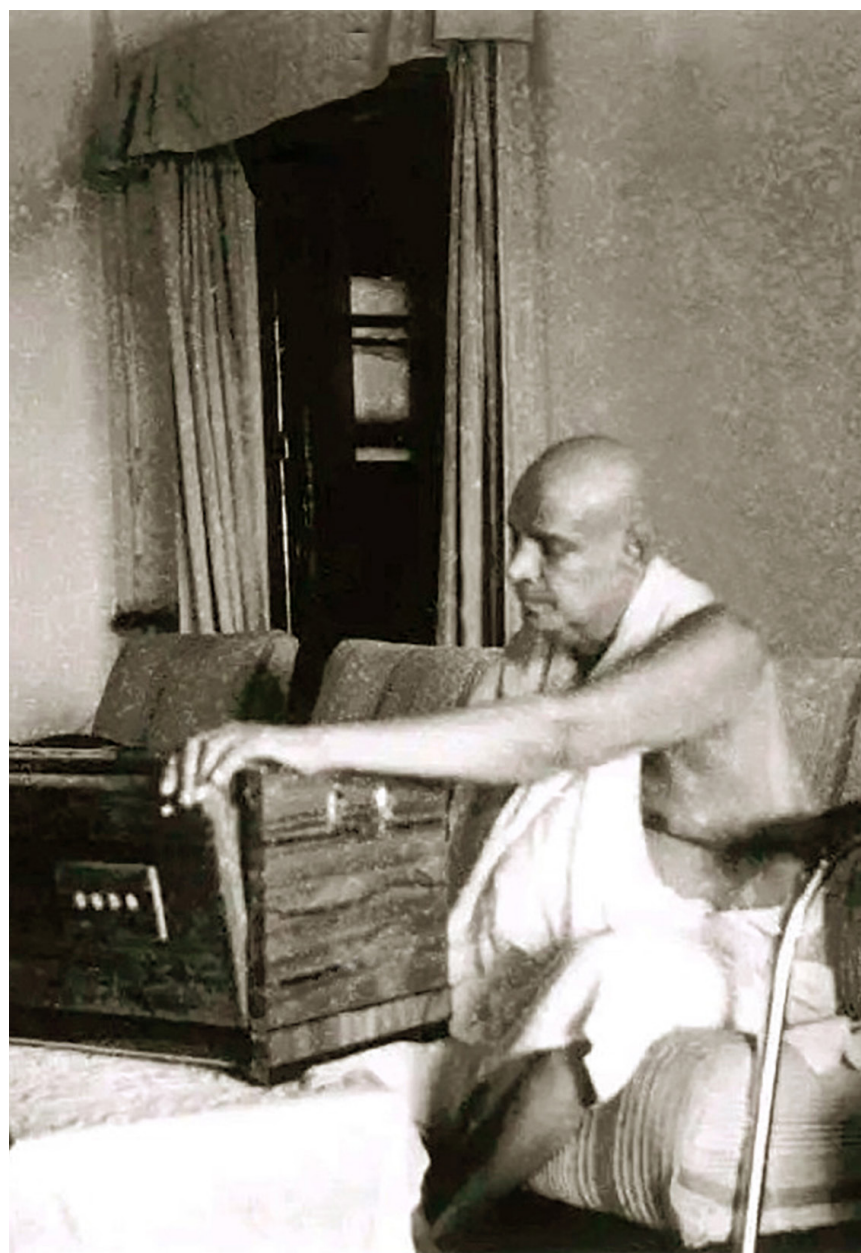
Scientists say there is energy within matter. We say that beyond energy is consciousness, beyond consciousness is the soul and beyond the soul is divinity. The ultimate essence of matter is God, and matter is the manifestation of divinity. We are all manifestations of divinity. Scientists will not investigate the soul, the spirit, atma, because they say it does not exist, but they can certainly research the influence of bhakti on the human personality. Only in bhakti yoga can the human mind stabilize itself easily. Once scientists begin to reflect on this, spiritual science will be reborn.

Bhakti brings about a transformation in awareness, like a chemical change. It causes a metamorphosis in one's thoughts, actions and mind as well as in reactions and lifestyle. These changes can be seen and experienced. Those who reached the ultimate stage of bhakti, like Mirabai, Kabir and Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, have told us that bhakti is divine energy, transcendental love. It is not the ordinary emotion of love. When your mind is fully submerged in something, it becomes one with that object. When you turn your love towards God, the mind begins to lose itself in God, and the chasm between the devotee and God begins to narrow.

The industrial revolution was a gift from the scientists and the bhakti revolution will also be their gift. The time will











come for redefining bhakti as a part of our personal lives and as a means of redemption from pain. If you were to search for an individual cure for all the problems in the human mind, consciousness and psyche, it would take a lifetime.

