

YOGA

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July 2026



Bihar School of Yoga, Munger, Bihar, India



Hari Om

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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

Guru

The guru, by virtue of his wisdom and capacity, draws towards himself the souls fit to be guided by him. A guru is one in whom the disciple can find no defect and who serves as the ideal to be reached by the disciple. The relation between the guru and the shishya is genuine and unbreakable, even as that between God and man. When the disciple is ready to receive the higher light, he is brought into contact with a suitable guru by the supreme dispensation.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

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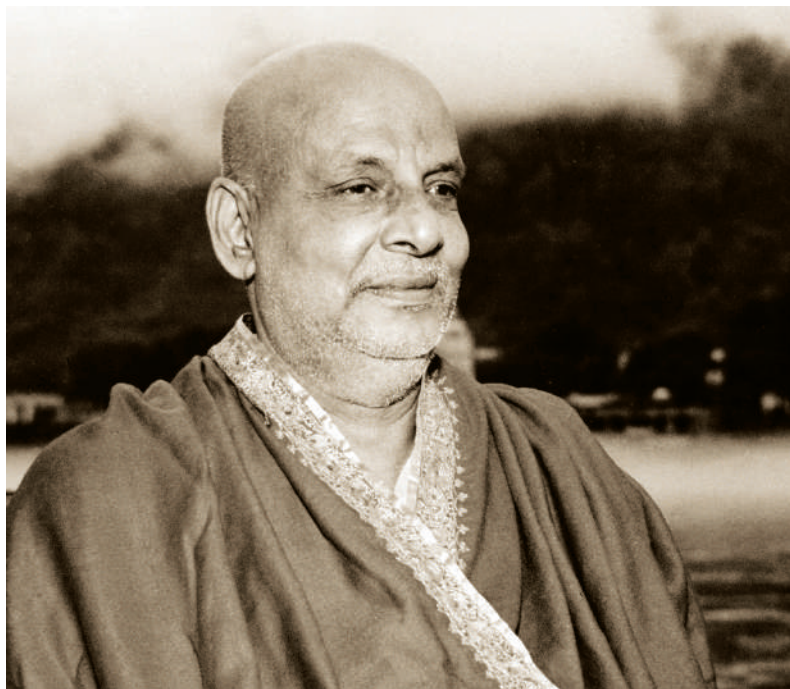
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The Yogi is superior to the ascetic. He is deemed superior even to those versed in sacred lore. The Yogi is superior even to those who perform action with some motive. Therefore, Arjuna, do you become a Yogi. (*Bhagavad Gita* VI:46)
तपस्विभ्योऽधिको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

The Main Source

Swami Sivananda Saraswati



The guru in physical form is the main source and embodiment of all the good and happiness that can accrue to the disciple. The disciple should realize the supreme necessity of obeying the guru's commands and keeping his faith in the guru unsullied and staunch.

Just as electricity flows from a positively charged battery towards the negative pole, power, energy, love, wisdom and spiritual currents flow from the master mind of a guru towards the lesser mind of the disciple.

Know that your life is a yajna, a sacrifice, a long program of performing the sacrifice of the self for the good of all. You do not exist for your own sake. You exist for the sake of all.

My Guru, Swami Sivananda

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



I am the product of my guru, not of my parents. My body may be a genetic transfer from my parents, but my spirituality is not. I had no saintly qualities. It is only by the grace of my guru that I gradually became softer and softer. I was an angry young man, foolish and impatient. He was calm, enlightened, patient and generous, nothing but mercy and compassion. You must find a guru who can be your complement. My raw material was suitable for creating a good statue of a sannyasin, so my guru carved it. He taught me how to shoot the arrow straight at the target. Without the guru, knowledge is not realized. The guru is light himself.



My guru gave me sannyasa only when the time was ripe. In 1947 I was in Lahore when the partition of India took place. I need not elaborate on the devastation and inhumanity I witnessed everywhere. My outlook on life took a complete turnabout. I

lost faith, condemned the saints and seers, denounced religion and dispensed with God. What can I tell you about God's ways? Swami Sivananda's birthday fell on September 8th and many of us were due to take sannyasa, but I refused. However, Swami Sivananda succeeded in convincing me otherwise, and on the 12th I took sannyasa.

Swami Sivananda opened up certain experiences of consciousness in me which continue to develop. In 1955, he said, "Satyananda, you have worked hard for the Divine Life Society, now you are free to go." He gave me one hundred and eight rupees and said, "You have to do nothing but add zeros to the right side." He taught me kriya yoga in five minutes through which he said awakening would take place. It became the medium for the shakti he transferred to me. At the same time, he forbade me from practising it. The reason is simple. When you drink poison, you don't lick your lips afterwards. When the downloading happened, a different vision started to develop and evolve in me.

Swami Sivananda was a simple, devout, kind and compassionate man. He never cared for money, and I also acquired the same temperament. I always thought that life is to be lived, to be enjoyed. It is bliss. The whole world belongs to me. It also means that I belong to the entire world. In 1964 I established the ashram in Munger. However, I always realized that this work could not be for myself, so I did it for my guru. It is not for me, not for my enjoyment, name, fame or glory. Dedicating the karma to my guru became a strong force in my mind.

True Connection

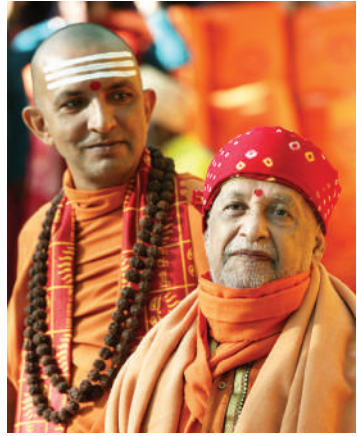
Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

The relationship with Guru and God is not an intellectual relationship. You cannot say, 'I am connected with my guru. I am connected with God.' Connection is an experience of their continuous presence and continuous inspiration.

Swami Sivananda met his guru only for ten minutes in his entire life, when he took sannyasa. The presence of his guru was so strong that from the moment of initiation until the end of his days, he was in constant communion with his guru. The guru was present and alive in him. Sri Swami Satyananda states, 'I am able to see my guru. I am able to talk to him. He can appear in front of me and have a normal conversation with me. I also receive mandates from the higher power, whom you may call God, and I fulfil those mandates.'

Although Sri Swamiji lived with people and he used to meet people, his mind, his awareness was always absorbed in the guru element and in the divine element. That is the state of paramahansa, where the mind merges with the *guru tattwa*, the guru element, where the mind merges with the divine element. The mind becomes an expression of that guru and *ishwariya* or divine element. This is also an indication of having gone through the process of self-discovery and self-correction, and reaching the point of self-realization, inner illumination or inner oneness with the cosmic consciousness.

– 19 December 2025, Ganga Darshan, Munger



Truth of the *Rig Veda*

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



When we talk about yoga we are talking about a science which not only takes care of the physical body and the vitality but also of a great potential in this physical structure. In relation to this, there are two striking definitions of yoga. Firstly, yoga is efficiency in one's own actions and duties. Secondly, yoga is balance of mind in relation to one's own duty.

Western nations have been facing great difficulties in their individual and in their social lives and have been trying every possible method, from medical science to psychology, from acupuncture to Zen Buddhism. They have been trying everything to correct this situation. But ultimately they have come to the conclusion that unless the transformation of individual mind takes place and its stuff undergoes transformation, nothing can be achieved in personal and social life. We can talk about thousands of people coming together and working for a cause. It is an attractive idea and a tempting slogan. As a nation we can always think, 'Well, we work for

the nation, we build it up.' But is this the spirit that is speaking or is this only a slogan? I think it is only a slogan.

