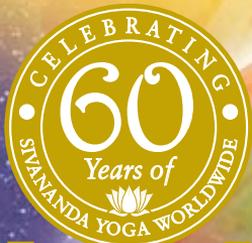


SIVANANDA YOGALife

\$5 Canada \$3.50 US £2.50 UK 3.70 € Europe

Autumn/Winter 2016



• 1957 – 2017 •

A central photograph of Swami Vishnudevananda, an elderly man with white hair and a beard, wearing an orange robe. He is smiling and holding a glowing, realistic Earth globe with both hands. The background is a vibrant, colorful cosmic scene with a rainbow-like arc behind him and various planets (Jupiter, Saturn, Mars, Venus, Uranus, Neptune) floating in space. The overall color palette is bright and celebratory, with yellows, oranges, and blues.

**Celebrating 60 years
of Swami Vishnudevananda's
Teachings Worldwide**

*The experience 'I am universal space; I was never ever bound
by this body and mind'...this is yoga. – Swami Vishnudevananda*

SERVE • LOVE • GIVE • PURIFY • MEDITATE • REALIZE



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- immerse in a yogic lifestyle
- align with daily rhythms
- engage in spiritual practice and study
- renew your body and refresh your mind

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THE INTERNATIONAL SIVANANDA YOGA VEDANTA CENTER



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Come and take that much needed relaxation time away from polluted air and noisy city living.

Yoga Teacher's Training
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Nov. 12 - Dec. 10, 2017

Advanced Yoga Teacher's Training
August 6 - 5 September, 2017

Sadhana Intensive
June 11 - 25, 2017

Kid Camp
July 8 - 29, 2017

Teen Karma Yoga
July 31- August 13, 2017



**SIVANANDA ASHRAM
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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, Realise. 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. We welcome Kanti Devi, Acharya for the South American Centres and Prahlad, Acharya for the Indian and Canadian Centres, as new members on the executive board.

Swami Durgananda
Swami Svaroopananda
Srinivasan
Swami Sivadasananda

Swami Kailasananda
Swami Sitaramananda
Kanti Devi
Prahlad



Swami Durgananda Swami Svaroopananda Srinivasan Prahlad



Swami Sivadasananda Swami Kailasananda Swami Sitaramananda Kanti Devi

Welcome

Sivananda Yoga, a gateway to your Self

In 2017, we will celebrate 60 years of Sivananda Yoga Worldwide. This milestone is the opportunity to assess where we are standing as an international spiritual organisation teaching yoga to hundred of thousands of people, to define afresh our dharma and mission, based on the very strong foundations laid by our Masters.

For this reason several of the articles in this issue are dedicated to dharma, to the ethical principles of yoga and the vision of Swami Vishnudevananda of how yoga can help humanity overcome the crisis it is going through.

The foundation of our teachings lies in the vision of the great sage and yogi, Shankaracharya, who reformulated Vedanta, the ancient philosophy of India, in the 8th century. He asserted with authority that our true nature is universal Self and that separation between beings is based on a limited perspective of reality. Swami Sivananda and Swami Vishnudevananda inherited these teachings and interpreted them for the modern world. Being both visionaries, they foresaw the evolution of the world towards more conflict, chaos and loss of meaning. They breathed new life into the practical side of Vedanta philosophy, yoga, and opened this ancient practice, so far kept for a small group of recluses, to the world.

Swami Vishnudevananda came to the West in 1957 and further adapted the teachings of yoga to the western world, creating a remarkable bridge between East and West. He taught young and old, men and women from all walks of life and religions, equally.

The Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres continue to carry this powerful message of unity: yoga is for all and can help humanity overcome the consciousness crisis it is going through.

What people need now are practical guidelines on how to make changes in their lives. It is becoming very clear that for this world to overcome the huge challenge it is facing, the changes must come from individuals. This is exactly what yoga can give: guidance on how to live a meaningful and successful life. We need a new definition of success. Success if not in material possession and power over others. It is in harmonising ourselves and reaching a clear understanding of who we are. Once we understand that we are the all powerful Self, fear disappears, and if there is no fear, how can one harm anyone? This will solve religious conflicts, environment conflicts, addiction and depression problems. People will regain self esteem and hope for the future. They will sense that their true roots are not in a country or a religion, but that the grounding and stability they are seeking comes from a clear sense of identity. This new sense of goal will bring focus, positivity and fresh energy. This will in turn affect their health positively.

May we bring forth the true message of yoga with full power, authenticity and humility, remembering that we are only instruments of the cosmic being, and be ever grateful for the opportunity to serve in His grand plan for the evolution of the world.

The International Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres

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.

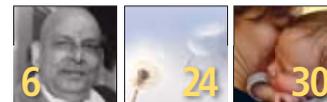


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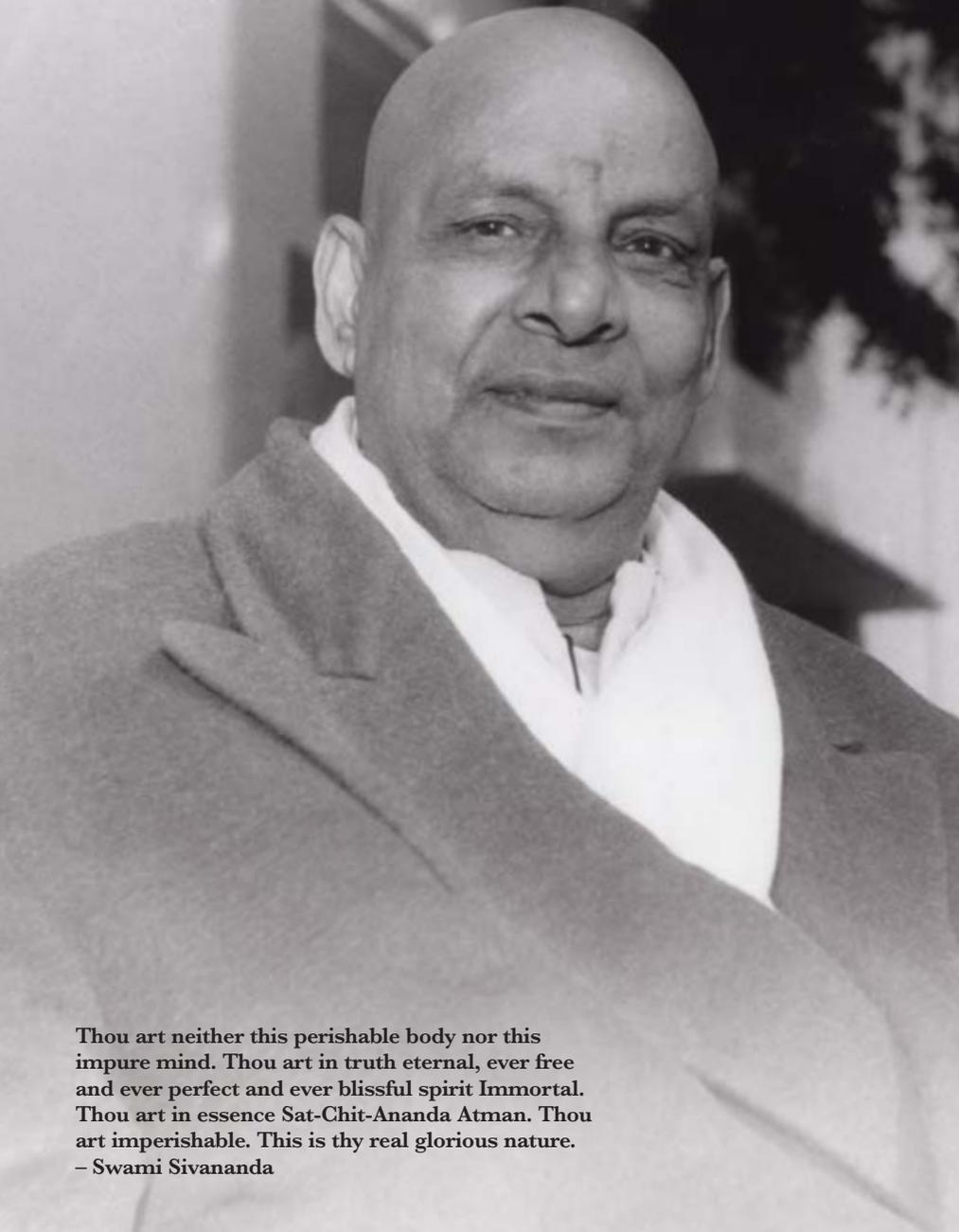
With ashrams and centres located around the world see page 60 for addresses

SIVANANDA YOGALife



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- A Tribute to Dr Sastry PhD** Dr Sastry had been a close friend and supporter of the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres for many years. He is fondly remembered by two students who had studied with him.
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Thou art neither this perishable body nor this impure mind. Thou art in truth eternal, ever free and ever perfect and ever blissful spirit Immortal. Thou art in essence Sat-Chit-Ananda Atman. Thou art imperishable. This is thy real glorious nature.
– Swami Sivananda

Life and its Purpose

By Swami Sivananda

Have you understood the significance and the glory of human life? Have you realised what a precious gift and veritable divine power this human birth is? Do you not feel that life is meant for the fulfilment of a most sublime purpose? Truly it is meant for the attainment of a lofty goal, namely divine perfection and perennial peace and bliss. You all know quite well that life is not merely the act of breathing, digesting, eliminating, thinking, feeling, knowing, willing, etc. Life is not meant for eating, seeing, sleeping and dying miserably in the end.

A little toast, butter and jam, a little stylish clothing, a bungalow and a motor car and a round of cinemas, attendance at parties – these do not really constitute life.

You truly live your life when you strive manfully for working out and driving the mind to spiritual realisation and service of humanity. A little toast, butter and jam, a little stylish clothing, a bungalow and a motor car and a round of cinemas, attendance at parties – these do not really constitute life. This is not the end of the real man who has been 'made in the image of God.' Mere sensual life is after all only the life of an animal. Every day you must polish it and make it look divine and be divine. Egoism, desire and sensuality – all this is ignorance; it is deep delusion. Can material comforts elevate the souls of the people? Can gross physical prosperity alone confer upon you solace, courage, peace, joy, immortality and eternal perfection in the spirit? Certainly not.

Oh blessed children of immortality! Reflect yourself over what I say. Think deeply. Discriminate. You will realise the truth about this most transitory pain-filled life on earth. In the dizzy whirlpool of fleeting sensual pleasures and ceaseless seething desires, do not forget the true purpose of life and its real goal. There is no greater blunder than to think, to feel, to mistake the unreal for the real, the transitory for the permanent and to forget the most important duty in life. What greater folly, what greater tragedy is there than when a man neglects to reach the goal of life?

You are helpless when you are a baby, you are helpless when disease overtakes you and when you are seriously ill and you are helpless when powerful calamities like fire, flood, earthquake, cyclone, etc., strike down mankind. You are helpless and you are miserable when you become old and senile. Why then are you so proud and eccentric? Rise above this delusion and attain your goal through discrimination and dispassion, analysis and enquiry of your real spiritual nature. Enquire 'Who am I' and try to realise your essential natural self. Then alone you will transcend your body and mind and realise the Self. Then alone you will be really free and ever blissful.

Virtue is the way to peace and light. Righteousness is the

real secret of Self-realisation. Purity is the path to perfection. Goodness leads you to godliness. Strive for ethical perfection. Live a strictly ethical life. Adhere to truth and righteousness, even at the cost of your life. Base your life upon absolute righteousness. Cultivate noble qualities with diligence and care. Be sincere, friend! Actively practise all virtues in right earnest and with real zeal. Become an embodiment of goodness. Think no evil. Speak no evil. See no evil. Do no evil. Be good in thought, speech and action.

Remember the Lord daily and every moment of your lifetime. Pray to him fervently with humility and devotion for purifying your nature and helping to attain the glorious goal of life. Live for God. Boldly face all the difficulties and tribulations of this petty earthly life. Be a man. With courage, struggle for the great attainment. Climbing a mountain, crossing a channel, bombing a city or blasting a fort, these are not the true acts of heroism and real courage. Controlling your mind and senses and overcoming anger, passion and egoism, by attaining self-mastery; these constitute the real heroism in man. How long will you be a slave of passion and the senses? Assert your real divine nature and your mastery over your lower nature and lower self. This is your most important duty.

Assert your real divine nature and your mastery over your lower nature and lower self. This is your most important duty.

Do not identify yourself with this perishable body. Do not run after fashion and passion. Do not cultivate the habit of clinging to the glittering names and forms. Do not be ignorant, Oh man; and think of no delusion. Do not feel: 'I am an Indian,' 'I am an American,' 'I am an Italian', etc., 'I am black, I am white, I am yellow'; 'I am superior, I am inferior'; 'I know everything, he knows nothing; I have done this, I have done that; I am a Hindu, I am a Christian, I am a Mohammedan and I am so and so, I am a Parsi, I am a Jain', etc.

All this is the worst type of ignorance. Hear the great truths declared boldly by the prophets and godmen, saints and men of real deep wisdom. Thou art neither this perishable body nor this impure mind. Thou art in truth eternal, ever free and ever perfect and ever blissful spirit Immortal. Thou art in essence Sat-Chit-Ananda Atman. Thou art imperishable. This is thy real glorious nature.

Feel this, meditate over this and assert this. Realise this and attain the Wisdom of the Self. Be for ever in bliss. Life is meant for the practice of Yoga. Strive ever to attain this great goal. Practise the Yoga of saintliness. Do selfless service in a spirit of pure worship. Cultivate devotion to the Lord and worship Him daily. Purify the heart through charity and generosity. Meditate daily upon the Lord.

Serve Love, give, purify, meditate, Realise. Be good. Do good. Be kind. Be compassionate. Enquire 'Who am I?' Know the Self and be free.

Through ceaseless discrimination, reflection and enquiry attain the Wisdom of the Self. Serve Love, Give, Purify, Meditate, Realise. Be good. Do good. Be kind. Be compassionate. Enquire 'Who am I?' Know the Self and be free. The one Lord indwells all beings. Feel his presence everywhere. See Him alone in all men and things. Give up all distinctions and differences. Feel oneness with all beings. Embrace all. Love all. Feel the bliss with all in a spirit of brotherhood and live to kindle the light of life in your heart. Be all-inclusive. Radiate pure love throughout your life. Start the good life right from today.

