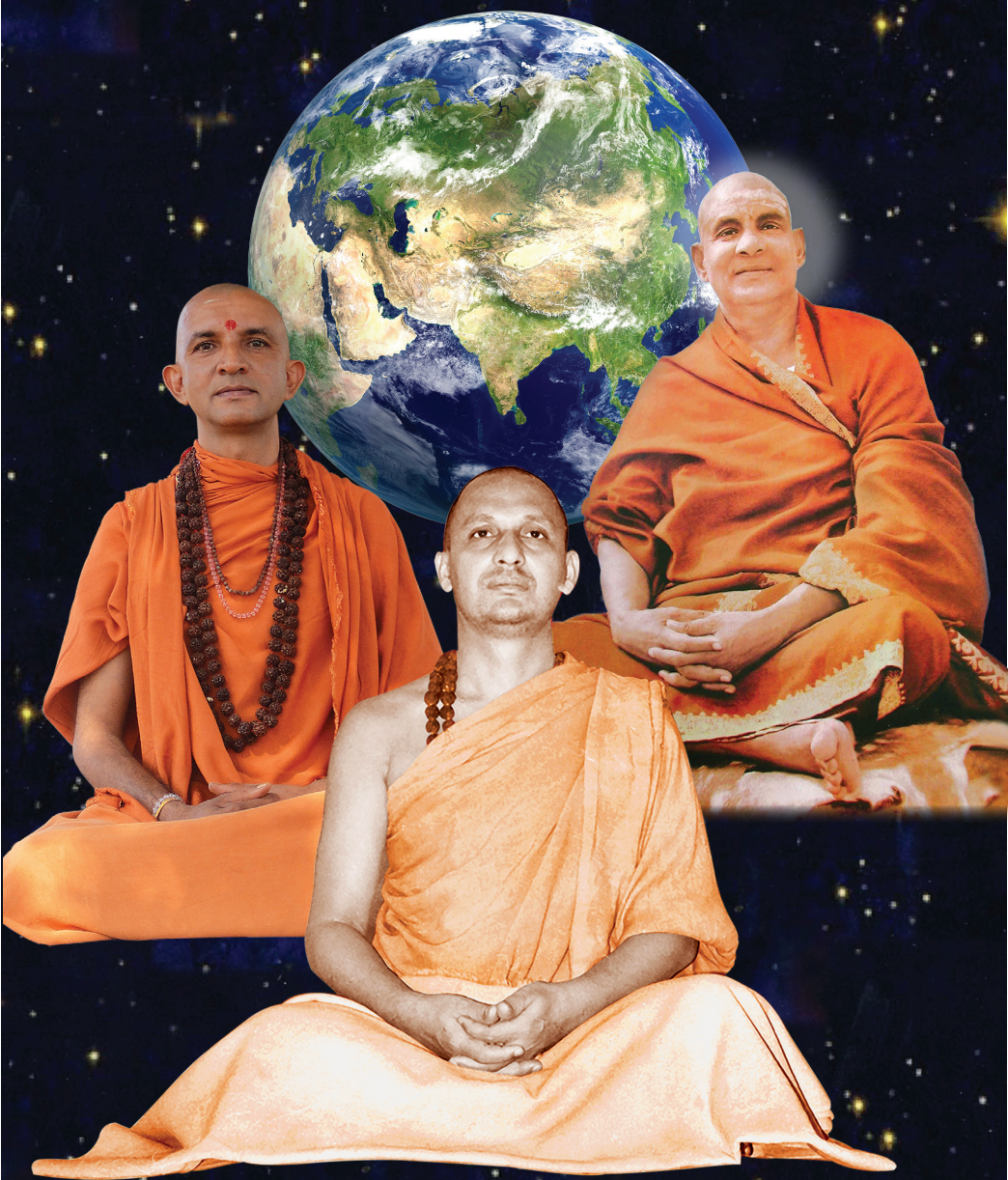


YOGA

Year 15 Issue 1
January 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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Plates: 2025 satsangs with Swami
Niranjanananda Saraswati



GUIDELINES FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

Benefits of yoga

Yoga can help in one's business and in daily life. One can have calmness of mind at all times by the practice of yoga. One can have restful sleep. One can have increased energy, vigour, vitality, longevity and a high standard of health. Yoga transmutes the animal nature into divine nature and raises one to the pinnacle of divine glory and splendour. It will enable you to keep a balanced mind always and remove fatigue. It will confer serenity, calmness and wonderful concentration. Yoga is a conscious and sustained attempt towards self-perfection.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

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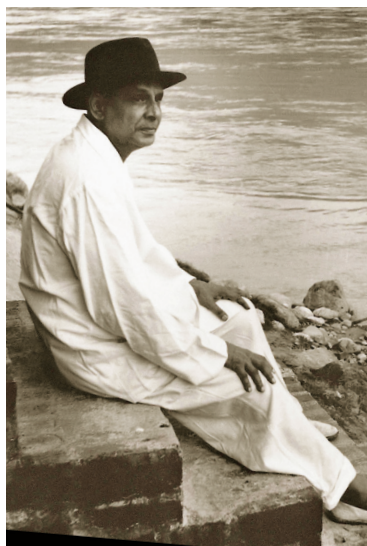
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The Yogi is superior to the ascetic. He is deemed superior even to those versed in sacred lore. The Yogi is superior even to those who perform action with some motive. Therefore, Arjuna, do you become a Yogi. (*Bhagavad Gita VI:46*)
तपस्विभ्योऽधिको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

Turn Over a New Leaf

Swami Sivananda Saraswati



The more you yearn to turn over a new leaf and lead a pure, divine life, the more opportunities will come. Have one all-consuming aspiration. Pray to the Lord from the bottom of your heart. Attain inner peace and live in inner peace. The strength of your longing should be the invincible strength born of wisdom and discrimination between the real and the unreal, born of your sincerity and wholehearted dedication to the yoga of equanimity.

Be prepared to sacrifice everything. How then can you fail to attain the highest state of tranquillity? How then can the aspirant fail to become the highest yogi? Spiritual yearning must be real and lasting. Only then can you have spiritual progress and be able to stick to the path. A life of sadhana must become a passion, so be firm in your vows and fiery in your determination. Every failure is a movement towards success. Every difficulty or disappointment is a trial of your faith. Be a hero and win the spiritual battle.

Be serene, balanced and steady. Overcome whatever obstacles come in the way through self-effort, faith and surrender. Adaptability and an iron will can turn all obstacles into stepping-stones. Be a light unto yourself. Calmly bear insults, privations and sufferings. Be harmonious everywhere, with everybody. Act nobly, live peacefully, endure pain. There is nothing comparable with peace in this world.

Moment To Moment

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



What you have to renounce is the frailties in your own personality. You have to reject what is not wanted within. It is not possible to do it intellectually. It is only possible by having complete faith in yoga, a complete life in yoga. You must say, 'I am a yogi.' You must feel it every day. You must not be afraid. In this way, the practice of yoga, the moment-to-moment awareness to live a life with higher principles, with absolute faith in that higher Spirit who shall be made known to you through yoga, transforms the values of your life little by little.

Make resolves and keep revising them. Finally remind yourself every day as to the purpose of your life and that while the ultimate purpose of yoga is to bring enlightenment, the primary, preliminary purpose is to clean the road, to light the path and to make the journey itself.

— 1968, Integral Yoga Institute, New York City, USA

The Lives of Saints

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Whenever I see the image of saints and enlightened beings, what triggers in my mind is the lifestyle, which they lived. Their lifestyle speaks volumes about their thoughts, intentions, desires, and what they want to achieve. When we are unable to fathom the lifestyle of such enlightened beings, then we say that they have given an idea, a thought, a philosophy or a religion. Actually, they have not given anything.

After thinking for many years, I have come to the conclusion that there is no such thing as philosophy. Philosophy is a creation of a mind which does not grasp the details of wisdom. People who live the correct life do not have to look at the details, because they are living it. I do not believe that there is anything such as moral and ethical teaching in the world. Everything is a natural expression of human personality. You can speak an untruth, a lie, deceive people, be jealous, be angry, and that is all accepted as a natural way of life. However, for you to be truthful, it becomes a moral teaching.

There is definitely something wrong with human understanding of the good things that we can achieve and experience in life, and the negative and the destructive that we express continuously in life. For the people who are expressing the tamasic any positive idea can be a philosophy. However, for those who are pursuing the sattwic way of life, philosophy is nothing but an expression of the clean and pure intention of the individual.

The lives of saints show us that. Buddha did not come to teach philosophy, or to establish a religion. He came to teach how to transcend the suffering that we experience in life, yet instead of looking at that as the core of his teachings, people who did not understand what his intention was, said it was a religion. The same happened with Christ, who was just teaching a way to live a bhakta's life. A bhakta is a person who



is immersed in the higher nature, the higher consciousness. By living a bhakta's life, one develops compassion and love, and recognizes that everyone is a child of God. Jesus lived that life.

In our own tradition, we have Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda, who have adopted what one can call universalism. They have not only adopted and accepted it, but also lived universalism. Sri Swamiji accepted everyone whether from any form of Christianity, Islam, Hinduism or any other religious tradition in the world. He said, 'These are all different paths to reach the same destination, and therefore they must be honoured, respected and lived.' Sri Swamiji lived those principles.

Spiritual principles are not Christian, Islamic, Hindu or Buddhist. They are universal principles, and a person who can live these principles has a universalist mind. The universalist mind sees the essence of everything, and not the form. This is how a knowledgeable person should live. One can derive inspiration from this, for it is the lifestyle which is the real teaching, not what is spoken or written in books. What is spoken and written in books can be interpreted in a hundred different ways, by the knowledgeable and by the ignorant. What is realized and when it is lived, is the real thing which needs no interpretation, no belief and no dogma.

