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Summer 2013

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Swami Durgananda

**Learning to Distinguish
the Real from the Illusory**
Swami Swaroopananda

Back in Shape
Swami Sivadasananda

Journey to Peace of Mind
Swami Sitaramananda

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Yoga Vedanta Centres**



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20th Anniversary
of Swami Vishnudevananda's
Mahasamadhi

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November 9 - 17, 2013

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Kam Thye Chow
November 10 - 15, 2013 • February 9 - 14, 2014 • May 18 - 23, 2014

The Yoga of Sound and the Voice

Dr. John Beaulieu and Silvia Nakkach
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Mala Cunningham
January 26 - February 1, 2014

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Dr. Marc Halpern (Dr. Siva)
March 12 - 15, 2014

Advanced Bhagavad Gita Course

Swami Swaroopananda
March 16 - 26, 2014

Ayurveda Yoga Therapy Course

Dr. Marc Halpern (Dr. Siva)
and Marisa Laursen (Sri Devi)
March 17 - 29, 2014

Advanced Raja Yoga Course

Swami Swaroopananda
April 23 - May 3, 2014

And many more...

SIVANANDA ASHRAM YOGA CAMP



TEACHERS' TRAINING COURSE

June 30-July 27
November 17-December 15

ADVANCED TEACHERS' TRAINING COURSE

August 4-31

YOGA & SCIENCE CONFERENCE

July 4-13

KIDS' CAMP

July 6-27

FAMILY WEEK + YOGA & MUSIC FESTIVAL

July 28 - August 3

AYURVEDA NUTRITION & COOKING CERTIFICATION COURSE

August 14-20

AYURVEDIC YOGA THERAPY CERTIFICATION COURSE

August 18-29

RAW FOOD CHEF CERTIFICATION COURSE

August 26-September 8

IN THE HEART OF CANADA'S SPECTACULAR LAURENTIAN MOUNTAINS

CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR CELEBRATIONS

December 22, 2013 - January 1, 2014

SUBRAMANYA AIYAPPA TEMPLE

Inspiring Swami Vishnu's Peace Vision

PONGALA FESTIVAL

June 23

TEMPLE 18TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

July 9

KAAVADI

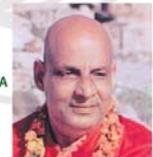
July 21

MAHA MRUTHYUNJAYA HOMA

September 14

NAVARATRI

October 5-13



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Ashram de Yoga Sivananda

Loire Valley, France

Swami Sivananda
1887 - 1963Swami Vishnudevananda
1927 - 1993

Est. 1957

Founder:
Swami Vishnudevananda

August 5 - 11
Celebration of the 10th Anniversary
of the Ashram

Yoga Vacations & Teachers' Training in France

Teachers' Training Course

July 28 - August 25, 2013, in French
April 26 - May 25, 2014, in French
June 27 - July 25, 2014, International
July 27 - August 24, 2014, in French

Advanced Teachers' Training Course

June 27 - July 25, 2014, International

Sadhana Intensive

August 3 - 17, 2014, International

Diplomas courses 2013

July 27 - August 3
Yoga Psychology and Mental Health
with Dr Uma Krishnamurti

August 22 - 25
How to design Healing Spaces with Vastu
with Olga Sokolova

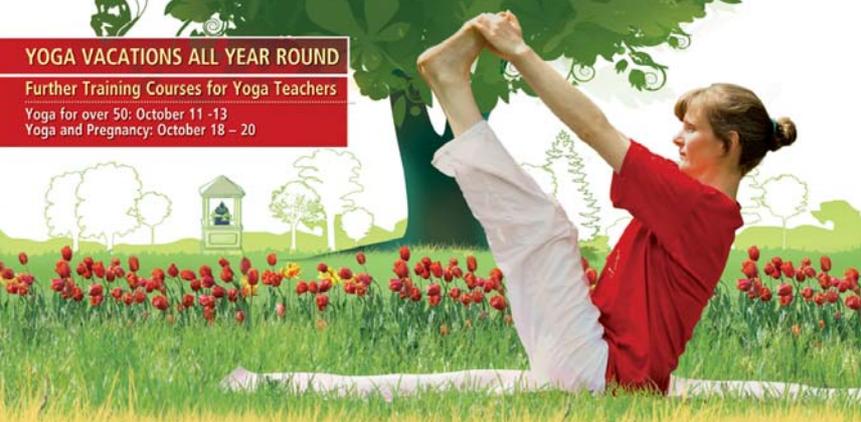
September 20 - 26
Healthy cooking with Ayurveda
with Sanjay and Anjali Kulkarni (MD)

July 27 - August 3
The Meditation Experience
with Swami Kailasananda

YOGA VACATIONS ALL YEAR ROUND

Further Training Courses for Yoga Teachers

Yoga for over 50: October 11 - 13
Yoga and Pregnancy: October 18 - 20

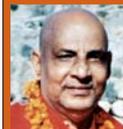


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International Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres

Swami Sivananda (1887 - 1963)



The spiritual strength behind the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres, Swami Sivananda's teachings are a synthesis of all the formal doctrines of yoga. Author of more than 300 books on yoga, Swami Sivananda was a medical doctor before renouncing worldly life for the spiritual path. He founded the Divine Life Society and the Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy, Rishikesh, Himalayas. His main message was: *Serve, Love, Give, Purify, Meditate, Realize*. In 1957 he sent one of his foremost disciples, Swami Vishnudevananda to the West to spread the ideals of yoga. Swami Sivananda entered Mahasamadhi on July 14th 1963.

Swami Vishnudevananda (1927 - 1993)



Born in South India in 1927, Swami Vishnudevananda entered the ashram of Swami Sivananda at the age of 18. A world famous authority on Hatha and Raja Yoga, Swami Vishnudevananda founded the International Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres in 1957 and was author of *The Complete Illustrated Book of Yoga, Meditation and Mantras, Karma and Disease* and a commentary on the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*. Swami Vishnudevananda entered Mahasamadhi on November 9th, 1993.

The Executive Board

The Executive Board of the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres is comprised of senior disciples of Swami Vishnudevananda, personally chosen and trained by him to direct the organisation after his departure. Each of them has had many years' experience in teaching all aspects of yoga. They are renowned for their devotion to Swami Vishnudevananda and Swami Sivananda and for their profound knowledge and inspirational teaching and guidance, wisdom imparted to many thousands of students throughout the world.



Swami Durgananda



Swami Svaroopananda



Sriivanan



Swami Sivasadananda



Swami Kailasananda



Swami Sadasivananda

Swami Durgananda
Swami Svaroopananda
Srinivasan

Swami Sivasadananda
Swami Kailasananda
Swami Sadasivananda

Welcome

Twenty years ago, Swami Vishnudevananda attained Mahasamadhi, after building up a successful worldwide yoga organisation. He accomplished the mission imparted to him by his Master, Swami Sivananda: "to bring the teachings of Yoga and Vedanta to the West - people are waiting."

Yoga is now a mainstream practice around the world. Not all yoga practitioners, however, are aware of the scope of this yogic knowledge - how it is a way of life, more than just a physical practice. Today, more importantly than ever, the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres continues the educational work of bringing these yogic teachings to those in search of well-being and meaning in their life. Yoga is an integral system of self-development aiming to bring about a life of both inner and outer peace. This ancient message of the Upanishads was brought back to its full glory by the great vedantin, Shankaracharya (8th Century AD), and carried through to modern times by an uninterrupted lineage of sages. Each one gave this vedic knowledge a fresh perspective and a new vigour, which is what the world needs today more than ever.

Swami Sivananda played an important role in the propagation of yogic knowledge in the 20th Century and was very instrumental in opening up yoga to the entire world. We have just celebrated his 50th mahasamadhi anniversary on July 14, 1963.



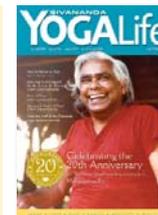
Swami Mahadevananda

The Sivananda organization would like to announce that Swami Mahadevananda, one of the most senior disciples of Swami Vishnudevananda and member of the executive board, has decided to withdraw from his responsibilities as a member of the Executive Board, as well as from all other administrative and teaching responsibilities in the Sivananda organisation, in order to move on to a contemplative life in seclusion in India. The executive board would like to express its great appreciation for Swami Mahadevananda's devoted and inspiring service of Master and Swamiji's mission over more than 40 years.

We welcome a new member on the executive board, Swami Sadasivananda, who is currently the director of the New York Centre.

Om Shanti,

The Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre, London



Cover

2013 marks the twenty year anniversary of Swami Vishnudevananda's Mahasamadhi (when he left the physical body).

In this issue of *YogaLife* we celebrate Swamiji's Life and Mission (page 20), and the 20th Anniversary of his Mahasamadhi on page 24.



Est. 1957

HEADQUARTERS

SIVANANDA ASHRAM YOGA CAMP
Eight Avenue, Val Morin, Quebec, Canada J0T 2R0
Tel: +1 819 322 3226
email: hq@sivananda.org

With ashrams and centres located around the world see page 64 for addresses

The International Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres, founded by Swami Vishnudevananda is a non-profit organisation whose purpose is to propagate the teachings of yoga and vedanta as a means of achieving physical, mental and spiritual well-being and self-realisation.



TEACHERS' TRAINING



INTERNATIONAL SIVANANDA YOGA TEACHERS' TRAINING COURSE

With internationally recognized certificate.
3 - 31 August 2013: English, German
1 - 29 September 2013: English, German
14 Dec. 2013 - 12 January 2014: English, German
17 May - 15 June 2014: German
26 July - 24 August 2014: English, German
30 August - 28 September 2014: English, German

FURTHER YOGA TEACHERS' TRAINING

The Art of Correcting Asanas | Yoga and Anatomy |
Yoga Body Work | Yoga during Pregnancy |
Yoga over 50 | Strength and Flexibility in the Asana
Yoga for Children |

CERTIFICATE COURSES German & English



July 5 - 14: ACCESSIBLE YOGA
With Jivana Heyman, California

July 17 - 24: YOGA AND PSYCHOLOGY
With Dr. Ums Krishnamurthi, Bangalore, India

August 20 - 27: HEALTHY COOKING WITH AYURVEDA
With Sanjay and Anjani Kulkarni (MD),
Ayurveda-Experts, Pune, India

**August 29 - September 1: VASTU SHASTRA -
HOW TO DESIGN HEALING SPACES**
With Olga Mandorai Sokolova, certified Vastu teacher

July 31 - August 9: YOGA OF THE HEART
With Nichala Yoga Devi, USA, also in Spanish

November 15 - 22: THE YOGIC WAY OF COOKING

November 22 - 29: YOGA & STRESS MANAGEMENT

SPECIAL PROGRAMMES



With Yoga Acharyas and International Guest Speakers

YOGA PHILOSOPHY AND SATSANGS
Swami Durgananda

SPECIAL ASANA WORKSHOPS
Swami Sivadasananda
and Swami Atmaramananda

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VEGETARIANISM IN THE LIGHT OF SCIENCE
Dr. Anika Waldmann

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WIDE CHOICE OF SEMINARS

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SIVANANDA
YOGALife



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Learning to Distinguish the Real from the Illusory

Questions & Answers with Swami Swaroopananda

Sivananda Ashram Yoga Ranch June 26, 2009



“Spiritual discrimination is the only discrimination that is meaningful and it is the discrimination between what we call the real and the unreal.”

Question:

How does one cultivate viveka?

Answer:

Viveka means discrimination, or the ability to correctly discern one thing from another.

For instance, when we go to the market, what do we do? We look for the good vegetables, which go into our basket, and we leave the bad vegetables there. We do the same with good fruit and bad fruit. When we shop for shoes or clothes we check to see if there are any defects in them. We keep what is good and leave what is not good in the store. This is discrimination.

Normally, people who are more conscious will choose good food over bad food because it is healthier. They will choose clean air over toxic air, good exercise over laziness. If we have discrimination, we go to the gym, we practice yoga. We learn, first of all, how to discriminate between what is good for us and what is not good for us on a physical level.

“Normally, people who are more conscious will choose good food over bad food because it is healthier. They will choose clean air over toxic air, good exercise over laziness.”

There is also discrimination at the mental level, which is a very strange level of discrimination between pure thoughts and toxic thoughts. Although we would never take in spoiled or toxic food, something very bizarre happens when it comes to thoughts: We just joyfully let everything come in. This is very foolish because thoughts are more important, more essential, than physical food. Lord Jesus explains this very beautifully when he says, “It is not so much what comes into the mouth that affects us,” meaning

physical food, “but what goes out of the mouth that affects us,” meaning what we say. The words we speak are physical, external expressions of our thinking so that others can understand our thoughts. Speech is manifested thought. Nevertheless, even though thought is more important than food, our discrimination on the mental level is usually lacking because we let all types of junk thoughts come in. We should not take in toxic thoughts any more than we should take in junk food. Swami Vishnudevananda taught the practice of positive thinking and meditation, which teaches us how to take in good thoughts. This is also a discrimination – negative thoughts out, positive thoughts in.

Then we come to the ultimate discrimination. It is all well and good to keep our physical body healthy, or our mind healthy, but for what purpose? What is it good for except to improve our condition within samsara, within this vicious cycle of birth and death and misery in between? Think of it as if we are in a mega prison, a huge prison. We try to improve our conditions in the prison and this is one way to do it. Remember, though, that you are in a prison, so even if you improve your conditions there, suffering is still guaranteed. Misery is guaranteed. Really, you cannot improve your conditions in the prison. You can improve your physical condition and even your mental condition, which as a starting point is not bad, but unless you exit this mega prison that we call samsara, what you are doing is not so valuable. In the context of ultimate discrimination, just taking care of the physical body and the mind doesn't make much sense.

“Swami Vishnudevananda taught the practice of positive thinking and meditation, which teaches us how to take in good thoughts. This is also a discrimination – negative thoughts out, positive thoughts in.”

We have to understand our real situation and to understand that, we have to be like Lord Buddha. Lord Buddha, if you remember, was a prince. He lived in a beautiful kingdom. He was a very beautiful boy, very handsome, very healthy, very good psychological makeup. He was provided with every possible type of pleasure. He had a beautiful wife, beautiful children, everybody loved him. He had everything that any human being might desire. Nevertheless, he left his kingdom, left the riches, left the pleasures. Actually, he escaped a kingdom that for him was like a prison and went into the world to try to find the solution for universal human misery. An interesting thing about Lord Buddha was that he himself did not experience misery but when he saw other people suffering he understood that their suffering was his suffering. Although he himself did not suffer, through empathy he realized a profound truth: If you are a developed human being, you cannot be happy when everyone else is suffering. If you are happy when everyone else is suffering, something is wrong with you.



a soul comes into this Earth, it has a golden opportunity to attain the purpose of its existence, which is to realize the Self. On an intuitive level we are happy because, in order to realize the Self, we must have a human body, we need to be born in a physical body, that is a must. It is such a golden opportunity. Then, when a person dies, we cry. Why? Because most of the time a person exiting this Earth has missed his opportunity, so intuitively we cry. Actually, we should not cry, because we know that everyone is going to exit. In the case of a self-realized sage, we don't cry, we celebrate. When a self-realized sage leaves the body, we call it mahasamadhi, the great samadhi, and there is a great celebration. Why? Because that person did not miss his opportunity.

The questioner asked about viveka, and in fact there is an ultimate viveka, an ultimate discrimination. To be honest with you, it is the only one that is meaningful. The other types of discrimination I mentioned are more preparatory. You need a healthy body in order to do spiritual practice. You need a healthy mind in order to do spiritual practice. But if you don't know the reason you have a physical body and a mind, this cannot help. Spiritual discrimination is the only discrimination that is meaningful and it is the discrimination between what we call the real and the unreal. In other words, between what seems to be real but it is illusory by nature, and what is real but veiled. The phenomenal world of names and forms is illusory by nature, and the Atman, which is the true Self, is veiled. In other words, the absolute reality, which is the substratum of this phenomenal reality – the ground of being of all of these phenomenal realities – our real Self, is veiled. We mix truth and untruth, the eternal and the ephemeral, the real and what is illusory, and therefore we suffer.

