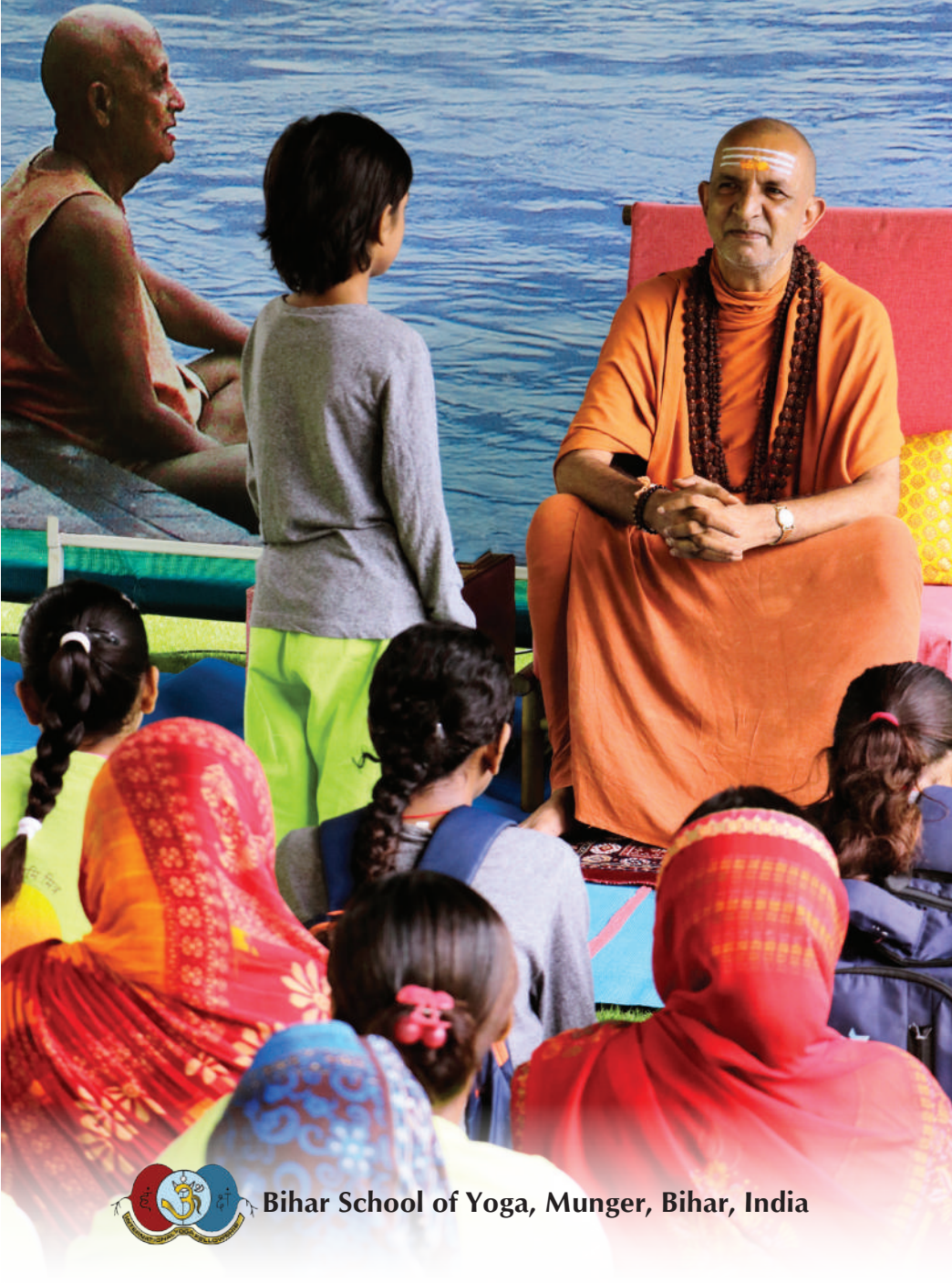


YOGA

Year 15 Issue 8
August 2026



Bihar School of Yoga, Munger, Bihar, India



Hari Om

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

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Useful Resources

Websites:

www.biharyoga.net
www.sannyasapeeth.net
www.satyamyogaprasad.net

Apps:

(for Android and iOS devices)

Bihar Yoga
APMB
YOGA (English magazine)
YOGAVIDYA (Hindi magazine)
FFH (For Frontline Heroes)

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GUIDELINES FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

Waters of bhakti

It would be a gross mistake to consider bhakti merely as a state of emotionalism. It is actually a thorough discipline and training of one's will and mind. It is a means to apprehend the true knowledge of reality. Bhakti may begin with ordinary idol worship but culminates in the highest form of realization – the individual soul's oneness with the Supreme Spirit. When the water flows, it washes away the mud. So also when the water of bhakti flows, the mud of ignorance is washed away.

—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 ॥

Fear of Failure

Swami Sivananda Saraswati



One of the biggest complexes that modern man has is the fear of failure, the desire to be successful. Every person feels that he must be a great success or he will lose the respect of his friends, family and himself. This fear is only a programmed response; perhaps our parents and teachers continually indoctrinated us that the only worthwhile people in the world were those who 'made it'. As a result, we are continually worried about failing; every situation we meet in life, every person we meet is a challenge, for they may show us up as failures.

So whatever we do in life is treated as an emergency, and we remain perpetually tense. It is only when we mix with close friends, who we know will never consider us as unsuccessful, that we actually relax. This is a good example of how our mental programming governs our life and makes us unable to free ourselves and relax. Again this type of programming is not necessary – it exists only because of our faulty way of thinking and education.

Yoga

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Yoga is not part of any organized religion; yoga predates every religion. Yoga was practised since Satya Yuga, it was even practised in Treta Yuga, when Rama was born, and in Dwapara Yuga, when Krishna was alive. Religions have only come in Kali Yuga.

Yoga is the original sadhana of humankind. Even the creator, Lord Brahma, practises yoga, meditation, mantra, contemplation, yogasanas and pranayamas. It is in the pranayama of Brahma that creation takes place and that creation dissolves. It is in the asana of Brahma that the world is created and destroyed. Yoga has nothing to do with any religion. Religions can come and go, religions can change, religions can be destroyed. The sadhana of an individual always represents the innermost aspiration to achieve the highest experience in life. Never confuse yoga with any type of religion.

Yoga is not only confined to India or any Indian belief systems. Evidence of yogasanas, kundalini, chakras, meditations has been found in the ancient civilizations of South America, in Africa, and Scandinavian countries. Yoga is not even Indian, but a global effort to discover the best within oneself. It can never be called part of any Indian religion. Once upon a time, yoga was a global culture. Today also with our understanding evolving, people of all creeds and casts, religions and sects, are able to practise yoga without any confusion or contradiction with their belief in life. Yoga is a universal sadhana to discover the best within oneself.



– 19 April 2025, Srimad Andavan Ashram College, Trichy

Higher Mind and Lower Mind

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

There is no ultimate definition of a good action or a bad action. Anything that a person does should be done for the good of many people. You may think that the higher mind always thinks higher thoughts, but that is not so. Sometimes the higher mind will leave the house or destroy the property. Sometimes the lower mind is more capable, practical and realistic than the higher mind. The approach of the higher mind to problems is idealistic, whereas the lower mind is impatient. You will find that the person with a lower mind is always more successful than the higher-minded person.

The lower mind is realistic and bound by a fixed pattern of thinking - three plus three makes six. For example, if it sees an elephant it thinks, "Oh, this is an elephant, so it must have a trunk." However, the higher mind will think, "It may or may not have a trunk, our mind is just conditioned to think that way and hence our eyes are focused accordingly."

Neither the higher nor the lower mind is immortal. They are conditions of mind that depend on individual training. After all, we cannot fix which particular characteristics belong to the higher mind and which belong to the lower mind. The lower mind has the capacity to analyze things through reason and intellect. The higher mind decides things intuitively. The lower-minded person thinks how to benefit himself while the higher-minded person thinks for others as well.

I will tell you a true story to illustrate this. A boy of sixteen years went to live with a swami. The boy was very bad. He went to the pictures every day and did all sorts of things, even stealing from his father's pocket. He was sent to the swami, who was a very good mahatma, for correction, but the mahatma



used to view things from a different angle because his higher mind was functioning. So, the boy would go to the pictures and return to the mahatma. When the mahatma asked where

he had been, the boy would reply, "Swami, I have been to satsang." Then the mahatma would ask, "Are you telling the truth?" and the boy would reply, "Oh yes."

Later on, the boy started going to prostitutes and he went from bad to worse. Ultimately, he stole all the valuables which the mahatma kept in his house and went somewhere to spend the money. Again he returned to the mahatma and told him, "I beg your pardon. I won't commit such an act again."