That life is an expression of the purity and luminosity of your nature. Therefore, instead of reading words and trying to interpret words that are written, take inspiration from how the saints lived, and challenge yourself to live like that.

Welcome to Ganga Darshan

Swami Ratnashakti Saraswati



Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth is an ashram; it is not a yoga centre. A yoga centre is a place where you go to learn how to practise yoga, but an ashram is a place where you go to learn how to experience and live yoga. In a nutshell, this is the reason and intent behind ashrams and the way they function – the routines and disciplines that make up the basis of ashram life. The entire purpose of an ashram and of ashram life is to accelerate the spiritual evolution of everybody who is in the ashram. That is the purpose of ashram. It is to fast-track your spiritual growth, your spiritual development and your spiritual evolution. Ashrams are designed with this in mind.

This environment is totally different to a material environment, because that is not the purpose or focus of ashram. This ashram is unique, because it is nurtured and sustained

by three generations of spiritual masters. This is a very rare thing. In a spiritual tradition, you may get one or two, but to have three masters in unbroken succession is a rare and unique opportunity to go deep into spiritual life, by spending time in the ashram that they have created.

This ashram is inspired by Swami Sivananda, and his vision of life that everybody, no matter who they are, where they are and in what condition and situation of life – everybody can live a divine life, everybody can connect to the positive within themselves and express that positivity outwards, externally into society, for the benefit of others. That is the inspiration of this ashram. It was created by his disciple, Swami Satyananda, who made it his yogabhoomi, the place from which he spread yoga from shore to shore and door to door. To every nook and cranny of the world he took yoga, so that people may be benefited by applying the practices of yoga in their life. This ashram is sustained and nurtured by the presence of Swami Niranjanananda and his yogic vision.

In this ashram, we also have the tradition of sannyasa. Sannyasa is a spiritual lifestyle, it is not a material lifestyle. It is a spiritual lifestyle designed for exploring the potentials of the individual, and also dedicating oneself to seva and dharma, under the guidance and watchful eye of the guru. You do not find this in material life.

What we think of as the disciplines of the ashram are actually the road maps for us to go deeper into our spiritual and yogic experience. You cannot be in two places at the same time. Material life is an external life. In material life, your mind is externalized, you are chasing your desires and expectations, you are led by the entanglement of the mind with the senses and the objects of the senses, you are experiencing your frustrations and your ups and downs. That is all material life.

Spiritual life is inside and you cannot be in two places at the same time. Either you are outside, or you are inside. What we think are disciplines are actually the road maps which have been set down by the people who have attained these spiritual



states and are able to say to us, 'Hey, if you go this way, you will reach your destination.'

So, while you are here, make the most of this opportunity; you are here for a short time, try to connect with the intent of the place, the vision of the place, and what is being taught and what you can experience here. The way to do that is to disconnect from your social and material entanglements.

If you are here and you spend your time socializing and gathering phone numbers and planning your next trips and programs, you are wasting your time. If you are here and you make the effort to follow the disciplines, to connect to the vision, to connect to what is being taught, then your experience will be deeper. You will have an experience; ashram is the place where people have a breakthrough in spiritual life. They do that by following the disciplines and routines of the ashram, and by making the effort to disconnect from those things which dissipate and distract the mind. They bring it inside to discover their own spiritual and yogic potentials.

Anushasan, Sanyam and Anuvrat

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Laws are necessary now even more, in this modern environment and situation. Why are laws made every day? Why does the Parliament or the courts enact new laws, practically on a daily basis? As people's minds deteriorate, their life becomes tamasic, thoughts, behaviour and actions become tamasic, selfishness and arrogance come to the fore, and the ego becomes totally inflated. The negative individuality comes to the surface: 'This is what I need, this is what I demand, this is what I want to do.' Therefore, laws have to be made to curb the tendencies that are detrimental and harmful to the individual, or to society in general. The laws are made to curb the negative impact of the changing environment.

Since the vedic times, ashrams have existed as residences of rishis and sannyasins, where people go for learning the social as well as spiritual sciences. These residences were educational institutions and were called ashrams. Today you call them vidyalaya. A *vidyalaya* or school is controlled by the state or the government, and the knowledge imparted there is to succeed in social and material life. You can become a scientist, an artist, an engineer, a doctor; you can acquire the skills that allow you to survive in society. The focus of vidyalayas or schools today is only the outer, sensorial, mundane, material. Whereas in ashrams, along with the external, people were also inspired to inculcate spiritual awareness and qualities, so the mind would not be running amok only for its own gratification. Instead, harmony and balance could be experienced in life.

In our culture and tradition, the conditions and qualities that bring harmony and balance in life are known as yamas and niyamas, or sadgunas. In the times past, it was the cultivation



of these harmonious, awakened and peaceful qualities that defined one's spiritual journey. There were no laws at that time, for everybody knew what their obligation, *kartavya*, was, what their dharma was, how they had to live in the family and in society, what their obligation was for the community, the family, the state, the nation. Such harmony, where there is no negative behaviour, is the spiritual experience: everybody living the best, the positive and creative aspect of themselves. They were being themselves, they were not trying to imitate anyone else.

Then times changed, the mind shifted from that level of lifestyle, understanding, behaviour, performance, thought, to more sensorial, material, mundane things, which then started to shape the mind, and a different type of neuroplasticity happened. We saw ourselves expressing arrogance, ego, ambition, expectation, desire, passion. We no longer lived for the greater good; it was all for one's own good, at the expense of others' good, leading to mental states like envy, aggression, jealousy, hatred, frustration.

For a long time, there was a balance between the outer and the inner in Indian society despite the onslaught of

technology. Now, as the dependency grows more and more on the outer material things, and less and less on our own conviction, willpower and strength, our behaviour is guided not by wisdom, but by self-centred ego. This ego makes us more aware of what we wish to do, rather than how we can help contribute to better things. With this distortion, the basic quality of mind that we are losing, is *sanyam*.

Sanyam does not mean restraint, it means knowing what is right and what is wrong, and living the right. That is *sanyam*. People translate it as restraint, but it is in fact your identification with the right. When you don't live the right and start doing the wrong, that is an indication of no *sanyam*. If you like doing what is wrong and somebody tells you to stop and do something different, that would be restraint – an external push to move you from the wrong to the right. So, *sanyam* means living in the right, knowing the right, doing the right. In that state, everything is perfect and in harmony.

Since people don't understand this concept of *sanyam* due to their material engagement, the yogis said, 'Here is another word, *anushasan*.' *Anushasan* translates as discipline in English; however, *anushasan* really means learning how to govern the little things within ourselves. *Anu* means the smallest and the littlest which is very impactful; *shasan* means to know, control, direct or govern. Everything that happens in the body of mind and prana, if it comes within the purview of your awareness, and you are able to harmonize that, then that is *anushasan*. You realize what you have to observe and change within yourself. But then, to live *anushasan*, you have to start with what is called *anuvrat*.

Anuvrat

Anuvrat is tweaking of the small things. When you walk into a dirty room and notice that the paint is peeling off, there are no fans, no pictures, only dust on the ground, what do you do first? Do you take up the whole room at once or you do things one by one? First you open the windows to get rid of the damp

smell, then you clean the floor. If you have the resources, you then get somebody to come and scrub the walls, re-plaster and paint them. Then somebody comes to fix the electricals. You go step by step. You can't do everything on the same day. So, little actions that you do to improve that dirty room and turn it into a liveable space, is known as anuvrat.

What is anuvrat for the mind? First, to stop the agency that speaks the mind: the mouth. The mouth speaks everything that the ego, the arrogance, the negativity, the critical mind wants you to speak. Therefore, the first anuvrat in yoga is mouna. *Mouna* is silence of the mouth no doubt, but it also means measured speech. What harm is there if you stop speaking for twelve hours? Does it hurt you in any way? The anuvrat of ashram is simple: practise mouna from 6 pm to 6 am. It is their ego and arrogance that does not allow people to follow this.

Those who cannot follow the anuvrat are far from spirituality. It is like a donkey wearing a lion's skin and believing that it is a lion. The thinking is that of a donkey, the braying is that of a donkey, not the roar of a lion. The food is that of a donkey, not of a lion; the *sangat*, company, is that of a donkey, not of a lion. One cannot be a lion by wearing the garb of the lion. One cannot be spiritual by thinking, 'I am spiritual'.

There are certain markers of spirituality in life, and living those markers to the best of our ability is anuvrat. Mouna is one of them and most conflicts happen due to mouna. I don't understand why. Why people find it is so difficult. What within you is making you rebel against mouna? Think about it. When it does not harm you in any manner, rather it is a step in controlling the misbehaviour of the mind, what stops you from practising it? Is it your arrogance? Is it your desire to prove that you are somebody? You are not proving anything to anybody, except to yourself. If somebody tells you, "Please don't speak now, follow the rule of the ashram," you react. That is your arrogance; it is neither an understanding

of yourself nor any respect for the anuvrat of the place. If you find it difficult, then why are you here? You can go back. Why do you want to destroy the environment and the anuvrat of the place? The anuvrat is meant to do good to everybody, yet you do not allow that to happen, neither to yourself nor to others. You become an impediment in your own growth and in the growth of the other person.

These are the things that one has to appreciate and learn in an ashram. You won't learn them in your home. Many people will think that I am speaking hard words. They are not hard words, they are questions to you. Why do you not follow a simple thing which is meant for your own good? Why do you identify with your arrogant nature and want to break the discipline of a tradition, a place, an intention? It indicates that you are far from spiritual understanding, spiritual life and spiritual awareness.