“We need a long process of practice before we can practice jnana yoga or the yoga of wisdom, which is the yoga of discrimination – viveka – between the real and the unreal.”

The real discrimination is between what is real and what is not real, and it cannot be done in the beginning. We need a long process of practice before we can practice jnana yoga or the yoga of wisdom, which is the yoga of discrimination – viveka – between the real and the unreal. Until then we have to develop our power of discrimination on the physical level, on the mental level, and so on as I described. Ultimately, spiritual discrimination should take place. Only spiritual discrimination can bring an end to samsara, an end to this mode of miserable, sugar-coated existence. ■

Swami Swaroopananda is the acharya (spiritual director) of Sivananda yoga Centres and Ashrams on the West Coast of the United States, in the Middle East, and in the Bahamas, and is one of the foremost disciples of Swami Vishnu-devananda. This article is from one of the spontaneous question and answer sessions that he frequently offers at Sivananda Centres and Ashrams around the world.
email: rukmini@sivananda.org

“When a soul comes into this Earth, it has a golden opportunity to attain the purpose of its existence, which is to realize the Self.”

When Lord Buddha described the universal truth of suffering, he mentioned four things. He said disease is suffering, and nobody needs proof; everybody understands this. He said old age is suffering, which everybody understands. He said death is suffering, and nobody needs proof. Then he said something extraordinary: He said birth is suffering. Why is birth suffering? Because it is the cause of the other three. Now when a person is born we are very happy. Why? The real reason is that when

Sivananda Yoga in Italy

Swami Sivananda Swami Vishnu-devananda

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The Three Types of Power



This is an edited version of a talk by Swami Vishnu Devananda on the importance of practice. It was given to Advanced Yoga Teacher Trainees and guests following the Inauguration of the Course on 5th August, 1986.

There are three types of power: *Ichha Shakti*, *Jnana Shakti*, and *Kriya Shakti*. *Ichha Shakti* is thought power, *Jnana Shakti* is will power, and *Kriya Shakti* is action power.

Everything originates in thought power. When thought power is intensified and made pure it becomes will power and when will power becomes stronger and purer you will have action power in your physical body.

You all had a desire to come for a Yoga Vacation, a Teachers' Training Course or an Advanced Teachers' Training Course. That is thought power, but that thought power is not sufficient. Many people want to do what you are doing but they don't have the will power.

Will power will not come by merely thinking. How do you increase your will power? Will power comes by practice. It comes by performing action. Practice is the only way that you will get will power. We have lost our power due to our wrong living, wrong conditions, wrong thinking. We have to relearn everything, just like a man who is paralysed goes to physiotherapy and relearns how to use his limbs again.

In the same way, our will power is paralysed. Only when you have will power can you do anything you want. Nothing can stand before you. The only thing that stands in your way is lack of will. That is all.

All the great achievements by any human being on this planet are done through the power of will, either good or bad. The people who climbed Mount Everest, how many times did they fail? How many lost their lives? But still they did not stop; they went on until they reached the top. That is called will power, but that will power did not come by merely wanting it. It came through action, suffering and pain.

You must understand that you can gain nothing without intense effort, without pain. That's the law: no pain, no gain. You will see one day that your pain will be converted into sweet fragrance, but you won't see it now, today, when you are suffering.

“The purpose of all this physical discipline through action – the asanas and pranayama – is to increase your inner will power.”

I went as an eighteen year old boy to Master's Ashram. I lived in the Himalayan caves. I lived in the tiger-infested forest. I lived alone. I did intense sadhana for years and years. Four times a day I did my sadhana, morning, mid-day, evening and midnight. I hardly slept – only two or three hours. The will power created during that intense sadhana created all these Ashrams. The strength I gained through my will power and discipline is the cause of the materialisation of the Yoga Camp. So whatever you are doing, the pranayama, the asanas, getting up in the morning, it actually adds to your will power, your shakti. Don't think that what you are doing now is just a temporary thing. All of this has a cumulative effect.

The purpose of all this physical discipline through action, the asanas and pranayama, is to increase your inner will power. It will make it pure. At that time thought becomes very powerful. Anything that you think will materialise. That is the law. Nothing happens in this universe without your thought. But at present your thought is very vague. Like water flowing in a wide area it doesn't have any power.

Samadhi Estates, where my house is now, was a marshland, a complete swamp. Nobody could even walk there. I drained the marsh, made a small lake with an outlet, and created a waterfall and an island. It took planning. But without that planning that marshland would still be there and the mosquitoes would still be breeding. It is the same thing with your mind. Your mind contains the power, the energy, but it is just like a swamp. It has no force. A little water goes here, a little water there, a little stagnation. Mosquitoes start breeding. Somewhere some plants are growing, and some weeds.

That can all be converted through positive action. That is what Yoga is all about.

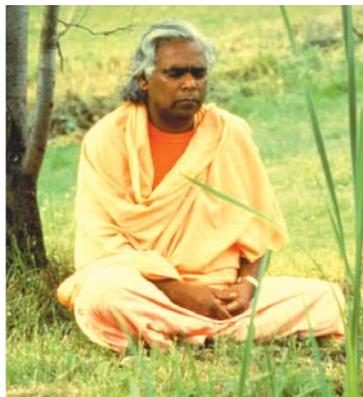
Asanas are not just physical exercises. Asanas belong to the system of Raja Yoga: yama, niyama, asana. It's the third anga, the third limb. Asanas and pranayama are part of Raja Yoga. Patanjali did not elaborate on asanas and pranayama in the Raja Yoga Sutras except for 'Sthira-sukham asanam' – easy comfortable pose – and inhale, exhale. Why? Patanjali did not elaborate on them because in the ancient days in the Gurukula system they were practicing the yama, niyama, asanas, and pranayama in their daily life. Later on the energy level started to go down, people became tamasic, and their will power went. They were only thinking that they were Raja Yogis. They didn't want to practice any physical exercises. They lost their will power. The asanas and pranayama got watered down and became empty rituals that were performed without understanding. In every religion you will find empty ritual because the action is no longer understood.

Action without understanding will not bring will power. Blind faith will not bring will power. Mechanical action and blind faith are not the purpose of Yoga. We have both theory and practice: theory to understand the purpose behind it and then the practice with proper understanding and physical discipline. Then you become strong physically, mentally and spiritually. It's called the holistic approach. So don't learn anything blindly, just because Swami Vishnu says so.

Grain contains a lot of stones; you can remove the stones without removing the grains, or you can remove the grains without removing the stones. Once you have taken the grains away from the stones you throw the stones away. In a similar way, there are many stones in your mind so you extract the good things by repeating your mantra. Another example is a field with weeds. A field contains many weeds so you just pull them out. This is the purpose of mantra, the purpose of pranayama, and it is also the purpose of asana. It is not just physical exercise; it increases your will power.



Swami Vishnu meditating at Samadhi Estates, which was once a mosquito infested marshland



When we retreat from these obstacles – ‘Oh, it’s too much; I don’t want this’ – it is finished.
 Obstacles will come, especially when you are on the spiritual path. The entire universe is going to stop you because you are going upstream and everything is going downstream. You are opposing these forces which are pushing you downstream. All these years, all these thousands of lifetimes, you are going downstream. Now you are pushing upstream. Upstream is not easy. Your hands are aching, your muscles are aching. Before, downstream, the water is pushing you along. You can go downstream like everybody else. Downstream is very easy, no will power is necessary. To climb up, even five feet upstream, tremendous energy is necessary. It’s the same on the spiritual path too.

Training in Yoga is only a way to increase your strength to go upward, but the more you go upward the more the current will push you down. There will be so many obstacles. The higher you reach the more obstacles there will be. So don’t think that there will be less obstacles. They will increase. You will be bewildered. Before you started practicing asanas, pranayama and japa your life was very easy and comfortable. Now everything becomes very horrible. You see peoples’ thoughts. We start to blame everybody when things are going wrong. You don’t understand that things are not going wrong when you are struggling harder. You are progressing. You just don’t understand: no pain no gain. That is the law of the universe. Everywhere there is pain if you want to gain something. But if you don’t want to gain anything then you can just move on downstream.

What Yoga gives you is a method to go against the current according to your strength. We have to go upward. There should be no going backward. That is not going to be easy, but don’t stop. As the purification goes on you will feel the benefit. At an early age you can put tremendous effort into your sathana. If you wait until your children have grown and you have a big bank balance you’ll never do it. Unless you have tremendous will power when you are younger you will never be able to sit for asanas, pranayama and meditation when you are older. Your mind will have been with your wife, your husband, your children, and your career for all these years. It cannot just run after God at a later date.

So, increase your will power. There will be temporary setbacks and depression, but when there is depression just change a little bit: take a walk, take a swim, repeat some mantras or go to the Temple. Do an additional fifteen minutes of pranayama, meditation and japa. Do not neglect your practice. Take it seriously and practise with full understanding. Understand why you are doing all these things. Don’t practise mechanically just because Swami Vishnu says so. It is your life. You have to put in the effort and then you will increase your will power. Anything that you have done is not lost. You can use it, just like money that you have earned and put in the bank. If depression comes you can take a few deep breaths and then strength will come and you will become a strong, powerful person. Peace and joy will come and you will get your freedom. Om shanti. ■

“You have to put in the effort and then you will increase your will power. Anything that you have done is not lost. You can use it, just like money that you have earned and put in the bank.”

Desire, thought, will and action: these all go together. Only then will you have pure will power. Thought means inquiry, reasoning. That is also very important. Without reasoning you cannot think properly. Your thought becomes merely instinct, blind. A child also thinks, but his thought is instinct. When he is unhappy he will cry. He doesn’t know how to express his emotions, or how he feels. When he is happy he laughs.

When you are happy you know there must be a reason for it. You know you are going to get married tomorrow and so you are happy today. The reason should be pure. The only purpose here is to find our freedom. We have lost our freedom. We have tremendous power and strength within, unbelievable shakti, but all is lost because from childhood onward we never learned how to discipline ourselves. In ancient days they taught that discipline. A child went into the Gurukula system and then married and became a householder. Before that he had all the strength and power to control himself. He could change his environment through thought alone. That is what he was practising. We have lost all these things. Many of you are starting later in life, some are starting earlier in life. It makes no difference because this is not the first time you have started. Just because you started late in your life that doesn’t mean that you did not have training in your previous life. If you didn’t have training in your previous life you would not be able to practise intensively because your will power would not be sufficient.

Obstacles will dampen your will power. When you face these obstacles head on then the will power will come.



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2013 Schedule Highlights

Emotional Intelligence Using Ayurveda

with *Arun Deva* May 3-5

Yoga of Voice with *Silvia Nakkash* May 10-13

Yoga Teacher Training Course May 11-June 8

Hatha Yoga Intensive and Pradipika Study

June 18-23

Raja Yoga Sutra course June 23-28

4th of July Vedic Astrology Conference

July 4-8

Fundamentals of Vaastu Shastra

with *Olga Mandadari Sokolova* July 22-26

Meditation and Self-Study

with *Swami Sitaramananda* Aug. 1-11

Yoga of Recovery for Counselors Aug. 4-14

Ayurveda and Yoga Wellness Cert. Course

Aug. 16-26

Labor Day Vedic Knowledge Integration

Forum with *David Frawley* Aug. 29-Sept. 2

West Coast Teacher’s Meeting Oct. 4-6

Yoga Teacher Training Course Oct. 12-Nov. 9

Permaculture Design Certification Course

Nov. 13-23

Vedanta & Silence Retreat

with *Swami Sitaramananda* Nov. 15-24

Thanksgiving Retreat on Bhagavatam

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How to Relate to God

By Swami Durgananda

Excerpts from lectures held at the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre London in March 2011 and at the Ashram de Yoga Sivananda in Neuville-aux-bois, near Orléans, France in July 2012.



"By looking very closely at nature the yogis came to the conclusion that everything we see is a projection of maya. We can relate to God as present in creation, in every name and form."

It is not so easy to relate to God, because I am here, incarnated in this physical body, and somehow, God does not seem to be here. God is invisible, not physical – so how can I connect? Instead of 'God' we may say 'Source', because there is always a longing to connect to where we are coming from, to the source to which we belong.

Delaying the question

This search for the source leads us further than parents, grandparents and ancestors. But most of the time we do not follow up the question. We are too busy, there is no time now. We postpone it for later, when we are retired. In this way we can avoid the question for a lifetime, just being busy with survival, feeding the body, clothing it and giving it shelter. Considering survival as the purpose of life is a sure recipe for depression. Life must have another purpose than being able to pay the rent and keeping the fridge full. Life is communication, everything in creation is full of joy, except human beings.

Dogs are very happy beings: the master goes for a walk with the dog, and the dog right away is happy, wagging its tail. But the master is walking head down, depressed. We should ask ourselves: "What went wrong in the programme that I have made myself so desperate? In the middle of everything I am sitting and feeling depressed."

Nature – a projection of God

In the Bhakti Yoga Sutras, Narada, a great seer, says: "Love of God is extreme attraction to THAT, which cannot be expressed in words."

The yogis asked themselves: As a human being, I am incarnated and God, the invisible source, is not incarnated. Is there separation between the two, God beyond and myself here?" By looking very closely at nature the yogis came to the conclusion that everything we see is a projection of maya. The word maya or illusion should not be understood as something negative: The manifested world as we see it now, maya, is a projection.

So the good news is that God is right here and now, projected in the creation, in maya, and therefore easier to meet, not somewhere at the other end of the galaxy. We can relate to God as present in creation, in every name and form.

Bhava – connecting through feeling

In order to be able to do this we need bhava or feeling, which allows us to see God inside and outside without any sense of separation.

Bhava is different from analytical thinking, it is a training in specific feelings. It is fundamental to our physical, emotional and mental health. Our lack of emotional stability and

positivity shows that we do not have much training in these feelings. Feeling and thinking come from two different hemispheres of our brain. The left brain activity intellectualises everything, even art. It is very prevalent. The right brain activity of Bhava or feeling is neglected. We are trained mainly in left-brain considerations, thinking about the things we need to make a living. We are not trained to look beyond this mental cage and yet we think that we are free. Our mind is lacking the education of contemplation and meditation. Yoga is a perfect method to stimulate the right hemisphere of the brain.

"Everything is connected by this overwhelming intelligence and harmony. Everything is working together, nothing is separated. It is only the limited mind that assumes separation"

Universal Intelligence connects everything

One way to practice this is to look at nature, a peaceful or majestic landscape like the mountains or the ocean. You just sit with patience until it comes to you – that beauty, that presence, that life which flows in everything. Or you watch animals in nature. It is amazing how we can put our mind into a right brain space just by connecting with a bird. Just look at a bird going on its way and doing what birds do. There is so much innocence. You connect with your right brain, you connect with life just because it's alive, because it's so pure, a pure expression of the Divine. The bird will react to what you think. If you send a feeling of appreciation, it starts looking at you. The bird does not know the words which you are thinking, but it knows the energy which you are projecting. You can easily connect to that energy, that response and that magic.

Everything is connected by this overwhelming intelligence and harmony. Everything is working together, nothing is separated. It is only the limited mind that assumes separation. We are creating disaster after disaster in nature because we don't realize that everything works together, and if we move one single piece, everything is disturbed, but we are not yet enough aware of this.

Turning the Gaze within

Even looking at our own body can be a source of inspiration. The body knows perfectly well what to do. If we cut ourselves, the proper reactions are immediately there. There is no delay, it is never on strike, thank God! Even under the worst, most difficult and challenging circumstances the body is always ready to repair itself.