Cast aside all doubts, fears and misgivings. Do not hesitate, be bold; life is short. Time is fleeting. You have to be practical Oh man! Do not be weak in thy faith. You must have faith that can move mountains. Never forget your Immortal nature. Never forget your true purpose in life. Wake up from your long sleep of ignorance. Realise thy hidden real nature. Stop not till the goal is reached. Stop not till you attain the wisdom of the Self. Oh Wanderer in this quagmire of Samsara! Overcome all evil. Annihilate all lust, greed and egoism and come back to your sweet original home, the abode of eternal peace, eternal bliss and eternal sunshine. Through sincere struggle with the lower nature and the lower self and through a life of practical goodness and Yoga, attain perfection in thought, word and deed in this very life. To whatever nation you belong, to whatever race you belong, to whatever society you belong, your real duty and the most important work is this, the attainment of the highest spiritual perfection and bliss. May the Lord, the one God who is known variously bestow upon you all the highest bliss and perfection in this very life. May love alone prevail everywhere. May peace and prosperity be unto all living beings ■

The one Lord indwells all beings. Feel his presence everywhere.

Sunrise meditation overlooking Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Dhanwantari Ashram Neyyar Dam, Kerala South India

Fascinating India



Rudraprayag Himalayas

International Sivananda Teachers' Training Courses

February 25 – March 26, 2017
October 21 – 19 November 19, 2017

Sadhana Intensive

October 30 – November 14, 2017
Advanced hatha yoga practice following the instructions of the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*

Sivananda Kutir Uttarkashi, Himalayas

International Sivananda Advanced Yoga Teachers' Training Course

March 4 – April 2, 2017



Asana class on the rooftop terrace in Rudraprayag



Sivananda Kutir, Uttarkashi



Kartik Swami Temple, near Rudraprayag



Hotel Monal Resort, the Venue for the Teachers Training Course in Rudraprayag



SIVANANDA YOGA VEDANTA RETREAT HOUSE

Founder: Swami Vishnudevananda. Est 1957

www.sivananda.eu · Contact: rudraprayag-himalayas@sivananda.net



Celebrating 60 years of Swami Vishnudevananda's Teachings Worldwide

The experience 'I am universal space; I was never, ever bound by this body and mind' ... this is yoga. – Swami Vishnudevananda

Sent by his teacher Swami Sivananda in 1957 to “bring yoga to the West.... people are waiting”, Swami Vishnudevananda fulfilled that mission and more. He planted the seeds for yoga to grow into the world-wide phenomenon that it now is, at a time when the practice was barely recognised.

We celebrate the 60th anniversary of Swamiji's first arrival in the West with a selection of photographs and quotes to give an idea of the dynamism of this great teacher, of his unequalled determination and the boundless joy and freedom that he brought to the world through his teachings. His energy shines through the photographs that have been gathered here; a life of selflessness and of heartfelt goodness, a life of grace and generosity. These few pages are excerpts from a new book soon to be published: *Swamiji, a Pictorial Celebration of Swami Vishnudevananda's life*.

Swamiji's Mission and Legacy

Swami Vishnudevananda was a pioneer and a visionary. He simplified and clarified Yoga by formulating the five points, and making yoga easily accessible to all, without ever compromising the integrity or purity of the teachings.

Swamiji said that his mission was as much as possible to reduce the negative influence on human society by positive suggestions and a positive way of life.

From very humble beginnings and much hard work, Swamiji was instrumental in bringing Yoga into the mass consciousness of modern culture. His tenacity, courage and will power helped him to overcome many obstacles and hardships along the way. Swamiji said that it was his faith, love and devotion to Master Sivananda that enabled him to achieve so much.

Swamiji established a network of worldwide Ashrams and Centres, run by dedicated karma yogis, and was the first to conduct Yoga Teacher's Training Courses in the West, which helped to lay the cornerstone for the systematic spread of yoga. The International Sivananda Yoga Teachers' Training Course is now conducted in countries worldwide including North and South America, Canada, Bahamas, France, Austria, Spain, Poland, Lithuania, the UK, India, China, Thailand and Vietnam. To date over 39,000 people have been trained.

Swamiji was motivated by compassion and a determined desire to help humanity. He was very open and honest and taught only what he himself practiced. He hid his saintliness but never tried to conceal his own emotional human nature. He would admit that he didn't always know the answers and that anything good that the students received was by the grace of Swami Sivananda.

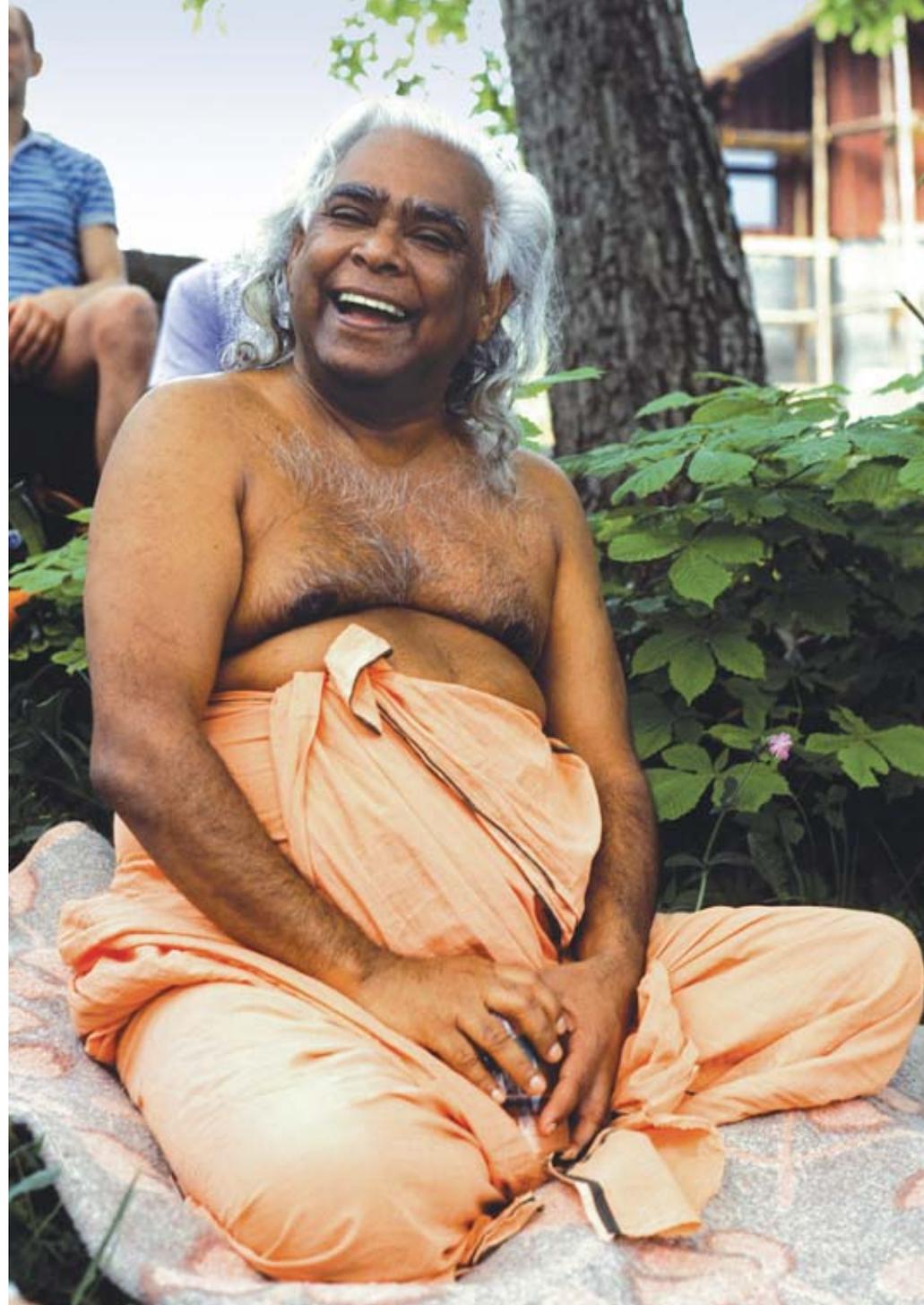
Swamiji helped promote universal peace and understanding by organising inter-faith peace conferences and symposiums at a time when no one else was doing this. His courageous Peace Missions were to show that the real boundaries that need to be broken down are the ones that exist in the mind. To see the unity in diversity and the oneness of humanity; to realise that we are all global citizens of this planet earth. He gave us the tools for finding individual peace without which there would be no real hope of attaining world peace.

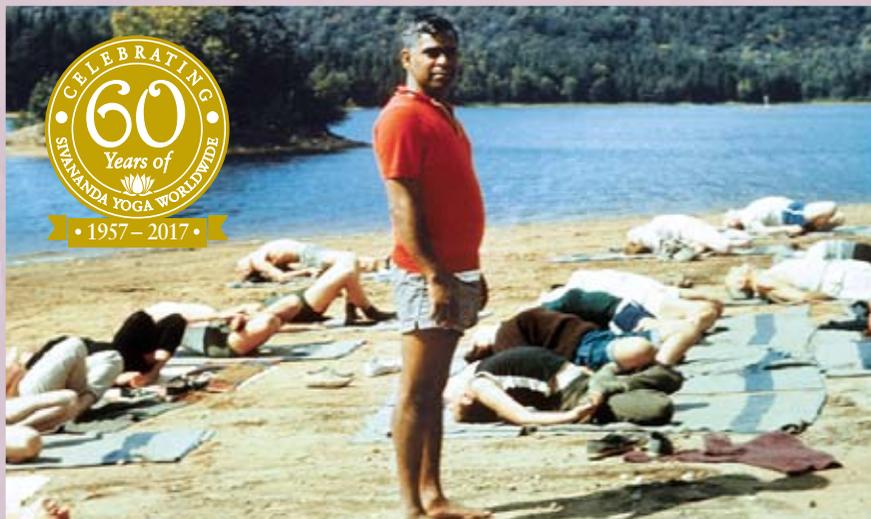
Swamiji's life exemplified the spirit of service and sacrifice that he had imbibed from his master, Swami Sivananda. Swamiji often defined yoga by quoting Swami Sivananda's motto: "Serve, Love, Give, Purify, Meditate, Realize".

The yoga that Swamiji taught was a synthesis of the four classical paths of yoga – Karma Yoga, Bhakti Yoga, Raja Yoga and Jnana Yoga. He gave us the practical tools for personal transformation on all levels – physical, mental, emotional, intellectual and spiritual. He emphasised that asanas and pranayama are not an end in themselves but that they lay the foundation for the higher aspects of yoga; the ultimate goal being the realisation of the same all pervading Self in all.

Our memories of Swami Vishnudevananda, yoga pioneer and peace missionary, run deep. His dedication, his infinite love and kindness, his devotion to his teacher Swami Sivananda, his courage in the face of personal danger in the case of his peace missions into war zones, and his sheer undaunted fearlessness in bringing the ancient wisdom teachings of yoga and meditation to the World are indelibly imprinted on us all.

Swamiji had given all that he had with all his heart and love and said that it is for us to give to others. He laid the foundation for an upsurge of Yoga in the modern world and it is now up to each individual that he touched to pass this message on.

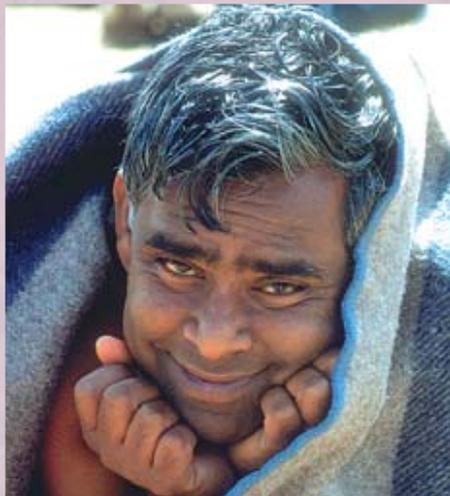




Nothing is impossible if you have faith in yourself. Yoga proclaims TAT TWAM ASI, Thou Art that, I am He. If we are willing to develop our latent spiritual powers, we can and will build a better, greater self and a better, greater world of peace and understanding. – Swami Vishnu Devananda



Mankind is in dire need of peace, and that peace can only come from within, from the heart of man. – Swami Vishnu Devananda



The highest form of positive thinking is Love thy neighbour as thyself. – Swami Vishnu Devananda



The most positive action we can perform to contribute to the momentous task of bringing our planet back into balance is to start changing ourselves. – Swami Vishnu Devananda



Swamiji Speaks:

The Purpose of Sadhana

What's the purpose of pranayama? What's the purpose of meditation? It doesn't matter what sadhana you do: asana, pranayama, meditation, japa etc. What's the purpose of all these?

Yoga is uniting with all. There is no individual self. There is only one Self, one God. I and my Father are one. I am in you, you are in me. I am He. Who said that?

Jesus taught the same Eastern philosophy. Instead of repeating "I and my Father are one" we say "Aham Brahmasmi."

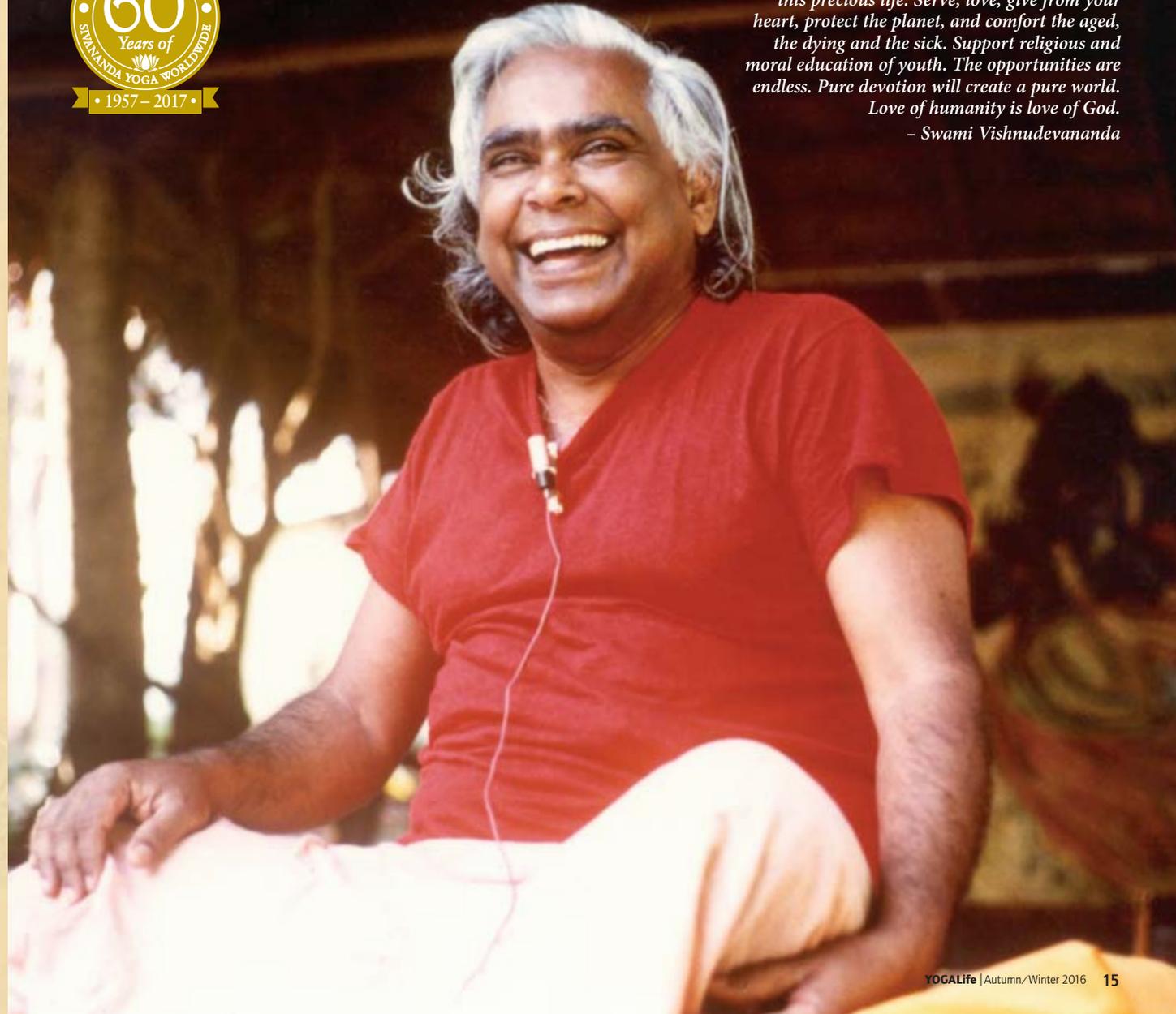
So the purpose if life is to unite ourselves. Prejudices like "I am different from you because you're English and I'm Indian"; or "You're Catholic and I'm Protestant"; or "you're a Muslim and I'm a Jew"; or you're white and I'm black", are distinctions existing only in your mind.