Cultivating spiritual awareness in life is the inspiration for which Swami Sivananda lived. It is the inspiration for which Swami Satyananda lived. It is the inspiration that we are trying to share with everyone. For this reason, anuvrat, or small efforts are defined in an ashram environment, whether it be mouna or using your phone to talk.

Why do you want to talk on your phone? Can't you stay away from it for the period that you are here? If you have to talk on your phone and continue that same life which you lived outside, then better to stay outside at home. Why come here, if you do not want to change anything? The ashram is not a hotel or a resort; it is a place where you learn to live in a different manner. By talking on a mobile phone you go to jail, that is why phones are known as 'cell' phones. You are in the jail of your phone. So, enjoy the freedom of life outside it. If you want to become free from your imprisoned life, come here and follow the rules. That is anushasan, that is sanyam, that is anuvrat.

– 21 August 2025, Ganga Darshan, Munger

Qualities of a Yogi

Swami Sivananda Saraswati

In Chapter 12 of the *Bhagavad Gita*, Sri Krishna describes the qualities that a true devotee possesses. He neither attaches himself to anything nor does he have any aversion to things. He has a balanced mind under all circumstances. He is not agitated by the happenings of the world, nor does he himself cause any agitation in others. He is perfectly desireless and rejoices in the Divine within. He sees equality everywhere, being untouched by sorrow, fear, honour and dishonour. He is perfectly content as he has surrendered his entire being to the Divine.

The devotee is neither elated by praise nor pained by censure. He keeps a balanced state of mind. He has controlled the organ of speech and so he is silent. His mind is serene and silent as he has controlled the thoughts also. He is quite content with the bare means of bodily sustenance. Contentment ever dwells in the heart of the devotee. Like the ocean which is ever full, his heart is ever full as he has no cravings. He is ever joyful and joyous. He never grumbles, complains or murmurs when he does not obtain food and clothing.

Those who are free from likes and dislikes, attraction and repulsion, can possess equanimity. Those who are neither elated nor troubled when they obtain desirable or undesirable objects can possess evenness of mind.

The bhakta does not rejoice when he attains desirable objects nor does he grieve when he parts with his cherished objects, and he does not desire the unattained. The ordinary person of the world is ruled by the pairs of opposites, honour and dishonour, cold and heat, pleasure and pain. A yogi, a sage or a devotee has a balanced mind. He has poise or equanimity and is not at all swayed by the blind forces of attraction and repulsion.

The Ashram

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

In the ashram, how do I overcome arrogance, aggression and anger, and protect myself from the people who exhibit these traits?

Two types of people live in every ashram. One type flows with the spirit of the ashram, and another type resists the flow. Those who flow with the spirit of the ashram are the workers of the ashram, they do not have any private agenda, they are not seeking anything special for themselves; they simply want to ensure that the ashram routines, disciplines, systems and needs are being followed. They work from morning until morning.

Then there are those who resist the flow of the spirit of the ashram, like a rock in the middle of the Ganga's current. Even the current cannot push the rock. These people are demanding, ambitious; they do not care for the vision of the ashram; they care more for their ego. They demand recognition, power, and are uncaring of others. If their demands are not met, they get angry with those flowing with the ashram, and create ill-will. This is what I see every day; it happens everywhere, even in homes.

Those who resist the flow, create difficulties in integrating, appreciating or contributing in an effective manner to the vision of the ashram. If you are told, "You go and do this," you go and do it, finished. You do not have to make demands.

Those who resist the flow express aggression, hatred, jealousy, ill speech. Instead of finding solutions, they derive happiness in conflict. If you have the eyes and the wisdom to know the difference between the two groups and decide which one you want to belong to, good. If you do not have the eyes or the wisdom, you will be swayed by your own expectations and the level at which you see things.

The ashram is an open ground, free for all. People of every type and mind-set come here: sick people, healthy people,

negative people, good people. The majority are sick or negative, only a few are healthy and good. So, try to pick up those who are positive and smiling, and associate with them.

I came to the ashram with a great hope of meeting sadhakas and true yoga practitioners, who possess humility and great compassion, but many residents are different. Why?

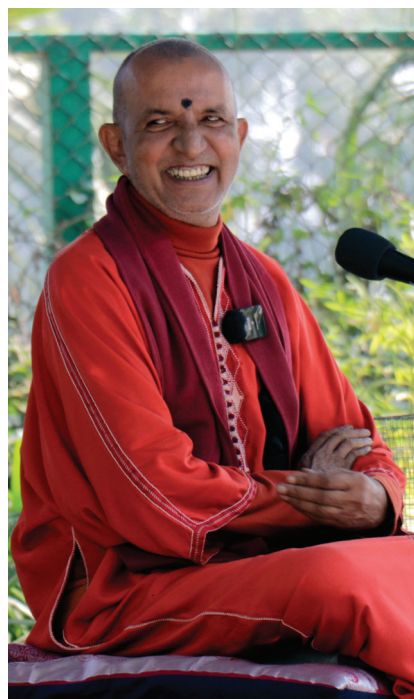
You should also understand that you are living your expectations and not the reality. Who goes to health centres? Everyone who is sick. No healthy person goes to a health centre. In the same way, everyone who comes here is sick and they have come to become healthy.

The second point. People from every walk of life, culture, tradition, background, lifestyle, come to the ashram. Many take sannyasa, but by taking sannyasa nobody becomes enlightened. Initiation is not an indication of spiritual development. People who come to the ashram are spiritually fragmented. They want to learn how to sew back the fragments of the cloth into one whole piece again. So, how do you sew together the ripped fabric of the mind, which can make you more spiritually aware? Everybody you see here in different dresses is not spiritual. They are making the effort to understand themselves first. They are making the effort to improve themselves first. It can take time and it can take no time; that is irrelevant. But, everyone is making that effort. You cannot question that.

The only person who is healthy in the hospital, is the doctor, which in this case is me. Prior to me it was my guru, and prior to him it was Swami Sivananda. So, you have to associate with the doctor and not with the patients. If you talk to patients about health, what will you hear? "Oh, I have been ill for so many years." You will not hear about health; you will hear about their problems. The only person with whom you can talk about how to manage your health and improve it, how to be good and do good, is the doctor. If you came expecting everybody to be highly spiritual, then you are grossly mistaken. We are all sick people; no one is healthy. Nevertheless, each

one is trying to remove the conditions that made them sick, to again experience health. That is sannyasa.

If you understand this, then you will also understand how a sannyasin has to live their life. Every day they have to learn to fine-tune themselves. There is nothing final in life. As long as they follow the orders of the doctor, they are in good hands. If they choose to become their own doctors, then no need to come to the hospital. Then search Google and Chat GPT for solutions. You will never



find the right and appropriate solution there, as social media does not have the experience; the individual has the experience.

When my guru, Sri Swami Satyananda, came to the Rishikesh ashram, he saw all types of people there. Some were even racists, due to the British presence in the country at that time. Different mentalities, groups, societies, cultures, beliefs, castes – all used to come. Do you think they were all equal in their zeal for spiritual search? No. When Sri Swamiji saw all these different types of people, he said to himself, and he has spoken about it, ‘I am not going to allow myself to be influenced by anyone. I will only listen to my guru. I will try to perfect my own awareness according to the instructions of the guru.’

It is written in his satsangs: “When I was in Sivananda Ashram, I focused on remaining positive all the time. I never allowed myself to have a bad thought about anything or anyone. If, due to some reason, anything negative appeared,

immediately I would counter it with something more positive, uplifting and beautiful. For the years that I spent in my guru's ashram, I only focused on becoming positive, non-reactive and peaceful every day." That was his understanding and association with his master. Such a beautiful example.

What is your understanding? 'I can have a nice discussion with other enlightened beings who live in the ashram.' That indicates you do not have clarity of intention. If you have come for something experiential, then have the wisdom to differentiate between those who resist and those who flow with the ashram. Derive inspiration from those who flow and do not criticize those who resist.

When people come to an ashram, they come with a purpose. Focus on that purpose. Identify who can inspire you to experience that focus and purpose. Identify who cannot inspire you, and stay away from them. Live your life peacefully and happily, and let others live their life in the manner they have chosen to live, either by flowing or by resisting.

This is the awareness of a spiritual being. Even in the *Yoga Sutras* it is stated, 'Be friendly with those who are happy'; share their happiness with you. 'Be compassionate towards those who are suffering.' Try to help them; don't become them. If you support somebody in their negativity and criticism, you are becoming that. If you tell somebody, 'No you are wrong' and help them come out of their negativity, then that is your compassion for them. 'Ignore the crooked,' knowing them as obstacles, just as when you walk you avoid obstacles. When you walk the paths of the ashram, avoid those obstacles.

If you are aware of your intent, you can know the difference between those who can help and those who cannot, between the good and the not good. In the ashram, cultivate different habits and awareness; do not bring your chatterbox habit and distribute that freely to other people. Respect the vision the ashram stands for.

– 21 August 2025, Ganga Darshan

Towards Self-Discipline

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Self-discipline means regulation and demand means imposition. There is a difference between regulation and imposition. When you demand something of yourself you are imposing, when you are self-disciplined, you are regulating. There is a big difference.

Demand comes from a mind which is distracted, which is not focused and which is not convinced that it can do something. Regulation is an expression of a mind which is observant and is always trying to enhance its own abilities. With self-discipline, you not only regulate your actions and responses to become constructive and positive, you also enhance your creative abilities.

By expecting and demanding too much from yourself, you are stunting the natural and spontaneous growth of your own psyche, you are struggling with it. So don't be too demanding, just be self-regulating and you will attain self-discipline.