Let us just imagine we would be consciously in charge of the body. Innumerable chemical reactions are going on



“The essence of all the yoga techniques is to try to touch the source of energy, God, or whatever you like to call it.”

simultaneously in the body. Would we survive for more than ten seconds? Managing two things at the same time is already overwhelming, three is stressful. Yet in our own body everything is cooperating smoothly, everything is interrelated, extraordinarily complex and at the same time so gentle and flowing, harmonious

“There must be an extraordinary intelligence which at this very moment is taking care, not just of my body but also of everything else in creation.”

and effortless. It is extraordinary; you simply cannot but think there is God behind this, the universal intelligence. There must be an extraordinary intelligence which at this very moment is taking care, not just of my body but also of everything else in creation.

Meditation – going to the source of the mind

Meditation is a way of going beyond thinking, also beyond logical thinking. It is not illogical but beyond logic. A simple way to describe it would be ‘silence.’ How long can we keep our mind silent, without thinking? It is difficult to remain a silent witness even for a few seconds. But even if we can do it for some seconds, we get energy for hours, it can be better than 8 hours of sleep. The essence of all the yoga techniques is to try to touch the source of energy, God, or whatever you like to call it, for a few seconds. You will feel rejuvenated and renewed. The longer you can do it, the more you are renewed, and this is the secret of the masters.

Inner Silence rejuvenates body and mind

If we look at the life of Swami Sivananda we may think that the amount of work he took on was not possible for one person.

So what was his secret? He was in touch with the silence, the source of energy. It does something to our body. It does something to our brain. It does something to all our cells. There is alignment with the source of energy, everything vibrates, everything is back in tune and we feel extraordinarily well. It is a state where there is no mental projection, we are not expecting anything in particular, just feeling the presence of our own self, feeling that source of energy and bliss. In this state of complete grace, you feel there is absolute, unconditional love and acceptance. When you have a little bit of that experience, you feel: “Ok, I can go through any situation, even pain and disease because this is there, it exists, I don’t know when I will experience it again, but just knowing that there is the possibility to experience it, is enough to keep me going.”

“It is a state where there is no mental projection, we are not expecting anything in particular, just feeling the presence of our own self, feeling that source of energy and bliss. In this state of complete grace, you feel there is absolute, unconditional love and acceptance.”

Sometimes it is like this in life: a few seconds keep you going for a year or more because it was so beautiful, so beyond any expectation and beyond anything that has been experienced so far. ■

Swami Durgananda is Yoga Acharya (spiritual director) of the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres in Europe.
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Swami Sivananda
(1887-1963)

Swami Vishnudevananda
(1927-1993)

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Swami Vishnudevananda

– His Life and Mission Part 1

By Gopala

Swami Vishnudevananda's mission in life was to bring yoga, as taught by Swami Sivananda, to the West. Looking back on his life, Swamiji said that every lesson in his early years helped him in this mission.

Swamiji began school at 4½ years of age. He seemed to embark on all phases of his life earlier than was expected. He was the first person in his village to learn English and he also studied Sanskrit for 10 years in school. Science fascinated him and he achieved very high marks in all of his tests. The interest continued at home where he constructed his own projects, including taking all of his father's eyeglasses to magnify the sun's rays!

His father was a strict disciplinarian, so Swamiji was always awake at 5.30am to begin his day. Another lesson from his family life came from his sister, who was 10 years older than him. She developed a craving for coffee every day, and Swamiji, watching her, decided he never wanted to be addicted to anything.

In High School, Swamiji selected Chemistry and Human Physiology classes. His uncle asked him if he was going to be a doctor, to which he replied, "No, but nevertheless I want to take these classes". When I attended my Teachers' Training Course in 1982, I was amazed at how well Swamiji knew human physiology. Later, in 1984, when I was attending



Swami Vishnudevananda as a young man

my Advanced Teachers' Training Course, Swamiji said "I shouldn't show you this, but I will". He lifted his left hand to show it was so full of blood you could barely see his knuckles. He then walked around the campus for a few minutes, and on his return showed us his other hand, his right hand, was now engorged with blood. He had moved all of the blood from one hand to the other in a matter of minutes! Swamiji was the perfect Anatomy and Physiology instructor: he knew the subject material and could perform many Hathya Yoga feats. Master Sivananda said of Vishnu Swami (his affectionate nickname for Swami Vishnudevananda), that "he is a man without bones."

Swamiji saw his first asana demonstration in grade school and started practising himself. He continued his practice while serving in the army during World War II. Under a mosquito net, very early in the morning, while the other soldiers were asleep, he would perform asanas and pranayama.

Originally, Swamiji had applied to join the Navy. He was younger than the age requirement (he was just 16½ years old) and he flunked the Navy's physical exam. But the same week, an unknown person took Swamiji to an Army recruiter in another

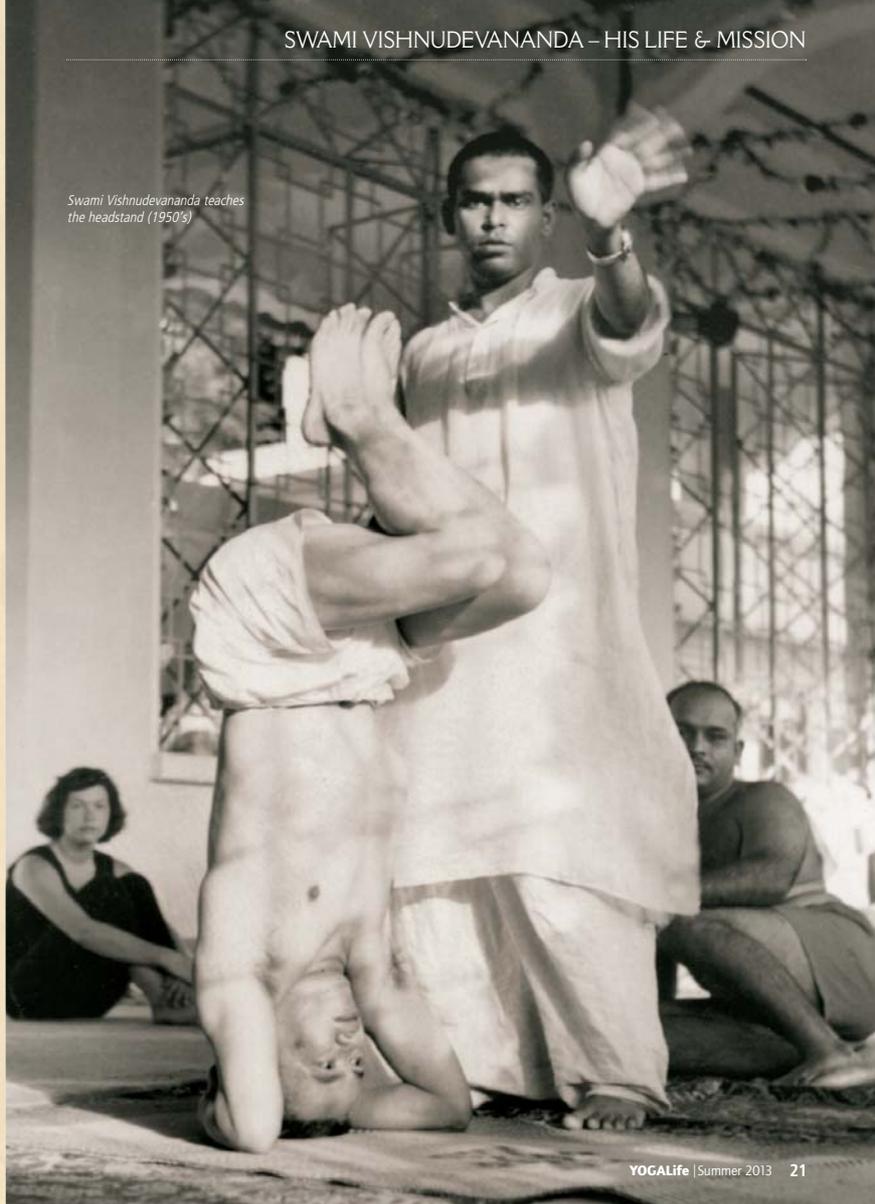


School class photo. Swami Vishnu circled.



Swami Vishnu, left, with army friends. Many of whom did not survive the war.

Swami Vishnudevananda teaches the headstand (1950's)





Left: Swami Sivananda initiates Swami Vishnu into a Mantra (1955)
Right: An early yoga class held in Montreal

town and there he passed the physical exam, joined the Army and was sent to Jalandhar India. Every recruit in Swamiji's class was sent to fight in Iraq and Iran. Swami Vishnu's name was the last name called in the class and his assignment was to stay there in Jalandhar to do office work, never to see combat. This WWII assignment allowed Swamiji to travel to Rishikesh to meet Master Sivananda.

Swamiji's first encounter with Master Sivananda was only a few minutes long as Master Sivananda was talking to a group of guests outside his kutir. Swamiji was there only very briefly as he had to go back to the Army base, but the visit had a profound effect on him and he left Rishikesh with a tear in his eye. From his first encounter, he said of Master Sivananda that he was about 6 feet 5 inches – 6 feet 6 inches, had very soft skin and there was a glow about himself and his face.

“I don't know anything about Hatha Yoga, let alone becoming a professor in the subject”– Swami Vishnudevanda

In 1948 Master Sivananda opened The Divine Life Society's Vedanta Forest Academy. Swami Vishnudevanda was appointed Professor of Hatha Yoga. Swami Vishnu had reservations and thought to himself, “I don't know anything about Hatha Yoga, let alone becoming a professor in the subject”. Master Sivananda looked at Swami Vishnu and said, “You'll get it.”

Another time, Master Sivananda touched Swamiji's forehead. Swami Vishnu said that during that weekend everything came back to him: all the Hatha Yoga knowledge from previous lifetimes was awakened. Swamiji said, “That weekend was like a dream.”

Master Sivananda had many lessons for Swamiji. Once, for instance, Master Sivananda, who would write from his own experience for five to six hours a day, lost the gold coin he always placed in the roof of his mouth before he started writing. The gold coin was always placed in the same box for storage, and one day the coin was missing (probably stolen). Swami Vishnu was the attendant on duty that day. Sometime later, a young woman lost her gold necklace while in the Ganges. She told Swami Sivananda what had happened, and he pointed to the Ganges and told Swamiji exactly where he would find the necklace. Swamiji retrieved the necklace and brought it back, much to the young woman's delight. Master Sivananda thus told Swamiji indirectly that he knew Swamiji

would never steal anything from him.

Master Sivananda kept thirteen typists busy with the books he wrote, and he loved to cycle and take walks by the Ganges. Master Sivananda loved to be by himself.

Swami Vishnudevanda, at age 8, was given his personal mantra: “Om Namo Narayana.” Swamiji asked Master Sivananda to again initiate him into this mantra, and he asked us to chant it for world peace and our own inner peace.

When Swamiji began living in the Ashram, there were 30 – 35 ashramites, and maybe 7 – 8 people would attend Satsang. Swamiji would always go to Satsang and, as Master Sivananda's personal assistant, he would greet Master Sivananda at his door at 4am before they both used vines to climb up the hill to the temple for morning Satsang.

During an evening Satsang, a troubled ashramite named Govinda tried to assault Master Sivananda with an axe. Swamiji quickly jumped up and threw the man to the floor. The next day, Master Sivananda visited the disturbed Govinda in the local jail and upon leaving looked over to Swamiji and said, “Vishnu Swami, you really must learn to control your emotions” – not a word of thanks for saving his life!

In 1957, Master Sivananda said to Swami Vishnu, “Go to the West, people are waiting”. He put a ten rupee note in Swamiji's hand and said “Everything you need is in these rupees.” By 1958, Swamiji had 90 Jesuit priests in his first class in Montreal, Canada.

The first Yoga Vacation was conducted in 1959 in St. Hippolyte, about a 45 minute drive west of Montreal. It was held in a small cottage with no running water. The second venue for Yoga Vacations was 11th Avenue, Val Morin, Canada, a one hour drive from Montreal. Then, while at the 11th Avenue location, Swamiji



The first Yoga vacation to be held at the Yoga Camp in Val Morin

was attracted by a pink light in the sky. He drove over to 8th Avenue with a couple of other people to look at the current property, the now world famous Yoga Camp. The pink light appeared overhead again while they were looking around the 8th Avenue property. Taking this as an auspicious sign, Swamiji collected \$7,000.00 as a down payment to buy Yoga Camp in Quebec, Canada. ■

To be continued...

Swami Vishnudevanda made a 2 hour film about himself in the early 1970s, which can be located on “YOUTUBE” SYVC # 198 <http://youtu.be/tEKrh8Xs0k>

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Celebrating the 20th Anniversary of Swami Vishnudevananda's Mahasamadhi

Swami Vishnudevananda was sent to spread the message of Yoga and Vedanta in the West in 1957 by his Master, Swami Sivananda, with the words "People are waiting". For 37 years he worked tirelessly as an active and dedicated spiritual teacher travelling around the world establishing city Centres and Ashrams where his work could be accomplished.

The Early Years

Swami Vishnudevananda was born in the south Indian state of Kerala on December 31, 1927. After completing school he entered the Engineering Corps of the Indian Army. It was while he was in the army that he first met Swami Sivananda, one of the great saints of modern times.

After being discharged from the army, Swamy Kuttan Nair, as he was then known, was a schoolteacher in his native Kerala for a short while, before leaving his life behind and entering the Sivananda Ashram in Rishikesh in 1947. Within a year, he took the monastic vow (sannyas) with the name of Swami Vishnudevananda.



Swami Sivananda saw in his young disciple special tendencies towards Hatha Yoga. With his training directed towards this discipline he became an expert, mastering many of the most difficult and advanced Hatha Yoga techniques (asanas, pranayamas, mudras, bandhas and kriyas). How did he learn these ancient practices which to a great extent had been lost in modern India? He often said, "My Master touched me and opened my intuitive eye. All this knowledge returned to me from past lives".

Remaining at the Ashram for ten years, he was appointed as the first Professor of Hatha Yoga at the Yoga Vedanta Forest Academy. He held a number of other positions at the Ashram, including personal secretary to Swami Sivananda.

How Swami Vishnudevananda met his Master Swami Vishnudevananda remembers his very first contact with Swami Sivananda:

"I first heard about Swami Sivananda in a strange way. Looking in the waste paper basket for a lost paper, I found one small pamphlet called Sadhana Tattwa. His teachings were so simple and straightforward, 'an ounce of practice is worth a ton of theory'.

**"Swami Sivananda touched my heart
not with miracles or shows of holiness,
but with his perfect egoless nature."
– Swami Vishnudevananda**

I got a couple of days' leave of absence from the army and went to see him. There was no kind of religious hypocrisy, no sitting on a tiger skin with ashes smeared all over his body. He had an extraordinary spiritual glow. The second time I saw him, Swami Sivananda was coming up the stairs in my direction. I didn't want to have to bow my head to him. I was young and arrogant and never wanted to bow my head to anybody. But it is the tradition that you should bow your head to a holy man. To avoid the situation, I just moved out of his path. Master saw me and headed in my direction. He asked me who I was and where I was coming from. Then he bowed down and touched my feet!! My whole body began to shake violently. With all my heart, with all my life and love, I learned to bow without any type of reservation. He touched my heart not with miracles



Top: Swami Sivananda and Swami Vishnudevananda (right). Middle: Swami Sivananda inspects the yoga class taught by Swami Vishnu.

Above: Swami Vishnu mastered many of the most difficult and advanced Hatha Yoga techniques. Here he demonstrates the Locust.

or shows of holiness, but with his perfect egoless nature. He didn't consider that I was just a stupid boy standing there, although I was just that. He touched my heart and broke that egoism in me. I didn't think anything else in this world would have broken this ego. That was my first lesson, and if I could attain one millionth of the state of egolessness of the Master, it is His Grace."



Swami Vishnu with some of his early students



1969, the inaugural Teachers' Training Course, Val Morin, Canada

The West

Upon leaving India for the West, Swami Vishnudevananda spent a year travelling, arriving on the West Coast of America in 1957. It soon became apparent that Westerners were so caught up in the whirlwind of their lives that they neither knew how to relax nor how to live healthy lives. Swami Vishnudevananda devised the concept of the Yoga Vacation and set about creating places where people could have a complete rest of body, mind and spirit. Several Ashrams and Centres were founded based on an integrated approach to yoga.