Until you remove these distinctions there will be no unity. To cultivate this experience of oneness is called Yoga.



Universal Love

Truth is not the sole monopoly of any person, group or spiritual system. Universal peace and brotherhood are possible only when hatred, prejudice and bigotry have been replaced with love.



If you cannot remember God, remember death and see the suffering of humanity. Don't waste this precious life. Serve, love, give from your heart, protect the planet, and comfort the aged, the dying and the sick. Support religious and moral education of youth. The opportunities are endless. Pure devotion will create a pure world. Love of humanity is love of God.

– Swami Vishnudevananda



Swamiji Speaks:

Asanas are not the End

Asanas and pranayama are not the end. They are only steps which help the aspirants to ascend the spiritual ladder and to remove the tamasic and rajasic nature of the body and the mind. They make the body very light and remove physical and mental ailments so that the practitioner is able to sit for meditation.

If the nadis are purified the prana moves in sushumna. Then the mind stops functioning and the senses are brought under control.

When the mind and its vrittis are stilled, the real divine nature is seen clearly in the mind-lake. Mere pranayama itself will not help the aspirant unless he combines selfless service and worship to remove the impurities of the mind.



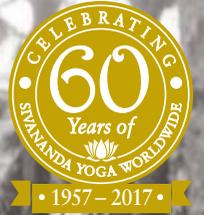
Tap the Source Within

For an external observer, Hatha Yoga appears to be an entirely physical process. Many people nowadays do asanas and pranayama merely for maintaining good health. No doubt, Hatha Yoga enables you to maintain perfect health and in this respect it is infinitely superior to all tonics and medicines. It enables you to tap the infinite source of vital power lying latent within you.



Unity in Diversity

There are and always will be different languages, cultures, thoughts, faiths, religions and social orders. Yet all this will only add to the beauty of the world if we accept them properly instead of creating friction and war.





Swamiji Speaks:

It is all up to you now

We have shown you the path – how to achieve this peace and tranquillity and evolution. You can evolve fast and bring peace to the entire humanity. The aim of yoga is to remind us that we are living like human brothers on this planet earth. Try to remove the idea that ‘I am a Jew’, ‘I am a Catholic’, ‘I am a Protestant’, ‘I am a white man’, ‘I am a black man’, ‘I am a coloured man’, ‘I am an Indian’ and so forth. This idea should go from human thinking.

Yoga teaches that you are immortal Spirit. Until you find this Spirit, until you know that everyone is made up of the same substance, the same Spirit, the same Consciousness, the same dignity, there will be no peace.

It is not possible to have one language, or one religion, or one faith, or one philosophy to suit all human levels. There will always be different languages. Different religions will be there, different colours will be there, different customs, different philosophies, different thinking. Let them all have what they want. If we can live peacefully, respecting others’ wishes and others’ religions and others’ philosophies and yet sticking to our own philosophy, our religion, our faith, our way of life, this is the beauty. This is called Unity in Diversity.

Let us bring as much peace, unity and oneness as possible – not separatism, not division, and not war, not fighting, but unity in diversity.



Continuing Swami Vishnudevananda’s Mission...



Today thousands of people practice the yoga exercises which Swami Vishnudevananda first taught in the West in 1957.

There are more than 60 Sivananda Centres and Ashrams worldwide, all peaceful oases of intense Yoga practice, open to people from all walks of life. All the activities of the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres are based on the principle of “selfless service”.

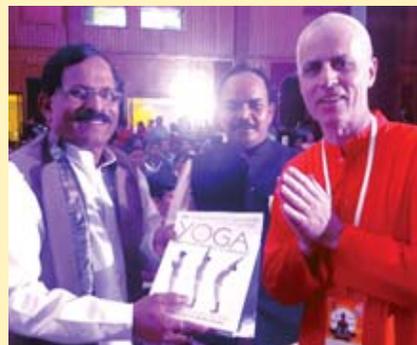
There are many possibilities to help at the Yoga Centres and Ashrams. Get inspired to give some of your time to others, and share the energy of the Yoga practice with like-minded people.

www.sivananda.org · www.sivananda.eu



The Sivananda organisation participated in the International Conference “Yoga for Body and Beyond”, which was held by the Ministry of Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homeopathy (AYUSH) on 22nd and 23rd of June 2016 in Delhi. With 3,000 mostly Indian delegates in attendance, the focus of the conference was on scientific research and healthcare, as well as physical and mental well-being.

A major topic was the Yoga Teachers’ Certification and Accreditation Scheme which has been launched by the Ministry of AYUSH: (www.yogacertification.qci.org). The Sivananda organisation takes an active part in the development and implementation of this project.



Congratulating the Honourable Minister of AYUSH, Sh. Shripad Yesso Naik



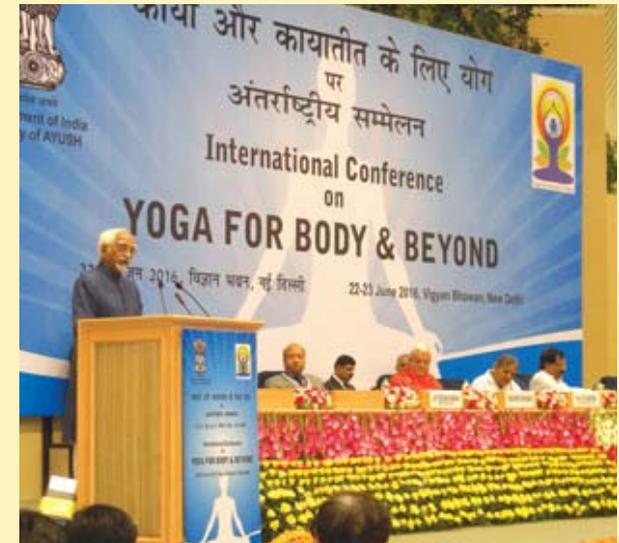
Swami Sivadasananda and Gopala

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF YOGA CELEBRATION

DELHI, INDIA

The International Conference: “Yoga for Body & Beyond”

June 21 – 23, 2016



The conference was inaugurated by the Honourable Vice-President of India, Sri Mohammad Hamid Ansari



How to Overcome your Inner Limitations

By Swami Durgananda

Through regular Sadhana your life will experience a shift of consciousness, a shift of awareness. You notice things you never noticed before within yourself and also within nature all around you. You recognise that you are actually a spiritual being, it means you are part of everything. You are part of nature, you are part of this universe.

Swami Vishnudevananda, our teacher and founder of all the Sivananda Yoga Centres worldwide, had a vision in the late 1960s. He had been sent by Swami Sivananda to the West to teach Yoga, but Swami Vishnu did not really know what to expect as he had never been to the West and he was unsure what to do. Then he had a vision whilst meditating, which physically shook his body with its strength. He saw suffering, he saw cities on fire, millions of people

running, escaping, babies being delivered on the way. Visions can take some time to manifest, because physical life is much slower than astral life, but we recognise Swami Vishnu's vision today in the world around us. From his vision, he knew he had to do something, and realised what his master had meant. He set about establishing the Centres and Ashrams, naming them "Sivananda" out of devotion to his guru, and started training people in the techniques of yoga.



The vision led him to create a training programme in yoga on a grand scale. He started quickly, and within 10 years we had ashrams and centres in America, Europe, India, and Australia. He taught non-stop, with the first organised Teachers' Training Course in 1969. The course originally lasted six weeks, it is now four weeks, and rather than create a yoga "profession", it is intended to pass on techniques for people to manage their own suffering, to suffer less, and create a personal Sadhana. Once you have this in your own life, you can pass it on. Swami Vishnu said you should teach in your own community, in your schools, wherever you are working – and people do. Now we have thirty nine thousand teacher trainees worldwide, and they teach, and so it multiplies.

In addition to the Teachers' Training Courses, Swami Vishnu created the "Yoga Vacation", quite familiar to us as a concept now, but he was the first to invent it. He saw how people would "escape" to the country for their holidays, and said, "Let's make use of this, when people have time, to teach them yoga."

Swami Vishnu said "teach". There is no competition, just teach. Learn to cultivate your character. Remove self-centeredness and develop divine radiance. These are just words, but the feeling within tells you when you get closer to that divine radiance because peace and harmony will go side-by-side. Then outer

Inner peace can be experienced through the practice of yoga, and that is what the masters are trying to convey to us.

actions and language reflect your inner character and show where your heart and mind are. That is why in yoga we also watch the impulses. Swami Vishnudevananda would say, "roll back your tongue", at the beginning, when you still have these impulses of wrong language. You can't speak when you roll your tongue back!

Through regular Sadhana your life will experience a shift of consciousness, a shift of awareness. You notice things you never noticed before within yourself and also within nature all around you. You recognise that you are actually a spiritual being, it means you are part of everything. You are part of nature, you are part of this universe. That is the idea of Brahman-hood, of this oneness.

Swami Vishnu would speak of the seven instincts: lust, anger, hatred, jealousy, greed, pride, and a very big one, fear. All of these are within us, you might say sleeping within us, unknown. But when they appear, we identify with them and we think we are that. This is a mistake, what yoga calls avidya, ignorance of our true Self. These instincts veil us completely. But if we watch nature around us, the animal kingdom and so on, we see that these instincts are also very much present in them. They are just camouflaged in human beings because of the way we are educated, the way we dress and the way we speak. We think we have overcome these instincts, but we have not. When we are challenged, they come out.

We call it in yoga "the untrained mind." The untrained mind is reacting and identifying with these instincts. It leads to fighting, wars, negativity. Consequently we feel isolated. We isolate ourselves in groups, and we feel depressed and unhappy. This is what we see, particularly now in this Iron Age, (Kali Yuga) the term that yoga philosophy gives the period of time in which we live.

Inner peace can be experienced through the practice of yoga, and that is what the masters are trying to convey to us. Then, the reflection of that feeling of inner peace radiates outwards and helps towards community peace, and so on. At the

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moment you see the opposite taking place. Yoga can help but we need to train the mind, and this is not easy. Yoga is a self-discipline, it is not an imposed discipline, you impose it on yourself, and this gives you tremendous strength and will-power. Those who have learned will-power in their early age have a big advantage. Sports, music and a good school all help a youngster to cultivate will-power. Often, though, parents and teachers lack will-power themselves and in order to encourage self-discipline in a group, it takes a lot of will-power from the teacher. It takes courage to go beyond that emotional, sensual life.

It takes courage to practice yoga, to cross certain barriers of yoga. The easy yoga is just up and down, left and right. But to cross certain borders in yoga also takes courage. What hinders us from crossing these borders? The stagnation of life, fanatic perceptions, old habits from unaware lifestyles, and of course laziness. These prevent us reaching beyond certain points. So emotionally, intellectually and culturally we build barriers, and they need to be broken down. It takes will-power, self-discipline and a lot of courage.

We want quick fixes, quick methods, like when you have a story and you want to know how it ends so you start at the back of the book. People want to learn how to overcome their dilemmas in life so they start from the back with everything. This can only give a shallow result and shallow understanding, which leads to our second problem: the real understanding of what life is and of our spiritual life takes a long journey. It can be discouraging to hear "it takes lifetimes" when we have to deal with our life now, but even if the results come slowly and we feel like a snail crawling, it doesn't matter. Something is happening.

Inner awareness indicates whether we have developed, and as Swami Vishnudevananda said, the sign of inner awareness is how much selflessness is being expressed. How much selflessness are you expressing? Not how much do you want to express, but how much is coming naturally from within? How much simpler have you become in dealing with your life? That is also something to be observed. Simplicity, real simplicity, comes out of awareness. How much love do you have for your fellow man? That is very difficult, to love thy neighbour as thyself. It grows as inner awareness grows. These are signs of your inner awakening.

The body and mind are like vehicles which can drive us on our inner journey. Yoga takes good care of the body and mind, not because of attachment to any sensual pleasures, but because

we need these two vehicles in order to achieve inner awareness. Swami Vishnu would constantly remind us that yoga has different levels even though he is known as a big Hatha Yoga teacher. First is the physical level, second the emotional level, and third there is the spiritual level. This is what we learn about in more detail in the Teacher's Training Course.

At a physical level we have the asanas. They lubricate the joints and keep the body healthy. They also have influence upon the emotional level, although it is pranayama which primarily takes care of the emotional level. Pranayama is more difficult for people to practice because the results are less tangible. You need a certain focus and you also need a certain technique so you need a good teacher to show you. It is further complicated because you progress slowly and your lung capacity may be diminished, and the tension of your solar plexus may be immense. However, it is very important because in our society now in this age, many people are emotionally not fully developed, which means they are not in control of their emotions and they are not even aware that they are emotional. This is a big hindrance if you want to go further up the ladder in yoga.

To take care of the physical level is easy, we understand why we need to do asanas because we want to walk, we want to be flexible and have good digestion, we want to enjoy food, and sleep well. The emotional level, however, often gets pushed towards the medical route. You go to a psychiatrist or a psychologist to take care of your emotional level but in a lot of instances pranayama will deal with the emotional level very well. Swami Vishnudevanda used to say that half an hour of pranayama is essential every day. It cools your brain and it controls the impulses of the mind and therefore it controls the individual ego, the instincts. We go to yoga schools and yoga masters to learn this.