The real spirit can never come unless expansion of consciousness takes place. A mother can never feel the suffering of her child unless her consciousness is expanded and united with that of the child. Two people who love each other can never feel the happiness and the suffering of one another on the spiritual plane unless there is a union, and this union is not an intellectual affair. This union is not hypothetical. This union is actual fusion of the two, three and hundreds of temperaments, in the same way as there is fusion of different electrical lines in one pole. The mind moves through the atmosphere. It has a plane of movement. It can travel just as sound waves or objects can travel. In the same way, the mind travels through space.

In an institution, in an industry and also in society, hundreds of people come together to work. Do they do so just because of persuasion? Do they do it just because it gives them a slogan, or because they are made more conscious of their duty? Is this why we can lead them to perform their duties in a better way, or is it possible that we give them an opportunity to expand their consciousness beyond the frontiers of their own minds and bodies, so that union and homogeneity takes place between the two or three thousand people who are working in that institution?

This spiritual union occurs even without the individual knowing the details and the importance of group performance. In my opinion, an organization is nothing but a total fusion of spiritual possibility. If the spiritual evolution of the mind is realized by society and its organizations, then we can definitely assure not only the generations of today, but also of posterity, that our performances and our achievements will be more spontaneous. There will be less fluctuations, less compulsion and less philosophical interpretation of the meaning of union.

Yoga means union. If thousands of people all over the world can be influenced by one thought, one philosophy, we will have a different society altogether. I have been visualizing

in my mind ever since 1956 that yoga is emerging as a very powerful way of life, which is going to influence and alter the events of the world. I am not talking a political power to come, but in the sense of the descent of a new form of consciousness. It is said in the *Rig Veda* (10:191:2):

*Samgacchadhwam samvadadhwam sam vo manamsi janatam;
Deva bhagam yatha purve sanjanana upasate.*

May we march forward with a common goal. May we be open-minded and work together in harmony. May we share our thoughts for integrated wisdom. May we follow the example of our ancestors who achieved higher goals by virtue of being united.

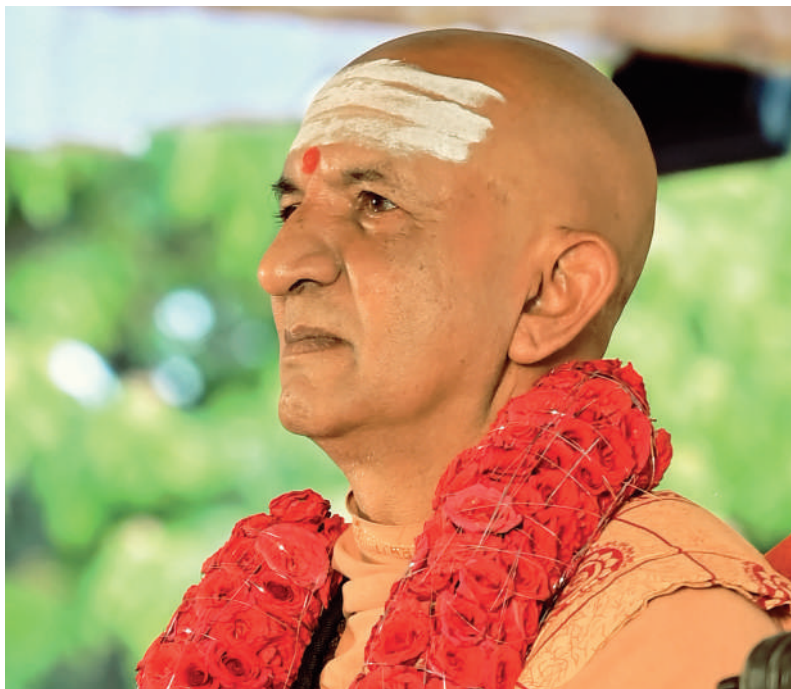
In the context of our present society where the affairs are becoming more and more complex, where we face problems in our personal, family, and professional lives, it is necessary for everybody to pick up one set of yoga practices suitable for their own body and mind. The purpose with which you pick up those practices for yourself is to expand your consciousness, so you become a part of the whole institution. Then thousands of people belonging to an organization will be unified by one universality. When this universality and homogeneity come then that mantra of *Rig Veda* will become a truth. This is the truth of living, working, achieving, suffering and enjoying together.

Yoga needs a teacher or guide. In the beginning yoga needs a special place as well. Your house is a nice place to practise yoga but it is not the right place to learn yoga. A place is required where you can learn properly and that is called ashram. A teacher is required for the transformation of human personality, evolution of human mind and betterment of our individual circumstances. More important than that, we must know the theories and ideas of yoga.

– 7 January 1979, Ranchi, India

Discovering Spirituality

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



The purpose of life is to develop spiritual awareness. This is something important which each one needs to understand and to know. Do not confuse spirituality with religion. The realization of the sannyasins and enlightened beings has always been that spirituality and religion are two different things. Religion says, 'Believe,' spirituality says, 'Discover.' It is the process of discovery which has been emphasized by our saints, sages, ancestors, rishis – the people who have guided us to experience a connection with the higher nature. It is the experience of this connection which people identify as the realization of Satyam, Sivam or Sundaram, according to their understanding.

Ultimately, everything boils down to connecting with one's higher nature. There are people who, out of curiosity or ignorance, not because of their wisdom and knowledge, ask if God exists, and if God exists, where does He live? Why are you asking about God? Why don't you see something inside you, your own atma? Are you able to experience your atma? Without your atma, without your soul, you won't survive even for a split second. You never see your atma. Forget atma, do you know the shape, the dimension, the form, the quality, the nature of your own mind? Something which you cannot see, but without which you cannot exist on this planet, in this life, in this body.

When you do not even know the basics of the mind or spirit, why are you asking about God? Nobody can satisfy you, because you do not have the background which starts with something basic. How can I ask my Guru, 'How do I explode the atom?' First I have to learn the basics and understand what the atom is, understand how it can be taken through a process of fusion or fission. Only when I have realized the process, can I experiment and achieve a result, and that happens in the material dimension.

Why will it not happen in the spiritual dimension? The process is the same, the discovery is the same. You have to begin with learning the basic component of life. You have to realize that life can be transformed into something better and more beautiful. When life becomes better and more beautiful, then that is the emergence of the spiritual nature in yourself, in your life, in your personality. Until then, you are what you are; a person who has to face difficulties and challenges, who is confused, in conflict, under stress, tension and duress. You have to make the effort to come out of this condition to experience happiness, peace, creativity and positivity. These become the stepping stones to spiritual awareness. This is the statement of my guru.

To develop spiritual awareness, people try many things. Some try meditation, some this technique or that technique,

some become religious, some engage themselves in *karmakanda*, ritual, some engage themselves in *jnana*, study and analysis. Yogis have identified a process of development and growth in life. Since time immemorial, yogis have spoken about realizing the higher nature, in whatever form you can experience it. Some bhaktas experience the higher nature in the form of their ishta devata. Jnanis experience the higher nature according to their understanding, in the form of luminosity or light. In this way, everybody has an avenue which they can explore to understand what the higher nature is.

Transformation

Exploring these avenues, according to your choice and inclination, does not bring any transformation to your life. In times of trials and difficulties, one is not able to hang onto peace; one becomes subject to the influence of those difficulties, stresses, anxieties and frustrations. Despite your attempt and practice of something for many decades, the condition of mind has not changed. The condition of mind still remains what it was many decades ago. Where is the flaw, where is the mistake?

The mistake is that people have focused on practice and not on transformation of the Self. Do you believe that practice of asanas will make you spiritual? The practice of asanas will never make you spiritual. That is only a physical component to help you manage the imbalances of the physical structure; it has nothing to do with spirituality. Do you believe that the practice of pranayamas will help you become spiritual? No, it is just a method to increase levels of vitality in your system; nothing more than that. So, practices are not going to make you spiritual.