However, bhakti is a common cure for them all. Just as we have been successful in establishing contact with outer space, in the same way we will work to discover the many facets that comprise man's complex and extraordinary mind and behaviour patterns.

The subject of God has to be brought forth very systematically and scientifically. Realized saints and scientists will have to join hands to do this work. The preliminary groundwork for these enquiries and discussions on God and bhakti will be done by people who have realized divinity in their own lives. The twentieth century did not have many people with the capacity to inspire others to lead a divine life. Many preachers spoke about God, but unless God is in you and works through you that is not enough. Only saints and scientists or rishis can propagate bhakti and dharma. They alone can see beyond matter and dissect it to its smallest principle.

Whether you are on the Jewish, Christian, Muslim or Hindu path, you will have to direct your mind to matters beyond this world. Try to inspire your children to take a new direction. In Kali Yuga, the present age, there are two main sadhanas – singing God's name and helping others. Sing kirtans and bhajans, associate with sadhus and saints, read the lives of great saints. Try to draw their inspiration into your life. Give some time to serving God. You have served your children and parents, but you have not served your soul, which has always been your protector and your witness.

Bhakti is the path, God is the destiny and you and I are the travellers. I spent years believing that God was without name or form, but my views changed because I have been convinced by my personal experience. Something transcendental has to come as a focus for the mind. People have developed their emotions during the present era and now these feelings have to be redirected or streamlined. Bhakti is not just a philosophy, but a science which can transform your thinking pattern and basic tendencies. It is a force which will influence our civilization, culture and relationships in the new millennium.

Bhagavat Dharma

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Bhakti is not a philosophy, it is not a religion, it is not devotion, rather it is a way of life. The concept of bhakti started as a way of life, not as a way of devotion. From the Indian perspective, time is classified in four different stages or ages. Satya Yuga, Treta Yuga, Dwapara Yuga and the fourth age is Kali Yuga. We are living in the fourth age, Kali Yuga.

From all the records, scriptures, literature and history of the world available to us, it is quite clear that most of the religions have come about during the time of Kali Yuga. In

the other three ages, there were no formal religions. There was only one religion, *Bhagavat Dharma* or the religion of God, the most ancient form of religion of humanity, at least in the Indian culture and tradition. In the *Bhagavat Dharma*, the idea was that an individual who has taken birth in this body has to connect with the higher, the supreme, the transcendental nature. Human beings are subject to time, space and object, they are finite, whereas the transcendental nature is infinite.

In the *Bhagavat Dharma*, God was in his transcendental form as G-O-D having the qualities of generation, organization and destruction, G-O-D. It is the connection with this power, with this force which becomes the aim of bhakti. One cannot be without *jnana*, knowledge, which is acquired with life. One cannot be without *karma*, performance, involvement, action; we have inherited karma in our life. In the same manner, bhakti is also an integral part of our life. It is the desire, the drive to know where we are connected. The drive is the desire to know oneself; it is the desire to know the transcendental nature; it is the desire to know God.

Bhakti yoga lifestyle

How does one come to realize one's inner nature or the spirit, the transcendental nature? This happens when one is able to maintain one's equipoise, serenity and peace. When there is distraction and dissipation, there is no awareness, no focus, there is no attention. When there is awareness and focus, realization can take place effortlessly. To maintain the equilibrium in life became the basic teachings of bhakti yoga.

In all the literature of bhakti yoga, whether it is written by Sri Krishna or by authors like Narada, Shandilya and other people who wrote treatises on bhakti yoga, a few concepts are given. First, have faith in God, *Ishwar pranidhana*. Second, maintain your inner purity, *atmashuddhi*. Third, be equipoised. When you confront the opposites in life, the duality in life, maintain your balance. These three became the main ideas where bhakti yoga becomes a lifestyle. The nine forms of

bhakti as defined in *Navadha Bhakti* represent living a particular attitude, perception and mentality, a condition of life where you are positive, where you are optimistic, where you are able to confront the negativities of life with greater confidence in yourself, faith and conviction.

The first form of bhakti was the lifestyle aspect. According to the Bhagavat Dharma, God's religion, God is always indivisible, infinite, all-pervasive, omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent. God is something that no thought can conceive of, no eyes can see, no ears can hear. Somebody once tried to look at the form of God and nearly became crazy as described in the 11th Chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita*. To reach that inaccessible transcendental experience, you need to have a foundation on which you can build your own experience, your own process. So the manifest form comes in.

Vedanta says, the sun is up there in the sky shining bright at 12 noon. Take twenty plates, fill them with water and place them here. You will see the reflection of the sun in the water. The reflection that you see is not the sun, it is only a reflection, still you identify that reflection as the sun. The sun is up there, unreachable, the reflection here is reachable. You can create it. You can see it. You can have one, you can have twenty, you can have fifty reflections. These reflections, although not real, indicate the existence of the sun. They will give an indication of the power, force, light and the energy of the sun, although they are not the real sun. Being visible, that form will hold your mind. Your mind will not be lost in a limbo where it has to think of the unthinkable. If God is unthinkable, how can you think about the unthinkable? If God is beyond thought, if God is beyond perception, how can you perceive God?