The Five Points

By closely observing the lifestyles and needs of people in the West, Swami Vishnudevananda synthesised the ancient wisdom of yoga into five basic principles that could easily be incorporated into daily life to provide the foundation for healthy living. It is around these five principles that the activities at the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres are based.

The Five Points are:

Proper Exercise (Asanas) acts as a lubricating routine for the joints, muscles and other parts of the body by increasing circulation and flexibility. The asanas not only produce physical benefits, but are also exercises in concentration and meditation, promoting optimum health.

Proper Breathing (Pranayama) connects the body to the solar plexus, where tremendous potential energy is stored. Through specific breathing techniques this energy is released for physical and mental rejuvenation.

Proper Relaxation (Savasana) is a vital part of keeping the body and mind healthy. Yoga teaches three levels of relaxation – physical, mental and spiritual.

Proper Diet (Vegetarian) is eating with awareness. A yogi takes food that has the most positive effect on the body and mind and the least negative effect on the environment.

Positive Thinking and Meditation (Vedanta and Dhyana) relieve stress and replenish energy. Meditation is well known to improve concentration and to bring peace of mind and spiritual strength. Meditation is beneficial for everyone, especially those with a hectic, stressful life.

Teachers' Training Courses

In 1969 the True World Order was established to help create unity and understanding between peoples of the world. A unique Yoga Teachers' Training Course was developed with the aim of training future leaders and responsible citizens in the basics of yoga discipline. Swami Vishnudevananda emphasised the importance of first finding individual inner peace which could then lead to establishing global peace and harmony.

The first Sivananda Yoga Teachers' Training Course was held in 1969 at the Sivananda Yoga Camp headquarters in Val Morin, Quebec, Canada and to date more than 35,000 people have graduated successfully from the course – many having gone on to spread the teachings of yoga around the world.

Books

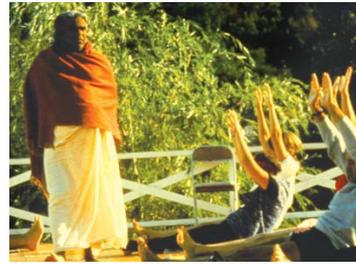
In addition to being a tireless worker for world peace and a renowned authority on Hatha and Raja Yoga, Swami Vishnudevananda is well known for his books *The Complete Illustrated Book of Yoga and Meditation and Mantras*. He also authored a commentary on *The Hatha Yoga Pradipika* and is the inspiration behind *The Sivananda Book of Yoga*.

Peace Missions

In 1968 Swami Vishnudevananda had a vision of the world being destroyed by fire, of people fleeing in turmoil breaking down the barriers between nations in an attempt to escape. From that moment on, he embarked on a series of peace missions whose purpose was to show "that the idea of nationalism, or patriotism must disappear, and only one unity should exist."

"In 1983 he made an historic and perilous journey across the Berlin Wall from West to East in a microlight aeroplane."

In 1971 he made headlines around the world by flying his two-seater Piper Apache plane over areas of serious conflict including Northern Ireland, the Suez Canal and the India Pakistan border. He 'bombed' these troubled areas with flowers and leaflets calling for peace. He also sponsored numerous festivals, conferences, symposiums and world tours – all calling for world peace and understanding.



Swami Vishnu teaching a yoga class on the outdoor platform Val Morin, Canada



Swami Vishnu with his pet goat



1983, Swami Vishnu's flight over the Berlin Wall

In 1983 he gained worldwide recognition when he made an historic and perilous flight over the Berlin Wall from West to East in a microlight aeroplane, the first to be made by a private plane since the wall was erected twenty years previously.

Swami Vishnudevananda recounts his Berlin Wall flight: "Just a few weeks ago I flew over the Berlin Wall with flowers in my hand. Everybody thought I'm going to be shot down. But I said, when I come with the flowers, how can anyone shoot. East Germans and West Germans, what is the difference? There was only one Germany. The moment that you put labels, then you think a person is not a human being. He should be shot. That's what Catholics and Protestants, Hindus and Muslims, black and white, Arabs and Jews are doing. They put labels. The moment you put the label, you forget. You are no longer a human being. They can be easily killed. So when I went, I went with the label removed. The Berlin Wall crossing was symbolic. The purpose was to break the man-made barriers that exist in the mind. That's the real barrier."

An Enduring Legacy

Swami Vishnudevananda was an innovator and a pioneer in his methods of disseminating the classical Yoga teachings that he learned from his Master, Swami Sivananda and to whom he



"Before you can change the world, first you have to change yourself"

dedicated his life's work. He demystified yoga and offered clear, practical techniques for people to spiritualise their lives and attain health, mental balance and inner peace.

Perhaps his greatest contribution was to popularise Yoga philosophy and practice throughout the West by establishing a worldwide network of Centres and Ashrams that made yoga easily accessible to all. The key to this injection of Yoga into the mass culture was the founding of the Sivananda Teachers' Training Courses in 1969 to train people in the essence of Yoga and Vedanta. He asked his teachers to be practitioners, and not mere preachers, and to date countless graduates are now teaching throughout the world.

Swami Vishnudevananda used to say, "Before you can change the world, first you have to change yourself. The only way to change society is like changing a cotton cloth to a silk one – by changing each thread one by one". Through this vast network of Yoga teachers, the social fibre is changing.

Swami Vishnudevananda left his body on November 9, 1993, leaving behind him a worldwide organisation with 7 Ashrams and 20 Centres plus many affiliated Centres and teachers dedicated to propagating the ancient and timeless wisdom of yoga. ■

Asanas and Postural Realignment

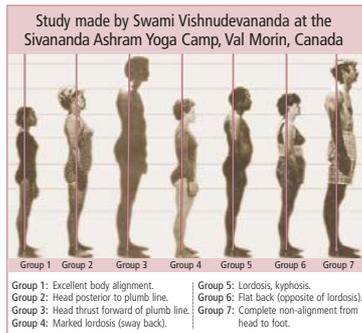
By Swami Sivadasananda



Swami Sivadasananda
Yoga Acharya and a senior student of Swami Vishnudevananda, teaches workshops throughout the Sivananda Centres in Europe and Teachers' Training Courses worldwide.
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In the late sixties, Swami Vishnudevananda conducted a systematic overview on spinal alignment. Participants in courses held at the Sivananda Yoga Ashram Yoga Camp in Val Morin, Canada were asked to pose for a picture in front of a plumb line.



Recent Studies of Spinal Alignment

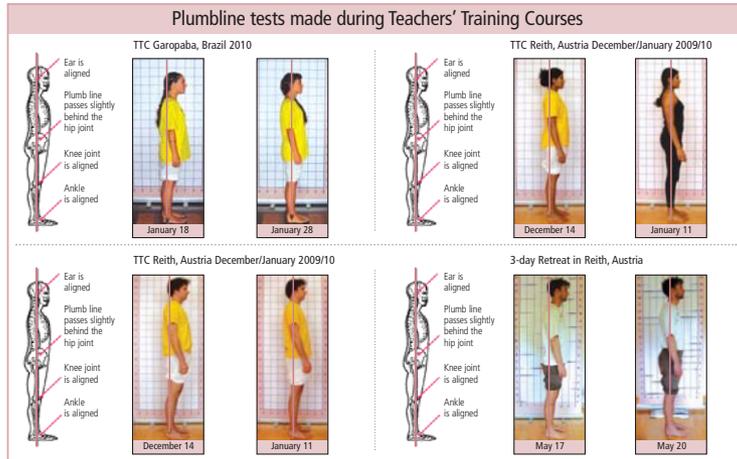
Remarkable improvements in spinal alignment were found after practising the 12 basic asanas, on which the Sivananda class is based. Over recent years this plumb line test has been carried out during Sivananda Teachers' Training courses in various locations worldwide.

Generally following 3 weeks of intense yoga practice the results have been remarkable. Originally, the main conclusion was that the postural improvements must be due to the intense practice of balancing of muscle length and muscle strength. However, this same plumb line test was then carried out over a 3 day Yoga Retreat in one of the Sivananda ashrams, with very much the same results. See *plumbline test photos on opposite page*.

Healthy Posture

Healthy posture is largely determined by three factors: skeletal structure, soft tissue integrity and sense of balance. Kyphosis, lordosis and scoliosis are 3 common malformations in the skeletal structure. See *illustrations on bottom of opposite page*. The second factor for healthy posture is soft tissue integrity. Soft tissue includes tendons, ligaments, fascia, synovial membranes of joints and muscles.

We work on skeletal structure and soft tissue integrity a lot



in yoga asana classes. The work on skeletal structure and soft tissue integrity during just three days of gentle to intermediate practice cannot by itself be the cause of such surprising improvements in spinal alignment. What then, should be the reason?

Sense of balance could show the answer. There are 3 systems in the body that contribute to the function of balance:

The visual system

Try practising the tree pose with open eyes for a few seconds. Then continue the asana with one eye closed and then with both eyes closed. Most probably you will lose your balance, which shows that most of the sense of balance in this pose is due to the sense of sight.

The vestibular system or inner ear

In the headstand and scorpion, many people can hold their balance with eyes closed. Here the network of canals in the inner ear supplies information of the head's position, including the sense of being upside down.

However, finding your balance when simply standing in front of the plumb line does not include any unusual position of the head, nor does it require a strong visual focus on a point in space, like in the tree pose. What then makes a person stand straighter after a yoga retreat of just three days?

Proprioception

Proprioception is defined as the perception of movement and spatial orientation arising from stimuli within the body itself. This is the information, which the brain receives from stretch receptors located in the muscles and the joint-supporting ligaments.

Proprioception happens both at conscious as well as unconscious levels. The information of conscious proprioception is utilised to facilitate complex motor activity and is communicated to the cerebrum. Unconscious proprioception is important to coordinate basic posturing during sitting, standing and simple gait activities.

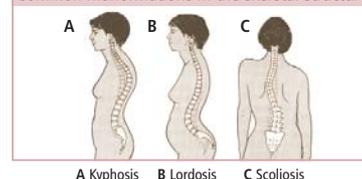
It is communicated to the cerebellum.

During the asana practice session, the focus is on awareness while moving into a pose, holding it, and moving out of the pose. There is intense conscious proprioception: in an asana you can feel what your body is doing, and make minute, precise adjustments to your pose, without having to look down at yourself to do it. The information received from inside the body is so powerful, that it could actually be considered as a sixth sense.

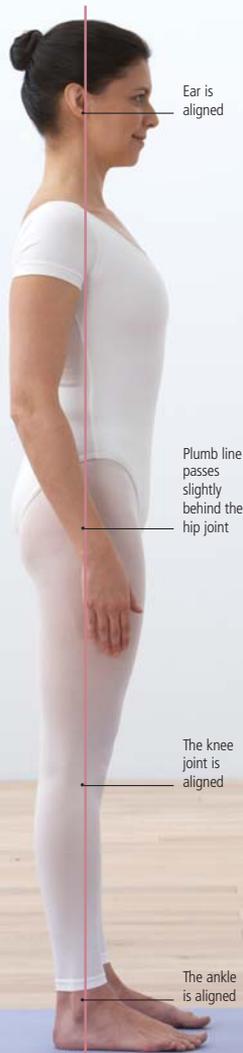
How much you can relax after an asana depends on how much you can tune to gravity while lying in the corpse pose. This intermediate relaxation is very helpful to find the sense of balance in the next asana.

It appears that asanas and relaxation intensify proprioception both on conscious and unconscious levels. This seems to be the main reason for the surprising improvement of postural alignment after just three days of yoga practice. The possibility to tune into the sense of gravity through proprioception is open to everybody. Many people come to yoga classes with various limitations in the skeletal structure and soft tissue integrity. This is how even a very simple asana and relaxation practice can improve your postural alignment.

Common malformations in the skeletal structure



Aligning the posture



Most people don't have well-aligned posture. Practising asanas focuses on strengthening and stretching key muscles. This will help to improve gradually any faulty alignment, particularly in the upper and lower back.

How the body benefits

Aligning your posture involves improving the balance between muscle length and muscle strength. Yoga does this perfectly, because when you hold an asana and then practise its counterpose, the major muscles on the front and back of the body are both stretched and strengthened. This creates tone as well as flexibility. Yoga asanas also have a positive effect on the muscles' connective tissue. Muscles are elastic: after they stretch or contract, the fibres return to their original length. Fascia, however, is plastic not elastic, which means that only if enough pressure is applied, will it change its form and it will not revert to its previous shape when the pressure is removed. Constant repetition of certain movements or body positions, such as always carrying a bag on one shoulder or hunching in front of a computer, fixes the connective tissue into a belt-like, non-elastic structure, causing postural problems. When you hold an asana for longer than a minute, this hardened connective tissue starts to be remodelled, bringing your posture back into proper alignment.

GOOD ALIGNMENT

When someone who has correct posture stands beside a plumb line, the ankles, knees, hips, and ears are aligned perfectly, stacked one above the other in a straight line.

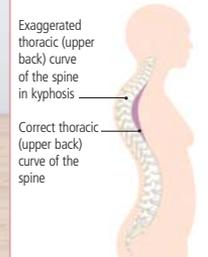
Corrective asanas for kyphosis

Kyphosis, or an exaggerated curve of the spine in the upper back, is a common problem of postural alignment, which is exacerbated by slouching or spending long hours hunching forwards over a computer. These specific asanas gently help to bring the spine into alignment.



Book extract taken from *Yoga Your Home Practice Companion*. © Dorling Kindersley, dk.co.uk

Kyphosis



BOW

In kyphosis, the shoulders round forwards. The Bow counteracts this by pulling the shoulders backwards and opening the chest.

FISH

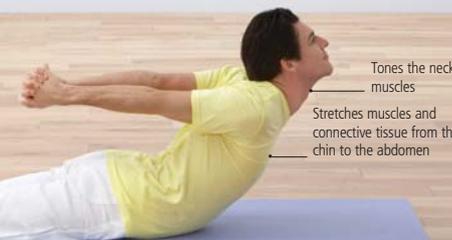
This pose stretches out the shortened muscles in the shoulders and upper chest, and also eases hardened connective tissue, or fascia, in the shoulder and chest area.

Fascia and muscles connect from chin to pelvis
Strengthens the muscles of the upper back



COBRA

Extending the arms behind the back in this version of Cobra strengthens weak upper-back and neck muscles.



Corrective asanas for lordosis

In this condition, the muscles of the abdomen tend to be weak, and the hamstrings and lower back muscles have become shortened. Connective tissue along the back of the legs and back has hardened. These poses help to strengthen and lengthen the muscles and soften the tissue.

Lordosis

Correct lumbar (lower-back) curve of the spine

Exaggerated lumbar (lower-back) curve of the spine in lordosis

DOUBLE LEG LIFTS
These develop abdominal strength. If the muscles of the abdomen are strong, they support the lumbar spine, keeping it in good alignment.

Builds abdominal strength

Lengthens the hamstrings

SITTING FORWARD BEND

This pose gives a deep stretch to the muscles of the back of the body, which have become shortened. Try to hold the pose for some time, stretching slowly and gradually. As long as any pain that comes from the natural stretch can be dissolved by rhythmic abdominal breathing and relaxation, it is safe to remain in the posture. Any other pain should be taken as a warning sign not to take the stretch too far.

Lengthens the muscles of the lower back

Stretches the hamstrings



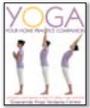
STANDING FORWARD BEND

Another stretch to lengthen the whole of the back of the body. As you stretch, use slow, controlled breathing and consciously relax. This, together with repeated practice, will ease any pain and boost flexibility.



Corrective asanas for scoliosis

When the spinal muscles diagonally opposite each other are shortened on one side and overstretched on the other, it leads to scoliosis. For example, the left side of the lumbar and the right side of the thoracic spine could be pulled out of alignment. Holding asanas to the right and left rebalances the muscles.