Then the third part is the spiritual level. This is actually the cream in the cake, and to reach the cream you have to go through the basics. The spiritual level is meditation, be it in the form of prayer, inner reflection, repetition of mantras, rosaries or malas, and studying scriptures. Our Easter 2016 retreat was based on the *Narada Bhakti Sutra* which is a small bhakti scripture. Bhakti is not very fashionable nowadays, but it is needed to soften the ego.

When you become aware of your real inner freedom and you become aware that your instincts are controlling you, this is a big step forward.

Swami Sivananda taught integral yoga, meaning you would experience all three of these levels as you practice. Then you experience some inner peace, you become more aware and gain real freedom. Freedom does not mean you can say what you want, eat what you want or do what you want. That is not freedom, rather it will give you even more boundaries. When you become aware of your real inner freedom and you become aware that your instincts are controlling you, this is a big step forward. Swami Vishnudevanda would say, "Be the witness of your own movie." When you reflect on your day and start to see where your emotions or instincts have taken over, where they have caused suffering, then you can start to realise what

you really are, to feel 'oneness' with all. Then compassion comes. It's not that you say, "Oh I want to be compassionate now." It's not from the intellect, it comes from inside, without thinking about it. Compassion has nothing to do with the intellect. You cannot think "I am compassionate now," or "I am devotional now". Swami Vishnu, when he walked through the ashram in Canada, would fold his hands to greet people as is the habit in India. The way he did it was more than habit, he made you feel so welcome. It was not done with the intellect, "I have to greet this person now", rather it was done with compassion, love and devotion for that being entering that place. In the West we also have our ways of showing compassion, love and devotion. The ego melts and the yogi is born. It will bring peace to the family, to the community, all around. With will-power, this can be achieved.

Pure yoga is something no teacher, no master, no guru can give you, only your own effort and your own hard work.

In 1986, Swami Vishnudevanda would tell us how the forces around us are very negative: mental and physical energy is depleted and will-power is weakened in the present Dark Age. In those days, when we were listening to his lectures, things were still quite alright, we still had flower power and things seemed ok. Now we know what he meant. We are currently transcribing talks that Swami Vishnu gave onto CD and paper, and in the most recent I have read he is talking about Sadhana during the Iron Age, the Dark Age we are in now. There are four ages according to the Vedas, and in the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna talks about it, and we are now in the darkest age. Well, hearing this in the seventies, we wondered, in the eighties, maybe we saw a little bit what he meant when we learned about AIDS, and now it is becoming very apparent.

Swami Vishnu said it would be very difficult for the individual to move on in their spiritual practice, to practice at a physical, emotional, and spiritual level. "It is difficult to plough on in this negative field of darkness. Only through god's name you will be able to move on through this dark time. What is happening to this world at present, we can't even describe. Imagine in a few more years we enter into our next century. We do not know what kind of calamities, evil and negative energy we will have to face. This world is getting darker and darker. Our energy and will-power are also depleted because of the Dark Age." Swami Vishnu said this in 1986. He had compassion for us, he would encourage us to get up to do our Sadhana, saying: "Remember it's the Dark Age, it's difficult. Our energy and will-power are depleted because of the Dark Age. People do not have strength to meditate, to do asanas, to do pranayama, and few people are able to do early morning meditation."

So this is why he started all the Centres and Ashrams, so you can train in a positive direction. We know it's hard. You also know. But at least you are here and you are working on your will-power. He continues: "But you have also moved in a positive direction quite far and quite fast." What he means by that is, if you make a little effort in these difficult times, it counts a hundred times more because the forces against you are very negative; anything you do to counteract this has its effect multiplied.

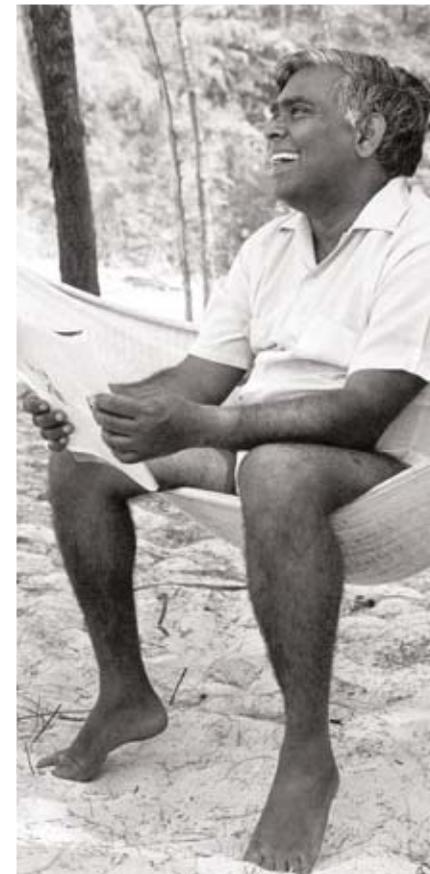
Swami Vishnu also spoke about experiencing your own inner peace, and how this is how you come to know real yoga. Pure yoga is something no teacher, no master, no guru can give you, only your own effort and your own hard work. He used to say this a lot. There is often a crossroad that people come to once they have learned the methods, either they become steady in their efforts and practice, or they don't, they are not really sincere and they start criticising and blaming others. Negativity takes over and then people stop, sometimes over a little thing, for example Western students who visit the Indian Ashrams expect raw foods and salads, which of course are very difficult to obtain in the Himalayas where barely a car will reach. So they stop following their course, after all the effort it has taken to get to India in the first place, the money they have saved, the travel arrangements, the packing. There are lots of obstacles if the three levels are not practiced.

In 1984 Swami Vishnu said: "Success in yoga will be rapid if you put your maximum energy in your yoga practice. You must have a keen longing for liberation, an intense vairagya (dispassion), and you must be sincere and earnest in your meditation." Now you can see the interrelation between your physical body and your physical flexibility, and mental flexibility. We talk a lot about this and it takes not only flexibility but courage. You have to adjust. All of a sudden your mind says: "I'm going to take the Teachers' Training Course, I'll go to India, but I'll take my own mind with me and I want raw food". Then you realise that things are different in the Himalayas and that you will need to be flexible. Physical flexibility and mental flexibility become one. They feed each other. We do physical exercises to achieve mental flexibility.

"When you start doing pranayama and asanas, your energy, or prana, will build up and you will see a power in your body as it becomes actively magnetised by this power." Swami Vishnu said this in 1968, a time when the use of drugs was widespread. Acid had arrived, and even professors from the universities were taking acid in order to find out about their mental powers. Swami Vishnu spoke out against these drugs, and he would do a lot to help people who were on drugs. People would come suffering from drug addiction, and he would give them asanas and pranayama, he would help them to fast to cleanse their system. He warned them to expect flashbacks and that the drugs would be in the astral body and would take more than one lifetime to clean.

Swami Vishnu was really in the midst of things during that time. He met the Beatles and taught them the headstand, and warned them about drugs. He tried to help everyone he came into contact with. Lots of people would come and Swami Vishnu would help them to come clean of drugs. He saved many lives like this, and received many, many letters of thanks, I remember. He said it was a real problem that the West had started to allow these drugs to be seen as acceptable when they are so destructive.

There are more talks which are in the process of being transcribed to give us strength in this Dark Age, because we need not only the technique, but to support each other in our practice. That is what the Centres and Ashrams are doing, Swami Vishnu's gift to us ■



Above: Swami Vishnudevanda

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Swami Durgananda is Yoga Acharya (spiritual director) of the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres in Europe.
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How to Love without Attachment

By Swami Swaroopananda

Question: What is detachment and how do we love with detachment?

Answer: Detachment means detachment from suffering and the causes of suffering. This is one of the great teachings in yoga. Long before Lord Buddha taught that was life suffering, the yogis taught about samsara – that mode of existence that is nothing but suffering. We are born, we live, and we die. Actually, the yogis said that in between death and the next life, there is also another type of existence – so, birth, life, death, existence after death, and again birth. It is a cycle we repeat, again and again. This cycle of birth and death is called samsara. The yogis said that samsara is full of pain.

Now, you may say, "Nah, Swami, this is not true." Why do you say this? Because it is true that in our lives we experience pain, but we also experience pleasure. So you think, "These yogis must have been mistaken. Because they say samsara is full of pain, but my own direct experience shows me otherwise, that life is not only pain, there is also pleasure." For example, today is a beautiful day; it is very pleasurable. Another day it may be cold, less pleasurable, (unless you like cold!!) But the yogis proved, beyond any doubt, that indeed even when we experience pleasure, this pleasure is masked pain. Let us see how.

Try to find one thing that does not fly away, including this body, including beauty, including youth, including intelligence, including wealth. Do not get attached to things that fly away, which is all things. You are going to suffer.

Desire

The main cause of pain is what we call karma. And the main cause of karma is what we call desire.

Desire has two forms. One we call raga, which is attraction to what is pleasurable. The other type of desire is called dvesha, aversion toward the painful. These are the two types of desires, and they are what push us to act. Either you see something you desire and you act in order to possess or experience it or you see something that you think is painful, and you take action to escape or avoid it. Those actions are called karma, and they are responsible for samsara, the cycle of birth and death.

Karma can only yield two types of fruit: sweet or bitter, in other words, pleasure or pain. Now, nobody has to convince us that pain is suffering. This is clear. How, though, is pleasure also the source of pain? Because of our desire for, and attachment to, the pleasure.

The desire that I am talking about is called raga-dvesha. This is what we call attachment, attachment to the pleasurable and attachment to, in the form of aversion, the un-pleasurable. This attachment, in a manner of speaking, is the direct cause of karma. And karma, in a manner of speaking, is the direct cause of samsara. And samsara, in a manner of speaking, is nothing but misery. Let us look deeper.

The Cause of Suffering

Yogis identified this problem long ago and asked themselves the question, "What is the cause of samsara? What is the cause of attachment? What is the cause of karma? What is the cause of suffering?" If you know the cause, you are on your way to find the remedy.

The yogis found that the cause of samsara is ignorance. They called it spiritual ignorance, or avidya. They said that the reason we suffer is because we have the wrong type of knowledge about reality. It is not just that we don't know what reality is, since not knowing is not too bad. It is an actual misapprehension of reality; we do not know reality for what it actually is.

The classical example that is given is of the rope and the snake: a person at twilight sees a rope and thinks that the rope is a snake. Due to ignorance of the fact that it is a rope, there is a misapprehension that takes the shape of a non-existing snake, an illusory snake, causing fear. This is the same misapprehension we have about the nature of reality.

Not being attached means being free, being able to love. In love, there is no fear. In real love, there is no fear. In attachment, there is fear of loss. There is always fear of loss in attachment. Not so in love.

Attachments

Now think about it. Tonight, before you go to sleep, take a notebook and write a list of all of your attachments. Maybe there will be 10, maybe 100. Maybe there will be 2,000 of them. Maybe you have to spend the whole night writing. Then, look at all of these attachments, and ask yourself, "How many more attachments would I like to have?" "I have 2,000. Would I like to have 2,000 and one?" Does anyone think, "I have 2000 attachments; that is not enough!?" Does anyone think one attachment is happiness, two attachments is greater happiness, and 2,000 attachments is ecstatic happiness? Write down your attachments, and sincerely ask this question: "Do I want more?"

If we are sincere, the reality is that each attachment is like a shackle; we are shackled in chains. Not one chain – thousands and thousands and thousands of chains. We are imprisoned in chains of attachments, which bring suffering. Why?

Change

You may desire whatever you like; it does not mean that you are going to get it. This alone can cause suffering. The more important thing is that even if you get what you want, it is guaranteed that you are going to lose it. Ultimately, everything changes, things that come will go, and eventually, everything will go away.

So again, let us say that I am attached to, I have a desire for, an object. The likelihood that I am going to possess the object is not very high, and so I will suffer greatly. Let us say, however, that I do obtain it. Once I possess the object, there might be a moment of pleasure, but, and this is the key, the likelihood of that pleasure lasting very long is very small. The likelihood of that pleasure going away is very great. Either the object itself will change, or I am going to change; either way the pleasure of the object will end. Which means that the likelihood that I am going to suffer due to this attachment to the object is very high – whether I get this thing I desire or not. This is what happens in our lives.

Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton

Remember Elizabeth Taylor and Richard Burton? It was a great love story, and Richard Burton bought her that wonderful diamond, and she said, "I love you, honey." And Elizabeth Taylor took that diamond and she put it in the safe. Then later on, there were saucers flying in the kitchen, she told him, "Go to hell, honey." But that diamond was still there. The diamond did not change. But Elizabeth Taylor changed. Richard Burton changed. The diamond was still there in the safe. The love was not there anymore.

At first, when Elizabeth Taylor would look at the diamond, she loved it; it reminded her of Richard Burton toward whom she had attachment. Later on, when she had such an aversion toward him, every time she would look at the diamond she would remember him – and she hated that diamond.

In our attachment to things, we forget that all life is changing.

The Crow Story

Suppose there is a crow coming every day to your window – a lovely crow. You feed the crow from your hand. And day after day, the crow comes, and you become attached to the crow. Now, I am not a prophet, but I can predict what is going to happen. One day, the crow does not show up. But you are attached to the crow. You ask yourself, "Where is my dear crow?" You check 10 times during the day and the dear crow does not come. The next day you check and the dear crow does not show up. And you experience so much anguish, because by now you are attached to the crow coming. Then, you go to a wise person and tell him, "I am suffering so much because of that crow. He disappeared. What should I do?" The wise man will say, "Do not get attached to things that fly away. Do not get attached to things that fly away."

Try to find one thing that does not fly away, including this body, including beauty, including youth, including intelligence, including wealth. Do not get attached to things that fly away, which is all things. You are going to suffer.

The Relief of Suffering

Understanding the nature of samsara, the nature of reality, the yogis have advised us not to get attached to things that fly away. How do we do this?

It is by developing the power of non-attachment. This is what will relieve suffering. It is guaranteed. And so, all we need is to learn the method of non-attachment. The method is simple, doing it is not always easy. Because we don't have just one addiction or attachment – there are millions.

It is by developing the power of non-attachment. This is what will relieve suffering. It is guaranteed.

Imagine a field full of thorns. Each thorn is an attachment, and there are millions of them. Now, you are walking on these thorns barefoot. All of those thorns were flowers when you desired them and fell in love with them, not knowing that they are going to turn into thorns. By the time that you realised they would all turn into thorns, you are already deep, deep into the middle of a vast field of them, barefoot. And each thorn is bringing you pain.

So you ask a wise man, "What do I do?" Well, one way would be to remove every thorn from that field. But this is impossible. A second way would be to buy a carpet that is big enough to put over the thorns. Obviously, this is not very realistic.