The transcendental nature of God is the final one, yet the presence, quality, power and the acts of that nature can be seen in different manifestations of form. The *sakara*, the manifest forms, are like ladders on which you climb to reach the rooftop. Once you have reached the rooftop, you don't need the ladder any more. Once you have used the manifest form to direct your mind,

to identify with that transcendental nature, then eventually the form drops away and you merge with the transcendental nature. Each individual was free to decide their own symbol of faith and reverence, according to the Bhagavat Dharma.

Bhagavat and Pashupat Dharmas

There are only two religions, the most ancient religions in the world: one is the Bhagavat Dharma and one is the Shaiva or Pashupat Dharma. Pashupat Dharma is the same as Bhagavat Dharma but in relation to Shiva, explaining the transcendental nature of Shiva and Shakti. Bhagavat Dharma is the same, but uses different names, Brahman and Maya. Bhagavat Dharma represents the vedantic approach and Pashupat Dharma represents the Shaivite, tantric approach. Names may differ, concepts may differ, yet the underlying idea is the same: we are subject to the senses and mind; we are subject to karmas and destiny. As long as we are subject to the senses and mind, karma and destiny, we are like animals, who are being controlled and guided. The master, the controller is only one. Who's the master? The transcendental being. This is the tantric view.

The vedantic view is that when you look at yourself in the mirror, you see the reflection and you say that is me. You are one side of the mirror. Why are you pointing to the reflection and saying that is me? So you identify with the unreal, the reflection as yourself. You forget the real you. Instead of saying, 'That is me,' you should say, 'That is my reflection.' You don't say, 'That is my reflection.' You say, 'That is me.' The choice of words represents the self-centred perception of body and identity. When you know that the reflection is not you, but 'That is you,' then realization takes place in Vedanta.

The Bhagavat Dharma and Pashupat Dharma state clearly that you are free to decide what is going to be your symbol. In that symbol you should perceive the innate quality which will propel you to a higher dimension of existence. Each one of us is attracted to a particular innate quality. Some people are attracted to love, contact, touch, feeling. Some people are

sensitive to sympathy. They only want sympathy. The people who want sympathy don't really need love, they only need sympathy. Those who want love, they don't need anything else. They only need love. After all, each person's mind reacts and behaves in a particular manner.

Lifestyle

A negative person will always see the world negatively. If you happen to be smiling and the person looks at you, the person will begin to think, 'He is making jokes about me.' You are smiling for your own reason, but your smile is taken with suspicion, as being against the person. Each one expresses a particular quality, each one is attracted to that quality. Each one demands a particular quality by nature, and each one has a particular, deep-rooted, unconscious desire to identify with a particular quality or condition in life. Maybe you don't know how to understand or express it or even realize it, still it is there. That quality is the appropriate one for you and it is that quality which has to be identified in the *sakara*, in the manifest form. Meditation on that manifest form leads to the *nirakara*, unmanifest dimension, while maintaining the balance and purity in all the opposites of life. This is the actual bhakti yoga.

In the course of time, the first concept of bhakti evolved into, 'How do I connect with my inner nature?' The first transformation in this idea takes place when bhakti becomes a lifestyle: keeping one's balance, equilibrium, peace, equipoise in the destructive, distracting, disturbing and conflicting situations and conditions. The ability to retain one's own serenity and purity, and the connection with strength, optimism, positivity, creativity, trust and faith constitute the lifestyle component of bhakti.

In Kali Yuga, the advent of different pocket religions started to incorporate principles of bhakti to reinforce their own belief and connection with that belief. Different aspects of bhakti were incorporated by different religious sects and bhakti became part of religion in the form of worship, devotion and adoration. This is another transformation in bhakti.



First was the basic idea of the connection between the individual and the divine. Second came the attainment of this by regulating one's lifestyle, mind, emotions and feelings. Then came the integration of bhakti concepts with religious precepts. This was so highlighted in the course of time by different groups trying to outdo each other that the lifestyle aspect of bhakti receded into the background. Only the religious concept remained in society. Yoga has not maintained the religious concept. Yoga still maintains the lifestyle concept of bhakti.

– 23 March 2009, Ganga Darshan, Munger

Three Components of Life

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

The cultivation of Vedanta and atmabhava is to live the teachings, not just to understand the teachings. Though people understand the teachings, they do not live them. Swami Sivananda lived them, and that was the difference. Yoga, Vedanta, seva and bhakti became the foundation for launching his vision of living a divine life. The divine life is a way of life that everyone can live. Right now you are living material, sensorial lives, and just as one lives this kind of a life, in the same manner you can live the divine life too. You can do this by cultivating the appropriate understanding, awareness and virtues that uplift human nature and consciousness, and that uplift human society as well.