Book extract taken from Yoga Your Home Practice Companion. © Dorling Kindersley, dk.co.uk

Scoliosis

Lateral (side to side) deviation of the spine in scoliosis

Correct position of the spine

HALF SPINAL TWIST
Hold this pose, and all other poses on this page, for the same length of time on each side. This ensures stretching and strengthening in all the required areas.

Increases flexibility on one side

Tones the muscles on the other side

TRIANGLE
Asanas such as Triangle that are practised to the right and left sides restore the correct balance of flexibility and strength to the muscles on either side of the spine. They also help to soften hardened connective tissue.



LATERAL BEND WITH TWIST

Lateral stretches such as Lateral Bend with Twist help to restore the balance of shortened muscles on diagonally opposite sides of the spine. Always move slowly into the pose to overcome gradually any inherent resistance in the muscles.





Swami Sivananda and Swami Vishnudevananda

Meet the Staff

of the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres and Ashrams

In 1957 Swami Sivananda sent Swami Vishnudevananda to the West to spread the teachings of Yoga and Vedanta with the words "People are Waiting!" With the blessings of his Master and much hard work, Swami Vishnu gradually established a network of Sivananda Yoga Centres and Ashrams around the world. In 1959 the first Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre opened in Montreal and Swami Vishnu's legacy continues to this day with recent Centres being opened in Italy, Japan, Thailand and Vietnam. All of the Centres and Ashrams are run by dedicated staff and helpers in the spirit of Karma Yoga and selfless service. In this issue of **YOGALife** we invite you to 'Meet the Sivananda Staff'.

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Durgadevi Ishwara Chaitanya

Woodbourne, New York USA



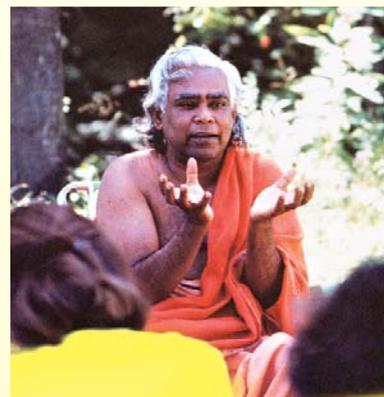
Swami Ambikananda Hari Katayani Mani Chaitanya Ram Prasad Ratha Paul



Puma Anoop Satyabhama



Mira Kalyani Bharata



“I have given you all I have with all my heart and love. It is for you to give to others.”
 – Swami Vishnu Devananda



Lives of the Saints

Mira Bai

This article is the first in an occasional series on lives of the Saints. It is an excerpt from Swami Sivananda's book *Lives of Saints*.

Mira is regarded as an incarnation of Radha, the companion of Lord Krishna. She was a saint, a philosopher, a poet, and a sage. She was a princess, but she abandoned the pleasures and luxuries of her high station and chose instead a life of poverty, austerity, tyaga (renunciation), titiksha (endurance) and vairagya (dispassion). Though she was a delicate young girl she began the perilous journey on the spiritual path amidst many difficulties. She underwent various ordeals with undaunted courage and intrepidity. She stood adamant in her resolve. She had a gigantic will.

Mira's songs infuse faith, courage, devotion and love of God in the minds of readers. They inspire aspirants to take to the path of devotion. They melt the heart.

Mira was born in 1499 AD in the village of Kurkhi, near Merta, a small state in Marwar, Rajasthan. She was the daughter of Ratan Singh Ranthor and the grand-daughter of Dudaji of Merta. The Ranthors of Merta were great devotees of Vishnu and Mira Bai was brought up amidst Vaishnava influence which moulded her life in the path of devotion to Lord Krishna. She learnt to worship Sri Krishna from her childhood.

When she was four years of age she manifested religious tendencies. Once there was a marriage procession in front of her residence. The bridegroom was nicely dressed. Mira, who was only a child, saw the bridegroom and said to her mother, "Mother, who is my bridegroom?". Mira's mother smiled, and half in jest and half in earnest, pointed towards the image of Sri Krishna and said, "My dear Mira, Lord Krishna, this beautiful image, is your bridegroom".

Mira began to love the idol of Krishna very much. She spent much of her time in bathing and dressing the image. She worshipped it and slept with it. She danced about the image in ecstasy and sang beautiful songs in front of the it. She used to talk to it.

Mira's father arranged for her marriage to Rana Kumbha of Chitore in Mewar. Mira was a very dutiful wife. She obeyed her husband's commands implicitly. After her household duties were over, she would go to the temple of Lord Krishna, worship, sing and dance before the image daily. The little image would get up, embrace Mira, play on the flute and talk to her. The Rana's mother



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and the other ladies of the house did not like Mira's ways as they were worldly-minded and jealous. They were all annoyed with her. Mira's mother-in-law forced her to worship Durga and often admonished her. But Mira stood adamant. She said, "I have already given up my life to my beloved Lord Krishna".

Mira's sister-in-law, Udabai, began a conspiracy and defamed her. She informed Rana Kumbha that Mira, in secret, was in love with others. She had, with her own eyes, witnessed Mira in the temple with her lovers, and that she would show him the persons if he would accompany her one night. She further added that Mira, by her conduct, had brought a great slur on the reputation of the Rana family of Chitore.

Rana Kumbha was very much enraged. He straightaway ran with sword in hand towards the inner apartments of Mira. Fortunately, Mira was not in her room. A kind relative of the Rana stopped him and said, "Look here Rana! Do nothing in haste that you will repent later on. Consider well. Enquire into the matter very carefully. Find out the truth. Mira is a very devotional lady. What you have heard now may only be a wild rumour. Out of sheer jealousy some ladies might have concocted a story against Mira to ruin her. Be cool now".

Rana Kumbha agreed to the wise counsel of his relative. The Rana's sister took him to the temple at dead of night. Rana Kumbha broke open the door, rushed inside and found Mira alone in her ecstatic mood talking to the idol.

The Rana said to Mira, "Mira, with whom are you talking now? Show me this lover of yours". Mira replied, "There sits He – my Lord – the *Nanichora* who has stolen my heart". She faintered. There was a wild rumour that Mira was mixing very freely with sadhus. She, no doubt, had great regard for sadhus and mixed freely with them. Mira never cared a bit for meaningless scandals. She stood unoffended.

Mira was persecuted in various ways by the Rana and his relatives. She had the same treatment which Prahlad got from his father Hiranyakasipu. Lord Hari shielded Prahlad. Here, Sri Krishna always stood by the side of Mira. Once the Rana sent a cobra in a basket to Mira with the message that it contained a garland of flowers. Mira took her bath and sat for worship. After finishing her meditation, she opened the basket and found inside a lovely idol of Sri Krishna and a garland of flowers. Then the Rana sent her

a cup of poison with the message that it was nectar. Mira offered it to Lord Krishna and took it as his prasad. It was real nectar to her. Then the Rana sent a bed of nails for Mira to sleep on. Mira finished her worship and slept on the bed of nails. The bed of nails was transformed into a bed of roses.

When Mira was thus tortured by her husband's relatives, she sent a letter to the poet-saint Tulsidasi and asked his advice. She wrote: "All my relatives trouble me, because I move amongst sadhus. I cannot carry on my devotional practices in the house. I have made Giridhar Gopal my friend from my very childhood. I am strongly attached to him. I cannot break that attachment now".

"Mira's songs infuse faith, courage, devotion and love of God in the minds of readers. They inspire aspirants to take to the path of devotion. They melt the heart?"

Tulsidasi sent a reply: "Abandon those who do not worship Rama and Sita as if they are your enemies, even though they are your dearest relatives. Prahlad abandoned his father; Vibhishana left his brother Ravana; Bharata deserted his mother; Bali forsook even his Guru; the Gopis, the women of Vraja, disowned their husbands in order to attain the Lord. Their lives were all the happier for having done so. The opinion of holy saints is that the relation with God and love of God alone is true and eternal; all other relationships are unreal and temporary".

Once Akbar and his court musician Tansen came in disguise to Chitore to hear Mira's devotional and inspiring songs. Both entered the temple and listened to Mira's soul-stirring songs to their heart's content. Akbar was really moved. Before he departed, he touched the holy feet of Mira and placed a necklace of emeralds in front of the idol as a present. Somehow the news reached the Rana that Akbar had entered the temple in disguise, touched the feet of Mira and even presented her with a necklace. The Rana became furious. He told Mira, "Drown yourself in the river and never show your face to the world in future. You have brought great disgrace on my family".

Mira obeyed the words of her husband. She proceeded to the river to drown herself. The names of the Lord "Govind, Giridhari, Gopal" were always on her lips. She sang and danced in ecstasy on her way to the river. When she raised her feet from the ground, a hand from behind grasped her. She turned behind and saw her beloved Krishna. She fainted. After a few minutes she opened her eyes. Lord Krishna smiled and spoke to her these words: "My dear Mira, your life with this mortal husband is over now. You are absolutely free. Be cheerful. You are mine. Immediately proceed to the bowers of Vraja and the avenues of Brindavan. Seek me there, my child. Be quick". He then disappeared.

Mira obeyed the divine call immediately. She walked barefoot on the hot sandy beds of Rajasthan. On her way, she was received by many ladies, children and devotees with great hospitality. She reached Brindavan. She found her flute-bearer there. She went about Brindavan begging for her food and worshipped in the Govinda Mandir which has since become famous and is now a place of pilgrimage. Her devotees in Chitore came to Brindavan to see her. Rana Kumbha came to Mira disguised as a mendicant. He revealed himself and repented for his previous wrongs and cruel deeds. Mira at once prostrated before her husband.

Jiva Gosain was the head of the Vaishnavites in Brindavan.

Mira wanted to have the Darshan of Jiva Gosain. He declined to see her. He sent word to Mira that he would not allow any woman in his presence. Mira Bai retorted: "Everybody in Brindavan is a woman. Only Giridhar Gopal is Purusha. Today only I have come to know that there is another Purusha besides Krishna in Brindavan". Jiva Gosain was put to shame. He thought that Mira was a great devotional lady and at once went to see her and paid her due respects.

Mira's fame spread far and wide on account of her renunciation, one-pointed devotion to Lord Krishna and God-realisation. She came face to face with Krishna and conversed with him and ate with him, her Beloved. She drank the Krishna-prema-rasa. She sang from the core of her heart the music of her soul, the music of her Beloved, her unique spiritual experiences. She sang songs of surrender and Prem.

Mira had beautiful cosmic vision. She saw Krishna in the tree, in the stone, in the creeper, in the flower, in the bird, in all beings in everything. As long as there is the name of Krishna, there will also be the name of Mira.

Mira's earthly life was full of troubles and difficulties. She was persecuted. She was tormented and yet she kept an undaunted spirit and a balanced mind all through, by the strength of her devotion and the grace of her beloved Krishna. Although she was a princess, she begged alms and sometimes lived only on water. She led a life of perfect renunciation and self-surrender.

Mira acted her part well on the stage of the world. She taught the world the way to love God. She rowed her boat dexterously in a stormy sea of family troubles and difficulties and reached the other shore of supreme peace and absolute fearlessness – the kingdom of supreme love. She was undaunted in spirit and full of courage. Although she was young she bore the persecutions silently. She endured the piercing taunts and sarcastic criticisms of the world bravely. She has left an indelible impression on the world and her name will be handed down to posterity.

From Brindavan, Mira proceeded to Dwaraka. There she was absorbed in the image of Lord Krishna at the temple of Ranchod. ■

*O my mind,
Drink the nectar of the Name of God.
Drink the nectar of the Name of God.
Give up evil company,
And continually keep the company
Of holy men.
Listen to the accounts of Hari
That proceed from their lips.
Expel lust, anger, pride, greed and infatuation
From thy mind.
Mira's Lord is the courtly Giridhara,
She is soaked in His love.*

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God's Own Country



A Journey to India's southern state of Kerala

By Swami Ramapriyananda

email: svr@sivananda.net



Would India be the same? With that question in mind, I sat in the plane from Munich to Kerala, India's southern-most state. I had visited Kerala several times since 1988, but 11 years had passed since my last visit. Travelling with me was Swami Anantananda.

Stepping off the plane we entered the brand new international airport of Kerala's capital Trivandrum, now called Thiruvananthapuram.

Yes, India's history had always been very eventful but how would the country deal with the present, certainly thrilling, technological changes? Growing at a pace faster than ever before, would it lose its spirituality? But as soon as we came out of the airport we felt embraced by this country's familiar and distinctive flair, and any doubts vanished.

“Lying against the southern low hills of Kerala's Western Ghats, Neyyar Dam has a scenic lake and is surrounded by tropical splendour.”

After a one hour drive we arrived at the Sivananda Ashram in Neyyar Dam. Lying against the southern low hills of Kerala's Western Ghats, Neyyar Dam has a scenic lake and is surrounded by tropical splendour. The Ashram is situated by the lake, just on the border of the Neyyar Wildlife Sanctuary.

For the past 36 years Swami Mahadevananda, senior disciple of Swami Vishnudevananda, has spared no effort in developing this Ashram and turning it into a paradise.

After being lovingly received by the Ashram staff we settled into our comfortable rooms and rested a while before starting our exploration of the Ashram. The Ashram reflects the many changes it has undergone in a most beautiful way. A strong feeling of peace comes over the visitor. The Raja Rajeshwari temple is undoubtedly the heart and soul of the Ashram. Puja (temple worship) is performed daily by a traditional priest to uplift and purify the atmosphere.

Guests like to sit after dinner in front of the sanctum sanctorium and join in the chanting of the famous Vishnu and Lalitha Sahasranama hymns followed by Arati.



Further temples dedicated to Krishna, Hanuman and Dakshinamurti can be found on the Ashram premises for worship and meditation. By the lakeside there are shrines to Ganesh, Ayyappa, Subramanya, Siva Lingam and Vana Durga.

The impressive Siva hall is the place where everyone gathers for morning and evening satsangs. A most impressive Nataraj statue, made by the late Sri Ganapathi Sthapati, a world renowned master of Vastu (the ancient Indian science of construction) immediately catches everyone's attention.

Maybe even more eye catching than the beautiful new guest rooms and yoga halls is the lush Ashram flora. An orchid garden, innumerable flowers, trees and plants create a kind of botanical garden. Beautifully set up and well cared for.



Settled among the plants are gray and black stone statues of Ganesha, Radha Krishna, Vishnu and Dhanwantari exquisitely carved by master craftsmen from Chennai.

Two delicious South Indian meals are served daily in the spacious new dining hall. All sit in silence in bhandara style on the floor while volunteers serve rice, sambar, different curries, salads, chutneys and paisam, the traditional sweet dish of South India.

“If all this was not enough, the Ashram’s Ayurveda Health Institute offers Ayurvedic oil massage and full Panchakarma treatments.”

If all this was not enough, the Ashram’s Ayurveda Health Institute offers Ayurvedic oil massage and full Panchakarma treatments. Under the able guidance of an Ayurvedic doctor and the motherly care of the local masseuses, guests can treat themselves to these special purification techniques. This is highly recommended! You could not do anything better for your health than such a treatment in combination with the yoga vacation program. The Ashram does indeed do a great service to its many, mostly western, visitors.

Speaking with many yoga vacation guests, it seems that

India still is the country people visit when looking for answers to the big questions of life. The stay at the Ashram, certainly for many, is the key in bringing about a natural re-evaluation of one’s lifestyle and mental patterns. One guest said, “What I really appreciate is that what is written on the website is the same as you find here: the beautiful daily schedule.”

The daily schedule based on asanas, pranayama, meditation and lectures shows the value of self-discipline. Many visitors were surprised that the rather intensive programme would give them so much energy and inner strength after just a short time.

All the various facets of yoga come into play over the course of the well-structured vacation programme. It is a first step in experiencing yoga’s vast potential toward finding the true meaning of life.

During a visit to the Sivananda Yoga Center in Trivandrum, I was able to talk to locals and to ask my initial question: are you worried about the speed of technological advances?