– 3 January 2009, Ganga Darshan, Munger

Sankalpa of a Sadhaka

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

In our *shastras*, scriptures, six demons are stated to control human life, behaviour and expression: *kama, krodha, lobha, moha, mada, matsarya*: passion, anger, greed, delusion, arrogance, envy. In reality they are demonical expressions of the self.

When a demon is controlling the mind, you are under the sway of that energy, that state, that mood. At that time, all the good experiences and the good knowledge is suppressed. If that knowledge came up to the forefront, the demon would not exist anymore. So the scriptures call them six demons to explain the idea.

If a terrorist rules the country, then all the good people will hide and the bad people will be in the forefront. Similarly, when anger is ruling the mind, when passion, envy or jealousy are ruling the mind, then all the good things of life hide, just to survive. All the bad qualities associated with that demon become its generals. If you see life in this manner, many things will make sense.

If you think that you are intelligent enough to know the difference between good and bad, you are mistaken. No one is intelligent enough to counter the influence or attack of these negative moods. For that, strength of will is required. Developing strength of will is like *tapasya*, where you have to face the onslaught of the negative to become victorious.

Every mahatma, saint and sage had to face the most negative and destructive aspect of themselves, before they were able to come out into light. Buddha had to confront a demon called Mara. *Mara* means death – death by the six demons. Anger overpowers you, it kills you. Envy and jealousy overpower you, they kill all the goodness. Infatuation kills you; it removes the wisdom. Mara is the chief demon who controls the six generals. Buddha had to face them all before



he became Buddha. In Christianity, it is said that Jesus had to confront Satan, and only after conquering the vasanas created by Satan did Jesus become Christ. Prior to that, he was just an ordinary man, suffering like you and me. In this way, every culture and tradition describes this journey through dark to light. That is the prayer:

Asato ma sadgamaya – Lead me from untruth to truth.

Tamaso ma jyotirgamaya – Lead me from darkness to light.

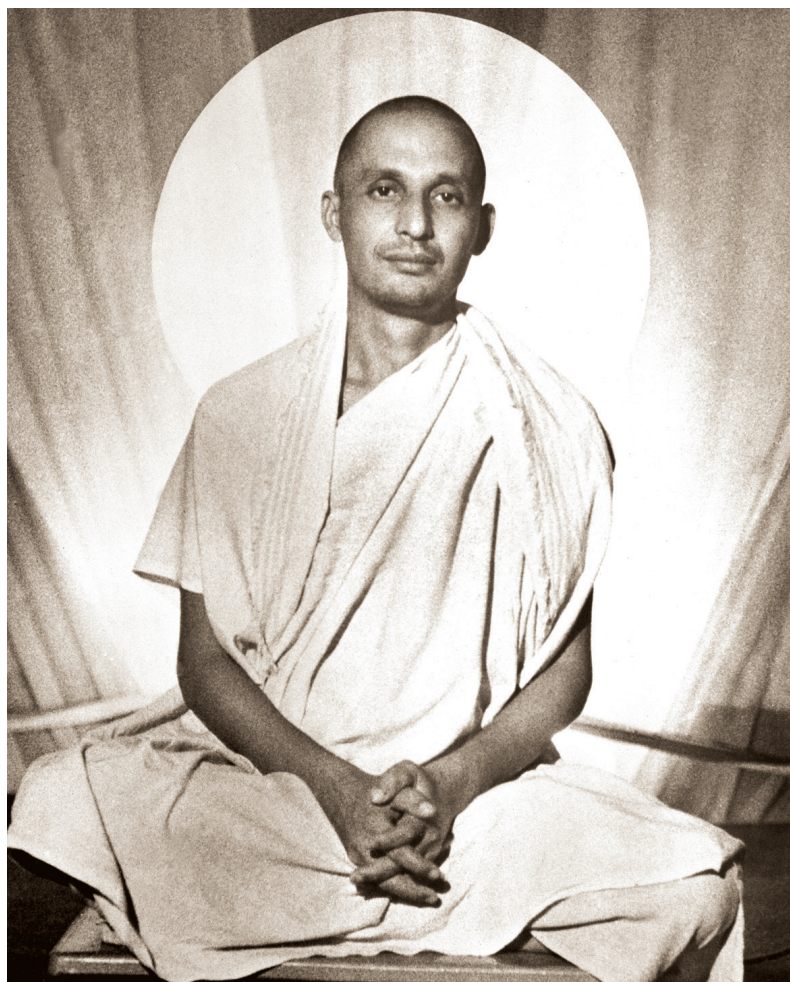
Mrityorma amritam gamaya – Lead me from death to immortality.

These are not just statements that sound good. They represent the sankalpa, the aspiration of the spiritual sadhaka. One has to always strive to be aware of one's responses and reactions, and eventually learn to manage them with more skill than what one presently has. Those skills are developed when you are able to regulate, modify and channel the behaviour of the senses, emotions, thoughts, attachments and detachments. That is why yoga says that it is only through *abhyasa* and *vairagya*, practice and detachment, that you can overcome the hurdles. Therefore, try to be a yogi in life.

– 9 February 2025, Ganga Darshan

Yoga as Doctor

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



Yoga can manage many diseases, especially the chronic and functional types. When I started the International Yoga Fellowship Movement in 1964, I had enough experience with yoga therapy. I have lived from 1943 to 1964 in Rishikesh at

the foot of the Himalayas with a very eminent sannayasin, Swami Sivananda, who had been a medical doctor in the earlier period of his life.

My contact with spiritual life was through philosophy – Vedanta – and that developed the desire to discover the higher consciousness within me. But when I lived with my guru and did a lot of work for him, especially typing, I used to read about the yoga postures, pranayama and other hatha yoga practices. I wondered if, when you practise sarvangasana the thyroid is really stimulated, or with paschimottanasana, the pancreas. Frankly speaking the claims made for yoga did not convince me.

I had my own background of medical studies, not with humans but with animals because I had been trained as a veterinary doctor. To me, these statements made by an ex-medical man were not convincing, but I kept them in my mind.

People used to write to Swami Sivananda for treatment of their problems, and he used to suggest that they practise yoga. Then in 1956, when I was wandering all over India, Burma, Nepal, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka as a mendicant, people used to come to me and ask what yoga they should practise to become free from their diseases. I did not know very much about it, so I decided to become a recluse again and make a thorough study of yoga.

I learnt that yoga is not only a series of exercises, the practices are postures or asanas, which produce a great change in the body, sometimes in the main organs, sometimes in the endocrine secretions and sometimes in the nervous system.

The body is maintained by life force, and mind is maintained by the mental force, this means that there are two forms of energy in the organisms. One form of energy is responsible for the maintenance of the gross organs in the body, and the other force is responsible for the mental activities.

When you practise yoga postures, particularly the major ones, they exert mild pressure on the six important junctions in the spinal passage. Of these six, four distribute life force

and mental force and a disease is caused by the imbalance of these energy quantum in the body.

Now of course, we talk about viruses, bacteria, vitamin deficiencies and there is no argument about it. However, at the same time, we must remember that a disease does not merely originate in the gross body. Even if a disease does appear to originate in the body, it travels straight to the mind and from there back to the body again. Such diseases are known as somato-psychic diseases.

Most diseases nowadays originate in the mind, then they travel to the body then from the body to the mind again. This is how every disease originates, spreads and comes back again. Therefore, whatever the origin of the disease, man's body and mind both suffer at the same time.

These two forces function just like material forces; we can call them 'positive' and 'negative' forces. The negative force controls the mind and its functions, while the positive force controls the body, its temperature, mobility, etc.

The two forces are distributed throughout the body via the four junctions which are situated in the spinal axis, at the sacral area, solar plexus area, cardiac areas and cervical area. These junctions are known as 'chakras' or psychic centres. For proper health, these four energy centres must maintain balance. If the balance is lost, then disease of that particular system originates.

I'll explain this a little more. In yoga, we call the life force, 'prana'. Other translations are vital force and bio-energy (though 'prana' is something more than this). In life, there should be harmony between the pranic force and the mental force but this does not usually happen.

If the pranic force predominates and the mental force becomes subservient then mental illnesses occur. When the mental force becomes predominant and pranic force becomes subservient, then physical illnesses originate. This is what we study in the modern medicine sciences as well. When the parasympathetic nervous system is predominant and









the sympathetic nervous system is subservient or vice versa, we have either psychic disorders or physical disorders. If a harmony could be struck between these two forces, then there would be perfect harmony in the body.

When there is a total harmony between these two systems, body/mind, life force/mental force, then there are also perfectly balances secretions of the endocrine glands. These glands are very important and each of them is directly or indirectly controlled by the energy systems, if there is some sort of disharmony in one of these systems, then it directly or indirectly affects that particular gland.

Shashankasana

This is the case with diabetes, for instance. The pancreas ceases to function, insulin is not produced and thus glucose is not controlled. It means that the nervous system has gone into a state of dysfunction on account of stress and strain. If proper relaxation can be given to the nervous system it will recommence functioning. Consequently, the pancreas will start working – and that will be the end of the diabetes.

Within this physical body there are also rich sources of life-giving chemicals; antibodies, adrenalin, etc. When we need one of them, we are given it from outside in the form of pills, serums or injections. However, if we can revitalize the particular system that produces these chemicals, then we make them for ourselves. This is what we accomplish through yoga.

Take the example of adrenalin. The patient who is suffering from asthma can produce his own adrenalin supply by practising one posture known as shashankasana. The person sits on his feet, bends forward, places his forehead and arms on the floor and relaxes in this position for 10–15 minutes.

In shashankasana the adrenalin glands are reactivated, they secrete more adrenalin and the attack passes off. This is especially effective if it is practised early in the asthma attack as soon as the person knows that the respiratory congestion is beginning to take place. An asthmatic patient can easily



tell when he is going to get an attack. The condition begins to accumulate from the morning and he begins to feel heaviness in the chest. But if he practises this posture right away he starts to feel better very quickly.