One person endowed with a particular quality can influence the entire society. Buddha was endowed with one quality and he influenced the entire society with that quality of ahimsa as compassion. Mahavir was endowed with these qualities and he influenced the entire society. Those people who live a qualitative life become the beacons of inspiration for people in society who are searching for a way to overcome their limitations and stress in life.

These are the teachings of Swami Sivananda that he gave to his disciples who became masters of Vedanta, masters of yoga and seva. Yes, mastery of Vedanta is an achievement, mastery of yoga is an achievement, and mastery in seva is the highest achievement.

Vedanta, yoga and bhakti represent three components of life. Vedanta is attitude, bhakti is involvement, and yoga is personal change and transformation. Personal change and transformation of body and mind, cultivation of a spiritual attitude, and involvement in the service of others is the path defined by Swami Sivananda and these are the three methods which he chose to achieve these components.

For the cultivation of a spiritual attitude, he chose Vedanta. Vedanta cultivates and develops the right way to think, to perceive and to fine-tune the gross mind. One learns the way to disconnect the mind from its attraction to the world of senses and sense objects and to reconnect the mind with its source of strength. The subject of Vedanta is attitudinal.

The attainment of health – physical, psychological and spiritual – comes through yoga. Along with this, the cultivation of awareness and the development of *sanyam* or restraint in life arises through the practice of yoga as a sadhana. Awareness and sanyam are also developed through bhakti and through involvement in seva, where you do not identify yourself as the doer or the enjoyer in the world, rather as a medium through which you are guided to live your dharma in life and where karmas become an offering to the divine.

After having defined these three approaches of Vedanta, yoga and bhakti for the integrated development of human nature, Swami Sivananda emphasized the cultivation of selfless qualities. He used to say that God-realization happens when you become selfless and ‘God-imagination’ happens when you are selfish. Now, this is a peculiar statement about ‘God-imagination’ and God-realization.

Do you know what is ‘God-imagination’? You sit down, close your eyes and try to imagine light and angels all around you. When you are trying to visualize lights and angels around you this is God-imagination, and that is what people do in their meditation. God-realization happens when you allow the mind to express its own nature and to sublimate itself; after sublimation, God-realization will happen by itself. Therefore, the effort has to be in sublimating and not in imagining. These three methods become the way to sublimate the gross human nature, cultivate the divine human nature and live a divine life.

Atmabhava

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Swami Satyananda says that the best way to experience God in one's life, is to cultivate *atmabhava*, the ability to see oneself in others, and that is the most practical way too. For instance, you have a family, you have children, and if your child falls sick, you will worry about this child incessantly. If the child has high fever, you will worry about the fever and spend sleepless nights until the child gets better. Your concern is for the welfare, happiness and peace of your child; if the neighbour's child falls sick it does not affect you at all. If other children fall ill it does not affect you at all, for you do not consider them to be your own. When you can consider other children to be your own children, then you have established a connection with them, and that connection is known as *atmabhava*, or what people call the heart connection.

For example, two boys have gone for a drive, they have an accident and both land up in hospital. One boy is your son and the other boy is your son's friend. You get the news that your child has had an accident and is in hospital, and you rush there immediately. You know that two people had gone driving, yet you are only worrying about one, your child. When you reach the hospital, the first person you go to see straight away is your child, who may have only superficial injuries. The other boy may have broken bones, yet the first person you will rush to see is your own child, for there is a direct connection with him, not with the other boy who had accompanied him.

This first level of connection is *atmabhava* – I see myself in my child. Swami Satyananda said that if you can cultivate the same feeling, if you can begin to feel the same intensity of emotion for everyone, then only is it possible to realize God, otherwise God is only a concept in the mind. So the practical way to experience Brahman is the cultivation of *atmabhava*, this gives a tangible dimension to that idea.

True Path of Life

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Swami Sivananda incarnated in this age to show humanity the true path of life. Not just for people of any particular religion or specific communities, rather he manifested in order to initiate souls of all nations and religions into the mantra of spiritual excellence. His principles are not bound by the narrow confines of race or religion; his dharma is intended to illuminate the vast canvas of all life and liberate it from the darkness of ignorance, without giving precedence to complex austerities, complicated yoga and weak knowledge.

Where there is attraction and repulsion, love and friendship towards all; where there is sin and wickedness, purity; where there is desire and anger, restraint, and where there is strife and war, peace – he was born in order to express and establish these sattvic states of existence all over the world.