Even meditation will not make you spiritual. How can it make you spiritual? Until today you have not been able to manage a single vritti of your mind. What is the use of meditating for three decades, when you have not been able to change your perceptions, your thoughts, ideas, intentions and connections? What is missing is the awareness of how you



can improve yourself consciously. This is the subject matter of spirituality. Spirituality here does not denote a transcendental nature which you can live, but a down-to-earth experience of connecting with the beauty, creativity and positivity in life, and living this life properly and correctly. For this, yogis said, 'Practise yoga.'

Our focus as teachers in society is limited to asana and pranayama, and maybe some forms of stress management techniques. Beyond that, there is no concept of yoga. So, you are not doing any justice or seva to yoga. If you want to do any service or seva to yoga and to society, you need to get out of the mind-set of, 'I am a yoga teacher, yoga guru, yoga therapist,' and begin to relearn yoga from the yogic perspective.

Our ancestors have defined the progression, that you start with hatha yoga by balancing the prana shaktis, then you move into raja yoga for creating a balanced mental behaviour. Then you move into other higher yogas to explore your inner nature and potentials. Then you express what you have understood through your actions, emotions and intellect, and help other people come out of their limitations. You explore the positive qualities that you hold within yourself. Yoga is not the practice of the physical techniques or breathing techniques, but



transformation of the tamasic mind into a positive mind. For this there are methods, not of meditation, but of changing and transforming the negative qualities into positive qualities. To become a yogi, you need not practise meditation, asana and pranayama. You need to change and transform the negative of your mind into positive. Then you can call yourself a yogi.

Sadgunas and durgunas

Swami Sivananda was the first to give an indication of this. He said to his disciples, 'We are sannyasins. We belong to the Dashnami sannyasa parampara established by Shankaracharya. Our sadhana, our aspiration, our goal is to realize Advaita Vedanta. This realization of Advaita Vedanta is not an intellectual analysis; it is not a philosophy; it is a way to live a proper life. What are the qualities, conditions, natures or the steps to convert the tamasic mind into a sattwic mind? It is no use saying, '*Aham Brahmasmi* – I am That.' That realization will never come unless you follow the steps. You cannot imagine yourself to be on the rooftop, without climbing the steps. By saying '*Aham Brahmasmi*', you are declaring, 'I am at the rooftop. I am That.' What steps have you climbed? And what are those steps? Those steps can be realized through

the yogic sadhana, and those steps will alter the behaviour of your mind.

Swami Sivananda gave eighteen such principles to alter the human mind, in the song of the *18 ITIES*. These eighteen qualities are the yamas and niyamas of yoga. When you think of the yamas and niyamas of yoga, you only think of Patanjali's raja yoga – satya, ahimsa, asteya, brahmacharya, aparigraha; shaucha, santosha, tapas, swadhyaya, ishwara pranidhana. These yamas and niyamas are only of raja yoga; they are not of the yogic science, of yogic life or of hatha yoga. Every yoga has yamas and niyamas. Adherence to these yamas and niyamas takes you to the ultimate end of the yogic experience of that particular branch of yoga.

Western interpreters speak of yamas and niyamas as ethics and morality. They never encountered sadgunas in life. The Indian tradition has spoken of durgunas and sadgunas since Satya Yuga. When people live under the influence of durgunas, they can realize sadgunas, for they have an option to go to the other end. Where there is no concept of sadgunas, the good qualities of life are seen as ethics and morality. That is the western culture, but for Indians there is no ethics and morality. We shift from durguna to sadguna, and from sadguna to durguna, and that is the normal human behaviour. Nobody can deny it, or challenge it.

In the spiritual culture of India, there is no such thing as ethics and morality; there is always an inspiration and direction to connect with that which is good and apply that which is good. The sadgunas are good. Swami Sivananda describes conditions that can help change the quality, the behaviour and expression of the mind. He also says that there are pitfalls. Anger, fear and jealousy are pitfalls.

We have no concept of how we can explore the positive side of our nature. For this reason, despite having such a rich cultural input since Satya Yuga, and despite having had the opportunity to live in the company of saints throughout the ages, positive qualities have not been able to make a dent in

the human personality. We need to change our understanding and analysis of our spiritual culture, and begin with changing the negative into positive; that is the first step.

Swami Sivananda inspired this understanding and told his disciples to follow it. He says, 'Be good, Do good.' They are two simple statements, but have you ever tried being good and doing good? It is not that easy, and it is challenging many times and in many ways to be good and to do good, in the real sense of the word. However, that represents the spiritual dimension of human personality. The spiritual dimension of the human personality is not a God-intoxicated dimension, but an intoxication of positivity, creativity and peace. That is the real spiritual dimension. Once you have that, then God-realization is spontaneous, automatic, natural, and you cannot avoid it, for that is the nature of the Higher Self. *Shanti*, peace, is the nature of God and shanti is the form of God. Happiness is the nature of God, and happiness is the form of God. Kindness is the nature of God and kindness is the form of God. Compassion is the nature of God and it is the form of God. With all the best and positive qualities you live, you are expressing the goodness and the godliness within you. What is there to search for outside? You just have to change yourself, nothing more than that. Yoga is the journey which takes you to that point of transformation and change.

Journey of yoga

Before you begin yoga, you have to know what the challenges are that you are facing. The biggest challenge that you face is interaction, relationships, communication, rigidity of mind and thought, demands due to expectations. Can we manage them? Yes, we can. Managing these *vikaras*, disorders, is the beginning of yoga. You remove the vikaras to realize your own *akara*, form, that is yoga. Therefore, first there has to be recognition of what our challenges are in life. What are the difficulties that we face in life? Not the common ones that you connect with, 'I can't concentrate, I can't focus, I am under stress, I suffer from anxiety, I am depressed.' These are symptoms of a mental

state, which have been there as the undercurrent in your mind. What are those undercurrents which are altering your moods and mental behaviour? That realization has to come, and for this there are techniques given in yoga.

The whole system of pratyahara is based on realizing the nature of the mind. Pratyahara helps you to realize the tamasic aspect of the mind. Pratyahara helps you to realize the limiting conditions of the mind. There are many techniques of pratyahara which people have not even been told about yet, as there is no use telling anything until they are able to perfect one thing in their sadhana.

Pratyayas are impressions and conditionings of mind. Sometimes, I feel very grateful that my pratyayas were given to me by my guru, and they are spiritual and positive. I do not have pratyayas given to me by my friends, my family members, my teachers, school or college, or by society. Nothing like that is there; only the pratyayas, the impressions and conditions established by my guru, are alive in me as pratyayas. Therefore, sometimes it is definitely difficult for me to analyze and understand your pratyayas, as I have never lived them. I can understand what you are going through and I can see what can be done to help you, yet you have to trust me for that.

If there is no trust, there is no help. It is like when you have a small pimple and go to the doctor and the doctor says, 'Don't worry about it; it is only a small pimple.' Then you will ask the doctor, 'Are you sure, doctor? There is nothing special about it? It is not cancerous?' The doctor will say, 'I am very sure; it is just a small pimple. Do not even think about it.' That answer will not satisfy you. You will go to many other doctors, and you will believe that doctor who will give a fancy name to your small pimple. Then you will think, 'I am unique; I have this fancy name to identify with.'

When you as a patient do not trust a doctor, how will you trust me as your spiritual advisor? You won't. I can tell you that frankly that until today very few have trusted me. Until today I have trusted very few, although millions come. There is

discussion, but there is no trust. I can see that after they speak to me, they will go to every guru wearer in the ashram and ask their advice. This happens; it is human nature for each one wants to be someone who is unique, and who can be recognized as a unique person for they have a fancy name for their problem.