How does shashankasana clear up the respiratory congestion? It increases the secretion of adrenalin. Every person with asthma knows that if he has an attack and goes to the doctor, the doctor gives him adrenalin. However, with shashankasana, he makes it for himself.

This is an example of how, by practising the specific yoga postures, the different endocrine glands are stimulated. The endocrine glands then, in their turn, influence not only the

body, but also the emotions, such as anxiety, fear and anger, which can also be controlled through yoga practices.

When I started the movement in 1964 I had 24 students, one of whom was suffering from peptic ulcer. He was a brilliant advocate and an astute politician. At the beginning his ulcer was very bad and it was hard for me to imagine how yoga could help a condition that was caused by hyperacidity, anxiety, fear and irregular habits. However, the man got better in 15 or 20 days – and he has not had a recurrence of the problem.

The experience with the advocate compelled me to follow a series of studies on yoga. I contacted various authorities in India, in Europe, America and Australia and asked them to study these phenomena. I helped one team to examine the impact and effect of yoga postures on coronary disease. I approached the Central Government in Delhi and I was granted a large sum of money and facilities in a Medical College, along with permission to examine and instruct the heart patients. Eminent doctors followed these observations during a period of five years and examined more than 950 patients, men and women, with all kinds of coronary diseases including angina, thrombosis and myocardial infarction. The report was finally compiled and published.

The report led to a great awakening. Many doctors began to follow yoga courses and we have formulated a systematic course for the different types of disease that affect the heart.

Coronary posture

Talking about the heart, it is a well-known practice to make a patient lie down on the floor with his legs raised, while awaiting arrival of the doctor. It is common sense – when the legs are raised on a pillow, the blood goes back to the heart, and the pressure and strain on the heart is relieved, no matter what complaint it is. Wherever I go, if I meet people over 40, I tell them that this is one practice they have to learn.

Recently, I met the eminent heart transplant surgeon, Dr Christian Barnard from South Africa. We started talking about

yoga postures and he said, "Yes, that is what I also tell people to do, because if yoga postures are done correctly, you don't have to worry about heart attack at all." When I asked him what was the basis of his statement, he replied, "In the male body, testosterone is produced, and these hormones attack the heart."

Testosterone is the hormone secreted by the testes in the masculine body. It is secreted every now and then, consciously and unconsciously during sexual intercourse, sexual fantasies, etc.

If testosterone attack the heart, how do we control them so that they are not produced in excess? Dr Barnard said that he had one posture in mind, and the posture he prescribed was siddhasana, the posture in which we sit for meditation. In this posture, the left foot is placed beneath the scrotum, with the right foot over the genital organ. If this is practised over a period of time, say a maximum of half an hour each day, it will give you complete control over the secretion of testosterone.

Siddhasana should therefore not only be considered a meditational posture, but also a 'coronary posture'.

When you practise siddhasana, you are pressing the perineum between the excretory and the urinary organs, with your left heel. And with the right heel you are pressing the lower abdominal viscera at the root of the urinary organ. You are pressing these two points, which are very important in controlling the flow of blood through the arteries and veins.

This posture of siddhasana helps in the treatment of abnormal blood pressure too. Any time one is suffering from high blood pressure or low blood pressure, if he just sits in this posture for half an hour or if possible one hour, the blood pressure will move towards normal. This is because the pressure exerted on the perineum and the viscera is transmitted to the brain centres which control the pressure. High blood pressure is caused by tension and stress reacting through the brain to the blood vessels and heart.

A medical system

Here in India, along with heart disease, another important experiment has already been conducted in the management of diabetes. The course was conducted in one of my ashrams for 40 days under the direct observation of doctors. When the course was concluded, the patients went home and the doctors followed up their progress.

In the same way, in the last 15 years, we have seen studies covering a wide range of diseases being conducted all over the country. Asthma, indigestion (the mother of many diseases), polio, muscular atrophy, multiple sclerosis and many other illnesses have been found to respond to yoga therapy.

Many women suffer from prolapse of the uterus, where its support becomes weak and it gets lowered. Of course, it can be tackled by surgery, but in yoga we use only three postures practised over a period of time, which bring the whole genito-urinary system into order and make it strong. One practice is called naukasana, 'the boat pose'. You lie down and raise both legs a bit and tense them, then raise the upper part of the body a bit, and tense it. Then stretch the arms in the direction of the feet and make them tense. It has been seen that during this posture, the uterus drops back. It may not happen in a few days, it may take a period of time, but this posture definitely helps in prolapse.

The other practice for prolapse is uddiyana bandha. Exhale the breath through the mouth, empty the lungs, and contract the abdomen upward and backward. At the same time, the kidneys, the bladder and the uterus follow the same contraction.

The entire genito-urinary and digestive tracts are contracted when at the same time you block the throat by extending the arms and pressing the knees in jalandhara bandha, the blood circulation is concentrated in the naval region, and we know that wherever the blood concentrates, repair work takes place very fast.

I don't make tall claims but I have seen how cancer can be successfully treated by yoga therapy. One of my friends

brought me a patient himself, a noted medical doctor, an FRCS. He had a cancer of the spine. We recommend only one practice, revitalizing breathing. He had to do nothing expect fold back the tongue and touch the upper palate with it (khechari mudra), then practise a particular pranayama called ujjayi, in which the breath sounds like steam escaping from an engine. This is known as psychic breathing. With his eyes open or closed, he was instructed to breathe this way 50, 100 or 150 times.

At first, he was very sceptical. But I told him he had nothing to lose since there was no other system available which could cure him. I said, "Practise it with faith and enthusiasm." He practised for one full year or more, and he is still very much alive today. He no longer has cancer but unfortunately he is not able to move his head, either to the right or to the left because of a certain test he had undergone earlier.

He is still the Dean of the Faculty of Medicine in a well-known University. He tells all his medical students that yoga is important, not only as a philosophy or a spiritual science, but because there are certain physical changes that definitely occur during the practice of yoga.

Yoga can move together with medical science or independently of it for we, too, have a sound system of aetiology, diagnosis and pathogenesis of diseases. We have a complete medical system within yoga.

Unfortunately, people of both East and West have understood yoga as a science of occultism, mysticism, black magic, something to do exclusively with the religious side of life. This is why yoga has remained outside the area of scientific investigation. However, we are now doing a lot of work not only in India, but also abroad. Many Australian doctors are prescribing yoga and much work is going on in a number of European countries. I am particularly aware of what is being done in Czechoslovakia and Poland because my disciples there are working in collaboration with the medical authorities.

– *Published in The Statesman, 14 July 1965*

Need for a Yogic Lifestyle

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



We are happy to welcome the students from the University to the ashram. I hope that during your stay here, you will get a glimpse of the yogic lifestyle and the yogic tradition that we follow here.

Everyone knows that in society today only the aspect of hatha yoga has been highlighted. Despite studying the *Bhagavad Gita*, the Upanishads, or other yogic scriptures, the focus is always on the asana component of hatha yoga. That

is because people are physically unwell today, and it has been seen that the yogic practices can provide wellness to body, mind, emotions and spirit.

The question that comes to my mind is: can asanas cure or provide relief from an illness? They can definitely help in understanding the physical body and regulating the functions of the internal organs. Ultimately, however, a substantial change can come only through an awareness of the lifestyle. How we live, under what stresses we live, what we eat, what is the impact of the chemicals in the food on our body, how we sleep, do we sleep in a relaxed manner or is there always anxiety and tension in the mind. These are the things that, in the course of time, will decide on the wellness of every individual. Not just practice of asana or taking medication.

Any disease that we experience is a symptom of some other deep-rooted cause. Hypertension is a symptom of deep-rooted stress and anxiety, worry and internal conflict. We can take medication for reducing the levels of hypertension, but there is no medicine which can help us realize the stressors or how to manage them. It is the same with any other illness, whether diabetes, asthma, arthritis, cancer, AIDS, or the common cold. Every illness represents an imbalance which has already taken place in the body. We realize it much later, when it manifests in the body in the form of illness.

The first attempt is to lower the high peak of the symptom. When the symptoms come to a lower peak, you feel that you have improved. In reality, you have not improved; you have only brought down the symptom from 100 percent intensity to 50, 30, 20 or 10, but the cause of illness continues to be there. What can help this situation is realizing the mistakes in our lifestyle, and trying to improve the conditions that create the psychological and physiological imbalances in body and mind. This is where the yogic lifestyle comes in.

The yogic lifestyle is an attempt to balance the irregular conditions of our life. From the time we wake up to the time we go to sleep, how do we live, how is our interaction with

people, with the environment, with society, with our peers, friends, family? What kind of moods come to the mind, and how do we deal with them?

You would have definitely read about the purpose of yoga as *chitta vritti nirodhah*, according to Sage Patanjali. What are these chitta vrittis? They are moods of the mind. Anger is a chitta vritti, fear is a chitta vritti, anxiety and worry are chitta vrittis, insecurity is a chitta vritti. Everything that we experience in our mind, and which does not leave the mind, becomes a vritti. Rather than the philosophical understanding of the vritti, if you come down to its practical realization, then you realize that the management of mind is more important than going into a debate of what is a vritti and how one can modify it. Regulation of body, mind, emotions are three things that give us the experience of wellness in life.

Asanas are good for the body, for physical wellness, no question about it. Equally important is relaxation and concentration for wellness of the mind. Equally important is the use of mantras for the wellness of emotions. Just keep these things in mind: the physical practice of asanas, purification and detoxification of the body, learning how to relax and focus the mind, and how to keep emotions in check through the application of mantras. If you can do this, you will find a clear understanding of experiencing health at the physical level, happiness at the mental level, and harmony at the family and social level. This is the concept of lifestyle that we have been involved in since the last sixty years.