Three Efforts

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



People say that spirituality is developing the soft qualities of life, like kindness, compassion, love, sympathy. However, the block for people to experience spirituality is always the mind. You can be kind and loving, yet that will be influenced by your mental perceptions. You can be meditating, yet your meditation will be influenced by your mental state or condition. For anything that you do, you will always find an imprint of the mind in your effort. Despite people making the effort to have that spiritual awareness, it is challenging and difficult. Most people have also experienced that to change a nature, quality, habit or behaviour of the mind, is very difficult.

When you are alone, and when there is no block, confrontation or challenge, you think, 'Oh, I have attained my state of equipoise and balance and harmony, and now I am not

disturbed by anything.’ Then, when you come out in public and you find challenges, difficulties and blocks, you also find your serenity suddenly evaporates and anger appears. You find your peace suddenly becomes a mirage and frustration sets in. Why is this happening? This is happening, because you have never tried to become a friend of and know the mind. You have always tried to push the mind. Even in meditation, when something happens, you say, ‘Stay down, I am meditating.’ The relationship with the mind never develops.

I remember small incidents that Sri Swamiji used to tell me. When I was about nine or ten years old, he told me a story of a king with four wild horses. These wild horses had to be tamed. So, the king made a proclamation throughout the land, that anybody who could train and tame these wild horses would get a good reward. Many people came to try tame these wild horses. Nobody succeeded. Some broke a foot, a leg or arm, yet those horses were untrainable and unmanageable.

Then one day, a young man comes and says, ‘Sir, give me a chance. Let me try. I only have one condition. I will take the horses away from you for one year, and bring them back properly trained.’ The king agreed and gave the man the horses. Time passed. The king at first worried about what had happened. The man had said one year and sixteen months had gone by.

One day, while he was walking in the courtyard of his palace, he saw these four beautiful horses trotting, with a man sitting on the first one. He recognized him. The man alighted, bowed before the king, and said, ‘Here are your horses.’ The king said, ‘How did you train them?’ The man said, ‘Well, I let them roam free. When they used to run, I used to run with them. When they used to sleep, I used to sleep. When they used to graze, I used to make my bread and eat. One day, I put my hand on the back of one horse. At first, it did not like it, but then over time it got used to it. Then one day, I put a blanket on the back. They did not like it, but eventually they got used to it. One day I put the bridle, they did not like it, but they got



used to it. One day I put the saddle, they did not like it, but they got used to it. Slowly they started to see me as their friend, not as their master. Not as somebody who was trying to subdue them, but one who wanted to become friends with them. Due to that relationship, today I am able to bring the horses to you.'

After telling me the story, Paramahamsaji asked me, 'Do you know who the four horses were?' I had to think. Then he said, 'They are what you carry with you all the time. Your mind or manas, your buddhi, your chitta, your ego. They are the four horses, that have to be controlled.' Although he told me the story when I was ten years old, fifty years later I still think that these four horses are difficult to manage. However, only after mastering them, can one experience the spiritual harmony, unity, luminosity and the soft energies.

Individual effort

The first level of work is at the individual level. What can I do to improve myself? Asana, pranayama, yoga nidra, meditation are good practices, no doubt. They make you feel light, they

give you energy and peace, yet they do not change your behaviour, attitude and awareness. You have to start with changing the quality of your awareness, your attitude, and for that, you have to observe, correct yourself, and improve. Self-observation, self-correction, and self-improvement become the individual effort. Yamas and niyamas help a lot, yet you have to make that effort continuously and constantly. It is not an effort that you can make, one week per year. Every day, every day, that awareness and effort has to be sustained. That is the individual effort.

Kartavyabodh

The second effort is the communal, the group, society, the family of which you are a part. If you are living at home, you are part of a family – father, mother, wife, children, whoever is there. If you are living in the ashram, you are part of the family. If you are living in a group, you are part of the family. Family means the group with which you interact. What can you do to maintain clarity, harmony, support? It is *kartavyabodh* in Hindi, knowing one's obligations, duties, responsibilities, and fulfilling them to the best of one's ability.

You have to become part of the community spirit, rather than trying to change the community spirit to suit your needs. This helps you lessen and overcome the self-obsessions and the selfish nature. It makes you more integrated, harmonious, helpful, supportive, balanced, within the group, within the family, within the organization or ashram.

The aim

The third effort is pursuance of the aim, the goal, and not losing the focus and awareness. If connection is the focus, then connection has to develop and evolve into something stronger, positive, uplifting, creative, better. If God is the goal, the effort has to be to realize the presence of that divine energy in everything. God is only a concept; it is not a person. People make God into a person, however, God is only a concept,

an idea which is beyond our existence, comprehension and intelligence. If we are limited, God is considered to be limitless. If we are restricted, God is unrestricted. If we are finite, God is infinite. If we exist in one dimension at one moment in time, God exists in every dimension, in every moment of time.