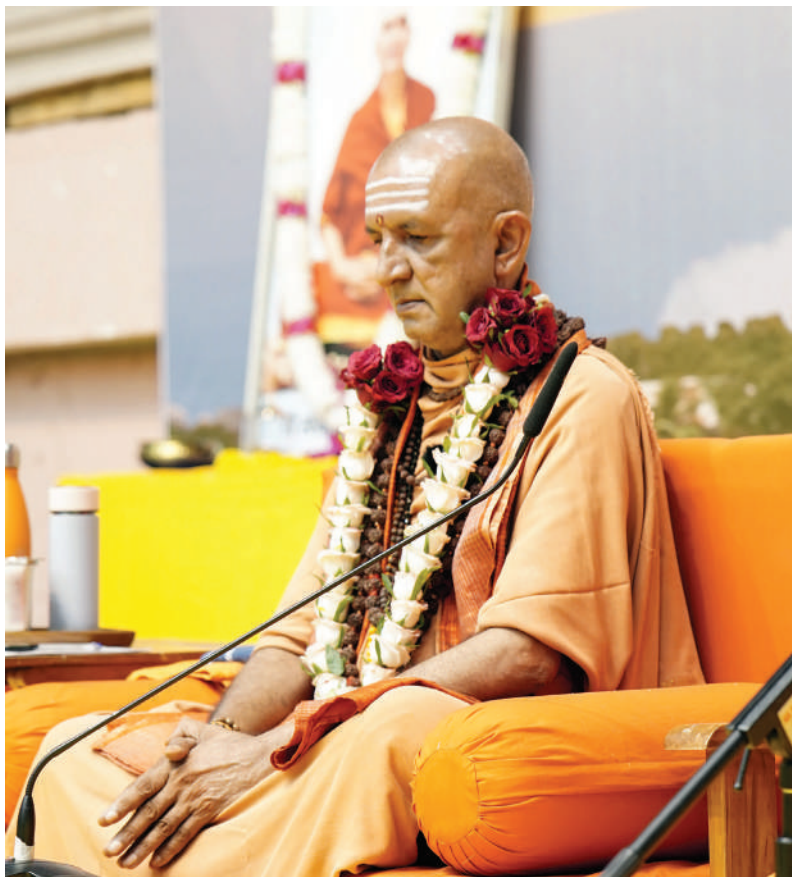
I happened to be there at that time, and I asked the mahatma, "What is the matter?" He said, "The boy will be alright," because his higher mind was functioning. I said, "No. What is the use? Has he made any improvement? Either you return him to his father or you give him to me. I will take charge of him."

The mahatma agreed, so I asked the boy, "Will you come with me?" He said, "Yes," knowing that I belonged to a very big ashram and thinking that perhaps he would have many chances to do mischief there. I said, "Alright, bring your things." At six o'clock in the morning I asked where the boy was. The servant boy said that he was in the tea shop. So I went there, pulled him out by the legs and threw him into the Ganga. I said, "The next time I see you in the tea shop I will break your head!" We took him out of the Ganga and put him under lock and key for three days. He said, "Swamiji, I promise that I will never commit any mischief again." I said, "That is not enough," because his lower mind was still functioning.

So, I gave him a department in the ashram post office and I saw how efficient he was. I put him in marketing and he was always calculating and comparing the prices. I put him in petty cash and every moment he was checking the cash. After a few weeks he left the ashram and returned to his home. He went to college and got his degree. Several years ago I met him and he had become the leader of his whole town. He still did the same things, but now he was able to direct his affairs in a more positive way, because the higher mind was functioning with the lower mind.

Thoughts

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Thoughts come to the mind all the time. When you suddenly become aware of them, that is a different matter. Most of the time you are not aware of what you are thinking, what thoughts are coming to your mind, unless you observe them. It is an established fact that during the waking hours of the day, we think about 50,000 thoughts. Are you aware of the 50,000 thoughts? No. You only become aware of the thoughts

when there is pressure on you, when there is pressure on the mind, when there is anxiety, a problem or trouble. Only then you become aware of your thinking process. Otherwise, you never bother about thoughts. You are thinking even now, but you are not aware of it. You were thinking ten minutes ago, but you were not aware of it. You were aware of listening, but not thinking, while thinking was also happening at the same time.

Out of these 50,000 thoughts, eighty percent are repetitive and eighty percent are negative. This is during the waking state, so imagine what happens when you sleep. Thoughts still continue, maybe another lot of 50,000 while you are sleeping. So, in twenty-four hours approximately 100,000 thoughts go through your mind. 50,000 in the waking state and 50,000 in the sleeping state. Out of these 100,000 thoughts, eighty percent are negative in the sense that you continue to think about your problems, difficulties, anxieties, stresses, which are influenced by different mental conditions like envy, jealousy, anger, hatred, anxiety. Out of one hundred percent thoughts, eighty percent are repetitive and negative, and they become the stronger thoughts which possess the mental behaviour and thinking, and that is expressed by our personality.

People meditate; for the duration of their meditation sometimes they find peace, as the influx of thoughts is not monitored or observed. When they are monitored and observed, they realize that suddenly they are thinking about this thing, this person, this situation, this event. They begin to brood and think about it. Some enlightened beings also try to change the negative thought into a positive thought. All this can happen, yet the main nature of the mind is a bundle of thoughts. Mind is a bundle of thoughts and desires, and this nature is not going to change. Even yogis have to confront the same number of thoughts like normal people. The only difference is that they are able to harmonize and channel those thoughts, due to the strength of will which is connected to positivity.

They do not suffer from anxiety and frustration, for they are connected with positivity. If we are not connected with the



positive outlook in life and are confused, and if we have had no experience of how to connect with positivity, then we can observe them in meditation. We can make an effort to come out of their influence, by saying, 'Okay, I accept this situation. 'As long as I do not accept the situation, I am confronting and fighting it. For the sake of my own peace, if I accept the situation in my mind, in my thoughts, I will discover peace. There are many ways how one can manage the thoughts, but the most important thing is that are we aware of our thinking process?

The witness

In yoga, the first thing is to become aware of the thinking process. In the *Yoga Sutras*, Patanjali talks about becoming the witness of everything that transpires in the mind. So, one has to witness the thoughts as well. There are techniques like *antar mouna*, which are thought-oriented techniques and make us aware of the type of thoughts we are experiencing, and how we can control them, stop them, create them, to create a different conditioning within our own mind. The effort is in observation. So become the observer, the witness; that happens during the practice.

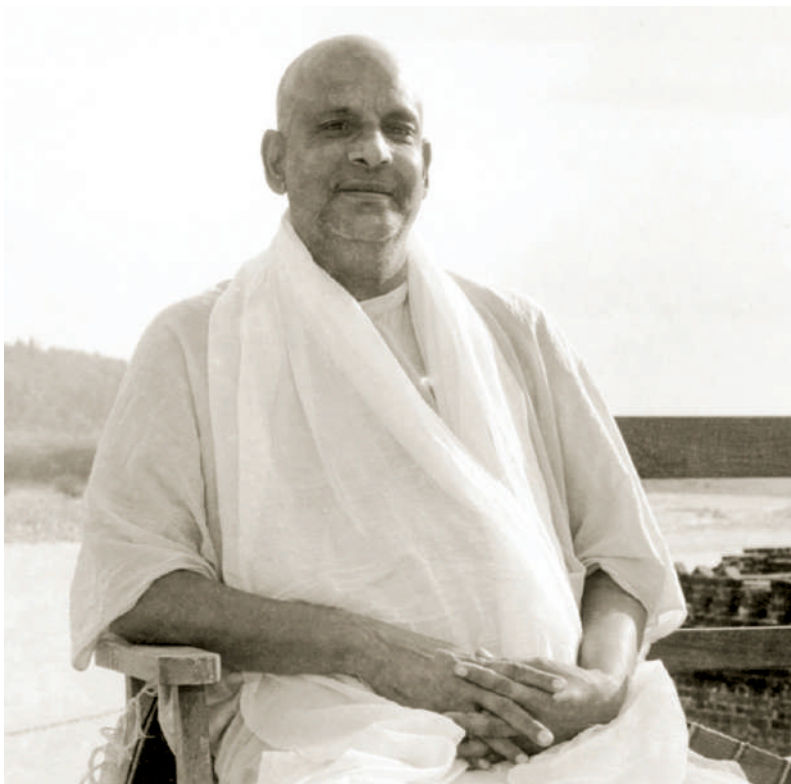
People make the mistake that they observe their thoughts while they are meditating, they become the *drashta*, the witness, the observer. To become the observer in meditation is not the goal of meditation. It is a training of meditation, not the goal. The goal is that you maintain the observer attitude for the remainder of the day. If you are meditating for half an hour and you are observing yourself, you are training your mind to become the observer. When you come out of the meditative state, you should be able to maintain and continue with that awareness of yourself, while doing the normal work of the day. That is where the challenge lies. While we meditate, we relate and associate a state, a condition of our achievement, for a limited time only, and we do not carry it with us in our waking state.