But there is a third way that is very intelligent and does not demand much effort. It is relatively easy: simply make yourself a pair of shoes. Make yourself a pair of shoes and then wherever you walk you will be protected from the thorns.

The Path of Yoga

Here is the lesson: the thorns are our attachments, and yoga is the pair of shoes. Once you have the pair of shoes of yoga, you can walk amongst the thorns and they are not going to hurt you; you will not suffer. Swami Sivananda says, "Yoga is a sheltering monastery from the three fires, the three types of pain."

You cannot get that pair of shoes; you have to make them. You have to learn how to make them. Then you can teach others how to make themselves a pair of shoes. You understand now? Do not get attached to whatever flies away. This is good advice. Learn how to do it.

Love

Life is still wonderful; it is even more wonderful. Not being attached means being free, being able to love. In love, there is no fear. In real love, there is no fear. In attachment, there is fear of loss. There is always fear of loss in attachment. Not so in love. Love is freeing. It is very desirable to be free of attachment, but it is not easy. Yet freedom from attachment exists. It is there, in yoga. Yoga is the pair of shoes ■

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 Vishnudevnananda. This article is from one of the spontaneous question and answer sessions that he frequently offers at Sivananda Centres and Ashrams around the world.
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China

Daily classes in Chengdu Center

TTC and Yoga Vacations,

Qian Fo Mountain, (near Chengdu, South West China) Sept 9th - Oct 7th, 2017

Ayurveda foundations in Chengdu, Mar 16th - 22th, 2017



Vietnam New Ashram open year round in DALAT, Vietnam Resort and Training Center.



Teachers' Training Courses Feb 12th - Mar 12th, 2017 (International) Jul 8th - Aug 5th, 2017 (Eng - Viet)

Ayurveda, Pancha Karma and 2 weeks Yoga vacations at K'lan resort by Tuyen Lam Lake, Dalat, Year round from Dec. 2016

Sadhana Intensive Mar 14th - 27th, 2017

Yoga and Ayurveda Councillors certification course (YACC) Mar 1st - 10th, 2017

Daily classes and Residential programs Year round at SYVC Ho Chi Minh; SYVC Dalat & Residential Retreats at K'lan resort.



2017 Sivananda Yoga in ASIA



Japan

Programs with Swami Dharmananda in Tokyo: May 2nd - 14th, 2017

Swami Sitaramananda and Swami Pranavananda in Tokyo: Oct 7th - 10th, 2017

TTC Refresher with Swami Narayananda near Kyoto: Nov 3rd - 5th, 2017



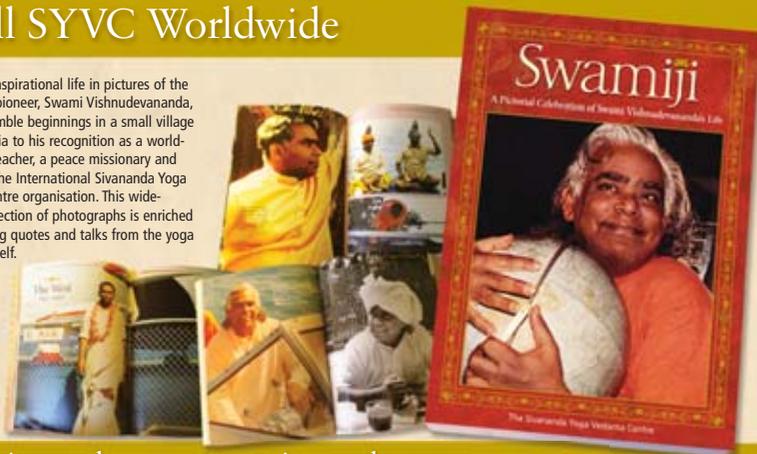
Taiwan

New Sivananda Yoga affiliated Center: Gokula retreat near Taichung.



Available Summer 2017 at all SYVC Worldwide

Here is an inspirational life in pictures of the great yoga pioneer, Swami Vishnudevnananda, from his humble beginnings in a small village in south India to his recognition as a world-renowned teacher, a peace missionary and founder of the International Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre organisation. This wide-ranging collection of photographs is enriched with uplifting quotes and talks from the yoga master himself.



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www.yogafarm.org/taiwan
www.sivananda.jp (Japan)



Mental Strength in the Asana Class

By Swami Sivadasananda



Mental fatigue is a common complaint of many people. Yoga promises relief, and it is surprising how much mental strength can be found in an hour spent on the asana mat. A closer look at some of the common features of an asana class reveals the astonishing potential of combining posture, breathing and relaxation for increased mental clarity and focus.

We live in a world of virtual space, from a narrow computer screen to special 3D-effects in movies. Adding to this the instant way we communicate through chats and email, our perception of time and space can become far removed from the natural world. As time and space are intimately related with the mind, mental clarity and mental strength decline if hearing and seeing is mostly related to a virtual reality.

The yoga class marks a clear difference: proprioception or perceiving the body through the sense of touch from skin to muscle fibres and ligaments creates a very real connection to gravity. Whether we are practicing on the top floor of a high rise building or on a beach, gravity is always the same.

Slow and rhythmical breathing with the diaphragm stimulates the solar plexus. One function of the solar plexus

is increased sensory perception of the abdomen. When applying this breath control while you move from the asana to the relaxation pose (savasana) and on to the next asana, the perception of the body in harmony with gravity deepens and extends from the abdomen to the whole body. This grounding in gravity and space calms the mind which gets settled in a very real sense of **"here"**.

The solar plexus or celiac plexus is part of both the sympathetic and parasympathetic nervous systems. Thus the conscious flow of rhythmical abdominal breathing helps to balance sympathetic ("fight and flight") and parasympathetic ("rest and rejuvenation") impulses in the body. "Inhaling energy – exhaling fatigue" is a common visualisation during yogic exercises and corresponds to this connection of the solar plexus with the autonomic nervous system.

With practice, the inhalation becomes like a mirror image of the exhalation and vice versa. The smooth and balanced flow of air entering and leaving the body becomes the main reference of experiencing time, creating a very real sense of **"now"**.

Towards the end of the final relaxation, no more movement of the body is felt and all irregularities of the breath subside. Outer sights and sounds become irrelevant and the mind is centred in the experience of a very steady "here" (gravity) and "now" (breath).

'Inhaling energy – exhaling fatigue' is a common visualisation during yogic exercises and corresponds to the connection of the solar plexus with the autonomic nervous system.

The natural mental clarity and focus which you have gained during the class tends to continue for some time. Even if you have to make your way back home or back to work through loud and intense traffic, you may be surprised how little these conditions affect your mind. But as the hours go by, the mind finds less stability in the experience of time (hearing) and space (seeing), and mental clarity and focus tend to diminish.

On one hand the yoga class guarantees more mental strength and balance by tuning to gravity and to the breath, on the other hand it seems impossible to extend this equilibrium due to the unsteadiness of sight and sound in daily life.

You may ask yourself: "Is there no other way to stay clear and focussed?" – "Is Yoga making me too sensitive?" – "Maybe it is true what some people say: Yoga makes you turn away from the realities of the world?"

Nobody should worry about these questions. They simply show the limits of asana and pranayama and the necessity to strengthen our hearing and seeing through natural means. Besides a variety of inner concentration techniques, yoga also offers simple physical meditation techniques which focus on sight and sound.

Tratak

Sit cross-legged and place a lit candle at eye level in front of you. Breathe slowly and rhythmically, and gaze steadily for one minute at the brightest part of the flame without blinking. Then close your eyes for one minute and visualise the image of the flame in the space between your eyebrows. Practise *tratak* for up to ten minutes, alternating one minute periods with eyes open and closed.



Gaze steadily at the flame without blinking



Visualise the flame between the eyebrows

OM Chanting

Sit cross-legged and pronounce the universal sound OM, by singing it on a medium pitch according to the natural flow of your exhalation. The humming M-sound should take about a third of each OM.

If you close your eyes, you can feel the sound vibrating in your body moving up to the space between the eye brows. Once you have found a pleasant rhythm and feel the natural focus between the eyebrows, you can move on to mental repetition of OM for a few minutes. Keep the eyes closed and mentally pronounce OM with each inhalation and each exhalation.

An interesting observation during *tratak* and OM chanting is that through the power of concentration the mind can create its own sensory experience: the mind can visualise the candle flame with eyes closed, and it can mentally project the sound OM without the vocal cords. With practice, it becomes clear that it is not the sense organs which perceive, but rather the mind which perceives through the senses.

This empowers the mind to act as the true master of sense perception. Like a good charioteer can direct the five horses of a chariot to run or to stand still, so also the five senses can be projected towards their respective objects or withdrawn from them at will. The body is the chariot; the Self is its master; the intellect is the charioteer, the mind are the reins, the senses are the horses and the sense-objects are the various directions where the horses can run.



Focus between the eyebrows and mentally pronounce OM

Subjugation of the Mind



"As long as the mind restlessly wanders about amidst objects, ever fluctuating, excited, agitated and uncontrolled, the true joy of the Self cannot be realised and enjoyed.

To control the restless mind and bring all thoughts and cravings to a stillness and sublimation is the greatest problem of man.

If he has subjugated the mind, he may be said to be, in his subjective freedom and power, the Emperor of emperors."

– Swami Sivananda

Swami Sivadasananda Yoga Acharya and a senior student of Swami Vishnudevananda, teaches workshops throughout the Sivananda Centres in Europe and Teachers' Training Courses worldwide. email: sws@sivananda.net

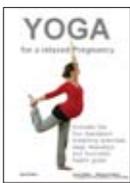
Yoga for a Relaxed Pregnancy



By Ursula Mäder
and Hildegard Pätzold

Gentle yoga exercises are a god-given present for all pregnant women. Through the adapted practise of yoga exercises (asanas), the body of a pregnant woman is supported through every stage of pregnancy, gently stretching, easing tension, and adjusting to the moment whilst preparing for the challenge of birth. Moments of happiness, peace, and calmness are the side effects of the asanas and will transfer to the growing child.

Ursula Mäder (Midwife) and Hildegard Pätzold, both yoga teachers at the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres, with a wealth of experience in teaching yoga to pregnant women, have written the book *Yoga for a Relaxed Pregnancy* for all women who want to experience the positive benefits of yoga during their pregnancy. For those women who have been practising the classical sequence of yoga positions for years, it will act as a valuable aid to adapting that practice for pregnancy. This book also serves as a practical reference work for yoga teachers wishing to develop their teaching through the 'Yoga for Pregnancy' course. In the following text, you will find some examples from *Yoga for a Relaxed Pregnancy*.



Pregnancy is a very special time in a woman's life. While nine months appears to be a long time at first, these months are very precious and pass by all too quickly. This is a period of profound physical change for the mother-to-be. It is also a time in which a woman's feelings change and she has to redefine her role in her relationship with her partner. A woman who is expecting a child is regarded with interest and curiosity by those around her.

A pregnant woman who decides to practise yoga is choosing a positive environment for herself and her growing child from the



Jyothi, our model,
and Bruno

outset. Pregnancy is often a time when a woman feels a natural inclination towards introspection and connection with her true self. As such, the breathing exercises are a godsend, as they help calm the constant churning of the mind. Yoga exercises have a wonderful ability to harmonise and bring body, mind, and soul together. Yoga helps create a protected space for the growing child and a positive, joyful experience for the mother-to-be. Her mind becomes centred, her body remains supple and she has the strength to overcome any obstacles with ease. Women who practice yoga, especially during pregnancy, can learn to tap the source of inner strength and thus better cope with new challenges.

The yoga exercises for pregnancy that are found in this book are intended for healthy women. Every woman, however, has her own personal needs during pregnancy, and these should always be integrated into one's yoga practice. Therefore, decide for yourself which exercises are best for you. A radiant sense of health after your yoga practice is a sign that you have done the right amount of exercise and performed the positions correctly.

The classical sequence of yoga positions

The classical sequence of yoga positions remains in its original form. For over fifty years these yoga exercises, made popular by Swami Vishnudevananda, have been taught in numerous Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres and nine Ashrams worldwide. Over time, these exercises have been adapted to fit the needs of pregnant women. The sequence of the asanas has been designed

in such a way that each position either builds on or provides a counterbalance to the effects of the previous exercise or prepares for the one that follows.

In order to experience the energising and balancing effects of the exercises on both the body and mind, it is necessary to practise the exercises and their relevant adaptations and variations in the order prescribed by the classical sequence of yoga practice. The exercises stimulate all systems of the human body, release muscular tensions and support the skeletal system. The stretching postures massage the internal organs, the endocrine and lymphatic systems, strengthen the heart, and promote good circulation. The digestive and eliminatory systems are also nicely stimulated. In addition, the physical exercises help maintain a good hormonal balance and the breathing exercises calm the nervous system. In the final relaxation, the full effects of the asanas unfold for the body, mind, and soul. The nervous system calms down and the mind comes to rest. Peace and harmony fill your whole being.

Ideal lifestyle during pregnancy

If you want to create the ideal lifestyle during pregnancy, include

everything that makes you happy, increases your wellbeing, and avoids, or at least reduces, worries and stress. Pregnant women suffering from constant stress are more likely to have children who will later show signs of behavioural difficulties. Studies show that women with irregular lifestyles and eating habits are more likely to have restless children. For these reasons, eat regularly and in a quiet place, and make time each day for relaxation and regeneration. Regular exercise, such as swimming, walking, and yoga, will do both you and your baby good. Avoid physical strain and remember the saying "early to bed, early to rise..." – this is good advice for healthy sleep patterns during pregnancy. In order to provide the best conditions for your growing baby, you should, as a mother-to-be, keep your body free from toxins, eat healthily, and pay attention to your own well-being.

Pregnancy offers a great opportunity to give up bad habits. The book contains advice about what you can do during pregnancy to improve your health and that of your baby. This advice is based on the teachings of ancient Indian traditional medicine, Ayurveda, which has attracted increasing attention in recent years due to its holistic approach and impressive results.

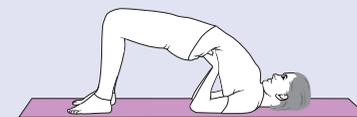
Modified Asanas for Pregnancy

All yoga exercises illustrated here can be practiced during the whole pregnancy by healthy pregnant women

The Bridge and its modified form for pregnant women: The modified Bridge



The modified Bridge. In this variation, the posture flows fluently, and is not held as a static pose.