This inquisitive human nature is good, yet it is also a big barrier to realize what is appropriate and correct, and to follow any advice or guidance. If you study the lives of sages and great people, you will discover that only few have followed their advice and guidance. If they do not match your expectation and ambition, then definitely you are not going to follow their advice or guidance.

Yoga has been clear in defining that first the realization of your difficulties should become clear, and then options to deal with these difficulties should be known. A selection of the appropriate option with which you can engage in the right manner has to be defined, which does not create confusion or conflict with your life and situation. Therefore, in yoga you will find, and more specifically, when we are dealing with our mind in raja yoga, that in pratyahara many different techniques deal with different components of behaviour.

Dharana is just to focus the mind. The real challenge is in the practice of pratyahara. What are we targeting within ourselves? Are we targeting thoughts? Are we targeting emotions? Are we targeting conditionings and impressions? What are we targeting? Only an expert advisor who knows yoga can tell you; what you need to practise, and what could be the possible result according to your condition and situation.

Yoga is a vast science which still has to be explored and understood; not only the physical component of yoga, but in totality what yoga can do for an individual to become self-reliant and self-confident, and to develop that awareness where we can fight with the limiting factors of life and express the beautifying factors of life. That is the beginning of spirituality.

– 21 March 2025, Shalini Grounds, Bengaluru, India



Don't Call Me God

I am nothing but a replica of you,
Why do they call me God?
I am nothing but your inspiration,
Before I was a sod.
You made me everything I am,
You never told me why.
Now people always come to me,
Their love for you to satisfy.
If God is eternal, then know I have died.
If God is bliss, then know I have cried.
If God is purity from the source,
Then know that I have suffered remorse.
If God's grace is given, then know mine was not,
For my life was a struggle, and know I have fought.
I will not answer to His name again.
By calling me Him, His love you won't win.
So leave me in peace, I'm tired of lies,
For your questions I have no replies.
If God is me, then after sunrise
My form you would see crossing the skies.
They say God knows all, they say He is wise.
Only fools come to me, that much I surmise.
For I know nothing, from me you can't gain,
My intellect is tired, it's on the wane.
Some people say that God's will is law.
If that is so, then I too am in awe,
By His power of thought, the universe He designed.
Believe me such a will could never be mine.
God is omnipotent, from Him all has grown.
And I am a beggar, but my name is known.
God is unchanging, but from youth I grew old.
So don't call me God, I'm just his clay mould.

—Swami Satyananda Saraswati

The Practice of Egolessness

Swami Satyananda Saraswati



In yoga, guru is the person with whom humility, dedication and surrender are practised. The first and foremost quality of a disciple is humility and egolessness. Whether the disciple is a renunciate or a householder, in both cases egolessness before the guru is essential. First you practise egolessness before your guru and when you practise this for some time it becomes your nature. When it becomes your nature you can practise it with anybody and everybody.

In India there is an ancient tradition, thousands of years old, and even today it is fully practised. When the disciple goes to his guru he carries three things: a flower, a coconut, money. They are symbolic. A flower is the most tender thing in the world. There is nothing more tender, nothing more beautiful

in this world, than a flower. Everybody loves a flower; nobody hates it. When you offer a flower to your guru, you are offering your heart, because the heart is with you, it is also most tender. It is responsible for life. If the heart fails, you die. This heart receives love and hatred. This heart receives the shocks and joys. This flower is the replica of the heart of the disciple and when he offers a flower to the guru, it means that he is offering his heart, his emotions, his feelings. He is offering everything that the heart represents.

The second thing he offers is the coconut. The coconut has a very hard shell outside, but inside there is a very soft kernel. It is a white stuff, like butter. That coconut represents the ego. When you are offering that coconut to your guru, you are offering your head. Head does not mean the brain. When you say 'head' you mean ego. "Oh, his head is very bad!" this indicates the ego is very hard, because inside the ego there is a soft stuff. So, the disciple goes to the guru, who takes the coconut and breaks it. This is a ritual I'm talking about. It means when you go to the guru, you must break your ego.

The third thing is money, but nowadays many people find gold and silver very difficult, so they give banknotes. Money in yoga, money in Sanskrit, is called mudra. Mudra here means the mood of attachment. Most people are attached to money. They work for it, they even steal it, they murder their own loved ones and they throw away their wife and children for the sake of money. They become merciless for the sake of money.

Money is a very important factor so far as the life of the ego is concerned. The attachment to money is like a life-saving, important vitamin to the ego, therefore they offer money to the guru. It symbolizes their surrender of attachment.

In India this tradition is still alive today. If I go to the house of my disciple and ask him or her for any amount of money, they won't refuse it. Of course, I never do it, because the guru also has certain duties, certain responsibilities and also he has certain morals. I have just to write a small letter, "Send me five

thousand rupees.” It comes, because the relationship between guru and disciple is based on higher factors. It is not like father and son, it is not like husband and wife, it is not like brother and sister. It is like God and devotee.

If God came to you in the night and said, “Give me all the bank cheques.” Would you do it or not? Of course, if you believe He is God you will do it. Or if God came to me in the night and said, “Get away from here, jump in the ocean and die,” I would do it because I believe in Him.

So, egolessness must be started with the guru. Of course, you must be sure that he too has his moral standards. If the disciple becomes egoless, then the guru can use him to the maximum. Even though the disciple has surrendered, the guru should not exploit him. The guru has to be what we call ‘beyond matter’; he should not expect any material thing from his disciple.

God does not need any material thing from you. Of course you give everything to Him. You offer your heart, you offer your heart, you offer your money, you offer your children, but He doesn’t want it. God only wants one thing from you – that is called bhakti. You understand what bhakti is? Your pure emotion, pure devotion, not in prayers, not in rituals, not even singing his glories. Even as you love your child, even as you love your beautiful girl, even as you are attached to your property and other things – that emotion, only that emotion he wants.

It is the same thing with the guru. He doesn’t want your head, he doesn’t want your flowers, he doesn’t want your money – but you should give it, because you need to. Why? To get rid of ego. Those people who want spiritual life will have to solve this riddle of ego. First you have to solve it on a day-to-day basis, then you will have to solve this on a higher spiritual basis. In nirvana there is no ego. In samadhi there is no ego. When there is no ego, the vision takes place. When there is no ego, then the divine or higher or supreme vision takes place, not at all before that.

Gifts to Humanity

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



My guru, Sri Swami Satyananda, has given two unique things to the world. One is yoga, and the other is yajna. These are the two gifts of my guru to humanity. Yoga has existed in the past. Yajnas have also existed in the past, but he gave them a new focus, a new vision, and through them he gave us a new inspiration. People today know the word yoga, but they do not understand the scope of yoga. Philosophically, people say that yoga is the union of the soul with the supreme consciousness; the individual consciousness with the supreme consciousness. That is a philosophical statement. How does one realize the individual consciousness? How does one realize the supreme consciousness? How does one realize the connection between the individual and the supreme consciousness? Only through belief, only through faith? No. That philosophical statement does not mean anything to any individual, in a practical sense.

This understanding of yoga is incomplete: union of the individual self with the higher self. It is beyond my intelligence; it is beyond any logic. Even I have not been able to figure out

why they say this, because I know that it is not true. I am not able to realize my individuality; I am not able to realize my transcendental nature. When I do not know my individuality or transcendence, how can I say that it is the union of both? Maybe the seers in ancient times had the vision to see that individuality and universality. Today, none of us have that ability, capacity or the vision to know the individuality or the universality.