Yoga says meditation is training only. The state of mind that you experience and you acquire in meditation should not be limited to that only, but carried forward in your normal activities of the day. You become the *drashta*, you become the observer of yourself, for twenty-four hours, not just for half an hour. That half an hour trains the mind, but then you live that state in your life, for the remaining twenty-three hours and thirty minutes. This applies to every other situation, experience and attainment in yoga. If you can achieve that, you will be known as a spiritual aspirant. Until then, we are only wetting our toes in the water and coming out, we do not dive into the water. Until today, people have only wetted their toes, and some people have wetted their feet. Nobody in this world has taken a dive. If they had taken the dive, they would be aware and enlightened beings today, who can live their lives in peace, happiness and contentment.

You can also try a simple method: before you sleep, while you are flat on your bed with the lights off, for some time just observe your thoughts and then go to sleep. In a week's time you will notice a change in your mental awareness, attitude, behaviour. The thinking pattern will change and you will find more peace, relaxation and happiness.

Moods

Swami Sivananda Saraswati



Mood is a mental state. The Sanskrit term is bhava. This term also does not express the true significance of the word 'mood'. We say, "Mr Naidu or Mr Atkinson is a moody gentleman." This means he becomes a slave of the mood quickly. We also say, 'That gentleman is in a 'good mood' or a 'happy mood.' 'I can approach him now for a short interview or talk' or 'He is in a very angry mood. I should not see him now.'

The English people, during the course of their conversation, use the term 'mood' in a broad sense. They say, 'He is in a talking mood;' 'He is in a silent mood;' 'He is in a mood

of hatred;’ ‘He is in a mood of love;’ ‘He is in a mood of selfishness;’ ‘He is in a mood of jealousy;’ ‘He is in a mood of separateness;’ ‘He is in a mood of unity.’ In the light of Vedanta, these are all *vrittis*, thoughts or emotions, only.

In Vedanta, there are only two kinds of moods, *harsha*, joy, exultation or exhilaration, and *shoka*, grief or depression. In the mind, these two kinds of moods prevail. Now there is joy. Five minutes later, there is depression. These currents alternate. They belong to the *shad-urmis*, six waves – hunger, thirst, grief, delusion, decay by disease and death. They are two waves that affect the mind-ocean.

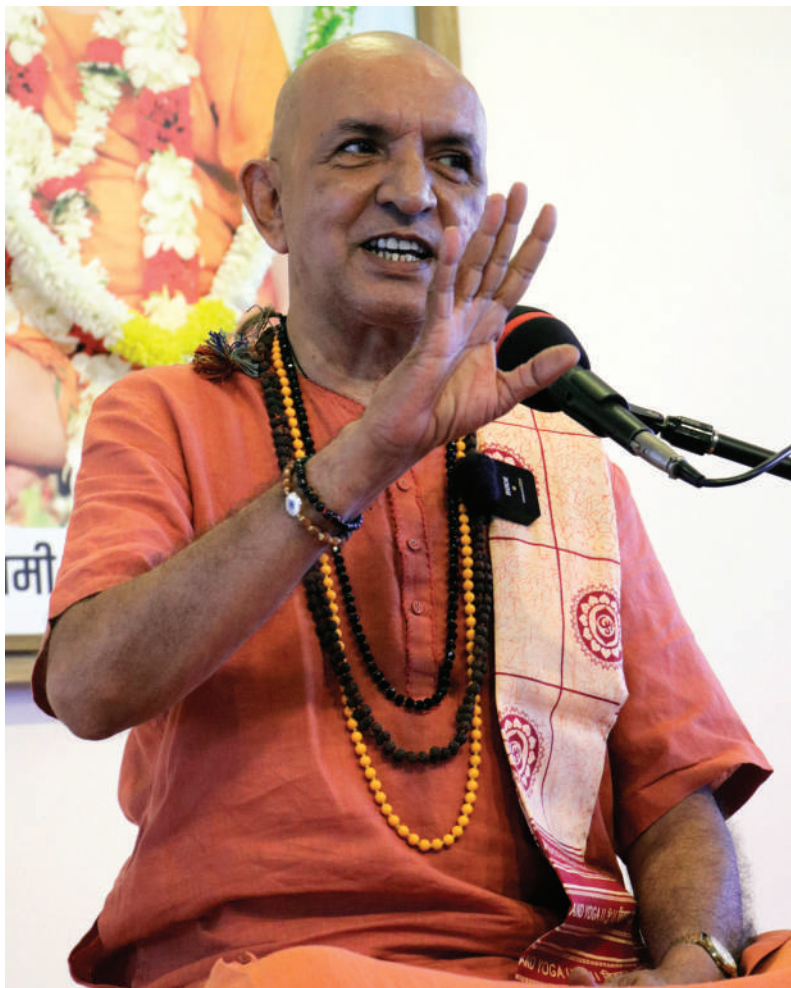
People of gloomy moods attract to them gloomy things and gloomy thoughts from others and from the akashic records in the physical ether. Persons with hope, confidence and cheerful spirits attract thoughts of similar nature from others. They are always successful in their attempts. People with negative moods of depression, anger, hatred do positive injury to others. They infect others and raise these destructive *vrittis* in others. They are culpable. They do great damage in the thought-world. People with happy and cheerful moods are a blessing to society. They bring happiness to others.

Just as a young, beautiful lady covers her face and does not like to come out to mix with others in society when she has a nasty festering sore on her cheeks or nose, so also you should not come in public and mix with your friends and other people when you have a mood of depression, a mood of hatred or jealousy. For, you will infect others with these moods. You are a menace to society.

There is one good mood in those who practise meditation. It is termed the ‘meditative mood’. Those who practise concentration and meditation feel this kind of mood. When this mood manifests, you must immediately give up reading, writing, talking, and so on. You must immediately sit on the usual seat and begin to meditate. Meditation will come by itself without effort. This mood is very favourable for contemplation. Watch for this kind of mood.

Dharana

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



The *Yoga Sutras* describe the eightfold path of raja yoga – yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana and samadhi. Dharana is the sixth component, and *dharana* means concentration. Many books have been written on this subject.

Vijñan Bhairav Tantra speaks of hundreds of dharanas or points of concentration. Lord Shiva mentions in his teachings that there are over 125,000 practices of dharana.

Dharana means merging the mind with the experience. There is a story in the *Mahabharata*. There was a contest of archery, and in this contest of archery a bird made out of clay was put on top of a tree. The students were asked to shoot the arrow through the eyes of the clay bird. The teacher would call the students one by one and ask them, 'What do you see?' The students would answer, 'I see the bird. I see the leaves. I see the branch. I see the trees. I see the sky. I see the clouds. I see other people standing around the tree.' The guru, after asking each student, would tell them, 'Now, go back. Don't shoot the arrow.'

Finally, one student comes up and the guru asks him the same question, 'What do you see?' The student says, 'I only see the eye of the bird; nothing more.' The guru says, 'Shoot.' Out of 105 disciples, only one was asked to shoot the arrow. 104 were rejected because they saw everything; they might be good archers, no doubt, but, they failed in this qualification. They were not focused. This last one who said, 'I can only see the eye of the bird,' represented the idea of dharana. In dharana, I can totally identify myself with the object of perception. If I have to see the eye of the bird as the target, that is all I am going to see. I am not going to see the branch, the leaf, the tree, the sky behind it or the clouds in the sky. Nothing. My mind is totally focused on what I need to focus on. That is the state of dharana.

Need for pratyahara

This state of dharana comes after the practice of pratyahara, which is the most important practice of raja yoga. Pratyahara is coming back within yourself, disconnecting from the connections of the senses and sense objects. You disconnect from everything externally, which holds your mind, you just focus on your own internal awareness, and you cultivate

that internal awareness. That is going to be a big challenge in the coming times. There was a report about children who are exposed to social media. They connect with social media at a very early age, sometimes from 8 years onwards. They think they are communicating with people, but they are not communicating with people. Their whole life depends on the 'likes' which they receive, and if they don't receive a 'like,' they get dejected and depressed.

This may seem to be an ordinary thing, yet until the age of sixteen, the highway of the mind is being constructed, and emotions are being formed, shaped, defined. At this age, you are not focusing on yourself, you are focusing on something different – acceptance by other people of who you are. You are not developing your own strength or culture; you are just hoping that people like you. That makes the mind weak. How come there is an increase in suicide rates of young people? Children who are 13, 14, 15 years old are committing suicide. Why? There is no inner training, there is no mental discipline, there is no mental restraint, and all in the name of 'my human right and my need'.

This is the nature which is being cultivated now in future generations. Parents are unable to do anything about it, because they themselves have no understanding of how to deal with children. They send them to a psychologist, a psychiatrist, and that person also has no idea. They only talk, but no solution is given. Medication is given which does not help the mental condition or the state. Young children chase the dopamine effect from the moment they grab hold of a mobile. The brain goes through a big change, the mind goes through a big change, and there is no concept of *sanyam*. *Sanyam* is a yogic terminology which means restraint of the senses and mind. *Pratyahara* is therefore the most important aspect of *raja yoga*, because it makes you aware of your mental behaviour. It makes you balance that mental, inner, emotional and intellectual behaviour.

Progression of dharana

Then you come to dharana. If dharana is supposed to be a state of concentration, then how come there are over 100,000 practices? This is an indication that even focusing on something is hard for people. They have to be guided through smaller things: focus on breath, focus on an object, focus on a flame, focus on a dot, focus on a star. They become like the practices of focusing, which are identified as the dharana practices. There are hundreds and thousands of these practices, and what is the end result?