The Bridge

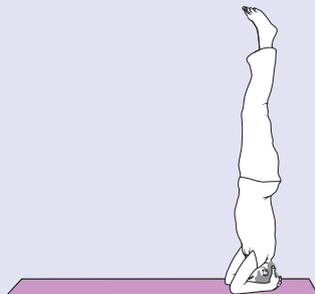
- 1 Lie on your back with your legs straight. Make sure there is enough room behind you for you to stretch out your arms above your head. Bend your legs and place your feet on the floor, about hip-width apart. Place your arms on the floor alongside your body, palms facing down.
- 2 On an inhalation, lift your buttocks up and roll your back off the floor while sweeping your arms up over your head until they touch the ground. On the exhalation, roll your spine back down onto the mat and bring the arms back down at the same time, ending with your arms alongside your body again. Repeat the exercise a total of five times.
- 3 To release the back, bend your knees in-to your chest, place your hands on your knees and rock from side to side, massaging the whole back on the floor.
- 4 Relax in your chosen relaxation position.

Benefits: Stretches the thighs, massages the shoulders, keeps the back flexible and strengthens the pelvic floor.

The Headstand and its modified form for pregnant women: The Inverted 'V'



The Inverted 'V'



The Headstand

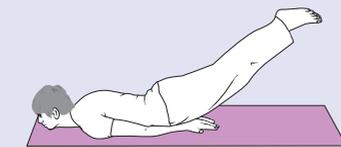
- 1 After a short relaxation in Child's Pose, come onto all fours.
- 2 Lift your buttocks upwards and stretch your arms and legs, without moving your feet backwards. Your tailbone should be pointing upwards. The position makes an inverted V shape.
- 3 Hold the position for three breaths.

Benefits: Inverted positions increase the blood flow to the brain, flushing out the toxins that have collected there and also improving our capacity for thought and concentration. Pressure on the heart is reduced as gravity aids the return of venous blood to the heart. Inversions are a sort of holiday for the internal organs that benefit from this release of pressure and this can ease problems caused by varicose veins. In addition, many nervous and glandular imbalances can be healed, particularly those linked to the reproductive system.

The Locust and its modified form for pregnant women: The Cat



The Cat



The Locust

- 1 Come onto all fours with a straight back.
- 2 Lift your left hand from the floor and stretch the arm out in front of you (hand and arm in line) then stretch the right leg out behind you with the foot flexed. Look towards the floor. Breathe deeply into the abdomen. Hold the position for three breaths and then release slowly.
- 3 Release the back by moving into the Cat-Cow position a few times. Now repeat the exercise, lifting the left leg and the right arm.
- 4 Relax in Child's Pose.

Benefits: This position will be particularly beneficial during mid – to late pregnancy, when the weight of the abdomen places increased pressure on the back and legs. The position also strengthens the back muscles and develops balance.

The Crow and its modified forms for pregnant women: The Dancer and The Tree



The Dancer



The Tree



The Crow

The Dancer

- 1 Stand up straight. Bring your weight onto your left foot, bend your right leg behind you and grasp the right ankle with your right hand. Stretch your left hand and arm upwards. Fix a point with your eyes to help you find your balance. Press your upper chest forwards and up and keep your thighs parallel to each other.
- 2 If you can easily keep your balance in this position, press your right foot backwards, pulling it as far as possible upwards and backwards at the same time with your right hand. This helps stretch the muscles of the hip joint. The left arm remains stretched upwards. Do not bend too far forwards while coming into this position.
- 3 Hold the position for three breaths and then release slowly. Repeat the exercise on the other side.

The Tree

- 1 Stand, feet firmly on the floor, feet and legs together. Like a tree, you should feel firmly rooted to the ground.
- 2 Bend your right leg and place the sole of the foot on the inside of the left thigh, as high up as possible. The right knee should drop out to the side. Fix your gaze on a point in front of you and find your balance. Bring your palms together in front of your chest and slowly raise your hands upwards until the arms are straight. Hold the position for three breaths and then release slowly.
- 3 Repeat the exercise to the other side, lifting the left leg.

Benefits: The Dancer and the Tree are balancing exercises that focus on stability, inner balance, and grounding. They strengthen our feel for physical balance. If we are sure on our feet, then our whole body can relax. Small imbalances in our posture resolve themselves. There is more space in the chest, shoulders, and throat. You can find your inner balance. If you are feeling mentally and physically tense and your nerves are on edge, practise this balancing posture – you will notice how the mental and physical imbalances soon lose their power. In addition, this posture strengthens foot and leg muscles.

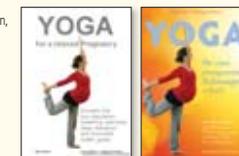
For further information please contact Ursula Mäder: umaeder@t-online.de

Yoga for a Relaxed Pregnancy

Ursula Mäder and Hildegard Pätzold have adapted the whole sequence of the classic Sivananda Yoga asanas for pregnant women, which makes it possible to practice yoga with or without experience through the whole pregnancy.

- There is an introduction of two short sequences of asanas if you are short on time.
- There are valuable tips given regarding the yoga and breathing exercises.
- Advice about nutrition to support body and mind during pregnancy are offered in the holistic and gentle way of Ayurveda.
- There is a Pregnancy Yoga Guide for yoga practitioners and yoga teachers.

The book is available from European Sivananda Yoga Centres (see listing on page 72) at a cost of 20 € for the English version and 20,50 € for the German version. It can also be ordered directly from the publisher, Hans-Nietsch-Verlag: www.nietsch.de





Yama and Niyama - living truth

By Srinivasan

Yama and Niyama are not only the foundations of Yoga, they are the ethical and spiritual ideals by which we live. Without ethical discipline, any attempts at asana, pranayama, meditation, or samadhi lack the strength of character and moral integrity essential for success.

Yet ethical discipline as a practice of self-mastery is also one of purification, which means facing lifetimes of emotional issues, weakness, and hypocrisy. As we develop deeper discrimination and awareness of negative habits and attitudes that were accepted as “normal” until we took on the Sadhana of Yama and Niyama, we will be confronted with the moral dilemma between the an ideal of ethical perfection and the human frailties of emotional immaturity – ignorance, vanity, attachment to comfort, prejudice and fear. To compound this dilemma, the mind recoils in shame and guilt, or denial when faced with these weaknesses. From a Yoga perspective this recognition of imperfection or impurity is the starting point of our practice or sadhana. This is why the Bhagavad Gita, the great scripture of Yoga, begins with the “Yoga of the Despondency of Arjuna,” the great hero who is shaken into depression because he wants to do the “right thing”, and finds no satisfactory option.

Yama and Niyama are deceptively simple yet humbling in their difficulty to perfect. The very attempt for integrity in ethical perfection is the essence of the vast majority of Yoga practice. As “union of body, mind and spirit,” Yoga is a homeostasis of healthy living and moral character. As “the art of right living,” Yoga is service and sacrifice with friendliness and compassion for all life. As “union with God,” Yoga is a tuning to the Universal Consciousness behind all life and a realisation of the God’s Love, which is the Divine essence of all Life. Ethical discipline is the integration of this understanding into every aspect of daily life. The practice of spiritual knowledge and devotion is nurturing and healing as we build character and integrity.

The Example of Ahimsa – Nonviolence

Yama and Niyama are precepts to live by, a structure to build strength of character by which to delve into the deconstruction of the delusions of rajasic and tamasic ego, as the play of the gunas in the mind and our relationships. For example, take the very first Yama, Ahimsa, or nonviolence. As a Yama, it is not just a law, a social more, or an abstract concept – it is a Great Vow,

(Mahavrata) and as such, provides the willpower and commitment essential to build integrity of character and the subtle discrimination to develop a compassionate conscience. Ahimsa is the foundation of all healthy relationships – with all living beings, with our self, and with God, because it develops consistent love and respect. Devotion, respect, and compassion are essential allies that make the skillful practice of Ahimsa possible, because they are the sattvic expression and motivation for the practice of nonviolence.

The only reasons we would ever want or feel the need to act or think violently is because of the negative or impure

From a Sattvic or spiritual perspective, all life is one. The very consciousness behind life is God, the love of God, or Satchidananda – Existence, Knowledge, Bliss Absolute.



influence of the qualities of Tamas and Rajas in the mind. Through generations or lifetimes of evolution of consciousness, the human mind has developed both instinctive violent reactions to perceived threats to self-preservation or property on the one hand, and habitual strategies of bullying and manipulating others to force our will and fulfill selfish desires on the other. From a Sattvic or spiritual perspective, all life is one. The very consciousness behind life is God, the love of God, or Satchidananda – Existence, Knowledge, Bliss Absolute. The basis of spiritual or religious morality is to “love thy neighbour as thy Self.” This includes “love thy enemy,” because the “enemy”

is a mental perversion of perception. It is the rallying cry of war that turns our neighbour into our enemy. This tamasic perception and emotional reaction of fear, anger, prejudice and hatred, is the mental projection that destroys families and all other relationships.

From the perspective of Yoga as “skill in action”, these “lower emotions” are at the very root of Karma, the inner emotional issues that this life is giving us opportunities to resolve. Resolving lifetimes of unskillful, or immature strategies for obtaining happiness, is the daily moral struggle of life. In the face of this instinctive delusion, Ahimsa is a counter-instinctive vow that saves families, friendships, and compassionate relationships with all of our neighbours, one situation at a time. It transforms our “enemies” into “neighbours” and finally into “Self”.

Transforming Attitudes as the Gunas of the Mind

The goal of Yoga is to transcend duality, the Gunas, the world, and the mind to realise the Absolute Spirit that is the Consciousness or Self in all beings. To do so, we must unlearn all of the instincts that put us in competition, or at war with our neighbours; or which allow the ego to objectify our neighbours for selfish reasons. The duality of the mind makes me the subject, and all others objects. The mature spiritual Realisation is that Life itself is the subject, and it is the false constructs, projections of the mind, that have turned family, friends, neighbours, others into enemies, obstacles, competitors, outcasts, or objects of desire.

The Yamas cut away that delusion by establishing a higher moral standard that respects all life and skillful behaviour to support that respect. The Niyamas cultivate sattvic self-discipline, attitude, knowledge, and ultimately direct experience of the Absolute, through surrender to Truth or God.

This life, and our experience of life, is a play of the gunas – Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. Until our minds are purified in the light of knowledge, in Sattva, experience of this world will be coloured by Rajas – desire, attachment and vanity; and Tamas – disappointment, doubt, hatred and despair. The path of the “Good” is the path of Sattva. The path of the “pleasant” is Rajas. Tamas is giving up on life, or a rejection of life. The practice of Yama and Niyama is a commitment to the Good and a rejection of the path of the pleasant that compromises our integrity. Yoga shows the way through cultivation of character and faith in Yama and Niyama.

With a little knowledge of the delusions of the mind, we recognise the influence of the impurities of rajasic and tamasic instinct on our thinking and begin to recognise the vain reactions of ego to things we like or dislike and to perceived threats to our ego or vanity.

Tamas in the mind instinctively makes us feel fear, project judgement, and objectify others and ourselves, resulting in both self-hatred and hatred of others. Tamas is root ignorance in the form of prejudice that demonises ourselves and others. Once this prejudice has transformed others into enemies and perceives them as threats, Tamas goes on to create the belief that we must destroy or punish them in self-defence. Thus the vow of Ahimsa is a direct act of sacrifice of deeply held instinctive prejudice and hatred at the altar of Truth or God.

Rajas in the mind perceives the world materially as objects to accumulate and exploit for power, wealth, and pleasure. The

rajasic intellect driven by the instinct of greed, transforms our neighbours into various categories of objects – objects to be exploited, objects to be discarded as worthless, or as competitors in the struggle to dominate and consume the material objects we desire. Lust is a rajasic objectification of ourselves and others as sexual objects. Nature is resource to be exploited, bought and sold, conquered and consumed. The practice of all of the Yamas allows us to sacrifice these rajasic instincts at the altar of Truth.

Like the vow of a public servant or a marriage vow, Yama is a commitment to righteousness or duty.

The Great Vow

The Yamas are first and foremost Mahavrata or Great Vows, as Patanjali Maharishi proclaims in the Yoga Sutras. Like the vow of a public servant or a marriage vow, Yama is a commitment to righteousness or duty. The vow reminds us of our faith and commitment to God, humanity, or Truth. Yama acknowledges the need to restrain rajasic or tamasic instincts that tempt the aspirant to deviate from or compromise that commitment. Daily life is a struggle to live up to the sattvic standard of dharma, or right thought, speech, and action. As long as our issues, the tamasic instincts of fear, hatred and self-defence; and the rajasic instincts of greed, lust, and anger are not transformed into Sattva, or oneness in Truth, the vows serve as the line of defence to keep us from destroying our integrity and relationships.

Ethical perfection is a divine goal, yet one that we can never realise by action alone. To “love our neighbour as thy Self” demands that we realise the Self. As long as we are lost in the illusion of duality, of superior and inferior we are prisoners of ego and vanity. Even to judge the world according to the gunas is ego and a breach of ethical perfection. Realisation is the effect of purified mind, forged out of integrity, discrimination, compassion consistent with the practice of Yama and Niyama. Therefore it is important to develop their practice step by step.

Integrated into character, Yama and Niyama become principles that are mindfully applied as not only disciplines, but as the basis for the viveka or discrimination that guides us on the path of Yoga.

Levels of Yama and Niyama

As new Sattvic habits take root in our consciousness, they become incorporated as character and conscience. Integrated into character, Yama and Niyama become principles that are mindfully applied as not only disciplines, but as the basis for the viveka or discrimination that guides us on the path of Yoga. Let us look at each of the levels Yama and Niyama take us through the path of Yoga.

✿ **The first level of practice must be an ironclad defence to protect not only others, but the very foundations of our character and integrity.** These are specific rules or laws of healthy behaviour to live by. They are where we begin our practice and continue as commandments to protect us from the ravages of the tamasic and rajasic mind. Here the Yamas take the form of:

1. Social laws that protect society.
2. Professional guidelines that protect students, parishioners, patients, and clients.
3. Personal boundaries of behaviour or character. As personal vows, one maintains standards of religion and faith.
4. Development of integrity or character, consciously confronting personal defects or weaknesses, building new, higher standards for purity, contentment, self-discipline, and faith.

✿ **Next, one develops principles for living a Divine Life** that become integrated as character and conscience which examines every action, every intention, as well as their consequences by the values of the gunas as they specifically relate to each Yama and Niyama. These include:

1. Spiritual principles for honouring God and one's integrity – to be true to oneself, Dharma, and God.
2. Developing the attitude that this world of karma is a place to work through our issues, to remove negative qualities, and to cultivate positive ones. Yama and Niyama offer a standard by which to develop sattvic character. Welcome challenges as growth opportunities.
3. Cultivate the faith to sacrifice ignorance, addiction, hatred, and fear.
4. To recognise the Divine nature of our true Self and act accordingly. “Thou art Divine! Live up to it!” – Swami Sivananda

✿ **Finally, Yoga is the practice of quieting the mind and meditation:** “*Yogas chitta vritti nirodhah.*” Yama and Niyama become daily sadhana in the practice of Abhyasa and Vairagya:

1. A quiet mind begins with a clear conscience based on living one's faith with integrity.
2. Yama provides clear standards to live up to. To perfect any of the Yamas takes lifetimes. As a universal vow or Mahavrata, the practice of only Ahimsa is a daily sadhana to free the mind of violent reactions based in vanity, fear, and prejudice. Each of the other Yamas can be taken as tools for self mastery.
3. Niyama offers systematic program to cultivate faith through purity, gratitude, self-discipline, scriptural study, and surrender to God.
4. Pratyahara or abstraction of the senses to follow the mind begins and is developed through the regular practice of Yama and Niyama.
5. Concentration has substance when focused on the highest ideal discovered through the practice of Yama and Niyama.
6. Meditation flows out of loving devotion to the Truth discovered through the practice of Yama and Niyama. Japa, or repetition of the Divine name, is key element of all of the Niyamas – mental purification, gratitude or contentment, the highest

Samadhi is complete absorption in God or Self revealed through the practice of Yama and Niyama.