It is the expansiveness of the spirit, which is known as God. The unit of that spirit is known as the individual soul. It is like a drop of water and the body of the ocean. The body of the ocean is made by an infinite number of drops of water. One drop of water, when it leaves the ocean, is identified as a drop, not as the ocean. That is the play. When we die, this bubble of water, evaporates, becomes steam, goes up into the cloud, God. When the season comes, the drop falls and starts the journey again. This is the continuous ascent and descent of the drop, which is known as the cycle of life and death.

If you look at the life of saints in every culture, religion and country, you will see that how they have experienced God is totally different to what we have conceived to be the experience of God. When saints like Saint Augustine, Saint Francis, Mother Teresa, and all the other saints that have come throughout the ages, speak of God, they speak of God as a higher power, a higher energy in which everything is fulfilled. In life, we strive to fulfil things, but in God everything is fulfilled.

Whatever the aim is in the third effort, one has to remain true to the experience of it. When you want to make a small business into a big business, you put all your effort and energy into it, and you think of nothing else but how you can improve the business. The same principle and effort has to apply here. Those who apply become the successful people. Those who do not apply simply live their life like a normal person. These three aspects have to be worked upon, if you want to be not only a channel, but also an experiencer of that higher nature.

– 20 January 2024, Ganga Darshan, Munger

My Only Craving

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Those who have enough of everything should develop the philosophy of atmbhava in their lives. That is the philosophy of Vedanta: we are all the same. All of us, living or dead, are part of the universal soul which resides within everyone.

It is easy to say that, but in actual practice the tenet is not followed. In practice 'I' is separate from 'you'. The feeling of oneness comes when we can feel that all those who live around us have the same soul or are part of the same soul that is within and that their sorrow and pleasure are our own sorrow and pleasure.

It may not be possible for one human being to share all the difficulties of their neighbours, but certainly one should have the quality to feel that. One person cannot wipe out the pain of everyone in the world, but there should be the feeling that if someone's child is sick, one should feel the pain that the mother feels for the child, or for that matter the pain of friends, wife, daughters and neighbours, in the same way as one would for one's own kith and kin. This is very important. The sayings of the Upanishads will not be true until that is practised.

This does not mean one has to pay for their education, although it would be good to do so, but at least they should have two square meals a day for their children. There are millions of families in this world whose children do not have two square meals a day.

I often pray to God for another birth and an early departure, because at this advanced age I am not as effective in serving people as I would be if I had a new life. When I see young people fully absorbed in their own selfish ends, I crave even more for a new life because I do not aspire for pleasure and riches, nor do I crave for a kingdom. My only craving is to serve those who are deprived and living in need. So I pray to God to bless me with a new birth, in a poor family where one feels the pangs of hunger, where one undergoes the torture of cold without adequate clothing, and where one lives and dies in sickness without proper treatment. The pangs of the illiterate mother whose son takes birth and lives in poverty is difficult to fathom. So I intend to have a life of hardship and rise from there.

Connection

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Connection indicates that you identify with something which you are. Connection is when you see yourself in the other person. Something that is yours, a feeling, a sentiment, an aspiration, an intention, something with which you identify. When you see the other person representing a part of that, connection happens. You can even say it is some type of compatibility. There are many people who connect, yet there is no compatibility. There are people who fall in love, marry and after a few months or a few years, what happened to that feeling of love and connection which they felt? It does not exist anymore and separation happens. It is not the connection, which leads to some type of gratification, that we are talking about. Real connection is much deeper, based on an understanding, a feeling and the realization that I see what I need represented in that person.