Then, people say that yoga is good for health, and they practise the yogasanas like they would practise any type of exercise in a gym. Just by performing certain physical asanas, they say, 'I am practising yoga and I have become spiritual.' Yoga is not exercise; yoga is not asana. Asanas are the kindergarten training of yoga, not even primary school. People think that, 'By practising these physical postures, I am practising and perfecting yoga, and becoming spiritual and enlightened.' That is totally incorrect.

Yoga

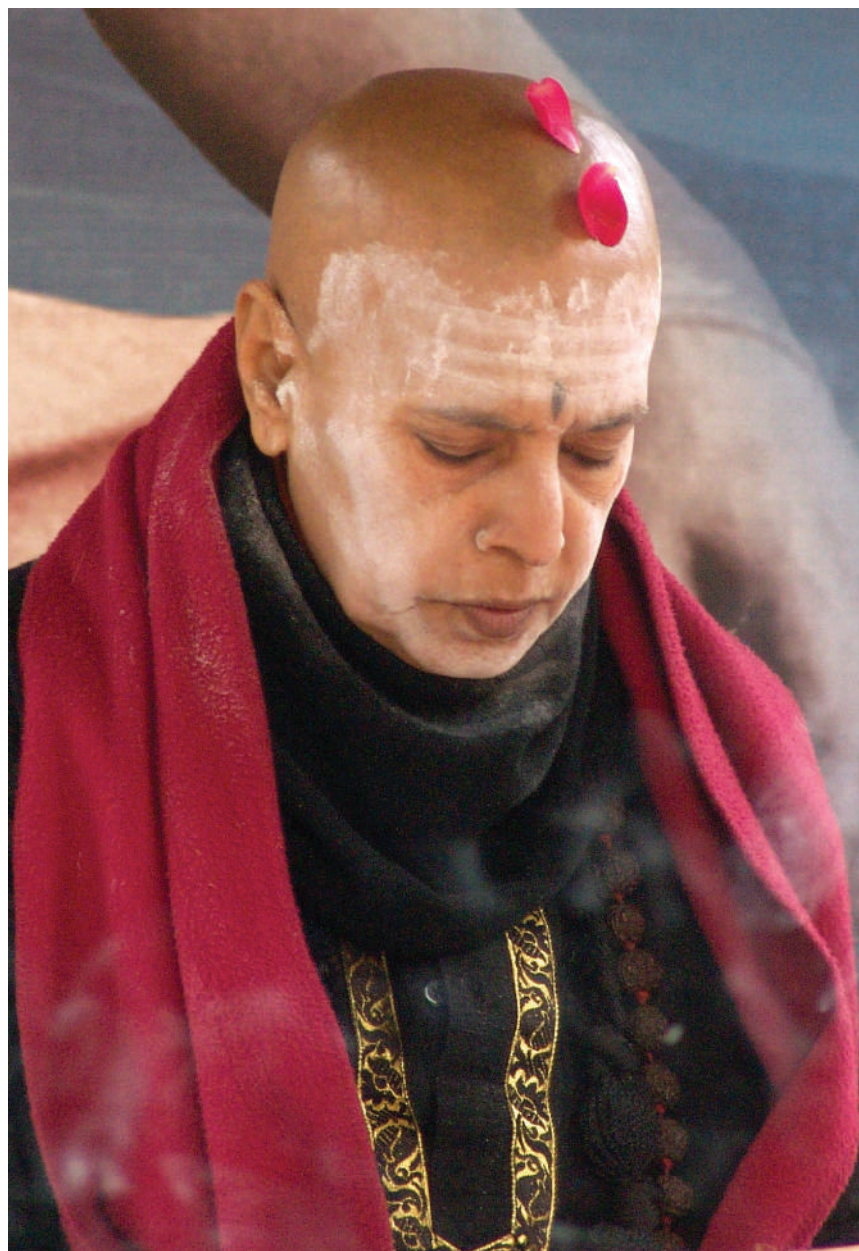
So what is yoga? Yoga is a system of living life optimally and finding your happiness, your freedom, and realizing your expanded awareness and consciousness, while living a normal life. There are people who meditate, and who have meditated for many decades. What has been the result of their meditation? Nothing but an escape into fantasy. 'I have seen the light. I have seen angels. I have seen my luminosity.' By saying that, have they changed anything, or has their mind changed into a positive mind, a better mind? Or is it still subject to likes and dislike, hatred, envy, jealousy, greed, aggression, fear and insecurity? If you have not been able to change the quality of your mind, then what is the use of meditation?

People say *yogaschitta vritti nirodhah*, to control the modifications of mind is yoga. What modification have you been able to change in your own life by practising yoga for so many decades? Not a single modification would be there. That is the fallacy, the wrong step, wrong understanding about yoga.









Elimination of all the disturbing factors from the five bodies in this physical body – *annamaya kosha*, *pranamaya kosha*, *manomaya kosha*, *vijnanamaya kosha*, *anandamaya kosha*. These are the five bodies that we live, that we experience every day.

There are many destabilizing, factors, distressing factors, which eliminate the harmony of these bodies. Maybe through asana you can find comfort in your physical body, but the disturbing agents have not been eliminated. Maybe through breathing practices, you can find comfort in your pranic body, but the factors which disturb the pranic body have not been eliminated. Maybe through meditation you can escape to a fantasy world and experience a little bit of peace, but the disturbing agents of the mind have not been removed.

Consciousness is unexplored; one can talk about it, but one does not experience it. The spirit body in our physical structure can be talked about but never experienced, due to the limitations of the other bodies. If we say that the purpose of yoga is to provide health, then health is not to be taken as elimination of disease of the physical body, but elimination of all the unbalancing factors of the human personality. All those factors which create an imbalance in our personality have to be eradicated and removed. Only then, total health can be experienced. That is yoga. This has been the approach of yoga as taught by our tradition.

The intent is that it is a lifestyle; we have to understand this as a lifestyle, not something that we do for one hour, or half an hour every day. Yoga is an expression of lifestyle at the physical, mental, emotional, psychic and spiritual levels. That is the teaching of the Bihar School of Yoga. This understanding is a gift to humanity by our guru, Swami Satyananda.

Our grandfather guru, Swami Sivananda, made many statements; I chose two statements – Become Good and Do Good. Yoga becomes the system to become good. To become good does not mean that you try to be nice and good with everyone or everything. That is something that will happen. To become good means that you take responsibility of bettering

yourself and connecting yourself not with the disturbing factors, but with those uplifting factors, which will give you eternal happiness, joy, peace and wellbeing – the total health.

Yajna

The second aspect that Sri Swami Satyananda gave us was yajna. *Yajna* means a fire ceremony, according to dictionaries. What the dictionaries describe is an act which people see outside yet without understanding. The word *yajna* itself means something that is produced, something that is distributed, and something that is consumed. The farmer toils in the field and produces grains like rice or wheat. The wheat that is produced is sold in the market, for people to take home. It is production and distribution. What you take home, is what you consume. There is a whole sequence of producing, distributing and consuming.

These three ideas represent yajna. What do you produce, what do you distribute, and what do you consume? Your intention, your positivity, your creativity – the best within you is produced, the best within you is distributed, and the best within you is consumed. That is the actual meaning of the word yajna; not fire ceremony. The people who know yajna, will never subscribe to the philosophy that this is a fire ceremony. Those who believe in religions and religious systems, will say that it is a fire ceremony. I have made it clear that that external understanding of a process does not indicate the real intention of the process. The real intention of the process is production, distribution and consumption.