Yoga is not a physical practice that you do for a specific time; it is a lifestyle in which you are able to express your awareness of health, your understanding of happiness, and your determination to find harmony in your life. That has been our focus in teaching and exploring the science and tradition of yoga.

– 14 May 2025, Ganga Darshan,
Satsang with Students from Central University, Kerala

Maya Devi

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



Spiritual traditions state that this world is an illusion. It is a transit place where we come to exhaust our karmas, to make new samskaras, and then move on to higher planes of existence. If this world is a transit place according to spiritual traditions,

then the main power or force in this world which keeps us engaged is known as maya, the power of illusion. Here we connect with the appearance, not with the reality. Those who search for the reality behind the appearance become spiritual aspirants.

What is this appearance? Distinction of religion, distinction of culture, faces, colour; these are all known as illusion. Though our bodies may have different colours, our society may belong to a different creed, our group may belong to a different caste, the spirit is one and the same in everyone. So, why do people not realize that spirit? Why do they look at the body and say, 'You are like this, and you are like that, and you are like this'? Why do people look at the body and say, 'You belong to a different culture. You belong to a different race. You belong to a different creed'? That is the appearance.

We are identifying with appearance and we create our own identity in this appearance, not as part of the human civilization but as part of a group that lives in a particular country. I am Indian. You are American. He is Chinese. That one is Russian. This one is French. This one is German. That becomes our national identity and the identity of the body as well. Is that reflecting the identity of the spirit? No. You can create boundaries in the material dimension, but you cannot create boundaries in the spiritual dimension. This is something that people have to understand and realize.

In the spiritual dimension, we are that spirit, the *atma*, which is part of the greater cosmic spirit, the *Paramatma*. You can take a cup and fill it with the water of the ocean, it will have an identity – ocean water contained in a cup. When you look at the cup, you will say that this is a steel cup, or a china cup, or a plastic cup. Your awareness will go to the cup and where it was made. What we are looking at is the outer appearance but the water contained in the cup has the same essence, same quality, same taste as the ocean water. The water is not different, the container is different, but we all look at the container.

Spiritual people say that is the appearance, if you look at the reality behind the appearance, you will not look at the container or the cup. You will look at the water which is contained in it and know that the water is from the ocean because it tastes like that. The quality is the same as the water of the ocean. However, it is the power of illusion of this world which does not let us see the reality, so we identify with the appearance. When we identify with the appearance, we separate ourselves from our own spiritual nature, and subject ourselves to the learning we have received from this material dimension, the material world.

The learning of the material world is to bind us, to keep us grounded to this dimension, this plane and planet, using the senses and the mental faculties, which are more negative than positive. We seek the positive qualities, yet we express the negative qualities much more than the positive qualities. Anger is easy; you do not have to learn about it anywhere. Fear is easy; insecurity is easy. You do not go to learn about fear, anger, insecurity, hatred, jealousy, greed anywhere. They are natural expressions of life. When you have to learn something positive, when you have to express the positive, then you ask, 'How do I cultivate my love? How do I cultivate my compassion? How can I become kind?' These are not the natural expressions of material life.

The restrictive and the conditioned expressions are known as tamasic behaviour which is composed of the six traits of *tamas*: desire, anger, greed, arrogance, infatuation and envy. These are the qualities of the tamasic nature, and we are living them, we are expressing them continuously. If I say no to something, people will get angry. If I achieve something, people will become envious. If I become something, peoples' egos will be hurt, 'Why am I not like that when I know much more than this person?' It is these traits of *tamas* which we learn in the school of *samsara*, the school of the world, the primary class. The teacher is Maya Devi, the force of illusion.

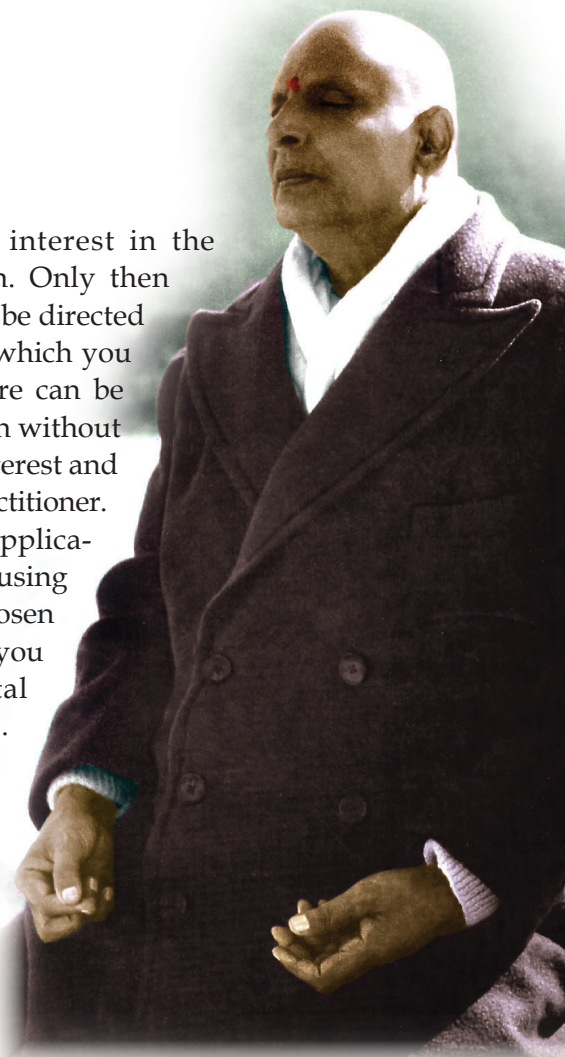
Attention

Swami Sivananda Saraswati

You must evince good interest in the practice of concentration. Only then will your whole attention be directed towards the object upon which you wish to concentrate. There can be no degree of concentration without a remarkable degree of interest and attention shown by the practitioner.

Attention is steady application of the mind. It is focusing of consciousness on a chosen object. Through attention, you can develop your mental faculties and capacities. Where there is attention, there is also concentration. Attention should be cultivated gradually. It is not a special process. It is one aspect of the whole mental process.

Perception always involves attention. To perceive is to attend. Through attention you get a clear and distinct knowledge of objects. The entire energy is focused on the objects towards which attention is directed. Full and complete information is gained. During attention all the dissipated rays of the mind are collected. There is effort or struggle in attention. Through attention a deeper impression of anything is made in the mind. If you have good attention, you can attend to the matter in hand exclusively. An attentive man



has a very good memory. He is very vigilant and circumspect. He is nimble and alert.

Attention plays a very great part in concentration. It is the basis of the will. When it is properly guided and directed towards the inner world for the purpose of introspection, it will analyze the mind and illumine many astounding facts for you.

Attention is the focussing of consciousness. Attention, *avadhana*, plays a conspicuous part in concentration. It is one of the signs of a trained will. It is found in men of strong mentality. It is a rare faculty. Brahmacharya wonderfully develops this power. A yogi who possesses this faculty can even fix the mind on an unpleasant object for a very long time. It is easy to fasten the mind on an object which the mind likes best. Attention can be cultivated and developed by persistent practice. All the great men of the world who have achieved greatness have risen up through this faculty.

Throw your entire attention into whatever you happen to be doing at that moment. Practise attention on unpleasant tasks from which you have been shrinking before on account of their unpleasantness. Throw interest upon uninteresting objects and ideas. Hold them before your mind. Interest will slowly manifest. Many mental weaknesses will vanish. The mind will become stronger and stronger.

The force wherewith anything strikes the mind is generally in proportion to the amount of attention bestowed upon it. Moreover, the great art of memory is attention; inattentive people have bad memories.

The human mind has the power of attending to only one object at a time, although it is able to pass from one object to another with a remarkable degree of speed. So rapidly in fact, that some have held that it can grasp several things at a time. But the best authorities, eastern and western, hold to the 'single idea' theory as being correct. It agrees with one's daily experience also.

If you analyze carefully the mental functions or operations, no one process can be singled out and called attention. It is

not possible to separate attention as a distinct function. You observe something, therefore you are attentive.

Attention belongs to every state of consciousness, and is present in every field of consciousness. An attentive student on the spiritual path can do hearing, *shravana*, of the Srutis in an efficient manner. The military officer says "Attention!" and the soldier is ready with his gun to carry out his orders. Only an attentive soldier can hit the mark. No one can get success either in temporal or spiritual pursuits without attention.

There are yogis who can do eight or ten or even a hundred things at a time. This is not strange. The whole secret lies in the fact that they have developed their attention to a remarkable degree. All the great men of the world possess this faculty in varying degrees.

Attention is of two kinds - voluntary attention, and involuntary attention. When the attention is directed towards some external objects by effort of will, this is called voluntary attention. When you have an express volition to attend to this or that, it is called voluntary attention. The man understands why he perceives. Some deliberate intention, incentive, goal or purpose is definitely involved. Voluntary attention needs effort, will, determination, and some mental training. This is cultivated by practice and perseverance. The benefits derived by the practice of attention are incalculable. Involuntary attention is quite common. This does not demand any practice. There is no effort of the will. The attention is induced by the beauty and attractive nature of the object. Individuals perceive without knowing why, and without observed instruction. Young children possess this power of involuntary attention to a greater degree than adults.

If a man is not observant, he is not attentive. If he observes something, he is said to be attentive. Intention, purpose, hope, expectation, desire, belief, wish, aim, knowledge, goal and needs all serve to determine attention. You will have to note carefully the degree, duration, range, forms, fluctuations and conflicts of attention.