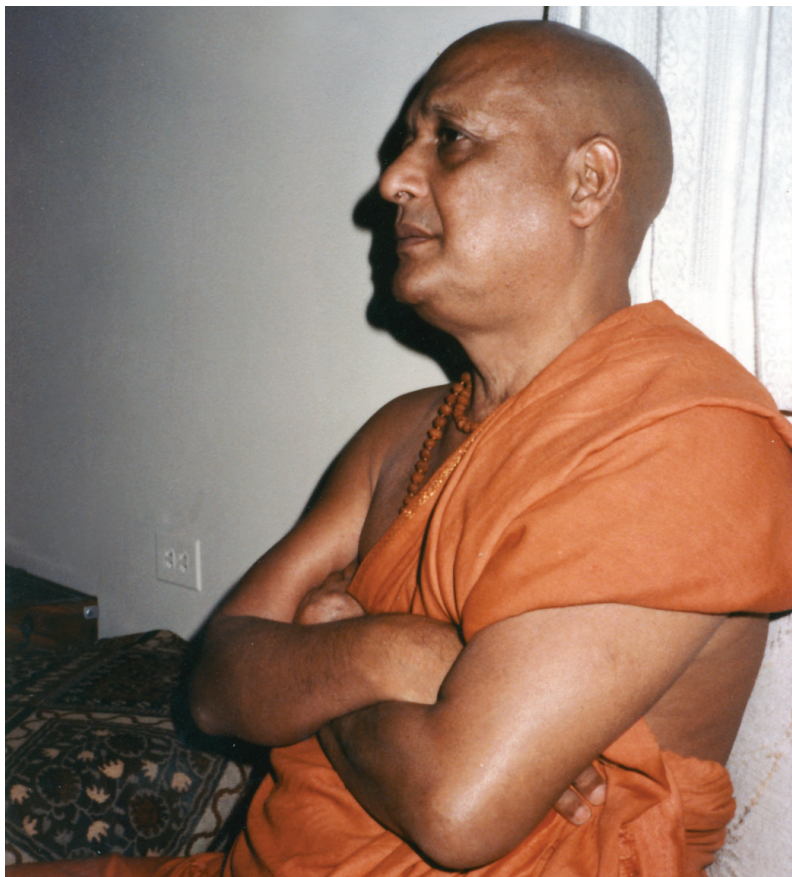
In connection to the ashram, Sri Swamiji, the tradition and people, we can infer that it is not something which is emotional or material, but something which is more internal. That internal connection is based on a belief, trust and faith.

If I look at my own life, right from the beginning until now, I have always known that I trust this person, knowing fully well that this person will never take me on the wrong path, will always help me, encourage me and inspire me to break the boundaries which I have created for myself. So, trust here is the foundation. Belief is the foundation, knowing that this person will never mislead me. That is good enough for my trust, my belief and my connection. If the trust is not there, then connection also does not exist.

– 28 May 2023, Ganga Darshan, Munger

Laws of Nature

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



When negative thoughts come into your mind, you must understand them, not from the religious point of view, but as laws of nature. Nature has certain laws, and negativity is one of them. If there is no negativity, there cannot be progress in life.

The spiritual path does not mean that you only unfold your own nature and potential. It means that you simultaneously understand and tune in with the nature of others.

What is Really Needed

Swami Sivananda Saraswati



The beauty of divine life is its simplicity and applicability to the everyday affairs of the ordinary man. It is immaterial whether one goes to the church or the mosque or the temple for offering one's prayers, for all sincere prayers are heard by the Divine.

The average seeker after Truth is very often deceived by the caprices of his mind. A person who takes to the spiritual path

is bewildered before he reaches the end of his journey. He is naturally tempted to relax his efforts half-way. Many are the pitfalls, but those who plod on steadily are sure to reach the goal of life, which is universality of being, knowledge and joy. I have laid great emphasis in all my writings upon the discipline of the turbulent senses, conquest of the mind, purification of the heart, and attainment of inner peace and strength, suited to the different stages in evolution.

I have understood that it is the foremost duty of man to learn to give, to give in charity, to give in plenty, to give with love and without expectation of any reward, because one does not lose anything by giving, on the other hand the giver is given back a thousandfold. Charity is not merely an act of offering certain material goods, for charity is incomplete without charity of disposition, of feeling, and of understanding and knowledge. Charity is self-sacrifice in the different levels of one's being. Charity in the highest sense I understand to be equivalent to *jnana yajna*, the sacrifice of wisdom.

Similarly, I consider that goodness of being and doing constitute the rock-bottom of one's life. By goodness I mean the capacity to feel with others and to live and feel as others do, and be in a position to act so that no one is hurt by the act. Goodness is the face of Godliness. I think that to be good in reality, in the innermost recesses of one's heart, is not easy, though it may appear to be simple as a teaching. It is one of the hardest things on earth, if only one would be honest with oneself.

There is no physical world for me. What I see I see as the glorious manifestation of the Almighty. I rejoice when I behold the Purusha with thousands of heads and thousands of eyes and feet, that *Sahasrarasirsha Purusha*. When I serve persons, I see not the persons, but Him of whom they are the limbs. I learn to be humble before the mighty Being whose breath we breathe and whose joy we enjoy. I do not think there is anything more to teach or to learn. Here is the cream of religion, the quintessence of philosophy that anyone really needs.

Forever Grateful



Sannyasi Dharmarakshit passed away on 16 September 2025. He was associated with the Ganga Darshan ashram for more than three decades, which he spent in ceaseless support of the ashram and its activities.



Along with him, his wife, Sannyasi Shashwatjyoti, and two daughters, Sannyasis Devanjali and Amargeet, were a part of the ashram family. The girls joined the Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal at an early age and rose to nurture and train following generations of young children. The whole family would accompany Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati on his tours throughout India and assist with the many small and not so small tasks that require attention during a yoga shivir. Together with the sannyasins they were part of Swamiji's team.