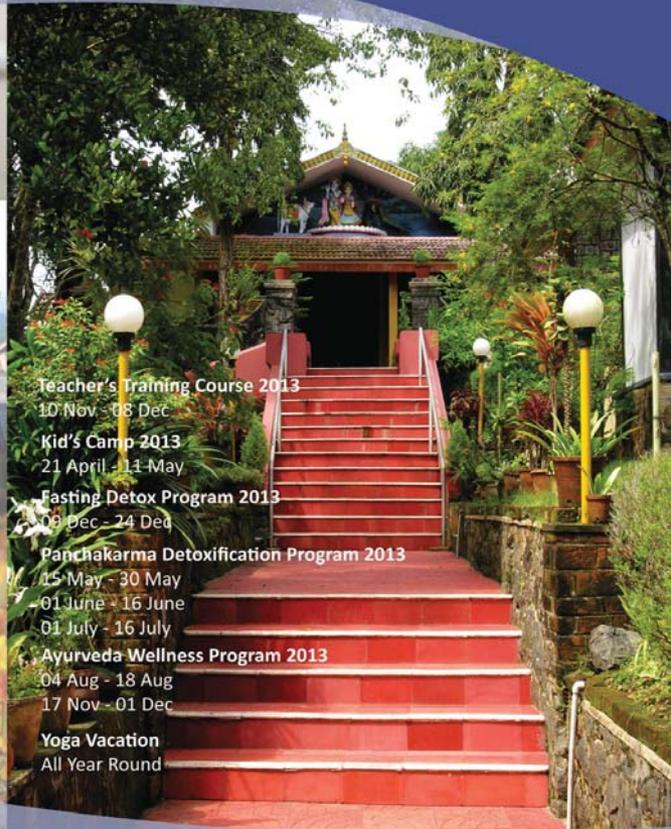
Not too much worried was the comforting answer. God is still here. Maybe that is what makes this country so attractive: a spark of the infinite is there in every moment of daily life. ■

Visit the Ashram website here:
www.sivananda.org/neyyardam



Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Dhanwantari Ashram

Neyyar Dam, Kerala, India



Teacher’s Training Course 2013

10 Nov - 08 Dec

Kid’s Camp 2013

21 April - 11 May

Fasting Detox Program 2013

09 Dec - 24 Dec

Panchakarma Detoxification Program 2013

15 May - 30 May

01 June - 16 June

01 July - 16 July

Ayurveda Wellness Program 2013

04 Aug - 18 Aug

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Yoga Vacation

All Year Round



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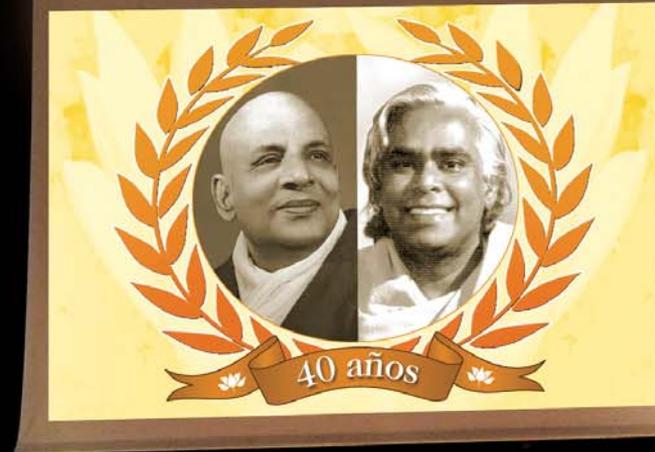


CELEBRATING 40 YEARS OF SIVANANDA YOGA IN SPAIN

In 1973 Swamiji founded the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre in Spain. Swamiji loved Spain and his yearly visit brought light, positivity and wisdom to many people. In 1985 the first European Yoga Teachers' Training Course was held on the coast of Galicia. Today Sivananda teachers share the classical yoga teachings in all parts of the country.

After several months of enthusiastic preparations, the main anniversary event took place on Saturday 8th of June 2013 in a college auditorium in Madrid. It attracted an audience of 500 teachers, students, friends, and visitors. Many close members, teachers and staff from the 70's and 80's came to meet and greet new and old friends.

Continued on page 48



Some of the participants (from left to right): Carlos Fiel, Tedilo Calvo, Ana Moreno, Lakshmi, His Excellency the Ambassador of India in Spain, Sri Sunil Kumar Lal, Swami Durgananda, Sri Swami Suryananda (founder president of the Confederation of Yoga in Portugal), Swami Sivadasananda, Swami Atmaramananda and Gopala.



Glory to Swami Sivananda and Swami Vishnudevananda, by who's Grace the celebrations were filled with inspiration and joy.



Asana demonstration by Sivananda Centre teachers

The programme began with an early afternoon asana class which was attended by 200 students. Then Gopala, senior teacher of the Centre, presented the festive programme in the main auditorium. His Excellency, the Ambassador of India in Spain, Sri Sunil Kumar Lal, told a touching story from the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad about yoga as a path to unveil subtle inner intelligence. Swami Atmaramananda gave inspiring hints on the benefits of the 12 basic asanas, which were demonstrated by a group of teachers on stage. Teófilo Calvo, pharmacist and researcher presented the encouraging results of a blood sample study made with participants of the last TTC in Spain. Ana Moreno, a leading teacher of vegetarian nutrition in Spain, made an appeal to take a real step in shifting from processed foods to living plant foods. A choir of students and teachers of the Sivananda Centre made everybody sing "I am neither body nor mind, immortal Self I am". Carlos Fiel, physician, musician and president of the "Federación Nacional de Yoga Sadhana" in Spain, spoke in representation of the many yoga schools present in the audience. His message was that yoga can unify all parts of modern society. During the main address of the celebrations, Swami Durgananda honoured the selfless spirit of all Masters and Saints which are keeping the light of spirituality shining in all parts of the globe. The programme ended with words of recognition by Swami Sivadasananda to Lakshmi and Gopala as shining representatives of the selfless spirit of Swamiji's mission in Spain. The evening concluded on a truly magical note with a vocal concert by Sri Venugopal Goswami and his group of musicians. ■

e-mail: madrid@sivananda.net



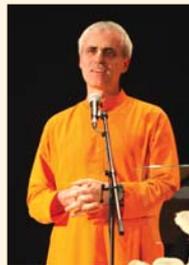
Asana in progress in the ample sports hall; only half of the class is seen on this picture.

Swami Durgananda gave the main address:



Swami Durgananda

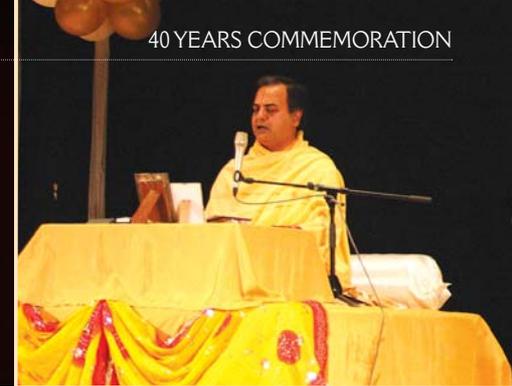
"It is the Grace of God that the message of Yoga has spread successfully in Spain for such an extended time, full of grace and vitality. By continuing to share the teachings as a selfless service to humanity, the true yoga will prevail. Swami Sivananda and Swami Vishnudevananda were such servants of humanity. They dedicated their whole life to offering the millenary teachings of yoga in a selfless way. They remain an inspiration for all those who want to share the true spirit of yoga according to the ideal of 'Unity in Diversity'. We thank all the masters, saints and selfless servants who kept the teaching of yoga pure. Thanks to them the yogic wisdom is so generously available to all of us today, ready to be practiced."



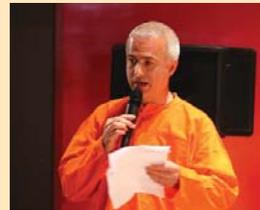
Swami Sivadasananda gave a vote of thanks to all the selfless supporters of Swamiji's mission in Spain.



His Excellency, the Ambassador of India in Spain, Sri Sunil Kumar Lal, presented the opening speech



Soul stirring ragas and kirtans by Sri Venugopal Goswami, Bhakti Yoga Acharya from Vrindavan, North India



Inspiring words on Hatha Yoga by Swami Atmaramananda.



Graceful and practical words on the virtues of a vegetarian lifestyle were presented by Ana Moreno.



Gopala, senior teacher of the Madrid Centre, introduced the various presentations of the commemoration.



Teófilo Calvo, pharmacist and researcher: "The proofs of the benefits of Yoga can be found in each drop of our blood."



It did not take long for the audience to join the Om Namah Sivaya kirtan



Carlos Fiel, president of the "Federación Nacional de Yoga Sadhana" in Spain: "Be awake in Yoga and practice from the depth of your heart."



Journey to Peace of Mind:

Break up tamas, pacify rajas, nurture sattwa

By Swami Sitaramananda

Pease of mind is difficult to attain because our minds are always changing. We restlessly pursue happiness outside of ourselves, preoccupied with our own self-interests, egoistic ambitions and opinions. Caught up in this cycle of seeking fulfillment everywhere but within, we fail to perceive or remember our true nature, which is already blissful and perfect.

This human condition of striving to find peace externally is depicted in Vedanta philosophy as a condition of darkness and ignorance. Besides the theory of karma and reincarnation, which describes that we are here to learn from our mistakes and will repeat the same life lessons until we learn the correct way and see ourselves, Vedanta philosophy, Yoga and Ayurveda offer us valuable guidance on how to progress towards peace of mind. The formula is simple, and can be described as a way of working with the 3 gunas or qualities of nature: 1. Break through the tamas, 2. Calm down the rajas, and 3. Nourish the sattwa.

What is tamas?

Tamas is the energy of inertia and darkness, the ignorance and denial that make a person lethargic, unhappy, or discontent, complaining but failing to do anything to help themselves. It is the veiling nature of reality that prevents us from seeing the way to our salvation and happiness, and causes us to identify with our delusional projections of ourselves instead of our true selves. It is the energy of going DOWN.

What is Rajas?

Rajas is the energy of action and passion, and of external projection. It singles out an aspect of life that the ego likes and goes towards it at the exclusion of everything else. This lack of capacity to see the big picture is called egoism. When rajas is dominant, reality is broken into pieces; the person under the influence of rajas will project an idea of happiness outside of his or her self and then run after it. The energy of Rajas is going OUTWARD. Rajas creates desires, restlessness, diversities, competitiveness and conflicts.

What is Sattwa?

Sattwa is the energy of purity, balance, harmony, knowledge, and wisdom. It is the revealing aspect of reality with which one is able to see clearly, penetrating to the true picture of reality. In sattwa, there is no pain and suffering from attachment to desires fulfilled or unfulfilled. The sattvic person is open to listen to God's will and to let go of the ego. This person will practice selflessness, devotion, control of mind and senses, and will meditate on the true nature of the Self and of reality. The ego does not have much pull over a sattvic mind. It is the energy of going INWARD AND UPWARD that brings us ultimately to peace of mind.

These three gunas or qualities of nature exist in our bodies and minds, and in order to bring ourselves to greater awareness, we can follow the yogic guidelines as a formula for bringing them back into balance.

1. We should wake up tamas by meaningful activities such as regular exercise, taking yoga classes, and regular exposure to satsang (spiritual discourses), as well as attending short yoga retreats where one can engage in selfless service, or Karma Yoga. Meeting with spiritual people and teachers will also help one to awaken from inertia. Begin to pay attention to and care about diet, reduce the number of hours of sleep, reduce numbing activities such as watching TV, playing video games, spending hours on the internet, or chitchatting or backbiting with friends. Immediately cease activities such as taking drugs, smoking marijuana, consuming alcohol, eating meat and fast food products, and watching movies based on sexuality and violence. Become more responsible in your relationships. Avoid dependency. Become more aware of expenditures, start to restrain from over-consuming, buying gadgets for pleasure and comfort, or anything that promotes fast and easy gratification. Instead connect with nature. This will make you feel more grounded and comfortable in yourself.

2. Pacify rajas. Rajas is outwardly-directed and self-centered action; it is manifested as a restlessness of the mind which has difficulty calming down and turning inward. To tame it, self-

motivated, egoistic and passionate sensual activities need to be reduced. We can pacify this energy by learning to become more selfless in our actions and in our hearts by practicing selfless activities, volunteering for meaningful causes, giving to charity, and beginning to think of others and develop compassion. To counter the outward energy of rajas and help channel emotional energy upward, we can also do devotional activities that will calm down the ego by acknowledging the presence of God. Devotional energy will pacify the needy, emotional mind and purify the heart. Improving your relationship with the Divine will improve your relationship with yourself. Learn to concentrate and reduce activities, leading a simple, pared-down life. This gives the mind focus and allows it some peace. Learn to live in the moment by not planning too far in advance for the future or worrying about the past. Start to question and examine your own motives and learn to discriminate between that which is lasting and truly important, and that which is illusory, or a construct of your own imagination. Practice contentment. Building a healthy, yogic lifestyle will calm rajas; so eat a simple vegetarian diet free of stimulating foods, and regulate your activities with a daily routine instead of engaging in chaotic or impulsive activities. As the mind and intellect become directed towards community service and the common good instead of ideas of "me" and "mine," you will become more calm and focused, able to channel your energy more effectively and bring greater harmony to yourself and others.

3. Increase and nurture sattwa: At the time when rajas has more or less calmed down and peace and purity start to dawn, the yoga practitioner doesn't stop there, but practises the inner discipline of yoga and meditation, continuing to lead a contented, meaningful, peaceful and simple life based on devotion to the greater Truth. He or she is stabilising everything and fine-tuning his or her awareness. He or she will experience less and less ups and downs, and gain increasing compassion and pure love for all beings. Selflessness becomes the natural way of being. He or she no longer experience loneliness and neediness in relationships, and is naturally respectful, calm and correct in all situations. Yoga terms this as having "equal vision." As awareness increases and consciousness expands, the practitioner experiences layers of bliss without seeking it. Meditation happens by itself, as the mind is clear and free from disturbance by desires, ambitions or inner conflicts.

By practicing these three steps starting today, you will begin to fill your life and the lives of those around you with peace, joy, contentment, harmony, and balance.

Swami Sivananda said: "A brilliant future is awaiting you!" ■

Swami Sitaramananda is a senior disciple of Swami Vishnudevananda and is the director of the Sivananda Ashram Yoga Farm in California, USA. www.sivanandayogafarm.org



"Sattwa is the energy of purity, balance, harmony, knowledge, and wisdom. It is the revealing aspect of reality with which one is able to see clearly"

The Philosophy of Siva King of Dance



by Raghunath
Manet



Siva in the
Nataraj pose

“Siva is regarded as the creator as well as the destroyer of the Universe through the action of his cosmic dance.”

Raghunath Manet
dances in front of the
famous Lord Siva Statue
in Rishikesh, North India



Photo: Madhavi Sekar

Raghunath Manet is a renowned Indian classical dancer, choreographer, musician, composer and singer. He has performed at many international festivals including London, the United States, Rome, Madras, Africa, Australia and Asia. This article is an extract from his book, *The Seven Dances of Siva*.

Siva is a god of dravidian origin, androgyne and with multiple powers. He has neither beginning nor end. He is the supreme being and the grand master of the world. He is the major god of the three divinities of the Hindu Pantheon (Siva, Brahma and Vishnu).

Regarded as the creator as well as the destroyer of the Universe through the action of his cosmic dance, Siva is also the regenerator (destruction and regeneration follow each other in an endless cycle). Siva the regenerator prepares for new birth; it is for this reason that he is represented by the Siva linga, the symbol of creation, omnipresent.

The home of Siva is Mount Kailas or Kailash, the sacred mountain. His vehicle (vahana) is Nandi, the bull. His wife is Shakti or Parvati, the cosmic mother. He has two children, Ganesha and Murugan. In Tamil Nadu, the sacred town of Siva is Chidambaram, the centre of the universe, where Siva comes down to earth to dance his cosmic dance in order to bring liberation to the world.