Pratyahara and Dharana

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

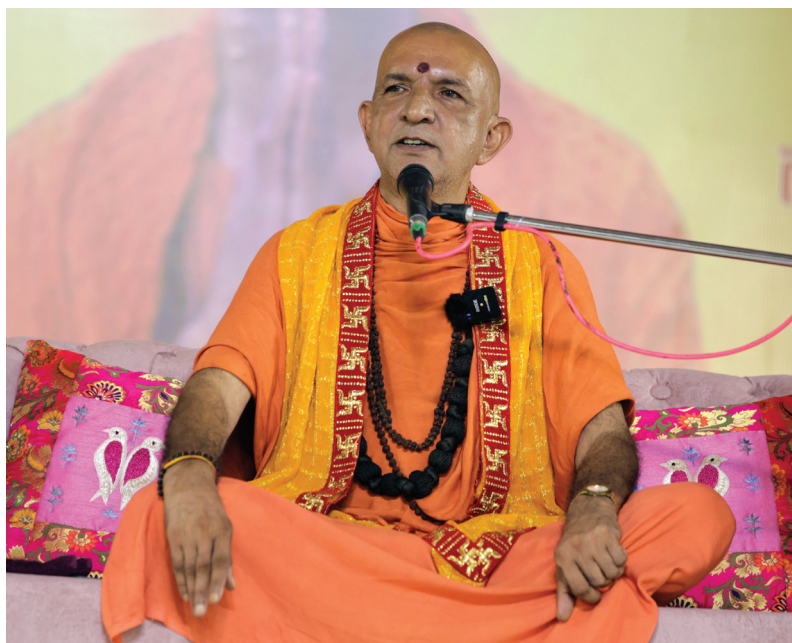
Yoga begins with pratyahara. Asana and pranayama do not represent yoga; they represent postures and breathing techniques of yoga. Their scope is limited. We need them only to ensure that our body is finely tuned, cleaned and recharged with the vital energies, so we can experience the higher states of yoga.

Yoga in reality begins with the pratyahara limb of raja yoga. It is here that you first encounter the nature of your mind. For the first time you become aware of your thoughts and the different mental processes. Learning how to manage them is the portal into yoga.

Many people say that yoga begins with hatha yoga; I also say that many times for those not initiated into yoga, and it is a perfectly valid statement. People identify more with the body, with how they look and their physical health, and less with the mind. They take the mind for granted. The discovery of yoga, however, begins with the mind. The first technique of pratyahara is to know the inadequacies of mind.

When yogis immersed themselves in yoga, the time was different. The mental makeup of individuals living on this planet was different. It was easier for them to go into deep states of meditation, naturally and spontaneously. They did not have the pressures, traumas, tensions and anxiety that people of today have. They did not have distractions of the senses, sense objects, social media and internet. They did not have dissipations of mind. Those people discovered yoga, meditation, and the nature of mind. Their understanding is much deeper than what psychology today knows about the human mind.

Then there is a big jump from those peaceful and relaxed times to the modern-day anxieties, tensions, the rush, and the



conditions that we experience today. Therefore it is not practical or even advisable to expect the same results in our short efforts, which our forefathers experienced with prolonged effort. When they meditated in a peaceful state of mind, they could go deeper without having to confront their tamasic nature. Their life was more regulated and disciplined; there was greater sensory and mental control. There was greater awareness of 'what I am' and 'what I need to become'. There was an aspiration and goal defined for every human being. Their engagement and participation in yoga and meditation is something that we cannot even contemplate or copy in our own lifetime.

We need to recognize that our engagement with ourselves is minimal while engagement with the outer world is maximum. We are always engaged in talking, interacting, gossiping, excitement, needs of the family, ambitions, finances, status, clothes, jewellery, the desire to look nice, the drive to be secure and comfortable. Hundreds of such factors are constantly

bombarding our day-to-day activity. We spend our time responding to them as the need arises, in the manner which we think is appropriate. However, this bombardment of the outer influences, distracts and disturbs the mind.

The nature of mind from the past ages to now has changed from sattwic to tamasic. It has changed from being positive, constructive and creative, to becoming negative, destructive and limiting. We are not even aware of these conditions. This inadequate mind is trying to experience something that the yogis did in a totally different state of mind. Even meditation today is not practised for cultivation of spiritual awareness, but for dealing with day-to-day stresses and anxieties, for dealing with the rough, negative and destructive behaviours and interactions. There is no concept of spirituality in meditation, yet there is the ambition, 'I want to become as good as the realized saints.' That is never going to happen.

During the *Pratyahara and Dharana* course that was conducted here, it was observed that everybody was excited about discovering, controlling and transforming their pratyayas, without even knowing the basics of how their own mind works, without knowing the strengths and weaknesses of their own mind. This attitude of trying to take something new and different the moment you see it, does not work in yoga. That may be your nature or aspiration, but it does not work.

You cannot even remain awake in yoga nidra, which is actually a meditation of the senses, so how will you remain awake in higher meditations? You are lying down flat, so you say it is relaxation. When you sit upright, you call that concentration. That is not correct. Even yoga nidra is a practice of meditation. It is only to make it easy for you that you are allowed to lie down. Try practising yoga nidra sitting up some time.

All these things indicate that we cannot manage, guide or control our awareness, concentration and senses, our distractions and dissipations, our mind, sentiments and emotions. This is a serious condition. Therefore, learning how to deal with the mind is the first step into discovery of yoga.

People quote the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali – managing the modifications of the mind is yoga. How many have been able to manage even a single modification, a single *vritti* of their mind? How many have been able to maintain a balanced mood, or manage a mental condition in times of difficulty, stress and anxiety? So, do not have high expectations from yoga in the present state of your mind.

What is possible is learning. Learning how to observe the mind, how to cultivate awareness, what to focus on, what to develop, change, transform. Try to follow a routine in which all these different aspects of self-observation can be covered – the physical, the sensorial, the mental, the internal. Through this routine, work with a small component of your nature and mind constantly, continuously, persistently, progressively, and improve on it. Then move to the next component.

Techniques do not mean anything. What you become after using the techniques properly, matters more. What you become has to be observed and sustained. It should not be something that you experience only when you practise yoga, but something that is sustained when you are not practising yoga. Learning geography, science, arts, medicine or math in school, and then applying the knowledge later on in life, indicates learning being applied. The same has to happen with yoga. Not that you become aware when you sit for yoga, and the rest of the time you pass unawares; that defeats the whole purpose of sadhana. If there is effort, awareness, and the desire to move forward, you will be able to witness your mind and not shy away from anything the mind contains: whether the restrictive and destructive, or the positive and constructive. There will be equal vision towards both. Until you develop this equal vision, pratyahara and dharana will remain a distant dream, no matter what technique you follow. The awareness and attitude have to change. If techniques do not change your awareness and attitude, then they have no meaning, and practising them is a waste of time.

Tweaking the mind

Those who participated in the *Pratyahara and Dharana* seminar have had a glimpse. You have come to know certain things that you can practise. However, know that it is only by observing the mind that you enter the dimension of yoga, not with the practice of postures or breath. Only when you are able to observe and tweak the mind, you are entering the yogic dimension.

The tweaking of the mind can happen in a spontaneous and simple manner. Swami Sivananda has spoken about it as *pratipaksha bhavana*: change the thought, the perception, the understanding from negative to positive. This is in fact expansion of awareness, where we are constantly aware of how we are acting and reacting, and tweaking our actions and mental reactions. If they are tamasic, we make the effort to become sattwic; if they are negative, we make the effort to become positive. It is the change in the attitude, behaviour and mood of the mind that makes us aware. Awareness is not about what we are doing right now. That is a training of the mind. There is a difference between training in awareness and awareness itself.

Being aware indicates that you are observing your actions and reactions. Whenever you find a deficiency, you are rectifying it, you are changing that for a better response. A better response is possible only when you are positive, not when you are in a negative state. Yogis, when they practised kundalini yoga or kriya yoga, were able to experience the ascent of kundalini. Now, people hypnotize themselves to feel an electrical current flowing through the spine, and start jumping. Then they ask, "Is it kundalini?" Stop hypnotizing yourself. That little electrical current is an experience created by the mind due to your expectations. Yes, the mind can create such experiences. If the kundalini truly awakened, you would not ask such questions. For that is a different state of consciousness, a different state of mind. A different quality of the whole being emerges at that time.



So, to experience yoga, you need to develop awareness, maintain the connection with positivity, and then try to move into pratyahara, dharana and dhyana states. Only then will the sadhana become complete. Practise your sadhana diligently. Be aware of what is happening, and always be ready to tweak the limiting and not-so-nice conditions. Convert them into strengths and conditions that can help you discover another dimension of yourself. Only then will pratyahara, dharana and dhyana make any sense to you. If you do not have this awareness, practices will only remain practice, without any advancement or discovery of the balance and harmony of your inner self.

Do not expect quick results, especially if you spend only half hour for your practice. At home, your mind is extroverted and diverted to worldly affairs most of the time. You do half hour of yoga, and want to experience everything the yogis experienced. You think you are greater than the yogis! This idea 'I am better than everyone else' is one of the biggest misconceptions. No, we are the most inadequate people, with very limited and dissipated minds. We need to work much harder than our ancestors did when they embarked on this journey. Remember that.