After his retirement, Sannyasi Dharmarakshit increased his commitment to the ashram manifold. He and Sannyasi Shashwatjyoti were the heart and soul of the Chaturmas Anushthana con-

ducted at Paduka Darshan since 2015. Their continued presence in all activities, from the early morning class to the mantra sadhana and maas parayan, ensured the smooth organization and success of every event. They were everywhere and ever ready to extend a helping hand.

When Sannyasa Peeth initiated the monthly Sankranti Daan, Sannyasi Dharmarakshit became the bridge between the ashram and the neglected groups of society. On foot and on his scooter he would travel the roads of Munger each month to meet, interact with everyone from the different groups and assist all to receive their Sankranti Daan. It is no small feat to gather every month 250 people from all over the city, yet his heart was with those who society ignores. When they walked out with their prasad, the joy on his face mirrored their joy.



Since 2023, the centenary year of Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati, Sannyasi Dharmarakshit involved himself with head, heart and hands in Vidya Daan, a project the ashram had commenced to reach out to the city's children. Visiting all Government primary and middle schools in Munger, he invited





the children, teachers and staff to come to Ganga Darshan to receive their prasad. The logistics were tremendous yet he mastered all with a smile and a heart that beat with love and care. Over 18,000 children walked out of Ganga Darshan with a heavy backpack on their back and a blue hat over their happy faces. For Sannyasi Dharmarakshit they had become his children. Ganga Darshan ashram is forever grateful for his effort and support that made

the vision of the Masters a reality and reach those most in need.

As secretary of the Bihar School of Yoga, Sannyasi Dharmarakshit extended his support and took part in daily activities of the ashram; he met with guests, answered queries and was a friend to all, generous with his time and ever ready with a smile and a joke.

Sannyasi Dharmarakshit will be remembered by all who knew him for his kindness, his goodwill and laughter. In every corner of Munger, he will be missed by the loadbearers of society whose hearts he had won and whose friend he had become. At Ganga Darshan, his gentle and open nature will be greatly missed by all who had the good fortune to have spent time with him. The heartfelt prayers of all members of the Ganga Darshan ashram family are with him on his onward journey.



IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT REGARDING DONATIONS

Donations to the ashram will be received only under the following 'Heads of Accounts':

1. **General Donation**

To Bihar School of Yoga, Bihar Yoga Bharati, Yoga Publications Trust or Yoga Research Foundation Funds will be utilized towards developing and furthering the Yoga activities.

2. **Corpus Donation**

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3. **CSR Donation**

Funds will be utilized towards CSR activities.

Therefore, devotees are requested to send donations to the above-mentioned account heads only.

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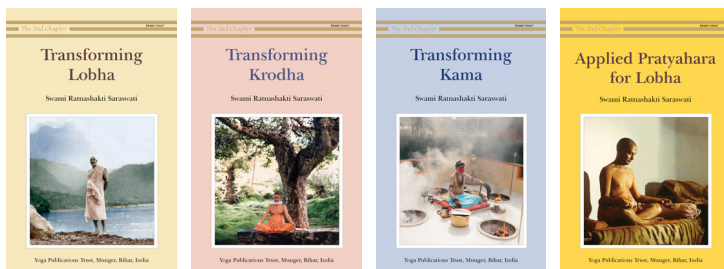
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Websites and Apps

www.biharyoga.net

The official website of Bihar Yoga includes information on: Bihar Yoga, Bihar School of Yoga, Bihar Yoga Bharati, Yoga Publications Trust and Yoga Research Foundation.

Satyam Yoga Prasad

The digital library of the Bihar Yoga Tradition presenting audio, video and publications online. Available at satyamyogaprasad.net or by scanning the QR code, and as apps for Android and iOS devices as prasad.



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YOGA and YOGAVIDYA magazines are available as free apps for Android and iOS devices.

Other Apps (for Android and iOS devices)

- **APMB**, the bestselling yoga book from YPT available as an easily browsable mobile app.
- The **Bihar Yoga** app brings to the user ancient and revived yogic knowledge in a modern medium.
- **For Frontline Heroes**, designed for people who are active in the fight against Coronavirus, presenting simple yoga practices to help alleviate tension and stress caused by the pandemic.

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Yoga Peeth Events & Yoga Vidya Training 2025

Bihar School of Yoga Yogavidya Training

<i>Jan-Dec</i>	Ashram Life Experience
<i>Sep 22-30</i>	Raja Yoga/Bhakti Yoga Training
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<i>Nov 1-15</i>	Progressive Yoga Vidya Training
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<i>Nov 1-Dec 31</i>	Yogic Studies, 2 months (English)
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<i>Every Saturday</i>	Mahamrityunjaya Havan
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<i>Every 12th</i>	Akhanda Path of Ramacharitamanas



For further information, as well as the online version of YOGA, visit the official website of Bihar Yoga at biharyoga.net or scan the QR code.