The end result has to be the clearing of mind, and that clearing of mind has to happen by following certain procedures, like the ability to visualize something, the ability to remain aware in meditation. That is the initial training. The ability to focus on something which is identifiable through the mind and the senses. If I focus on my breath, then that is something physical on which I am focusing. If I focus on a star, it is a symbol on which I am focusing. If I draw a triangle on a sheet of paper and focus on that, it is a symbol on which I am focusing. I am trying to hold my attention on that.

This is the start of dharana. Eventually dharana has to be seen from three different perspectives. *Bahir lakshya*, the outer goals; *antar lakshya*, the inner goals; and the *uchcha lakshya*, the higher goals. You have to go through these three different progressions. No matter what you do, which practice you do, which book you follow, it all becomes irrelevant because you have to pass through these three stages.

A person who cannot control the mind can never achieve dharana. Once you know the difficulties of dharana, you will realize that very few people are able to meditate. Those who are able to meditate, have achieved the state of dharana to experience the meditative state of mind. Meditation is not a practice; it is a state of mind, just as awareness is not a practice, but a state of mind.

– 4 April 2026, Dharana Training, Ganga Darshan, Munger

Health or Taste

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Spirituality is an awareness which can be cultivated no matter where you are in the world. Both vegetarians and non-vegetarians can cultivate spiritual awareness. Diet is to attain purity, vitality and balance in the body. It has nothing to do with spiritual life. If the diet had anything to do with spiritual life, there would be many communities who would be devoid of any spiritual awareness or spiritual attainment.

If vegetarianism is important for spiritual life, then eighty percent of humanity will have no chance to grow in spiritual life. Diet is not an important aspect to cultivate spiritual awareness or spiritual experience. Diet and a disciplined life are the medium through which we can attain better physical health, and with better physical health comes a better mind. With better physical health and mind comes better vitality and better participation in life.

There are many theories in the world, indicating the importance of diet and relating diet with spiritual life. It is understandable, because if there is physiological balance and internal harmony of the body systems and organs, then concentration

can develop more spontaneously, and you can guide the activity of your senses and mind more efficiently and effectively. You will be more in command of your body, senses and mind.

Therefore, *ahara* or diet is important to have better physiological and psychological conditions. These conditions can help you in achieving inner peace and connection with happiness and joy. They help you cultivate the *sadgunas* in life which indicates the spiritual attainments of the individual. There is a statement of the Upanishads, *annadvayah prana*. *Anna* means the food that we consume, which brings *prana*, vitality, to the body and the mind, so that we can live and experience our life.

According to the Upanishads, the whole purpose of *prana*, *anna*, *ahara* is generation of *prana shakti*. This *prana shakti* is of two types, physical and mental. The physical dimension of this energy is known as *prana shakti*, and the mental dimension of this energy is known as *chitta shakti*. They manifest in the physical body and the subtle, mental body; both are aspects of *prana*. When we consume food *prana* is generated. Our ancestors did not have the choice of food that you have today. Innumerable food items are available. When you go to a restaurant, you do your selection, and every time it is a different selection. These different selections are made to please your taste, nothing more than that. Fast food is to please your taste, nothing more than that.

Our ancestors used to eat one type of food, not changing every meal, but maintaining the same food for a week, so that the nutrients of that *anna* were absorbed into the body and they created the *prana shakti*. What you eat today does not give you *prana shakti*. It is full of chemicals and preservatives which are harmful to the body. Today, India has become the diabetic capital of the world. It is facing problems of obesity, heart problems, diabetes, knee problems, arthritis, rheumatism. Why? It is due to the flaws and faults in our diet, as we do not eat for health but for taste.

Ahara is not the variety that you are eating today, but *ahara* is the nourishment which fulfils all the requirements of

the body, from proteins, to minerals, to every other item that is necessary for the maintenance of a healthy body. Ahara has nothing to do with taste. If you are into taste, then know that your body will always be sick. If you are into ahara for the generation of prana shakti, you should know that your body will always be healthy.

Therefore, there have been different shastras which have indicated that ahara should be according to what is grown in the local area and according to the season. Ayurveda has given many indications and instructions in this regard. Yogis have spoken about what one should eat and what is appropriate for nourishing the cells of the body. Nowadays seasons make no difference. In mid-winter, you can have summer vegetables. In mid-summer, you can have winter vegetables. They have been preserved and kept for your taste, not for your health.

Today's ahara does not give prana; it creates chemical and mineral imbalances in the body. That causes illness and disease; it changes the condition of the physical body and makes the body sick. So, choose your ahara carefully, and if you want to know what type of ahara you should have, stay in some ashram for at least a month, to see how the food is made there. It may be tasteless to you, it may not have the spices you are used to having, it may not have the chemicals you are used to taste every day. However, it will be nourishing, healthy and it will give prana for the maintenance of the physiological and the psychological systems.

People go to dieticians to ask for advice about what they should eat. It can be a start, but that is not the final word. The final word is given to you by your own body, not the dietician. Ahara does play an important part in living your life properly and in a balanced manner, so you should be more aware that you eat for health, and not for taste.

*– 16 April 2025, KBS SREE Convention Centre,
Pondicherry, India*

Mantra and Samskaras

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

Every mantra has a specific sound. We do not know all the sounds, but we do know that there are certain sounds which are milder and others which are stronger. What happens when a sound is produced? Scientists have seen that the brain wave patterns are altered. Tantrics say that when a sound is produced, it alters the formations of the mind. The mind is not one unit. Just as water is formed by the combination of hydrogen and oxygen, the mind is a combination of numerous formations. In yoga and tantra, these formations are known as samskaras. They are the residue of individual experience through many incarnations.

The mind works like a camera. Whatever has been known and experienced through the senses remains imprinted in the subliminal part of the mind. These impressions or formations are so numerous that you may never be able to know them all, and it is not easy to classify them. Some are weak and insignificant, while others have a powerful influence on the character, habits and nature. Some are casual and periodical, while others accompany you all the time.

It is understood that powerful thoughts like anger, passion, jealousy or fear come into the mind from time to time, but during meditation many insignificant thoughts keep coming and going. This happens because we have not cleaned the formations of the mind. That is why the prerequisite to meditation is *chitta shuddhi*, mental purification. This should not be understood as a religious affair. Chitta shuddhi means fixing the formations of the mind. Otherwise, when you sit for meditation so many little thoughts constantly come into the mind, causing restlessness and disturbance. The practice of mantra is one of the best methods of chitta shuddhi, if it is done with awareness of all the thoughts that enter the mind as the mantra is being repeated.



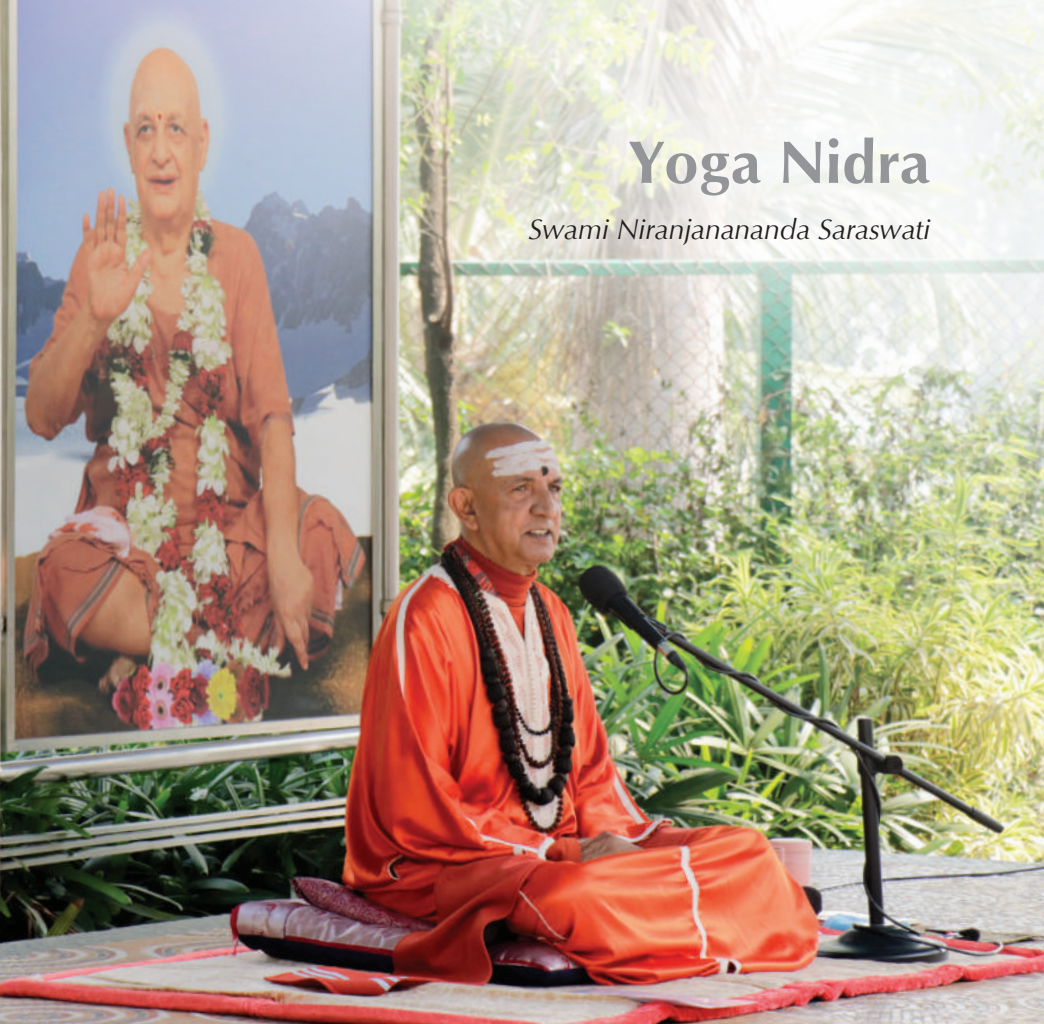
The formations of the mind have three ranges: *vikshepa* or distraction, *vikalpa* or one-pointedness, and *laya* or total dissolution. The first range occurs when the mind is continually jumping from one point to another and is never constant. For example, when you are concentrating on the flame of a candle and a distracting thought passes through your mind, it is called *vikshepa*. This is one formation of the mind.