You also produce in your mind many things and it is distributed and consumed by people. The gossip, the thoughts about other people that you have – either as good or bad, or the expressions of anger, jealousy, hatred and greed that are generated within your mind, is your production. You are producing them; you are the farmer of your intentions. When you speak with somebody, it is easy to criticize and difficult to appreciate their good qualities. It is easy to criticize the bad and the negative, but difficult to accept the good and the



positive. What you are thinking, is what you are distributing. What you are distributing is being consumed, and due to that consumption, there is suffering and pain. They also become catalysts in producing the negative in another person's mind.

Yajna, the three aspects of production, distribution and consumption, is always happening inside you. It is happening on a daily basis. Can you perform a proper yajna within yourself, where positivity is produced, where positivity is distributed, and where positivity is consumed? If that can happen in your life, you will be performing the real yajna. In the *Srimad Bhagavad Gita*, Sri Krishna has said the same. People read the *Bhagavad Gita*, but they do not realize what has been said. They believe the fire ceremony to be the real yajna, and everything else is philosophy. There is no such thing as philosophy, except the expression of qualitative wisdom. If you do not understand that, it becomes a philosophy. If you understand it, it becomes a lifestyle. So, don't think ill thoughts, leave aside the anger, aggression, frustration, anxiety and depression. Just connect with that which is positive and beautiful within you, and share that with everyone.

This completes the second component of Swami Sivananda's statement – do good. First become good through yoga, and then do good through yajna. The slogan of Vishwa Yoga Peeth, Bihar School of Yoga is – become good. The slogan of Sannyasa Peeth

is do good. This also creates a positive connection with yourself and with others, for what you offer is what you receive. My guru, Swami Satyananda, says that if you give hate, you will receive hate; if you give anger, you will receive back anger; if you give jealousy, you will receive back jealousy; if you give peace, you will get back peace. You get what you give. So, make sure that you give the best of you, to receive the best from the universe.

This is the yajna, and the spiritual lifestyle. People who come to the ashram engage themselves not only in yoga practices. Yoga practices become an aid only to experience the positive and qualitative life that one can live and lead. When people come to the ashram, for ashram life experience, they participate in the spirit of the ashram, and engage themselves in different activities which change according to the time. When there are no external programs, then internal programs are there – courses and classes are there, for you to delve deeper in your own nature and personality. When external programs happen, then we engage ourselves in service, *seva*, so that the best of the intentions can be offered to people, to inspire, uplift and encourage them to connect with positivity in life.

It is challenging definitely, because everyone is not at the same level. Just as in your hand, all fingers have different sizes. In the ashram too, all people are at different levels of inspiration and evolution. Every person wearing geru robes is not enlightened. We all have our traits, our nature, our mentality, and we see the world through what we are in our own mind. What we are in our own mind is nothing spiritual, but it is self-oriented awareness and desire.

When Lord Buddha was asked, ‘How can one define growth in spiritual life?’ he only gave one answer, ‘When your desires subside and you are in tune with the universal desire and will, then that is an indication of your growth in spiritual life. As long as you desire to experience this and that, including samadhi, it does not indicate spiritual life.’ This was the statement of Buddha.

Guru Poornima

Swami Sivananda Saraswati

The full-moon day in the month of Ashada is the extremely auspicious and holy day of Guru-Purnima. On this Ashada Poornima Day, sacred to the memory of the great sage Sri Vyasa Bhagavan or Sri Krishna Dvaipayana.

Sri Veda-Vyasa has done unforgettable service to all humanity for all time by editing the four Vedas, writing the eighteen Puranas, the *Mahabharata* and the *Bhagavata*. We can attempt to repay this deep debt of gratitude we owe him only by constant study of his works and practice of his teachings imparted for the regeneration of humanity in the iron age or Kali Yuga.

Mark fully the deep significance of this great day. Ashada Purnima heralds the Chaturmasa, or the setting in of the eagerly awaited rains. The water, drawn up and stored as clouds in the hot summer, now manifests in plentiful showers that usher in the advent of fresh life everywhere. Even so do you all begin seriously to put into actual working all the theory and philosophy that you have stored up in you through patient study. Commence practical spiritual sadhana right from this day.

Generate fresh waves of spirituality. Let all that you have read, heard, seen and learnt become, through sadhana, transformed into a continuous outpouring of universal love, ceaseless loving service and continuous prayer and worship of the Lord seated in all beings.

As the day of Guru-Pooja or worship of one's preceptor this is a day of pure joy to the sincere aspirant. Thrilled by the expectation of offering his reverent homage to the beloved Guru, the aspirant awaits this occasion with eagerness and devotion. It is the Guru alone that breaks the binding cords of attachment and releases the aspirant from the trammels of



earthly existence. The Guru guides and inspires you from the innermost core of your being. He is everywhere.

Guru Bhakti Yoga

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

Guru Bhakti Yoga is something unique. Somebody once asked my guru, Sri Swami Satyananda, 'What is your favourite yoga? You have written so many books, you have taught so many different yogas like hatha yoga, raja yoga, kundalini yoga, kriya yoga, nada yoga. What is your favourite yoga?' He said, 'My favourite yoga is Guru Bhakti Yoga.'

Guru Bhakti Yoga represents a connection, a positive connection with our inner nature, our luminous nature and awakened nature, which is known as the guru element. That is what we all need; we need to awaken ourselves. If you think you are awake now, think again. You are not awake. Awakening means realizing the potential of life. We live our life without realizing the potential. We live our life in frustration, dejection, depression, anxiety, and we struggle in our life. We have never made any effort to awaken our dormant potentials, which are positive, uplifting and nourish life.

Guru Bhakti Yoga is that yoga which awakens and connects us with the positive, the uplifting and with those qualities which we all want to have, but we struggle to have them. Guru Bhakti Yoga is the time of positive connection with our own awakened inner nature; connection, devotion and realization of the good, the positive and the qualitative that we all have, behind the curtain of the mind and the senses. We are not able to look behind the curtain of the mind and the senses.

When you look behind the curtain of mind and senses, you will discover a different you. Just as people in the past who have lived this life have experienced pure positivity, pure peace, pure harmony. I am using the word pure, because peace can also be impure, harmony can also be tainted. When there is purity, then everything is an expression of the beauty of life.



Hatred is not a beauty of life; it is an illness of life. Jealousy, anger is an illness of life. Just as cancer, asthma and diabetes are illnesses of life, these are also illnesses of life. When we are able to remove these illnesses and diseases that afflict us on a daily basis, in the form of anxiety, frustration, depression, lethargy, hatred, anger, aggression, envy, greed, then we discover something truly remarkably beautiful within us. That can be explained in one word only – positivity. That positivity connects us with our own inner luminosity, and that is Guru Bhakti Yoga.

– 3 September 2025, Ganga Darshan, Munger

Three-Mantra Sadhana

Sannyasi Prantirth

An essay on mantra sadhana, the nervous system, and what six thousand years of vedic practice and twenty years of neuroscience finally agree on.

Every morning, without your permission, your body begins a siege. Within the first thirty to forty-five minutes of waking, cortisol, your primary stress mobilization hormone, surges to its highest point of the day. Researchers call this the Cortisol Awakening Response. It is controlled by the suprachiasmatic nucleus in the hypothalamus, the body's central timekeeper, and it is not negotiable. The adrenal glands fire. Blood glucose rises. The immune system braces. Your entire physiology is preparing for confrontation – before your phone lights up, before the first message arrives, before the first demand of the day has been named. The body wakes up already at war.

The question is not whether this happens. It does, every morning, in every body. The question is – who meets it? What you do with the first twenty minutes of consciousness determines the neurochemical architecture of the rest of your day. Not metaphorically, physiologically. The cortisol peak can either sharpen into clarity, like focused energy, emotional readiness, cognitive precision, or spiral into reactivity, anxiety, the familiar sensation of already being behind.