The philosophy of Siva (Saiva Siddhantam)

The philosophy of Siva (saiva siddhantam) was developed in Tamil Nadu at the beginning of the 5th Century. The Tevaram, devotional Tamil hymns, written between the 6th and the 7th Century, are texts based on this philosophy. It is a philosophy of acceptance and knowledge, which aims to bring about harmony and unity. It does not allow for the caste system and affirms that liberation of the soul does not depend on caste or creed.

According to Swami Sivananda, this philosophy is the essence of the philosophy of Vedanta itself (philosophy of unity of each being with the cosmos). This philosophy was transmitted by the Rishis, (mystical sages) before the Christian era.

Siva himself passed these teachings to Paranjoti Muni who gave it to the world through an intermediary, the miraculous child Meykanta Devar. In the 12th Century, Meykanta wrote the *Siva-gnana-bodam*, the glory of Siva. He made the synthesis between metaphysics and logical thinking by way of questions and answers. It is a dialogue between intelligence and the soul. He shows the relationship between the world and the soul, the soul and Siva and the relationship between all three. The final aim is to attain Siva and to become one with him only.

Siva is called Nataraj, king of the dance and he dances inside a circle of fire, the symbol of the cosmos.

Nataraj, king of the dance

To worship God by dancing is the fulfillment of all inspiration, and the path to deliverance opens for him who dances, says an ancient text. Dance is the best way to please God.

Siva has no particular shape, he cannot be seen other than through the intermediary of the five functions in the dance or tandavam. He is called *Ada Vallan*, the King of the Dance, or *Jnana Kuttan* the Dancer of Knowledge. According to the ancient Siva texts, Siva has 1008 names and the name Nataraj is the most famous. The form of Siva in the Nataraj pose was

said to be created in South India and Siva was the first to execute the Artform of the Dance as confirmed by the *Matya-Sastra*. King Rjaraja Chola mentioned in the inscriptions in the Temple of Tanjore, the name *Adavallane* or King of the Dance, describing the god Siva. A large Chola dynasty bronze statue of Siva dancing can be seen at the temple of Brihadisvara in Tanjore, in South India. Although the temple was built in the 11th Century, the dancing Siva of that temple dates back to more ancient times.

The concept of the dancing Siva goes back to antiquity. In 1922, thanks to archeological excavations at the towns of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa in the Punjab, a religion called Harappian was discovered. This is the oldest religion known of the civilisation of the Indus (3300 – 1900 BC). This culture, preceding the migrations of Indo-European peoples, dates back to at least the 1st millennium BC, and is the most developed civilisation known in the world to this day.

Amongst the sculptures and objects discovered in this region, we find the cult of the Great Goddess as well as that of a God who could be regarded as a prototype of Siva. Sir John Marshall who examined these excavations, said : “The god who has three faces, is seated on a low Indian throne in a characteristic Yoga posture with legs underneath him, heels against each other and toes turned downwards. Four animals can be seen, an elephant and a tiger to his right, a rhinoceros and a buffalo

“The dances of Siva are eternal because he has neither beginning nor end, neither father nor mother. He is cosmic unity.”

to his left. Behind the throne are two kites”. A small statue of a female dancer shows that dancing was practised there since five thousand years BC. Another great piece of evidence is that of the temple of Chidambaram, one of the oldest and most venerated temples of Southern India. Chidambaram, the centre of the universe, is in the heart of each being, and it is here that Siva came down to earth and danced his cosmic dance in order to bring liberation to the world.

South India is the cradle of numerous temples dedicated to Siva. Tamil as well Sanskrit literature, is full of references to the dance of Siva for as long as ancient temples existed. The representation of Siva in the form of a bronze Nataraj is the most common in the Indian iconography. This has influenced numerous artists, notably the French sculptor Rodin. He says of the Nataraj statue, that it is “the most perfect representation of rhythmic movement”.

Siva is Nataraj, King of the dance *ananda-tandavam*, the dance of joy and happiness. When Siva dances, he makes the sound *Om* on his drum, the damaru, the first sound of creation. He repeats his own rhythm with the udukkaï, a small drum which he holds in his right hand. Siva gives birth to life with this rhythm which represents the pulsation of the cosmos (maya).

With each beat he creates one of the five elements: air, fire, water, earth and ether.

In his upper right hand, Siva holds the flame, symbol of destruction. On his head is a crane (presence of death: awakening) and the snake Adi Seshan, symbolising the human soul in search of the Universal Soul.

His hair is flowing in the wind and from it springs the Ganges, Goddess of water. The crescent moon in his hair spreads light onto the earth, and represents human passion. The snake Akilan runs over his body and symbolises the power of Kundalini. In the pose of *paya muttirai*, Siva says to Devotees "Don't be afraid, I will protect you all". In the pose of *kunjita-padam*, foot raised, Siva shows shelter and mercy to the faithful. Siva destroys Moyalagan, the uncontrollable passions of man.

Netri kan symbolises the third eye of knowledge in the centre of the forehead, and *kunmin-crippy*, the smile of knowledge. Siva is *Jnana Kuttan*, the dancer of knowledge.

Inside the circle of fire Siva dances, symbolising the movement of the eternally changing universe. According to the Agamas, he dances to symbolise 5 functions: creation (Srishti), conservation (Sthiti), destruction (Samhara), purification (Tirodhana) and mercy (Anugraha).

Creation, conservation and destruction belong to the physical nature of the body. Purification and mercy refer to the spirit. Joseette Herbert gives a definition of Siva: "The specific character of Siva is a transcendence of all change and alteration symbolised by a corpse (shava), which means that in the death of death immortality lives on, and that is what we call Siva". The dances of Siva are eternal because Siva has neither beginning nor end, neither father nor mother; he is cosmic unity.

Saivism deals with Siva (Pati), the human spirit (Pasu) and the relationship between them (Pasam).

Saivism says:

What is the conclusion of our birth?

What is the final end of our birth on earth?

How can one attain Siva during one's lifetime?



Raghunath Manet

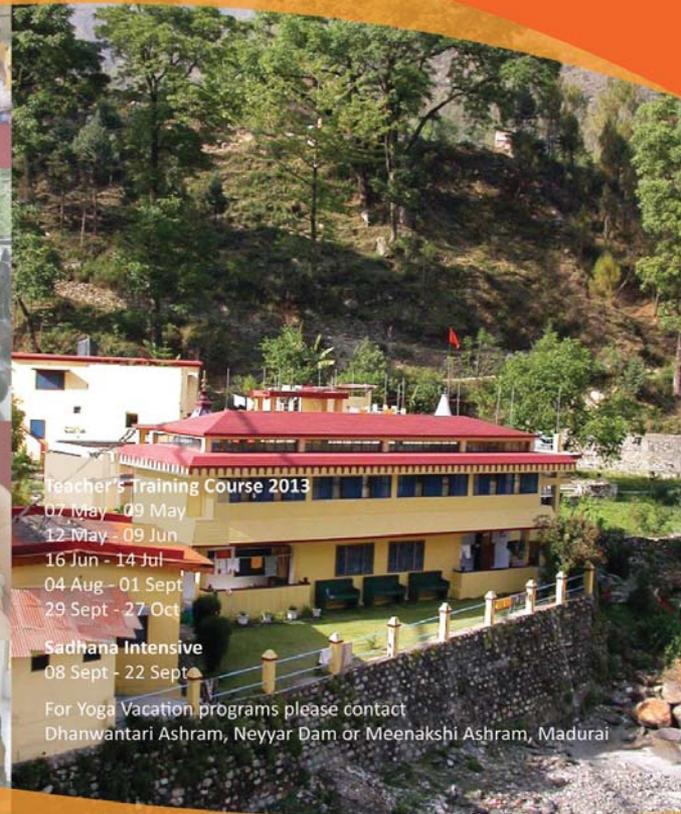
Siva creates the individual souls and during the course of their existence, they are *Sakala*, burdened with impurities. These impurities are ignorance, karma and illusion. If the soul manages to eliminate desire, attachment and the ego (anavam), it will attain liberation. However, if man does not understand what he must do, he returns to the cycle of birth and death. Because of his karma, he is re-incarnated so as to reap the fruits of his actions. If a human being follows the path of Siva, he is liber-

ated from birth and death and receives divine grace, which is given to all equally. The philosophy of Siva helps each person to become his own master. ■

www.raghunath-manet.com

Sivananda Kutir

Uttarkashi, Himalayas, India



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TTC Refresher Experience at the Ashram de yoga Sivananda, Loire Valley, France

Bathing in the Energy of Satsang

by Sundari, a teacher at the London Centre

www.sivananda.org/orleans

January 2013: Cold and dark, and a period of 6 months' hard work ahead of me planning for the spring of growing and gardening projects. Hmm, TTC Refresher at the French Ashram. Definitely a break to look forward to. The advice was to book quickly as the 150 places were already filling up.

June 14th 2013: The constant crunch of taxis on gravel, and cries of happy recognition as already shiny yogis descended on the Ashram de Yoga. A sunny summer day and relaxation on the way.

We were all coming to a reunion of the Sivananda family, and a star cast too. Not only Swamis Durgananda, Kailasananda and Svadasananda, but also six other swamis, two priests, special guests, and staff members – we would each know some or all from our TTC and subsequent journey in yoga. All under the guiding gaze of the Masters.

Yogis came from at least 15 countries and stayed in the Château, in tents and in the meditation hall. Late bookers found places in local "chambres d'hôte". Many re-connected with TTC gurubhai, some from less than a year ago, such as Padmini and two friends from Holland who I met on the train from Paris. She explained that although there is a small country they hadn't had the opportunity to meet up since the previous April. They chatted non-stop on the journey, and the whole Refresher too, I think. I was delighted to find four others from my TTC in Kerala 2001; all a bit silver-haired now and still practising. Such a good feeling to know our spiritual lives have continued from that common point.

There was a feeling of lineage and connection, even within our short stay journeys. Vasishtha who has been staff and now runs the Shanti Yoga School with his wife in Poland, told how he had been really moved by meeting new teacher Nataraj from Longford in Ireland. Six years previously, just at the start of his yoga journey, Vasishtha had been working in a hotel there. His morning sadhana had inspired a co-worker who in turn inspired the woman who became Nataraj's teacher. Now, with his life dedicated to yoga, Vasishtha says, "meeting Nataraj is confirmation that what we do makes a difference."

The roar of Om in Satsang put a vibration through the body. For Brahmini living in Mexico City, and Bhagavati in Barcelona, for instance, satsang was the key joy of the week as there are no Centres in their cities. Swami Durgananda told her story of coming to Sivananda through a small, informal satsang in her home town of Cologne. We were moved, and encouraged to hold satsangs in our own homes, even with just a few students – an inspiring starting point for new yoga journeys.

But satsang was just one of the sattvic joys with which the organisation spoiled us. There were workshops combining anatomy,

Below: From left to right: Swami Bhagavanananda, Swami Narayananda, Swami Kailasananda, Swami Ramapriyananda, Swami Atmaramananda



Inspiring yoga classes and asana correction workshops with Swami Atmaramananda (left) and Swami Svadasananda

physiology and corrections held on the lawn in front of the Château, all conducted with light-heartedness. We had lovely practice classes each morning, and pranayama sessions before morning satsang. We had inspiring lectures from the acharyas, a concert and four heart-opening discourses on the *Bhagavad Gita*. We opened the week with a Ganapati homa and, I'm rushing to finish this article to get ready for a final Lalita Sahasranama puja to close the week. As I write too, the storm that has been threatening for the week has broken spectacularly, but yogis are carrying on their correction workshop on the platform with lots of creativity and good humour.

Relaxation emerged as a theme of the time together. Swami Atmaramananda told me that what he enjoys about the TTC Refresher, "is to be in the energy of the TTC in a relaxed way without pressure. Although we have a tight schedule it's with a free spirit." Our asana classes very much focussed on calmness, and a "back to basics" refresher approach rather than a lot of possibly rajasic advanced variations.

For me, being with fellow teachers, experienced and focussed was very relaxing, as I could focus wholeheartedly on the practices. My feeling is that we "refreshers" have all been able to take a fresh high-energy charge of the Masters' vision.

Thanks to the staff and swamis who undertook a mammoth feat of organising, and all who contributed karma yoga in a marathon of cooking and cleaning. We've been blessed with this opportunity.

More please! ■



Ashram and Centre News

NEYYAR DAM, INDIA

Sivananda Yoga Vedanta
Dhanwantari Ashram

Although most major construction work in Neyyar Dam is complete, beautification work continues.

In the last year we have added a number of statues in the garden including Ganesh, Radha Krishna, Vishnu, Lord Dhanwantari and Gopala. The most impressive work is the cement sculpture of Govardhana Giridhara with an oil painted finish which took 3 months to complete. The attention to detail and expression is captivating.

www.sivananda.org/heyward



MADURAI, INDIA

Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre

The Madurai Centre moved to a new location in July 2012 just a few kilometers from the previous address. The Centre is on the first floor with a covered roof terrace space which makes it perfect for our needs. There is plenty of light and air with many coconut trees around the building. In February we held a "Walk for Yoga" event to publicise the centre and ashram in Madurai. The event was a great success with over one thousand people participating.

www.sivananda.org/maduracentre



MADURAI, INDIA

Sivananda Yoga Vedanta
Meenakshi Ashram

With a massive confluence of visitors, on the 9th March 2012, the Mahakali Temple was inaugurated in a very traditional Hindu celebration called Kumbabishekam. After the temple was opened we have been offering daily pujas to the Devi's murti and conducting some of the spiritual activities there.

keeping the energy of the place in a very sattvic vibration. The colourful and majestic structure of the temple is definitely an attraction for people who visit or join us for the courses at the ashram. We are currently working on the construction of some other temples for the Upadevathas (Ganesh, Navagraha, Nagar and Bairota) around the main Kali Temple, expecting it to be ready for the end of this year.

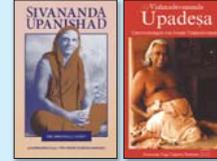
www.sivananda.org/madurai

REITH, TYROL, AUSTRIA

Sivananda Yoga Retreat House

The translation of Vishnudevandana Upadesa and Sivananda Upanishad are ready for print – a long expected direct inspiration from the Masters is now available to the German speaking public.

www.sivananda.org/tyrol



BUEENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA

Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre

On 28th of June the Centre was blessed by the presence of Goddess Saraswati: an exquisite white marble murti was installed. The expression of peace from Her face and her eyes are simply thrilling. Shankari, an architect and student of the Centre had designed a beautiful new altar. The meditation room is full of light and it has serene energy. The prathistapana (installation) was conducted by Ganapadas Bhat who also visited the Sivananda Centres in Montevideo and Porto Alegre. All the pujas, homas and yantra pujas inspired the students and teachers, and connected all of us with the tradition of our beloved Gurus.

www.sivananda.org/buenosaires



MUNICH, GERMANY

Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre

The reception and yoga shop area of the Munich Centre now received a big Sri Nataraj statue from India. The shining statue is about two feet high, and radiates lots of energy. The whole reception, changing rooms, toilet facilities and yoga shop area have been completely renovated during last summer. The students are now appreciating the new and very comfortable welcoming area of the Centre.

www.sivananda.org/munich



VILNIUS, LITHUANIA

Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre

After 3 years in its first location the Vilnius Centre moved to a new location on March 3rd 2013. The new Centre is located only at a 10 minutes' walk from the previous one. This allowed the Centre to keep all its students and to have a smooth transition into its new home. An open day with meditation, asana classes and a lecture demonstration at the medical University across the street marked this new beginning.