The second formation is called *vikalpa*. When you have established *pratyahara*, dissociated your mind from the senses, one-pointed awareness takes place. Then you begin to see visions. You may be concentrating on the flame of a lamp, but you begin to see the inner television! These psychic formations of the mind are called *vikalpa*, and they are extremely difficult to break. In *dhyana yoga* if a thought comes to your mind, you can definitely force it out by your own will. But when *vikalpa* comes, you are helpless. These are involuntary expressions of the psychic formations and you have no control over them. How are you going to destroy or fix these formations? Here the mantra will be very useful. Mantra is capable of destroying the psychic formations known as *vikalpa*.

There is a third and powerful formation of the mind called *laya*, which means dissolution, suspension. At that time the consciousness is completely eliminated and there is total *shoonya*, void. You have been concentrating on the flame of a lamp and suddenly everything is switched off; there is no flame, there is nothing, and you are totally helpless, lost. This is a very obstinate formation.

So, there are three types of *samskaras*: distraction, psychic visions and suspension of consciousness. How are you going to free yourself from these formations? Mantra is a very valuable tool for this purpose. When you are practising mantra, it is absolutely necessary to use a mala. Mantra and mala together will fix the formations of the mind. For example, while practising *Om, Om, Om*, your mind suddenly drops and visions appear. The turning of the mala will interfere with the visions and revive your consciousness. It will reverse the process of mental awareness. This is the importance of mantra in relation to *dhyana yoga* and the awakening of spiritual consciousness.





Yoga Nidra

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

For Sri Swamiji, progression was an important factor: evolving from one stage to another, from one practice to another, from one yoga to another. Even with yoga nidra he had a simple and unique method. Later, we started seeing many cassettes, CDs and DVDs of yoga nidra which had all kinds of additions. Some had music. Some had waterfalls and birds chirping, some had rolling drums. Different people made their own versions of yoga nidra, believing that it would lead people into deeper relaxation, yet that went against every principle of yoga nidra.

Yoga nidra is a technique of pratyahara, where the mind has to be disconnected from the senses and sensory inputs. If there

is music, no matter what type, or any other sound, you will not be able to disassociate yourself from that sound or sensory connection and you will not reach the state of pratyahara. This is the point which most people miss. The yogic practices aim to disconnect the mental plug from the outer socket and put it in the inner socket. You disconnect from the dimension of unhappiness, discontentment, tension, stress and anxiety, and connect with the dimension where there is solace, strength, comfort, peace, tranquillity. That connection gives the strength to again face the crises of the material world when you come out.

There has to be a disconnection; the tentacles that are reaching out in all directions have to be cut, and then yoga nidra will take place. If there is music and drums and birds chirping and lightning and thunder, then that disassociation is not happening. Therefore, you are not practising yoga nidra, you are practising listening to music.

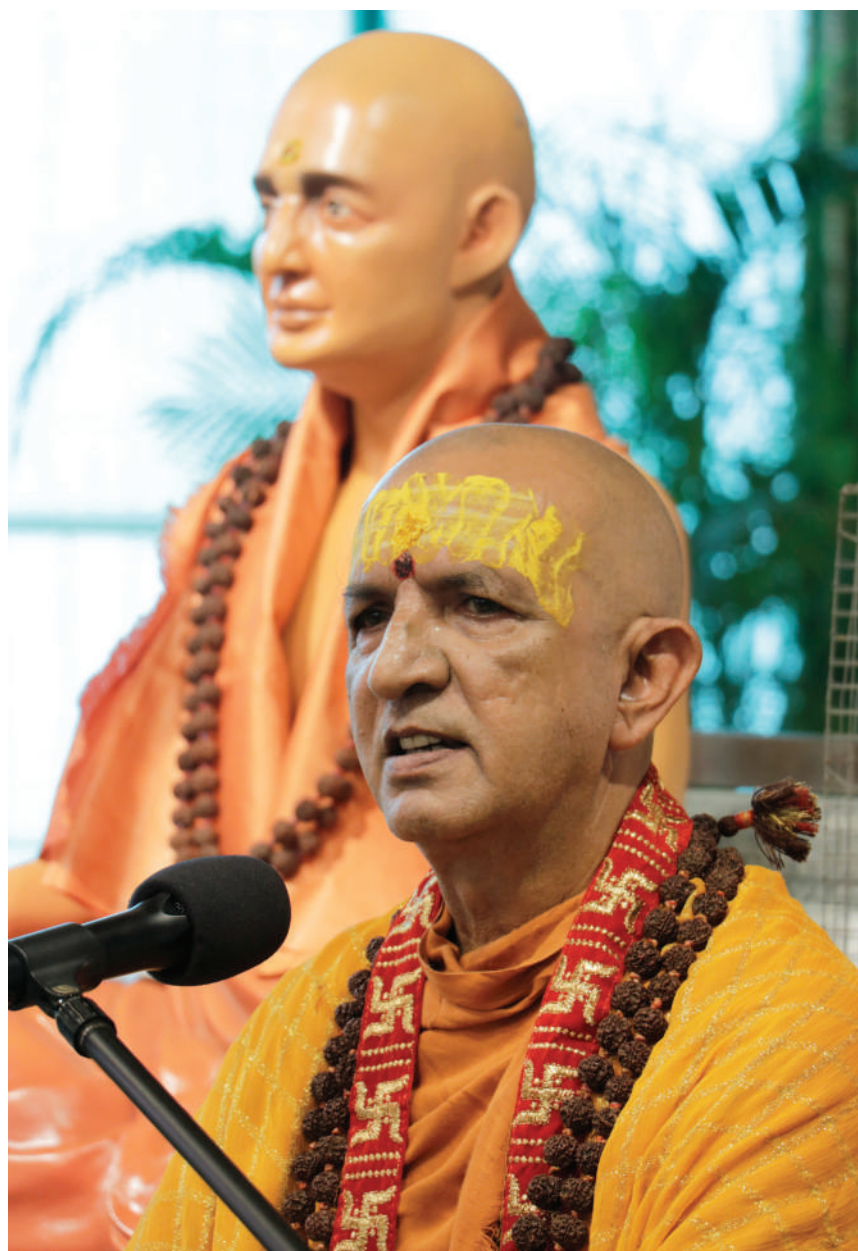
Swami Satyananda is definitely not the originator of the yoga nidra with music and other add-ons that people practise. He is the originator of yoga nidra that forms part of pratyahara, a state that you reach through a sequential practice.











I forgot, but the seed didn't . . .

Ravindra Shankaran IPS-DG-Sports BSSA (Bihar State Sports Authority)

Twenty years ago, it all began at the serene halls of Ganga Darshan at Bihar School of Yoga, where my wife, children, I, and many other seekers had gathered under the guidance of Guruji, Swami Niranjanananda. Little did I know that one of the toughest challenges waiting for me there would simply be . . . staying awake.

"Lie down in supine position. Head facing towards me. Legs apart. Arms away from the body and palms facing upwards. Gently close your eyes. Surrender completely and prepare for yoga nidra." The instructions flowed softly through the hall. Frankly speaking, I was delighted. The daily routine began at 4 am, a timing my body considered nothing short of cruel punishment. So the moment Guruji asked us to lie down and close our eyes, my inner voice happily declared, 'Finally! Official permission to sleep.' But then came the next instruction like a thunderbolt wrapped in velvet, "Try not to sleep."

What? You wake us up before sunrise, make us have our frugal breakfast at 6:30 am, sit through spiritual practices, make us work the whole day and now when sleep is finally within touching distance, we are told *not* to sleep? Spirituality, I realized, had a wicked sense of humour. "Listen carefully and follow the instructions," came the gentle voice again. 'Alright Guruji,' I told myself bravely, 'challenge accepted.'