Six thousand years ago, the rishis of the vedic tradition did not have the language of cortisol or suprachiasmatic nuclei. What they had was something more precise – direct observation of the human system, documented across generations, tested in bodies, not laboratories. The three mantras they bequeathed us, Mahamrityunjaya, Gayatri, and the 32 Names of Durga, were not composed as prayers in the way the modern world understands prayer. They were composed as technology. Technology for the nervous system. Technology for the mind.



Technology for what lies beyond both. The West is catching up. Slowly, and with instruments.

The physiology of sound

Before we enter the three mantras individually, one mechanism needs to be understood, because it runs beneath all of them. When you chant, you breathe. That sentence sounds obvious. It is not. The specific breathing pattern of vedic mantra (prolonged, controlled exhalation across syllables) is not incidental to the practice. It is the practice. A 2021 study published in *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience* documented that slow, extended exhalation at approximately six breath cycles per minute stimulates the vagus nerve, the longest cranial nerve in the body, running from the brainstem through the throat, heart, and viscera. This stimulation activates the parasympathetic nervous system – the branch responsible for rest, repair, digestion, and recovery.

The vagus nerve is not simply a calming mechanism. Stephen Porges, whose Polyvagal Theory reorganized how psychiatry understands the autonomic nervous system, identified a specific branch of the vagus, the ventral vagal circuit, as the neurological foundation of social engagement, safety and trust. When this circuit is active, the body stops defending and starts connecting. The heart rate slows. The middle ear muscles attune to human vocal frequencies. The face opens.

Chanting activates this circuit directly. The prolonged vocal exhalation, the very act of producing sustained sound, is a form of self-administered vagal toning. This is not a metaphor for relaxation. It is a mechanical fact about how the human nervous system is wired. The rishis did not call it vagal tone. They called it pranayama – the regulation of life force through breath. Same mechanism. Different language.

Mahamrityunjaya mantra

*Om Tryambakam Yajamahe Sugandhim Pushtivardhanam
Urvaarukamiva Bandhanaan Mrityor Mukshiya Maamritaam*

This mantra appears in the *Rigveda* (Mandala VII, Sukta 59, verse 12), attributed to the sage Vasishtha Maitravairuni. It is addressed to Tryambaka, the three-eyed one, an epithet of Rudra, the vedic form that precedes what we now call Shiva. It is among the oldest composed prayers in any living tradition, and its stated purpose has remained unchanged for six millennia – victory over death. Western medicine initially dismissed this as mythology.

In 2019, neurosurgeons at Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital in New Delhi received funding from the Indian Council of Medical Research, India's apex medical research body, to study what happens when the Mahamrityunjaya mantra is chanted continuously to patients in severe comatose states following brain injury. Forty patients. Twenty in the chanting group. Twenty in the control group. Over seven days, the mantra was

recited 1.25 lakh times to the first group. The Glasgow Coma Scale, the standard clinical measure of consciousness, showed statistically significant improvement ($p=0.02$) in the chanting group.

The researchers were careful. One positive study does not establish a protocol. But ICMR does not fund studies that have no basis for investigation. The neuroscience of what may be happening runs through several overlapping mechanisms. EEG studies on vedic chanting show consistent shifts from high-frequency beta waves, the signature of anxious, effortful thought, to alpha and theta wave dominance. Alpha is the state of relaxed alertness, the frequency at which the brain is most open to learning. Theta is deeper, the state of creative insight, of dreaming, of what meditators describe as the threshold between waking and inner perception. Functional MRI studies show reduced activation in the amygdala, the brain's alarm centre, during and after sustained chanting.

The three eyes of Tryambaka are not a mythological conceit. In the vedic system, they represent three levels of perception – the physical, the mental and the psychic, or ordinary vision, inner vision and the vision that transcends both. This mantra is placed at the physical plane of the practice not because its effects are limited to the body, but because the body is where healing must first be anchored. The verse asks for what it knows is needed – freedom from the fear of death, not as an event in some distant future, but as a daily recalibration of how tightly the body holds its fear:

Like a ripe gourd organically detaching from the vine,
Free us from death. Let us not be kept from immortality.

Chanted eleven times, as you wake up, with a personal resolve held in the mind as the syllables move through the body, this is not ritual. It is a nervous system reset before the cortisol peak crests.

Gayatri mantra

*Om Bhur Bhuva Swaha
Tat Savitur Varenyam
Bhargo Devasya Dheemahi
Dhiyo Yo Nah Prachodayaat*

The Gayatri mantra appears in the *Rigveda* (Mandala III, verse 62.10). It has twenty-four syllables. The metre it is written in, Gayatri, became the name of the mantra itself. It is addressed to Savitri, the sun deity, and its request is specific – illuminate our intellect.

This is the mantra of the mental plane. Its stated purpose is not healing or liberation but clarity – the dissolving of the mental fog that accumulates between sleep and full wakefulness, between the person you are in stillness and the person you become under pressure.

A 2025 study published in the *Research and Reviews: Journal of Neurosciences* tracked 1,200 students of Allied Health Sciences at Desh Bhagat University. The experimental group chanted the Gayatri Mantra for 20 minutes daily for 6 weeks. EEG measurements showed consistent increases across all four primary brainwave bands, most notably alpha (10%) and gamma (13%). Gamma frequencies, associated with peak cognitive integration and moments of insight, are rarely elevated through passive relaxation. They require a state of engaged, alert stillness, precisely the state that sustained mantra chanting, with its demand for correct pronunciation, correct rhythm, and sustained attention, produces.

The cognitive results followed the neurological ones – improvements in sustained attention, working memory, and processing speed. Cortisol levels declined. The stress-regulatory axis (the HPA axis, the same system that governs the Cortisol Awakening Response) showed measurable recalibration.

A 2024 study in *ScienceDirect* went further, documenting significant correlations between EEG patterns and HRV indices

after eight weeks of regular mantra meditation, suggesting that the brain and the heart, the neural and the cardiovascular systems, begin to coordinate in a new way. Not just separately calmed. Jointly coherent. The vedic text did not frame this as cognitive enhancement. It framed it as offering the mind to the light. The mechanism is the same.

32 Names of Durga

The 32 Names of the Goddess Durga are drawn from the *Durga Saptashati*, the seven hundred verses of the *Markandeya Purana*, one of the foundational texts of the Shakta tradition. The word *Durga* is itself a compound: *durgam*, that which is difficult, obstructed, impossible to cross, and the feminine suffix that indicates the one who dissolves the obstruction.

This mantra is placed at the psychic plane of the practice. Not because it is esoteric in the sense of being distant or inaccessible, but because it addresses what the physical and mental mantras cannot reach alone – the deeper patterns of the mind, the dissipation, distraction, the accumulated heaviness that sits below the level of thought.

Western psychology calls these patterns ‘cognitive-emotional schemas’. Psychoanalysis calls them complexes. The vedic tradition calls them the *shat ripus*, the six internal enemies, desire, anger, greed, attachment, pride and envy. They are not moral failures. They are energetic patterns that, left unaddressed, become the operating system of a life.

The 32 names are chanted three times; a structure the tradition designates as sufficient to invoke a recognition rather than merely a recitation. The body has already moved through the physical reset of Mahamrityunjaya and the mental clearing of Gayatri. By the time the 32 names begin, the practitioner is in a prepared state – neurologically, the amygdala is quieter, the prefrontal cortex is more active, and the vagal tone is higher. The ground has been cleared.

What is being invited in that clearing is not placid emptiness. It is Shakti, the intelligence of the feminine principle



that the Indian tradition, unlike almost every other surviving tradition, never drove underground.