Our students old and new find the new place very attractive with its asana halls giving views through big bay windows onto a beautiful small garden. The staff are very happy to serve an ever increasing flow of students in this new home for yoga.

www.sivananda.org/vilnius



ORLEANS, FRANCE

Ashram de Yoga Sivananda

The ashram gardens look like an enchanted place dropped by the gods straight from heaven, thanks to the efforts of one of our staff who is a landscape architect. She and a strong team of helpers spent the last months planting thousands of tulip bulbs, other spring flowers, all kind of shrubs, trees and plenty of rose bushes. In order to allow a more easy flow of people in the high season, the pathway connecting the main building and the meditation hall was enlarged and tiny lights were set into the floor tiles which sparkle merrily at night. Halfway between the two buildings the "Surya Square" was constructed, a beautifully paved space surrounded by flower beds and equipped with stone benches which makes it a perfect place to relax, socialise and study. The small Ayappa shrine in front of the main building was enlarged and transformed into a small temple

www.sivananda.org/orleans



MADRID, SPAIN, Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre

See report on 40th Anniversary on page 46.
www.sivananda.org/madrid

The Good Work:

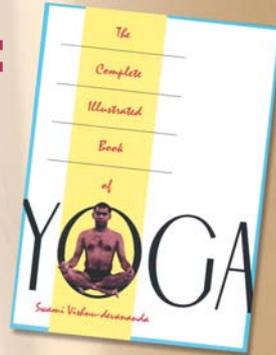
Prison Yoga Outreach Programme

by Narayan Chaitanya

In 1996, *Prison Life* magazine published an article written by an inmate describing the inspiration and joy the *Complete Illustrated Book of Yoga* (CIBY) by Swami Vishnu-devananda brought him. A book review mentioned that the book was available to all prisoners at no cost. Within weeks a deluge of letters from inmates arrived at the Sivananda Ashram Yoga Ranch, upstate New York, requesting copies of the book. Letter correspondence with the prisoners began immediately, as did a fundraising programme to meet the growing requests for books. Heartfelt letters of gratitude from prisoners proved the initial success of the Project, gave them a sense of "belonging", enabling them to express their feelings and aspirations, and gave them a safe place to ask questions and have their doubts cleared.

The work of the project has continued with letters being received and processed at SYVC's San Francisco Centre and in New York at the Ranch. Staff at these locations read and respond to hundreds of requests from prisoners a year and send out many copies of the CIBY and other books as our incarcerated students advance and become more curious about other aspects of yoga life.

It is important to recognise and lament the fact that the United States for example spends 6 times more money on prisons than on education and incarcerates 5 times more inmates that the world average. Many will leave prison after long terms only return again. As the connection between poverty, education, race, class, and incarceration all become alarmingly clear, yoga shows a way to break these cycles and escape the clutches of a broken system.



The Project is comprised of the following aspects:

- Sending Yoga books to prisoners.
- Letter correspondence with prisoners.
- Teaching Yoga in prisons – Hatha Yoga, Yoga philosophy, meditation.
- Organizing day-long programmes in prisons.
- Making personal visits to prisoners.
- Raising funds, mainly for book distribution, \$5,000-\$10,000 per year.

The project needs donations!

Can you take the time to give right now? The genuine sympathy of well-wishers has kept the programme alive. Even \$14 can buy one book. Donate \$50 and 4 prisoners lives can be changed, \$100 and it is nearly 10! And just as the TTC programme changes the fabric of society one graduate at a time, the Prison Project changes the prison culture one student at a time. If you don't think you have the funds, spread the word too—this helps. But if you need inspiration, read this quote from one of our students "inside":

"I feel I have much to learn and I will utilize the stuff you send. It won't just be taking up space. You guys sent me two books so I will give the other one to a friend. You know I am noticing the prices on these envelopes and I am so grateful for your service. I know books and

postage cost money. If I can ever get some stamps I will try and send them."

– D.D. Corcoran State Prison

When I read that quote I got quite tearful. Here he is stuck in a cage and without any means so grateful he is scrounging coins for postage to give back already!!! And this quote from a letter struck a chord too:

"Blessed one, . . . it has been just over 90 days since I received the books you sent me. Thank you for these blessed gifts. I am truly humbled by your kindness and generosity. I have spent these 3 months reading and studying these texts. They are very inspirational and informative. Guiding to understanding and how to be a better being, among other things. They speak upon traits which I do my best to embody throughout my life already, as well as insight into more areas I can approach. I'm not perfect though I strive for excellence (difficult in today's 'modern' world when surrounded by so much of the lower nature). Your letter instructed me to 'dive deep' and speak upon my keenest interest. Discourses 9, 10, 11 appeal to me. I want to know more about the divinities, the celestial beings, devas and gods. I would know God."

– D.M. Miami Correctional Facility

I hope this appeal and these two quotes speak to your heart and open your eyes to the potential of the programme to heal and break cycles of desperation and delusion. 100% of all donations go to Prison Project activities such as purchasing books and other Yoga items, correspondence expenses, occasional visits to prisoners, and costs involved in teaching in prisons. There are no salaries to be paid or any administration costs, and all donations are tax-deductible. Your generous donations are much appreciated, and can make a great difference to an inmate locked up for years on end. ■

Donations

You may pay by visiting: www.sfyoga.com/prisonproject.shtml and clicking on the PayPal button.

We accept checks (made out to Sivananda Prison Project), Visa, or MasterCard, or credit cards over the phone.

Address your envelopes to Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Center, Attention Prison Project, 1200 Arguello Blvd., San Francisco, CA 94122. For credit card payments, call us on (415) 681-2731.

All information will be treated with confidentiality.

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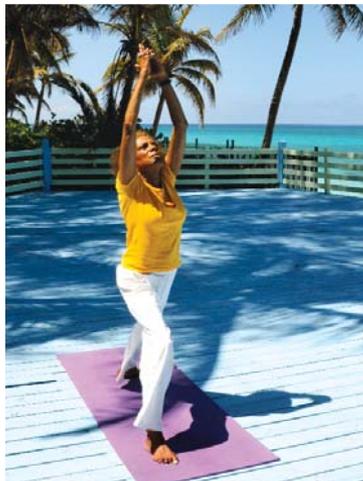
An Inspired Life at the Service of Yoga

Radha
(Gloria McCartney)

By Jyoti (Jody Tull)



Radha, is nearly 81 years old. She is a living testimony to the adage "You are as young as your spine is flexible."



She flows effortlessly through the asanas with presence. Her teaching style is clear, direct, and sprinkled with insight and humour. When she took her first yoga class at the Sivananda Yoga Centre in Chicago more than 40 years ago, she had no idea that doing so would completely transform the second half of her life. Gloria McCartney, known to most as Radha, is nearly 81 years old. She is a living testimony to the adage "You are as young as your spine is flexible." The spring in her step, she says, comes from choosing gratitude as a way of life, for her teachers, Swami Sivananda and Swami Vishnudevananda, her 24-7 yoga practice, and for the blessings of each and every experience, good or bad.

Gloria grew up in foster homes. "One day we will know who we really are," was the hope of her early life, as was her determination not to be "swallowed up" by circumstances. She achieved her teenage resolution to be surrounded by people with expertise beyond her own, financially and intellectually. Self-learning was at the core of her adult life, so much so that "everyone just assumed I had a college degree." At 55, 15 years after "happening" into the Chicago Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre, Radha entered college and was awarded an Associates degree in Arts-Foreign Languages at Harry S. Truman College on May 15, 1993.

Her introduction to yoga came in stages. "Back in the 1970s," she explains, I'd show up at the Bryn Mawr Centre in time for 4.30 hatha yoga, before getting ready for late nights out on the town. Adorned in evening gowns and spiked heels, I worked as a hostess in the Chicago night club scene, holding tight

to a desire to be part of the beautiful life. "However, Gloria's perception of yoga – as only physical exercise – shifted when she met Sivananda Yoga founder, Swami Vishnudevananda.

"His noisy entrance into the Chicago Centre one night carried the force of a tornado. This short, round, handsome Indian man dressed in bright orange, whom everyone referred to as Swamiji, was dynamic and charged with energy. I was captivated by everything he said, and I was struck by an accompanying student who was radiantly beautiful, elegantly clad, obviously intelligent and, like me, an African American woman," she says.

It was a turning point. "By the end of this unforgettable evening, I had decided to register for the first International Conference for Yoga Teachers at the Sivananda Yoga Retreat on Paradise Island, Bahamas. This was among the best decisions I ever made."

The week was "overwhelming and magical," Gloria remembers. "I was exposed to so many life-affirming concepts, with introductions to meditation, vegetarianism, massage and wonderfully inspiring and positive people from all over the world. I remember feeling as though I had encountered home for the first time, and I knew I wanted more. Not long after, I completed the month long Sivananda Yoga Teachers' Training Course."

As part of that training four decades ago, Swami Vishnu assigned her the spiritual name Radha. She and fellow students were encouraged to approach life through five points of awareness:

- **Proper exercise:** engaging in a non-violent total mind/body/spirit approach.
- **Proper breathing:** inhaling and exhaling mindfully while repeating a mantra that carries positive vibration and energy
- **Proper relaxation:** noticing just how freeing and energizing it feels to prioritize a flow of calm and gentleness through the mind body and spirit connection
- **Natural diet:** choosing foods and energy that increase vitality and feed the energetic vibratory level of the body
- **Meditation and Positive thinking:** weeding out all negative thoughts that no longer serve but weigh down the spirit. Focusing and strengthening the mind, realizing life's most important learning of becoming detached from situations and outcomes.

After graduation, certificate in hand, Radha returned to Chicago a vegetarian. She changed her daily ritual of tuning into the morning news, to lighting a candle and meditating in front of the altar she created in her home.

In order to create a lifestyle where she could alternate months at the ashram with months in Chicago, Radha opened a vintage clothing business with a friend. To this day, she continues to notice that she achieves deeper levels of relaxation and higher levels of energy at the ashram, enabling her to enjoy a richer and more fulfilling life of service when in Chicago.

Radha describes her journey over these 40 years of transformation, summing up the best in three insights.

1. "I used to think I had to try harder and harder and do better, better, better. Instead, now, in all situations, I silently repeat my mantra, saving myself so much aggravation and stress. Whether stuck in traffic, delayed on the train, in a hectic accounting office environment, or practicing hatha yoga, silently



"A big lesson for me has been the highest practice of yoga – absolutely no judging, good or bad, of anyone at all, including myself."

repeating the mantra Swami Vishnu gave me all those years ago, I feel a soothing balm in every cell of my body. Doing so makes me feel like a breath of fresh air, and I'm told this peaceful calm soothes those around me."

2. "My daily meditation practice has shifted my perception of what constitutes 'my personal best' from an insatiable desire to appear smart, in charge, and top of my game, to instead, give back all I've learned over the years, and offer the greatest blessing of my life, the Sivananda teachings, in service to others. It all begins with self knowledge."
3. "I used to want to persuade others to take up a yoga life similar to mine. I was the laughing stock of my family and friends. A big lesson for me has been the highest practice of yoga - absolutely no judging, good or bad, of anyone at all, including myself. This positively removes all sourness from life. I have the best friends, mostly 30 to 40 years younger than me, who are more like family than family. And family members who used to laugh at me, now post photos of me and repeat my quotes on Facebook."

Today, Radha's life in Chicago is busy. She teaches two yoga classes per week, takes two classes per week, works part-time for an accounting firm and is an active member of the Unity Church of Chicago. During months spent at the Sivananda Ashram in the Bahamas, she is in charge of guest services, runs midday counseling, teaches a hatha yoga class and the two o'clock workshop every day, and attends morning and evening Satsang.

"So many people tell me that I am their inspiration," she says. "And, it's true that I am filled with inspiration. I'm not willing to opt out of any of the asanas or warm-ups because of my age. I'm not willing to rush through any part of my life, but instead savour each moment. My whole life has, for many years, been dedicated to Swami Sivananda's charge to 'Serve, Love, Give, Purify, Meditate and Realize.'"

For Radha, life is "a Thanksgiving feast." ■

Father John Rossner

September 8th 1930 – August 27th, 2012



A Celebration of Fr. John Rossner's Life

Father John Rossner was an Anglican/Episcopal priest and was Professor in the Department of Religion at Concordia University in Montreal Canada since 1972. He taught and carried out research in comparative religions and cultures and was a pioneer in the applications of the findings of consciousness studies and psychical research in the scientific study of human religious experience.

He was the first scholar in Canada to introduce such subjects into an academic curriculum for both graduate and undergraduate studies in the history of philosophy and religion.

In 1976 he founded, with the help of his wife Dr. Marilyn Zwaig Rossner and a number of prominent scholars and scientists, the International Institute of Integral Human Sciences. Today the Institute is established as the nucleus of a worldwide network of outstanding scientists, scholars, religious leaders and professional persons involved in mind-body research directed toward providing new paradigms for the reconciliation of science and spirituality.

The Institute is a global family, with the objective of inter-religious and inter-cultural understanding for world peace.

Fr. John was a respected friend and associate of Swami Vishnudevananda. He first met Swami Vishnu in 1962 whilst a young professor at Concordia University. He was asked if he would like to meet a young Indian Swami who was giving a talk and yoga demonstration as part of the class on Comparative Religions. His first impression of Swami Vishnu is remembered in his own words, "I went to watch and meet him. When I looked through the door I saw Swami Vishnu demonstrating the headstand on the instructor's table. I went in



"True religion should give joy, peace and love."

– Fr. John Rossner

and he flipped into the lotus!"

Little did Fr. John know that this first encounter would form the basis of a lifelong friendship and association with Swami Vishnu and the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres.

In 1972 he was invited by Swami Vishnu to give a talk as part of the first Yoga Teachers' Training Congress held at the Sivananda Ashram Yoga Retreat, Nassau Bahamas. There were many speakers from all religions and traditions participating, and Fr. John was unsure of what to say in front of all these people. Here was a young priest studying classics, along with Buddhist monks, Jewish Rabbis and representatives of most religions. What could he say to impress this crowd? He said: "We once had a tradition like yours in the West but somehow we lost it. I have come here to learn what you know so that we can recover it!" This gained a tremendous response and since that first lecture, Fr. John was invited back many times over the next 40 years to talk at symposiums and conferences held at Sivananda Ashrams worldwide.

Fr. John and Swami Vishnu were kindred spirits who believed in the universality of all religions. In their own ways they both worked tirelessly to promote peace, understanding, tolerance and mutual respect for all religions and traditions through yoga, vedanta, science, culture and spirituality.

Fr. John left the physical body peacefully on Monday 27 August, 2012 at the Sivananda Yoga Camp in Val Morin, Quebec Canada. He touched the lives of thousands of people and he is remembered with much love, affection and joy. ■

For further information about the seminars, lectures and other programmes offered by the International Institute of Integral Human Sciences, please visit: www.iihs.com



Top: Symposium on Yoga and Psychic Discovery, Nassau Bahamas 1976. From Left to right: Fr. John Rossner, Indian Ambassador T.N. Kaul, Mrs. Edgar Mitchell, Astronaut Capt. Edgar Mitchell, Swami Vishnudevananda and Marilyn Rossner.

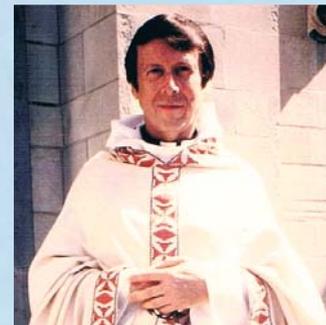
Left: Swami Vishnudevananda with Fr. John and his wife, Marilyn.

Bottom left: Fire walking ceremony during Swami Vishnu's historic Peace Mission to East Berlin where he flew his microlite plane over the Berlin Wall from West to East in 1983.

Below: Fr. John Rossner.



"Without meeting Swami Vishnu, life would have been much duller!"
– Fr. John Rossner





Sivananda Ashram Yoga Camp, Val Morin, Quebec, Canada



Sivananda Ashram Yoga Retreat, Nassau Bahamas



Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Dhamawanti Ashram, Kerala, India



Sivananda Ashram Yoga Farm, Grass Valley, California



Sivananda Retreat House, Reith near Kitzbühel, Tyrol, Austria

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