Guruji slowly guided our *chetna*, awareness, from toes to head, front to back, relaxing each part of the body. His voice was calm, soothing, almost hypnotic. Whenever he softly said, "Relax, relax . . .," my sleepy brain conveniently translated it as, "Sleep, sleep." Honestly, staying awake during yoga nidra



felt tougher than police academy training. At least during indoor lectures at the academy, we could occasionally steal a few moments of sleep in air-conditioned classrooms without anyone noticing.

Gradually, without realizing it, I drifted into a strange inner world filled with silence and darkness. I entered a state somewhere between wakefulness and sleep. Guruji instructed us to listen to distant sounds, then nearby sounds, then to feel the body becoming heavy and then light, to feel the body hot and then cold. Slowly, something strange began happening – the body obeyed. When instructed to feel heavy, my body felt like a giant immovable rock. When asked to feel light, I felt as though I was floating like a dry leaf in the wind. At one moment, intense heat coursed through me and I saw the image of a funeral pyre blazing before my closed eyes. Moments later, with the suggestion of cold, I found myself mentally standing amidst the glaciers of Tapovan with the mighty Himalayas before me.

Then came tremors along my spine. At that point, I had absolutely no idea what was happening within me. Was Guruji controlling my mind? Was my own consciousness unfolding? I couldn't tell. I simply surrendered and became a silent witness to the experience. And then came the most

unbelievable moment. Guruji instructed us to visualize our own body without opening our eyes. To my utter shock, I could almost see myself floating slightly above the ground. Now whether I had touched some higher state of consciousness or whether my sleep-deprived brain had started producing special effects, I still cannot say with confidence even today. But the experience felt intensely real.

Just then, Guruji's divine voice gently echoed again, "Take a sankalpa. Keep it short, clear and positive. Repeat it three times within." My undergraduate days in the Physics Department were less about physics and more about sport, fun, adrenaline and hormones in full rebellion. It was a season of life powered more by dopamine than discipline. I hardly remember attending post-lunch classes. Lunch hour meant only one thing. I would meet my school friends, now scattered across different departments of the same college, at the canteen. Steel tumblers of tea, noisy benches, loud laughter and then the inevitable question, "Movie?"

What began as a one-time thrill soon became tradition. One bunk became two. Two became routine. Routine became lifestyle. Semester after semester slipped by like this. Around the same time, our youthful experiments were also evolving – trying tobacco, chasing brief highs through cheap intoxicants, convinced we were discovering life while in truth merely testing its boundaries. I believed I was clever. Too clever. I thought I could disappear from classes unnoticed and return just as invisibly. I was convinced my little acts of deception were masterfully executed. I was wrong. Very wrong. My disappearance, my timing, my movements through the department corridors had all been quietly observed by a man feared by students and respected by everyone.

Major Karupannan, Head of the Physics Department, a disciplinarian and, to make matters worse, a close friend of my father. My bad luck. For months I had lived under the illusion that I was outsmarting him. Then one afternoon, as I was trying to slip out through the corridor after strategically

bunking class, I heard the voice behind me, "Ravi." I froze. "Meet me in my office chamber."

It was a command. I dared not disobey. Even today, decades later, that sentence can still send a shiver down my spine. He walked ahead. I followed like a soldier being escorted to trial. He entered his office. The door closed behind him. I remained standing outside. Unsure. Should I knock? Should I enter? Should I wait for him to call me? Or should I run, leave the department, perhaps leave the city and begin life somewhere else under a different name? Seconds passed like hours. No sound from inside. My heartbeat was so loud I could hear it in my ears. It felt as though my chest was pounding hard enough to announce my presence to the whole department.

Gathering courage from some unknown corner of my being, I knocked. Or at least I attempted to. It was such a feeble knock that even I could barely hear it. But the Major heard. "Come in." I opened the door slowly, carefully, as though entering a room occupied by a sleeping tiger. Inside, he looked up briefly and instructed me to sit. I hesitated. "Sit," he repeated. This time louder. I sat immediately on the nearest chair, but not directly opposite him. Slightly angled. Safely distant. As far from the firing line as possible. He looked at me.

"Sit in front of me." Another command. My legs had turned weak. My hands were trembling. Standing up felt impossible. So, without rising, I shifted sideways from one chair to the next, still seated, until I reached the chair directly in front of him. For a brief second I felt fortunate. He was reading a book and perhaps had not noticed my awkward sideways migration across the furniture.

Then he closed the book. Looked straight at me. Piercing eyes. "What is your plan?" I stared, "Sirrr . . ." That was all that came out. Seeing my confusion, he softened the question, "What do you want to become in life?" Blank. My throat had tightened. My mouth was dry. My tongue felt stuck to my jaw. Even if I had an answer, I couldn't have spoken it. He studied me for a few moments and then said calmly, "I am not going

to lecture you on what you should or should not do. I know you won't follow any of it." Sweat rolled down my back. Then he said, "I called you here to give you one life lesson." "Write it down." I immediately pulled out the only notebook I carried all year, a small battered scribble pad, folded, rolled, crushed and carried in one hand like contraband rather than stationery. I unrolled it on the desk. Then disaster struck. No pen. Of course. I never carried one.

Whenever required, I borrowed one from whoever was nearest, usually from the girls who were sincere, organized and always seemed to carry at least three pens. I began patting my shirt pocket. Trouser pockets. Looking around helplessly. Without saying a word, the Major opened his pen stand, took out a pen, leaned forward and extended it across the table. I took it from his hand without lifting my eyes. Then he spoke slowly, "Be someone, not anyone." I wrote it down. And forgot.

"Take a sankalpa, keep it short, clear and positive Repeat it three times within." Guruji's voice was soft, yet it travelled deep. As I lay in stillness, somewhere between wakefulness and sleep, watching the breath dissolve into silence, a sentence surfaced from nowhere, as if it had been waiting all along in some forgotten corner of memory, 'Be someone, not anyone.' The words appeared with startling clarity. Not imagined. Not searched for. Simply revealed. I repeated them once. Then again and a third time within. That became my sankalpa. Somewhere in that profound silence, a seed was planted, quietly, invisibly, a sankalpa that perhaps would shape the years to come in ways I could not yet understand.

Once the sankalpa was taken, Guruji gently guided us back. "Slowly move your fingers, your wrists, your feet, one after another . . ." As I began moving my body, it felt as if I was descending from another realm and returning to earth. Sensation slowly returned. I became aware of the parts of my body touching the floor, the heels, the back, the shoulders, the head resting against the mat. It felt less like waking up and more like arriving back. From that day onward, as instructed

by our beloved Guruji, I practised yoga nidra every day without fail. For more than five years. Every single time, with eyes closed and body still, I returned to the same sankalpa, 'Be someone, not anyone;' repeated again and again, like a whisper, like a reminder, like an instruction handed over by life itself.

But time, as it does, kept moving. The rhythm of practice slowly loosened. Days became busier. Responsibilities multiplied. Life gathered speed and scattered attention in many directions. Gradually the practice became irregular, then occasional, and somewhere along the way, it quietly slipped away. In the quixotic rush of life, yoga nidra and I became strangers to each other. Yet the sankalpa remained. Perhaps dormant. Perhaps hidden beneath layers of time. But never truly gone.

As a matter of fact, and with all humility, I would say that the sankalpa sown in 2007, nurtured through five years of practice, and then gradually forgotten, became reality nearly twenty years later. Looking back now, I draw two quiet revelations from that experience. The first is that a sankalpa taken in yoga nidra carries a power beyond our immediate understanding. It settles somewhere deeper than the conscious mind, like a seed placed carefully into fertile soil.

The second revelation is perhaps even more important: if one expects that seed to sprout the next morning, flower next month or bear fruit within a year, disappointment is almost certain. Seeds do not obey our timelines. They take their own time. They lie still beneath the surface, invisible, gathering strength in silence. They grow in darkness. They wait. Then one day, often when we have stopped watching, stopped expecting, and perhaps forgotten we ever planted them, they break through. They grow. They flower. And they bear fruit. That, perhaps, is the mystery and grace of yoga nidra.

What is sown consciously may fructify unconsciously. What is repeated in silence may return as destiny. And what is forgotten by the mind may still be remembered by existence.

Sankalpa

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Through *sankalpa*, affirmations, positive resolutions, you modify or develop better samskaras. If the mind is not capable enough to make a positive resolution, somebody can even tape it for you. One experiment that I often do with children when they sleep, is that I play a tape which has ten affirmations, such as, 'I'll be creative, I'll be happy, I'll be friendly with everyone, I'll always have a positive attitude in life.' Like this, record ten sankalpas and when they sleep, play them. The sound enters the mind and influences the subconscious, which then becomes active. Many children with bad habits have been helped with this practice. Many adults with seemingly unchangeable habits in life have also been helped through this process of sankalpa.