– 28 March 2025, Ganga Darshan

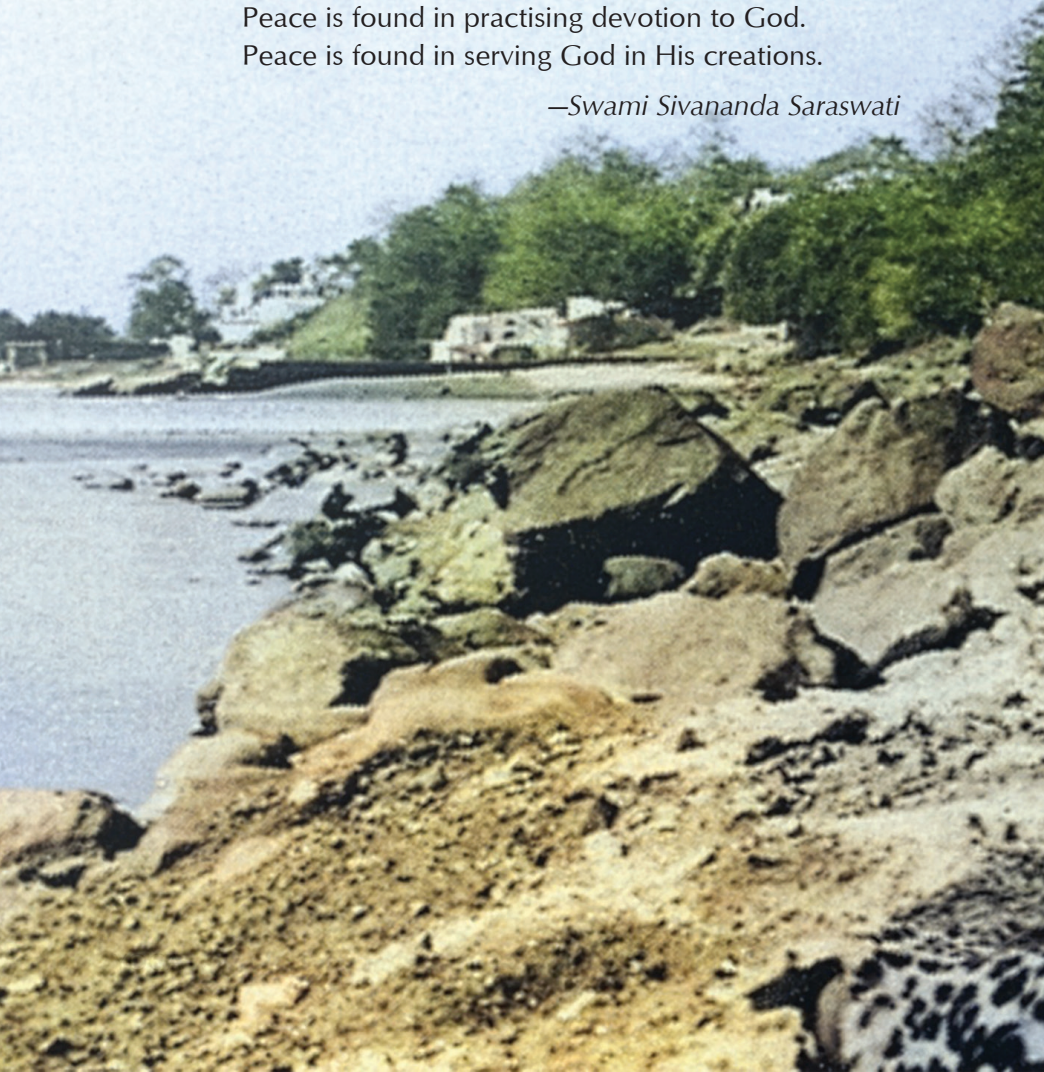
Peace

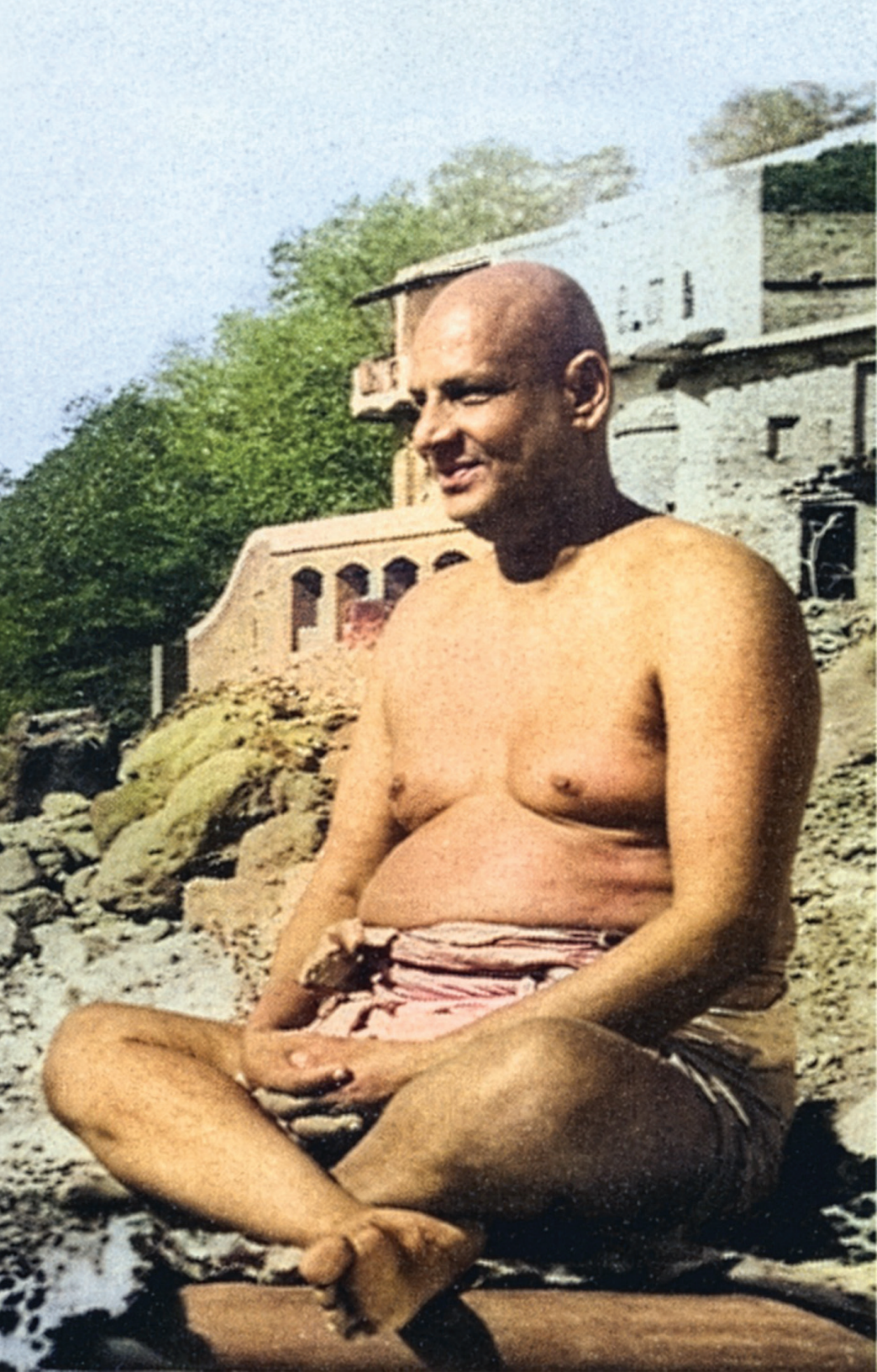
Peace is freedom from anxiety and agitation.
Peace is harmony, silence and calm.
Peace is the very nature of the soul.

Where are we to look for peace?
Peace does not dwell outside, but within.

Peace is found in stilling the restless mind.
Peace is found in leading a divine life.
Peace is found in knowing one's true nature.
Peace is found in practising devotion to God.
Peace is found in serving God in His creations.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati





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Yoga Publications Trust

Antaranga Yoga, A Manual

Swami Yogatirthananda Saraswati

196 pp, soft cover, ISBN 978-93-48677-66-2

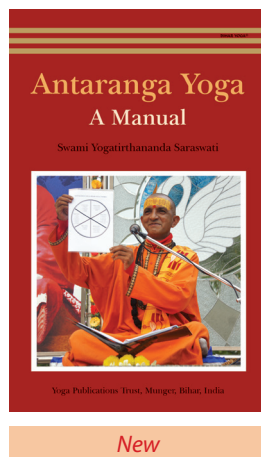
The *Yoga Chakra*, the Wheel of Yoga, is the creation of Sri Swami Satyananda Saraswati from the late 1950s. The practice-oriented, *bahiranga* branches are hatha yoga, raja yoga and kriya yoga. *Antaranga yoga* comprises the branches which are based on expression and understanding in daily life – karma yoga, bhakti yoga and jnana yoga.

Antaranga Yoga, A Manual contains sadhanas and satsangs. The sadhanas are based on the trainings of antaranga yoga conducted at Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth and support the practical application of antaranga yoga in daily life. The compilation of inspirational texts by Swami Sivananda Saraswati, Swami Satyananda Saraswati and Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati offers a wholistic understanding of the importance of these three branches on the yogic journey of the aspirant.

For more information, please contact:

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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.

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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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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 2026

Yoga Peeth Events

Jan 18-23	Basant Panchami Celebration
Jan 23	Basant Panchami/BSY Foundation Day
Feb 14	Bal Yoga Diwas
May 6	Munger Agaman
Nov 19-22	Padma Jayanti: Yoga Nidra Symposium
Dec 27-31	Padma Jayanti: Yoga Lifestyle Celebration
Every Saturday	Mahamrityunjaya Havan
Every 4th, 5th & 6th	Guru Bhakti Yoga

Bihar School of Yoga Yogavidya Training

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Apr 4-10	Dharana Training (English)
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Oct 11-19	Raja Yoga-Bhakti Yoga
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