Tapas or austerity of the mind, a study of the nature of God through contemplation of the name, and finally surrender to Divine name is surrender to Ishvara.

7. Samadhi is complete absorption in God or Self revealed through the practice of Yama (“Adapt, adjust, accommodate; bear insult and injury”) and Niyama (Japa meditation).
8. In the absolute silence found in meditation on Ishvara or the Immortal Self, unaffected by Nature or the play of the Gunas, the intuitive light of Self-knowledge is revealed. Silence, light, and wisdom are qualities of pure Sattva, untainted by Rajas and Tamas.

Self-mastery is the result of continuous, skillful practice of Yama and Niyama on all of these levels. The path of Yoga, especially Yama and Niyama, purifies the mind of its rajasic and tamasic tendencies, through the light and wisdom Sattva. The intellect is transformed into a pure, reliable mirror to know that Immortal Self in sacred silence. Yoga is union with one's true Self, or communion with God. Yama and Niyama are the foundation and path of Yoga in this long journey of Self-Realisation because they build the strength and clarity of character from which to respect oneself and see all life as Divine ■

Swami Sivananda on ‘Life’



“All creation is an organic whole. No man is independent of that whole. Man makes himself miserable, by separating himself from others. Separation is death. Unity is eternal life. Cultivate cosmic love. Include all. Embrace all. Recognise the worth of others. Destroy all barriers that separate man from man. Recognise the non-dual principle, the immortal essence, within all creatures. Protect animals. Let all life be sacred. Then this world will be a paradise of beauty, a heaven of peace and tranquility.” – Swami Sivananda

Srinivasan

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Vimana

By Mandodari (Olga Sokolova)

Temple Super Structure, Flying Chariot and Personal Meditation Space per Vaastu Shastra

Did you know that there is an important part of a temple structure, called the Vimana? It is a space which not only holds divine energy but creates it. The same word, Vimana, can also refer to an ancient space craft, or flying chariot, which can travel from one world to another. I'd like to explore here what the term Vimana means according to different Hindu literature and how this connects architecture, travelling in space, and meditation.

In his invaluable work on Hindu architecture, Manasara, Prasana Kumar Acharya gives a description of the term Vimana as follows:

"Vimana – Etymologically implies an object measured (from root ma), prepared, or made in various ways, a conveyance, a balloon, a heavenly car, a temple, or building in general, the place of an emperor, a tower surmounting the sanctuary which is made in the centre of the temple."

"A car or chariot (of the gods) sometimes serving as a seat or throne, sometimes self-moving and carrying its occupants through the skies".

In simple terms, the Vimana is a part of the temple super structure, the pyramidal top to the sanctum where the deity resides, called the Garbhagriha (shrine).

In simple terms, the Vimana is a part of the temple super structure, the pyramidal top to the sanctum where the deity resides, called the Garbhagriha (shrine). The deity meditates in the Vimana, or connects with cosmic space with the help of the structure and other procedures performed by temple priests.

The entire Hindu temple with the Vimana is mathematically calculated with care and precision according to Vaastu Shastra. This science was taught to me by my dear late Guru, Padma-bhushan Dr. V. Ganapati Sthapati, in 2005. After all these years,

I am still fascinated with the science and technology of Vaastu Shastra.

As I have said, the Vimana not only holds divine energy, it also creates energy. According to Dr. Sthapati, the most vibrant, energetic place of the temple is the Garbhagriha with the Vimana on the top of it. Usually only priests who worship in Garbhagriha are allowed inside. Still, even if you only approach the Garbhagriha, you will feel the incredible current of energy radiating from it. I have visited many old temples in Tamil Nadu and have experienced the flow of energy from this most sacred part of the temple. It feels like a gentle wind of energy enveloping you, and I felt as if I grew roots from my feet into the temple floor. You can sit near the shrine and meditate.

The phenomenon of feeling energy in the temple has a special Sanskrit term: "gamaka". Dr. Sthapati explains the phenomenon in his book, *Sthapatya Veda*: "If one could produce sound out of the cube of the inner cell and allow it to come out into the complex and fill the space around, don't you

feel that the whole space would reverberate in harmony with the sound of the inner cell? So very minute particles (paramanu) of the temple space would resonate with each other producing 'gamaka' of the musical field. If the effect is 'sunaada', you experience the 'SPIRIT' in full measure. This 'Rasanubhava' or 'Paramananda', is the supreme bliss that we temple-goers experience."

I have visited many old temples in Tamil Nadu and have experienced the flow of energy from this most sacred part of the temple.

Every temple has its own Garbhagriha carefully calculated according to special mathematical formulas, Ayadi calculations. The space of the shrine is calculated using the nakshatra of a specific deity. The Ayadi creates a very special vibrancy in each temple because the module of the measurement of the Garbhagriha's space is used in the entire temple complex. The space module can have a vibrancy of Siva, Vishnu, Meenkashi, or another deity. Therefore, Ayadi calculations are very important to create the specific Divine vibrancy of the main deity in the temple.

Then there is the other meaning of Vimana – an ancient spacecraft or flying chariot.

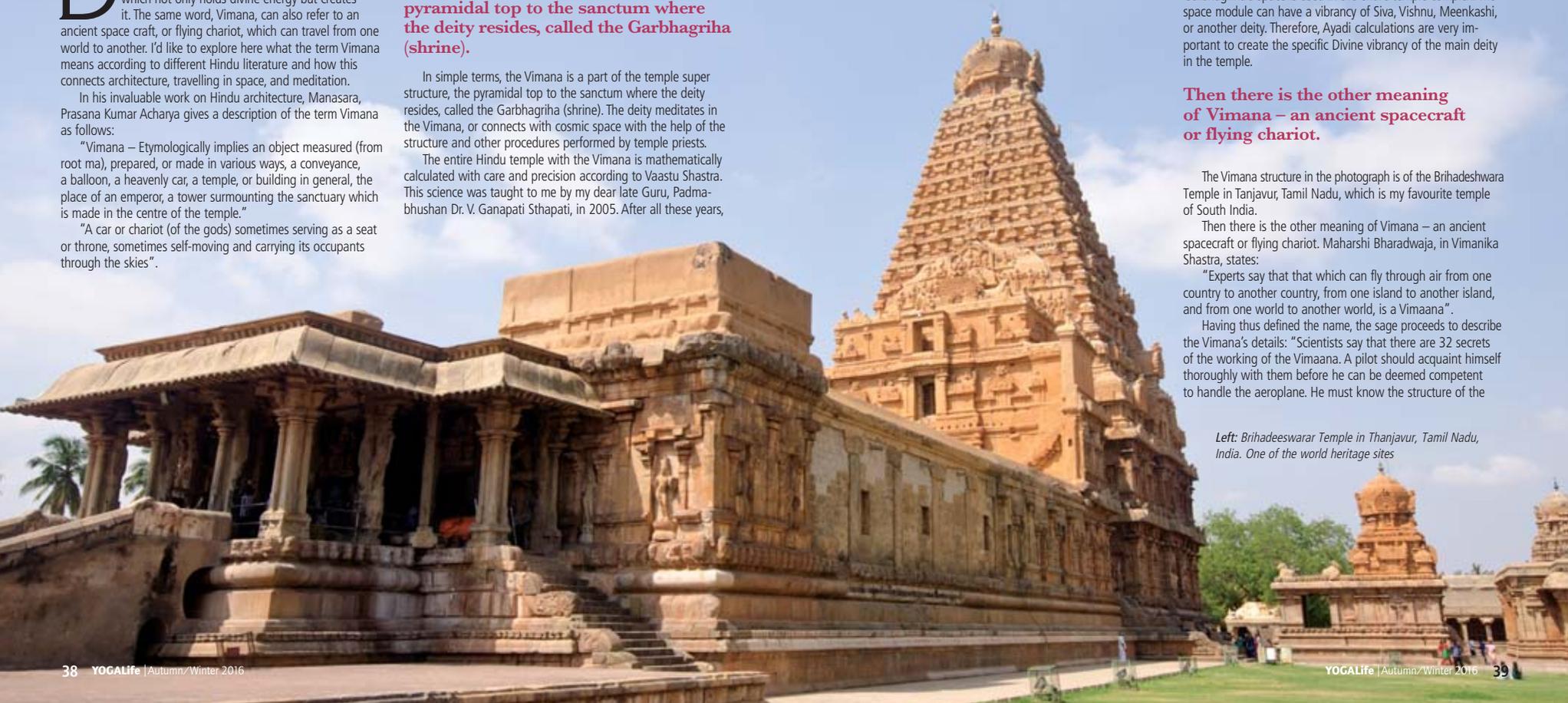
The Vimana structure in the photograph is of the Brihadeshwara Temple in Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu, which is my favourite temple of South India.

Then there is the other meaning of Vimana – an ancient spacecraft or flying chariot. Maharshi Bharadwaja, in Vimanika Shastra, states:

"Experts say that that which can fly through air from one country to another country, from one island to another island, and from one world to another world, is a Vimaana".

Having thus defined the name, the sage proceeds to describe the Vimana's details: "Scientists say that there are 32 secrets of the working of the Vimaana. A pilot should acquaint himself thoroughly with them before he can be deemed competent to handle the aeroplane. He must know the structure of the

Left: Brihadeeswarar Temple in Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu, India. One of the world heritage sites



aeroplane, know the means of its take off and ascent to the sky, know how to drive it and how to halt it when necessary, how to manoeuvre it and make it perform spectacular feats in the sky without crashing.”

Reading Vimanika Shastra, you find that the pilot has to use tantric knowledge, to know how to use yantras and yogic techniques. It states: “In shape and movements there is no difference in the vimaanas, except in the matter of the use of mantras and trastras.”

Pilots should possess strong will power and have control over the mind, then he or she can fly the Vimana at his or her will to different parts of the universe which are: “Five atmospheric regions – Rekhaapatha, Mandala, Kakshya, Shakti, Kendra and even 519,800 airways traversed by Vimanas of the Seven Lokas or worlds – Bhooloka, Bhuvraloka, Suvarloka, Maholoka, Janoloka, Tapoloka and Satyaloka.” (from Siddhanaatha quoted in Vimanika Shastra, p.8)

Vimanika Shastra can be found on the internet. Many people tried to build a Vimana based on the descriptions from this Shastra but they could not make the Vimana fly. The secret is in both the construction and most importantly in the qualities of the pilot. Such a person should have purified his or her mind and body to acquire yogic powers. Therefore, to be a Vimana pilot one should learn meditation techniques and be a yogi first. Then you can fly not only physically but also mentally. The power of the mind is the key.

I began to think and research how to build a tent structure calculated precisely per Ayadi calculations, to benefit different types of people, like a mini Vaastu house.

Ever since starting my studies with Dr. Sthapati, I have wondered if it would be possible to build a Vaastu structure that would benefit many people. According to Vaastu Shastra, space can be calculated to the personal energy of a specific human. Such space, as a home, will give more energy and peace to the owner, but this way of construction is very expensive in modern times. Finally, an idea came with some help from the Divine and good friends. I began to think and research how to build a tent structure calculated precisely per Ayadi calculations, to benefit different types of people, like a mini Vaastu house. It took years, and the support of family, friends, Sivananda yogis and Swamis, but finally the idea materialised combining the temple super structure and flying chariot Vimana together into one simple structure. I called it the Personal Meditation Space – Vaastu Vimana: “Vaastu” because Ayadi calculations are implemented to create a peaceful vibrant space for meditation, and “Vimana” because the structure has the pyramidal shape of the simple shrine, like in the temple. The pyramidal top has specific geometric angles to create peaceful energy for the meditator.

The picture shows the completed structure. You can sit comfortably and meditate in the Vaastu Vimana. It is a true Vaastu structure and built up to the precision of 1/16 of an inch and has the vibrancy of the Divine mother per Ayadi calculations.



Above: The Personal Meditation Space – Vaastu Vimana designed by Mandodari

It took years, and the support of family, friends, Sivananda yogis and Swamis, but finally the idea materialised combining the temple super structure and flying chariot Vimana together into one simple structure.

Therefore, it comforts anybody. You can meditate in it and “fly” in your meditation to those regions your mind can access for your own experiences.

Thank you to Sivanada Ashrams in Europe, Bahamas and California, USA who hosted Vimana workshops in 2015, when this Vimana made its first test flight to the yogis around the globe! We all had a great time ■

Mandodari (Olga Sokolova Ph.D.) is a Certified Vastu Shastra consultant. She studied at the International Institute of Mayonic Science & Technology in Chennai, India, under Dr.V. Sthapati Ganapati, a well-known architect from South India who applied Vastu principles in his architectural designs.

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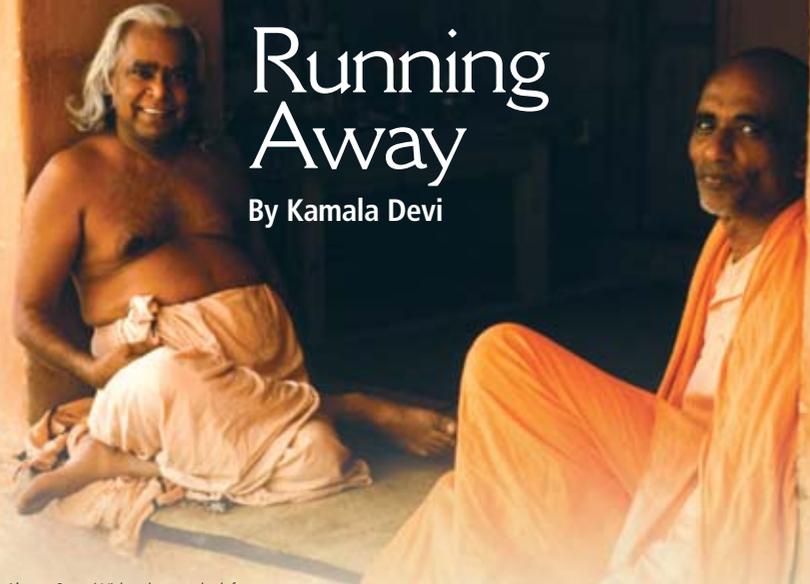
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Running Away

By Kamala Devi

Above: Swami Vishnudevananda, left, with his gurubai, Swami Chaitanyananda

Sometimes we are convinced that we know what is best for us on the spiritual path and we cannot see the benefit of the Guru's advice. Our reactions can be extreme.