Group effect

None of the above happens in isolation. The morning mantra sadhana, the most basic and the first of the five capsules in the Bihar Yoga Tradition, is not just designed as a solo practice. Its power compounds in groups. This matters scientifically.

Robin Dunbar's Social and Evolutionary Neuroscience Research Group at Oxford has published a body of work on what happens in the body when groups of people produce synchronized sound together. The findings are consistent: group synchrony in vocal activity triggers the release of endorphins, the same neurochemical system engaged by sustained physical exercise, along with oxytocin, the neuropeptide associated with bonding, trust, and the regulation of social stress. A 2015 paper in *Evolution and Human Behavior* found that group singing created faster and deeper social bonds than nearly any other group activity studied, including shared humour and storytelling.

The mechanism is understood. Synchronous movement and sound create what researchers call 'self-other merging', a

temporary dissolution of the rigid boundary between self and group. This is not mysticism. It is measurable neurologically and through pain threshold testing – people in synchronized groups demonstrate elevated pain tolerance, indicating endorphin release.

The Indian tradition never separated the individual practice from the community practice. *Satsang*, the company of truth-seekers, was considered not a supplement to individual sadhana but a condition for it. The isolation of practice is a modern invention. Its costs are becoming legible in the data.

Resolve before the chanting

In the practice of the morning mantras, before each mantra begins, the practitioner sets a *sankalpa*, a personal resolve held in the mind as the bell rings and the chanting begins.

The word *sankalpa* comes from *sam*, complete, thorough, and *kalpa*, a vow, a rule to be followed. It is not a wish. It is a directed intention, placed at the threshold of an altered neurological state, the moment when the conscious mind and the deeper mind are most permeable to each other.

In 2006, Peter Gollwitzer of New York University published a meta-analysis of 94 independent studies involving more than 8,000 participants, examining what he called ‘implementation intentions’ – specific if-then plans appended to goals. His finding: people who formed a concrete intention before attempting a goal were approximately three times more likely to achieve it than those who held only the goal itself.

The vedic tradition formalized *sankalpa* as a practice, thousands of years before the formulation of ‘implementation intention theory’. The mechanism appears to be the same: a specific resolve, placed at a moment of heightened neural plasticity, creates what Gollwitzer calls ‘strategic automation’ – the goal becomes embedded in the very structure of attention, running beneath conscious effort. Mantra vibration is the arrow. Your resolve is the target.

The Centre of Light

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



People say that the guru is the remover of *avidya*, darkness, nescience. Where does this *avidya* lie? What does it mean? The darkness, the nescience, the *avidya*, is the covering over the light, which has to be removed. The centre of this light is the heart, not the mind. From unconditional light it has become conditioned light, from unconditional love it has become

conditioned love, from unconditional feeling it has become conditioned feeling. There are many such coverings over the heart and the guru aims to remove them. You have to deal with the mind yourself. The process of dealing with the mind has been defined in the *Yoga Sutras* of Sage Patanjali (1:2 and 3):

Yogaschitta vritti nirodhah.

Tadaa drashtuh svaroope'vasthaanam.

To block the patterns of consciousness is yoga.

After you have managed your mind you will establish yourself in your own nature.

Personal effort is emphasized in order to deal with and manage the mind. However, when you want to remove the conditionings from life and express the unconditional nature, then the guru comes in.

For the practice of yoga and for managing your mind, you do not need a guru. Systems have been defined very clearly. You can learn and practise yoga at home from a book, from any teacher, and you will get some benefits. When it comes to removing the veil of avidya from the heart, the guru comes in, as it is the guru who tells us how we can let go of our ego, how we can surrender, how we can develop our faith, how we can develop conviction, how we can develop clarity of perception, action, thought, speech, and so on. The spiritual teaching that is imparted by the guru is to develop the unconditional heart, not the unconditional mind.

The role of the guru is to open the heart. The role of yoga is to open the mind. The role of an ashram is to open the perceptions that allow you to involve yourself in effort. These roles are predefined. In the ashram we practise effort, *purushartha*, we learn to control the mind through discipline and to awaken the *bhava*, the emotion, towards the guru. These are the three components: ashram life for discipline and motivation; yoga for mind management, and guru for opening the heart.

Guru's Grace?

Swami Sivananda Saraswati



The disciple needs guru's grace. This does not mean that the disciple should sit idle and expect a miracle from the guru to push him directly into samadhi. The guru cannot do sadhana or the spiritual practice for the student. He can guide the aspirant, clear his doubts, pave the way, remove snares, pitfalls and obstacles and throw light on the path. The disciple himself will have to place each footstep on the spiritual path. He will himself have to place his footstep on each rung of the ladder of yoga.

The guru's grace works in the form of sadhana in the aspirant. If an aspirant sticks to the path tenaciously, this is the grace of the guru. If he resists when temptation assails him, this is the grace of the guru. If people receive him with love and reverence, this is the grace of the guru. If he gets encouragement and strength when he is in despair and despondency, this is the grace of the guru. If he gets over the body-consciousness and rests in his own *ananda swarupa*, blissful nature, this is the grace of the guru.

The Light of the Lantern

Swami Satyananda Saraswati

It was late at night in the monsoon season. The sky was dark and cloudy and there was an atmosphere of gloom. A lone sannyasin was slowly walking along the road looking for a quiet place to sleep. Though his possessions consisted only of a small bag, a blanket and a lantern, he was blissful and carefree.

Suddenly he heard a motorcycle behind him. The cyclist was travelling very fast along the dark road, but he had no light. The sannyasin knew that he would have an accident so he immediately decided to give his lantern to the motorcyclist. He rotated the lantern in a circular pattern to signal the cyclist to stop. However, the motorcyclist did not stop; he went straight past and nearly killed the sannyasin. The sannyasin called out, "Stop! I want to give you this lantern, otherwise you will injure yourself." The driver shouted back, "What's the point, I haven't got any brakes either!"

This story is an analogy of the life of modern man. The dark road is the path of life, generally lived without joy or wisdom. The motorcycle represents the human body-mind; most people live a life that is like the reckless and thoughtless motor cyclist driving along the road, all aspiration and effort is directed towards attaining fame, wealth, luxury and other things that satisfy the ego, with little thought of the consequences and harmful effects. People tread the path of life without knowing where they are going.

The light of the lantern represents wisdom; the brake represents self-discipline. The motor cyclist had neither brake (self-discipline) nor light (wisdom). He was certain to meet with a serious accident. It is the same with any person who walks the path of life without wisdom and self-discipline; he will pay the penalty in the form of frustration, illness and despair.



The sannyasin on the road tried to give a light to the motor cyclist, but it was not accepted because the cyclist was unable to apply his brakes. It is the dharma, duty, of a sannyasin to guide other people along the path of life so that they avoid accidents in the form of disease, fulfill themselves and gradually tread the correct path to self-knowledge. If you can apply a brake in your life, then you will be ready to accept a guiding light.

The light that a sannyasin can give to others is yoga. There are many different types of light, just as there are many different paths of yoga, but who is willing to accept a lantern and willing to apply the brake of self-discipline?

Transfer of Goodness

Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati



The physical presence of the guru really has no meaning at all. It is the presence of the spirit and the experience of that presence which becomes the living reality. Where is the guru ultimately? Inside. Guru is the source of inspiration which you find first outside and then experience within. If with the help of the external guru you are able to awaken your internal guru, the work of the external guru is finished. This internal guru is intuitive power and common sense.



One of the functions of the guru is to empower you to take responsibility for yourself with wisdom, clarity and understanding. The role of guru is always identified not as a life companion, but as your constant and continuous inspiration in life to attain greater understanding, balance, harmony, contentment and peace, using your own wisdom, knowledge and skills. The *guru tattwa*, the essence of the guru, is the transfer of goodness.

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