* * *

Many people try to cross the waters of samsara. Some people have the strength to do it, some do not. We can also become the recipient of God's grace, for it is always possible to cross the

river of life. Some swim five kilometres, some eight, some nine, and then return. The potential, strength and ability is in each one of us to bring about a change in our life through *sankalpa shakti*, determination. If we are able to awaken the *sankalpa shakti* in our mind and life, then grace always descends, there is no doubt about it. If there is no *sankalpa shakti*, then no matter what you try to do, at one point, you will feel struggle and tension. You will feel that you will fail. Therefore, to have the correct resolve or determination to excel and be good in life should become the *sankalpa* for each one of us.

* * *

A *sankalpa* that is not intellectually understood by the mind has more power than a *sankalpa* based on rational understanding. The head and heart are two major components of the human personality. Yoga and tantra both say that one should awaken feeling, but many of the modern cultures advocate the opposite. In the harsh conviction of the head, the intellect, we tend to ignore the feeling side of our personality, and the separation of these two is likely the cause of a split or disunity in our behaviour, thinking and actions. This disunity is experienced and expressed through our actions, beliefs and performance.

Tantra and yoga have always advocated the awakening of feeling and the control of intellect. Therefore, a *sankalpa* that is based on a feeling will have much deeper results than a *sankalpa* that has been thought out rationally, when one has decided, 'I want to do this,' because this rationality totally isolates the feeling.

Do you ever think or plan how you are going to express love? Do you plan it or read about it in a book before actually expressing it to somebody, or is it spontaneous and natural? When it is spontaneous and natural one gains a deep insight into oneself, while in the case of disunity, the insight is lacking. Thus, a *sankalpa* based on a feeling will definitely be more powerful than a *sankalpa* that has been put through the filtering process of the intellect and rationality.

Suffering

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



All spiritual traditions begin with only one quest – how to overcome suffering in life. Even Mother Parvati questioned Lord Shiva, ‘The world is beautiful, yet there is a lot of suffering in it. How can people overcome their suffering and attain happiness, peace and bliss? What method can they adopt to realize that state of peace, bliss, happiness and fulfilment, and overcome suffering of life?’ In response to her question, Shiva gave the knowledge of the tantras and yogas to Mother Parvati.

Mahatma Buddha left his family and kingdom to discover how to overcome suffering in life. Through his discovery, he gave birth to a sadhana and an understanding, which was later on called the Buddhist philosophy. Buddha was not a Buddhist;

he was a person trying to discover the way to overcome human suffering.

The shastras tell us that there are three types of suffering in the world – *adhyatmik*, the one which we create in our own mind; *adhibhautik*, the one in which we are influenced by the stresses and tensions of our interactions and involvement in the material and sensorial dimensions; and *adhidaivik*, the one which is destined and over which we have no control. The shastras have defined these three types of suffering.

Adhyatmik is due to our ambitions and desires, and we create them ourselves. What we create ourselves is due to *lobha*, greed. If there was no greed in life, there would be no adhyatmik suffering. Lobha is the cause of our internal suffering, and this can manifest as a desire for material objects. It can manifest as an ambition to increase our self-esteem, which can later become arrogance. There are many aspects of lobha, and lobha also makes us commit different types of sins.

A story

One brahmin boy studied in a gurukul for many years. After completing his education, he came home and his father asked him, 'You have studied the shastras, you have lived with the guru for twelve years. Answer me one question, 'Who is the father of sin?'' This boy searched in all the literatures and scriptures to find out who the father of sin was. He could not find that name anywhere, so he said to his father, 'I shall go and try to find out, who the father of sin is from different sources.' With that he left his home and went from village to village, town to town, asking people, intellectuals, brahmins, gurus and scholars who knew the shastras, 'Who can tell me the name of the father of sin?' Nobody could give him the answer.

Once as he is coming to a small town, he feels hungry and he sees a house where there was a tulsi plant and a cow sitting in front of the door. He thinks, 'Oh, this is a pious house. Let me ask for some water and some food in this house.' So, he knocks at the door and the door is opened by a woman. The

child does not know that this woman is a prostitute, a *vaishya*. In his ignorance he asked the woman, 'Mother, can I have some water and food?' The woman gives him a glass of water to drink, and he drinks it happily. While he is drinking the water, a man comes to ask the lady for a time to visit. The boy realizes that this woman is not who she seems to be.

He is horrified, 'I have become impure. I have drunk water from her hands, from her tap. My body has become impure. I need to jump into the river Kaveri to cleanse myself of the sin.' Still he is hungry. The woman says, 'Why don't you have some lunch?' He says, 'No, no, no, I can't have lunch here. I did not realize that this was not the house of God, but a house of sin.' The woman says, 'Well, you have already taken water from here, and you call yourself impure. So, what harm is there if you have one roti as well? I will give you some food. You will have to take a bath anyway, so you might as well have bath with a full stomach. I will also give you some gold coins as dakshina.'

The boy thinks about it and says, 'Alright, I am already impure. I can have my meal, I will get dakshina which will help me go to another village and find myself something.' So, he agrees. When the food is served, the prostitute says to him, 'I want to feed you, and I will give you double the amount of dakshina.' The child agrees. This woman brings the morsel of food to his mouth, stops and says, 'You wanted an answer to your question about who is the father of sin. I have given you that answer. If you were sincere and true to your faith and belief, you would not be swayed by dakshina. It was your greed, the desire to have dakshina, the gold coins, which is allowing you to commit sin. Remember that greed is the father of sin.' This opened the eyes of the child and he says, 'Yes, you are right.'

This is a story and an indication that it is lobha, greed, that becomes the cause of those sufferings which are self-generated. The self-generated suffering of desire and ambition is due to greed. If you overcome greed, there is no adhyatmik suffering, the suffering which you develop from within yourself.

The quest

Then comes adhibhautik which is due to our interactions of the senses with sense objects, the material dimension, our interactions for prosperity, property and family. The stress, anxiety, frustration, depression and tension, which you experience while engaging in the material dimension, becomes the cause of adhibhautik suffering. You think of solutions for what you want to possess, you think that the solution for your happiness is outside in the sense objects. You have a car, but you want to buy a new car. You worry about it, you are stressed about it, you desire it. That is adhibhautik.

You are married but do not have any children, and you are concerned about it, you worry about it. That is adhibhautik. The stress that you accumulate at home, in your profession, in society, in your competitiveness is all adhibhautik suffering.

The last cause of suffering is adhidaivik. When a flood happens, you have no control over it; everything is destroyed. An earthquake happens, you have no control over it; everything is destroyed. A meteorite hits, you have no control over it; everything is destroyed. That is adhidaivik. You lose everything.

These are the three types of suffering that affect every individual on the planet. Nothing can be done about adhidaivik, the destined one, the God-given ones. Something can definitely be done for adhibhautik and adhyatmik suffering.

All the spiritual quests begin with discovering and finding the solution to these two types of suffering. These solutions become philosophies and religions in the course of time. You can look at the entire history of spirituality and this is what you will find. Whether it be Buddha, Mahavira, any sannyasin or sadhu, they all start their spiritual journey with the intention to overcome suffering and to find peace and happiness.

– 19 April 2025, Srimad Andavan Ashram College, Trichy

Anger Management

Swami Sivananda Saraswati



It will be admitted that everyone, without any exception whatsoever, is a victim of this horrible malady. Indeed, control of anger will result in supreme peace and immeasurable joy. As such, let me describe in detail what anger is, its various forms, how it affects the nervous system, its exact relationship with passion and lastly the various practical methods that can be safely employed to effectively eradicate it, root and branch. My fervent appeal to you all is that you will apply yourselves heart and soul to the eradication of this dire disease by following these valuable practices.

Philosophy of anger

Anger is a *vritti* or modification that arises in the mind-lake when the *gunas*, qualities, *rajas* or passion and *tamas* or mental darkness, predominate. It is a wave of unpleasant feeling that arises in the mind when one gets displeased with an-

other. It is in other words, a modification of desire or passion. Just as milk is changed into curd, so also desire changes into anger. It is the most formidable enemy of peace, knowledge and devotion. It is the straightest road to hell itself.

Anger is a manifestation of *shakti*, power, energy, or Devi, the supreme as feminine. In the *Chandipath* or *Durga Saptasati* you will find:

*Ya Devi sarvabhuteshu krodharupena samsthita,
Namastasyai namastasyai narnastasyai namo namah.*

I bow again and again to that Devi who is seated in all beings in the form of anger.

When Arjuna asks Sri Krishna, ‘But what impels man to commit sin, O Krishna, in spite of himself and driven as it were, by force?’ The Blessed Lord said (3.37 and 38):

*Kaama esha krodha esha rajoguna samudbhavah;
Mahaashano mahaapaapmaa viddhyenam iha vairinam.*
*Dhoomenaavriyate vahnir yathaadarsho malena cha;
Yatholbenaavrito garbhas tathaa tenedam aavritam.*

It is desire, it is anger born of the quality of rajas, all-sinful and all-devouring; know this as the foe here (in this world).

As fire is enveloped by smoke, as a mirror by dust, and as an embryo by the amnion, so is this enveloped by that.

Later, Sri Krishna says (16:21):

*Trividham narakasyedam dwaaram naashanamaatmanah;
Kaamah krodhastathaa lobhas tasmaadetat trayam tyajet.*

Triple is the gate of this hell, destructive of the self, lust, anger and greed, therefore, one should abandon these three.

Anger resides in the *linga sharira*, the astral body, but it percolates into the physical body just as water percolates through the pores to the outer surface of an earthen pot. Just as heat melts lead, just as heat and borax melt gold, so also desire and anger, the heating factors of the mind, melt the mind.

Anger begets eight kinds of vices. All evil qualities and actions proceed from anger. If you can eradicate anger, all bad qualities will die by themselves. The eight vices are: injustice, rashness, persecution, jealousy, taking possession of others' property, killing, harsh words and cruelty.

Whenever there is a little irritability, stop all conversation and observe *mouna*, silence. Practise *mouna* daily for one or two hours to help in controlling anger. Always try to speak sweet, soft words. The words must be soft and the arguments hard; but if the reverse is the case it will lead to discord and disharmony. There is a sharp sword in every tongue.

If you find it difficult to control anger, leave the place at once and take a brisk walk. Drink some cold water immediately. This cools down the body and mind. Chant *Om* loudly like a lion for ten minutes and then chant *Om Shanti* mentally or verbally for five minutes. Think of the picture of your *Ishta*, your chosen deity. Pray. Repeat your mantra for ten minutes. Gradually the anger will vanish.

Find out the real cause of your anger and try to eradicate it. If a man abuses you and calls you names, you become furious at once. Your blood becomes hot. Why do you feel offended when he calls you 'a dog' or 'a donkey'? Have you grown four legs and a tail like a dog? Why do you get excited over little things? Enquire:

What is this abuse? Is it not mere vibration in the ether? Am I body or atman? No one can injure atman. The atman of the abuser and the abused is one. Do I really gain anything by retaliating? I waste my energy. I hurt the feeling of another man. I disturb and pollute the

thought world. I do real harm to the world by sending a current of hatred. This world is unreal. I will live here for a short time only. Let me bear this insult. Let me excuse him. I will develop inner mental strength and power of endurance.

You can thus very effectively eradicate the feelings of anger. A time will come when you will not be irritated even a bit by harsh words, abuse and insults of this kind. You will not pay the least heed if a man says that such and such a man has said bad words against you. You will simply laugh the whole matter away. An irritable man is very weak and has no mental strength. You must try to remain cool even in the most provocative conditions.

Do not identify yourself with the vritti of anger. When a wave of anger arises in the mind-lake, stand as a witness of the vritti. Become indifferent. Say to yourself, 'I am the witness of this modification. I am distinct from this vritti. I have nothing to do with this wave.' The vritti will die by itself. It will not disturb you. Identification with the vritti is the cause of human sufferings. Identify yourself with the Self. Stand like a lion, as a spectator of the mental menagerie.



Yoga and Spirituality

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Spiritual life is not a serious life. Spiritual life is a joyous life. Happiness is the expression of that joy, and happiness is the first yama of yoga vidya. Yamas and niyamas represent a positive state of mind, behaviour and expression. *Yama* means something that you hold in your mind and what conditions your mind. Anger can be a yama, because you are holding anger in your mind. Frustration can also be a yama, because that is what you hold in your mind.

There are problems, difficulties, tensions, frustrations, anxiety, suffering, yet the antidote to all this is happiness. Happiness is like an armour, a protection against everything negative and destructive that the world can throw at you. Happiness also keeps the mind clear. Even before his birth, Sri Krishna was on the hit list of Kamsa, and many assassination attempts were also made in his lifetime. Was he ever depressed or crying? No. In every situation of life, he was smiling and joyous, always following the righteous path, the virtuous path, always inspiring others to be happy and, by being happy, following the virtuous path.

When you connect with the happy and positive qualities of life, that is the cultivation of the spiritual nature and spiritual awareness in your life. Spiritual nature and spiritual awareness does not mean that you become God-oriented. That is religious awareness and religious connection. There is a difference between religion and spirituality. Religion says, 'You have to believe' and spirituality says, 'You have to search and discover.' All the spiritual traditions, through their search, discover that which is beautiful within. And what is beautiful inside us? It is our connection to positivity and to the virtues of life.

I am not a yoga teacher. I am a sannyasin who experiments with yoga and experiences the aspirations of yoga. My guru



was not a yoga propagator. He was a sannyasin. Today he is known as the leader of the modern yogic renaissance, and he lived a life in which yoga was fully realized. My grandfather guru, Swami Sivananda, was not a promoter, propagator or teacher of yoga. He was also a first class sannyasin, who attained yogic realization of the highest nature, and became one with the divine, with God. In their lives, I do not see any religiosity, but a beautiful connection with everything which is positive and conducive to the development of human consciousness, leading to the highest realization of the potential and the divine.

Yoga leads to the cultivation of spiritual awareness; yoga is the stepping-stone leading you to that awareness and realization. If you have to go to the roof of your building, you have to use the staircase. You do not jump from the ground floor to the top of your building. When you climb the staircase, it is one step at a time, and on the roof there are no more steps



to climb. It is a flat surface. This is how you have to see and realize yoga and spiritual life. Spiritual life is like the roof and yoga is like the steps leading to the roof. Therefore, spiritual life is considered to be a life of awareness, whereas yoga is considered to be a system of practices which allow you to discover your nature.

Yoga is a journey of personal transformation. Spiritual life is the connection with all that is positive and beneficial, for the upliftment of a harmonious individual, family and society. As yoga is a journey of personal transformation, there are many branches; and as spiritual life is the experience of a positive existence, there is only one condition – be in control and command of yourself, and manifest your positive nature.

*– 23 April 2025, Duraiswamy Sports Academy (DUSA),
Madurai, India*



The Grain of Truth

It has been told from generation to generation,
And so it is sung by the bards and sages,
That he who would enjoy life
And gain enlightenment
Shall partake of the grain of truth.
This grain springs from bindu, the primal seed,
Rooted in the rich earth of mooladhara,
Watered by swadhisthana's unconsciousness,
Ripened in blazing manipura sunlight,
Fortified by the pure air of vishuddhi.
The wise man mills the harvest
Between the stones of austerity and service
And collecting the yield of unshakeable vision,
He kneads it with the amrita of intuition,
Baking the sacrificial loaf
In the fires of renunciation.
Yoking his soul to the powers of the cosmos,
The sage shares this yoga with men of worth,
By means of them reaching myriads of people.
Christian communion, Moslem loaf of hospitality,
Bhiksha of Buddhists, Shiva's prasad.
Yoga is the lifebread,
Broken to sustain the spirit of all mankind.
For even a single taste transforms
Every meal into a feast of truth,
All of life into
A celebration of awareness.

—Swami Satyananda Saraswati

Experience of Love

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



There is a beautiful story from Krishna's life. Due to his duties he could not go back to his friends or to the village where he had grown up. However, he could feel the emotions which his foster parents and former playmates were having and those feelings would come to him in the form of waves.

So he called one of his closest friends, Uddhava, and said, "Please go to Vrindavan and Gokul where the people are pining for me. Explain to them that right now it is not possible for me to come."

A beautiful discussion took place between Krishna and Uddhava. Uddhava was considered to be one of the greatest jnanis of that age. He was also arrogant about his knowledge. He would talk to Krishna and identify with Krishna but without form. In place of the physical form he would always see a light. When Krishna told him that the gopis were attached to the physical form, Uddhava could not understand. He said, "Why are they attached to your physical form? I will show them the way to identify with your formless aspect so that they can experience *shanti*, peace. If they identify with your physical form, they are identifying with *maya*, illusion. Because of *maya* they are experiencing *prem*, love, but that love is causing them a lot of pain and suffering."

Uddhava took a sankalpa to make everyone understand the nature of Krishna's formless divinity. When he reached Vrindavan no one was willing to listen to him. Everyone was pining for the return of Krishna, for his touch, for his physical presence. They said to Uddhava, "You might be the biggest jnani, but you have not yet experienced love and, therefore, your knowledge is not complete. If you experience love and if you experience the suffering, pain and yearning that comes with love, you will know what we are feeling."

Uddhava had not experienced that love for God, so all his wisdom and knowledge was halved. He got the message that knowledge itself is not enough.

Sri Krishna describes bhakti as a process of positive and qualitative transformation of one's mental, attitudinal life. Seeing within other beings, whether animate or inanimate, that aspect of divinity which one has experienced within oneself is the highest form of compassion, where the individual self is totally eradicated. One is God and everything is God. The same light that shines within shines everywhere.

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

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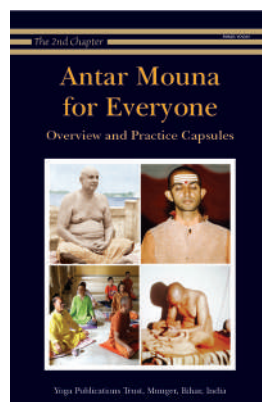
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Websites and Apps

www.biharyoga.net

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