This story is about an incident that took place in 1950 when the then twenty-two year-old Swami Vishnudevananda was sent by Swami Sivananda to Jagadhari in the Punjab to demonstrate asanas to medical men and scientists. Although Swamiji himself referred to this incident a number of times, other perspectives have also been given by his gurubhais (brother monks) Swami Chaitanyananda and Swami Venkatesananda.

Swami Chaitanyananda gave us his long-term view in the 1990s when he reflected on Swamiji's life. He also gave some valuable insights into life at the Sivananda Ashram in Rishikesh in those early years. Here we give an edited account of his memories of those times:

"I came to the Ashram in 1947, the same year that Swami Sivananda's Diamond Jubilee took place in September. Actually very few rooms existed then in the Ashram. There weren't many buildings there – only the Bhajan Hall, the Temple and one or two others.

Gradually, only after 1950 the Ashram developed very fast. We had no electricity, no water, not even latrines – it was like jungle life. We only had one servant in the Ashram who would cook food for everyone. Our work was to distribute and wash the plates and bring water from the Ganges. We were also

doing all the manual work and office work. There was not much money in the Ashram at that time. Sometimes Swami Sivananda himself had to join us in carrying things as well as Swami Chidananda – all of us were working like that.

So it was after 1950 that a few more comforts came and Swamiji Sivananda could take individual care of us. He would come and see each person and he would guide us. He was healthy also at that time and our numbers were not so many. There were not so many visitors, although the ashram inmates often had meetings and satsangs with visiting brahmacharis and sadhus, so we all benefitted.

In the same year that I came to the Ashram in April, our Swami Vishnu arrived from the Army in August, and then Swami Chinmayanandaji also arrived in the same month. He was a journalist then, so he came to edit the Diamond Jubilee journal. We were all new people together and we were sleeping anywhere, in the Bhajan Hall, somewhere here and there – our life was like that.

Swami Vishnu wanted to practice yoga daily; he wanted to eat kitcheri (a mixture of yellow mung dal and basmati rice) and to practice. He only wanted one room. He was learning, and he was also teaching, so we were given one old room that was available downstairs where the police station is. So Swami



Vishnudevanandaji, myself, and a man from Delhi were sharing the same room. Swami Vishnu was busy with asanas and Bhakti yoga practice, the other person would be reading something and I was with my meditation and Vedantic life. We three were different but living in the same room. We lived together like that for some time. Later on, of course, Swami Vishnu was moved and I was shifted to the Post Office as work expanded and we worked in different departments until 1956. Swami Vishnu was sometimes working in the kitchen, sometimes he was an attendant to Swami Sivananda, carrying his umbrella and his shoes and he would walk in front with a lantern. In those days we only had lanterns and some other lights; no electricity was there, so that work he also did. He was an attendant to Swami Sivananda, and then he was looking after the kitchen and then he was looking after the building construction and also he was one of the secretaries.

The Asana Master

Swami Vishnu may have been doing other work, but he was also the asana professor, the Hatha Yoga professor. Swami Sivananda would say 'Vishnu Swami is the Hatha Yoga Professor', so regularly he would teach; he would practice also, he would teach also and his own special kitcheri food was there also and he would not be eating sambar or other food. It was not there. He was very strict and very thin and lean. His body was like a piece of rubber. It could this way and that. Really! It was like that. Vrischikasana (*Scorpion pose*) is very difficult, but it was easy for him. He would go from this end to that end and again it was this end. Really, it was like the circus people how they do, it – was almost like that. And devotion! He belonged to Bhakti. Bhakti was the main and Guru Bhakti also and Hatha Yoga also

Top left: Swami Vishnu (centre front) at an Eye Camp in Patna 1953, where he and other Swamis gave a talk and yoga demonstration

Top right: Swami Vishnu (centre) with Swami Madhavananda and Swami Saradananda at Patna High School where they conducted a yoga programme

Bottom left: Swami Vishnu (right) with Swami Sivananda (left) and Swami Chaitanyananda (centre)

Bottom centre and right: Swami Vishnu demonstrates some advanced asanas for the cameras

He never thought that he would go abroad or do anything... he only wanted to confine himself to his room and follow his daily programme.

and service. He combined everything. And very genial, very accommodating, very calm and quiet.

He never thought that he would go abroad or do anything, and also he didn't want to. He only wanted to confine himself to his room and follow his daily programme."

Early in 1949 Swami Sivananda sent Swami Vishnu and Swami Chidananda to Patna to represent him at the Inauguration by the Governor of Bihar of the Bihar Provincial Divine Life Society. According to Swami Venkatesananda, Swamiji 'thrilled vast audiences with his Yoga-postures and took Yoga into the Government House at Patna'.

Swami Sivananda sent Swami Vishnu-devananda to the Punjab to demonstrate asanas to medical men and scientists. This time, however, there was a reaction.

‘What is this? I don’t want this!’

Then again, in 1950, Swami Sivananda sent Swami Vishnudevnananda to the Punjab to demonstrate asanas to medical men and scientists. This time, however, there was a reaction. According to Swami Chaitanyananda:

“Swami Sivananda sent him with Swami Chidanandaji and Swami Saradanandaji to Jagadhari. They requested, ‘Swamiji you send two or three people – someone to demonstrate asanas, someone to explain, and someone to take photographs’. So Swami Saradanandaji was taking photographs, Swami Chidanandaji was giving the lectures and Swami Vishnu was demonstrating the asanas. Like that, they finished the programme and returned to the Ashram.

This had disturbed Swami Vishnu and when he returned he said, ‘What is this? I don’t want this! My sadhana was gone when I went there for fifteen days. It was all gone. If I stay in the Ashram the same thing will happen again!’ So without telling anyone he walked away to Phool Chetty, a place near the Ashram at Rishikesh, beyond Lakshman Jhoola. Phool Chetty’s Ashram is there.

I came to know that his had happened and that Swami Vishnu had gone there, so one Sunday I went to see him. I was Postmaster at the Ashram and on Sunday we have no work so I was able to go there and talk to him. I said, ‘What is the matter? Why did you come here?’

He said, ‘Swamiji sent me to Jagadhari. It disturbs my programme, my sadhana, so I have come here.’

I said, ‘But did you ever tell Swami Sivananda that you don’t like going outside? Did you tell him?’

He said, ‘No, I did not tell him.’

I said to him, ‘But it is your mistake. If you had told him, “Swamiji I don’t like going outside, I will do these programmes only in the Ashram but not outside”. You should have told him like that and then Swami Sivananda would not have forced you to go. It is your foolishness; and why did you come away here?’

‘I want some peace.’ he said.

I replied, ‘But there is no culture, only local people are there, there is no-one to talk with, there is nothing there. In the Ashram all the things we will learn. So, this is not a sensible thing. You must come back.’

So I explained to him and then he ultimately agreed, ‘Alright, I will return.’

Then I said, ‘Let us go.’

‘I will come after two days’, he said. ‘I promise I will come.’ ‘Alright, I believe you so I will go’, I replied.

So after two days he came back to the Ashram. Then afterwards Swami Sivananda said to him, ‘Why did you go? If that was the reason you should have told me, and I wouldn’t send you outside – you can stay in the Ashram. But you didn’t tell me and you simply got annoyed and walked away like that. In future you don’t do such things.’

So Swami Vishnu came back to the Ashram, but what happened next?

An Extraordinary Incident

On 8th January 1950 Govinda, a disgruntled ashramite, attempted to assassinate Swami Sivananda during the evening Satsang. It was dark in the Satsang Hall, the lamps were turned down low, and Govinda struck Swami Sivananda on the head a number of times with an axe before others realised what was happening and intervened. Swami Vishnu was sitting nearby, and angrily sprang to his Guru’s defence. When the incident was over and Govinda had been taken to gaol, Swami Sivananda chastised Swami Vishnu for his hot-headedness: ‘Vishnu Swami, you must learn to control your emotions’.

Sivananda chastised Swami Vishnu for his hot-headedness: ‘Vishnu Swami, you must learn to control your emotions’.

After this additional correction Swami Vishnu left the Ashram again, and in March 1950 embarked on a period of parivrajaka life (wandering as a penniless monk) across North India from Dwaraka in the west to Badrinath in the north. He then returned to his home in Nemmara, Kerala, South India.

Swami Vishnu had first left Nemmara in August 1947, ostensibly for fifteen days, to attend Swami Sivananda’s Diamond Jubilee celebrations and this was the first time he had returned in two-and-a-half years. Mataji, Swami Vishnu’s mother, had written two months after his departure asking him to return, but he had replied that he wanted to take sannayasa. Without consulting anyone, including Swami Vishnu’s father, Mataji gave permission and had been facing heavy criticism from family members ever since.



The family temple in Nemmara where Swami Vishnu practised intense Sadhana

As he had in 1947, Swamiji occupied the spare room in the family Temple and practiced early morning yoga asana, meditation and mantra japa.

When he returned to the Ashram in May, he returned with phenomenal energy, confidence and faith. This was augmented by a period of intense austerities in Ramnagar where Swamiji lived in a small kutir about five kilometres from the Ashram.

‘I am with you; and you are an Ashram. Go and create a mighty Yogic stir in the whole country.’

These changes in his young disciple were recognised by Swami Sivananda. On 15th July 1952 he sent Swami Vishnu on an All-India Tour which lasted until 7th June 1953. He said:

‘Go from town to town, village to village; address the students of every school, college and University, demonstrate Asanas and Pranayamas. Hold classes and train everybody in the practice of Asanas and Suryanamaskar. Do not return hurriedly. I am with you; and you are an Ashram. Go and create a mighty Yogic stir in the whole country. Combine Bhakti and Vedanta also in your lectures. Discourse upon Karma Yoga and the Yoga of Synthesis. This is the need of the hour. Do not confine your talks to Hatha Yoga alone.’

‘Swamiji! I have never lectured so far on Bhakti and Vedanta’, said Swamiji.

‘You can and you should. You will be able to thrill the hearts of your listeners. God will empower you to lecture’, replied Swami Sivananda.

The All-India Tour created a sensation around the country. People wrote to the Ashram asking that Swami Vishnu’s lectures be published as a book. In 1953 *Lectures on Hatha Yoga*, compiled by Swami Venkatesananda, was published. In the Publisher’s Note Swami Venkatesananda wrote:

This work is the outcome of the insistent demand from hundreds of spiritual aspirants all over India who, thrilled by the hair-raising demonstration of Yoga Asans and Kriyas and illuminating lectures on the various Paths to God, by Sri Swami Vishnudevnananda during his All-India Tour asked that a summary of the lectures be published in book form.

Swami Nityananda wrote in the Foreword:

Sri Swami Vishnudevnananda whose All-India Tour has been chronicled in these pages is one of those rare God-intoxicated souls who often forget their body and environment and delight in blissful communion with the Self in silence and solitude. Though he is an advanced adept in Hatha Yoga, he has unequalled faith in God and Guru, he is a great Bhakta and a dynamic Karma Yogi too. He is humble, simple and pure, god-like in his wisdom and child-like in his nature.

Now Swami Vishnu’s fame quickly spread to the West. Not long after the publication of *Lectures of Hatha Yoga* British Government official and author, Pearce Gervis, came to the Ashram to interview and photograph Swamiji. He devoted two chapters of his acclaimed book *Naked They Pray* to his time spent with Swami Vishnu. He wrote:

I had hoped while there to meet a famous Yogi master of asanas I had been told by the ‘judge sadhu’ was resident in the Ashram. He had recently made an All-India Tour, giving talks and demonstrations, and I wanted to get some photographs of these asanas, but he was unfortunately away. They said he would probably be there the following day, in which case they were sure that he would be delighted to spare some of his time and oblige.

I am assured that he at once became a most extraordinary adept of Yoga asanas and pranayama; every bit of his learning came from the books written by the sage; he had before – when in the army – studied the more simple of them, but now

at the feet of his guru, his progress was phenomenal. Even the All-India Tour he made was amazing ... His vitality, I was afterwards to discover, was terrific, he must have personally trained hundreds of Indians and also scores of ‘foreigners’ in the correct practice of asanas during that tour. I have to agree with those who told me before I saw his demonstrations that the ‘pliability of his body has to be seen to be believed’.

Accuracy in asanas required the combined qualities of the perfection of a contortionist, the strength of a gymnast, and the stamina of an athlete. Yet I know that this Yogi eats little and sleeps less.

He was the first Indian I had met for many years who ‘got down to his subject’ so soon. Then I remembered that they had said of him, ‘His secret is that he will never waste a single minute in idle gossip.’

I was amazed at the medical knowledge of this young Yogi. Those who had imagined all those who wore the saffron cloth and wandered the roads of India to be unintelligent and uneducated, would do well to search a little deeper.

Following the publication of *Naked They Pray* in 1956 many people came from the west to the Ashram to study and practice with Swami Vishnu. One year later, in 1957, Swami Sivananda told his young disciple, ‘Go to the west, people are waiting ...’

This thing that he will go abroad and will do all this, it was clear to Swami Sivananda ... but Vishnu Swami didn’t know. The Guru knows more than the disciple.

Looking back on all of this fifty years later, and reflecting on Swami Vishnu’s reaction to being sent to demonstrate asanas to the medical men and scientists Jagadhari in 1950, Swami Chaitanyananda said:

“That Swami Vishnu will go abroad and he will do all of this was clear to Swami Sivananda, so he had given him this training, but Swami Vishnu himself didn’t know. The Guru knows more than the disciple. That was the difference. That is the way Swami Sivananda had patience. He had that knack. Everything was there – how to teach younger people, how to observe them; find their virtues as well as their weaknesses. So he would emphasise their virtues and put up with their weaknesses. That was the great thing in Swami Sivananda. Every one of us had weaknesses but he put up with those weaknesses and that training he gave has really helped us.

Then in 1957 Swami Vishnu had to go to the west. A lady from America requested Swami Sivananda, ‘Swamiji I will take Vishnuji and then we will open a Centre there’. So that was very dear to Swami Sivananda, spreading, dissemination of knowledge, somebody going from here. So Swamiji agreed and then Swami Vishnu had to go.”

Kamala Devi runs an affiliated Sivananda Yoga Centre in Katoomba, NSW, Australia. She is a long time disciple of Swamiji Vishnudevnananda and has helped a lot with the organisation of the archives of Swamiji’s work.

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Swami Sivananda
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Swami Vishnudevananda
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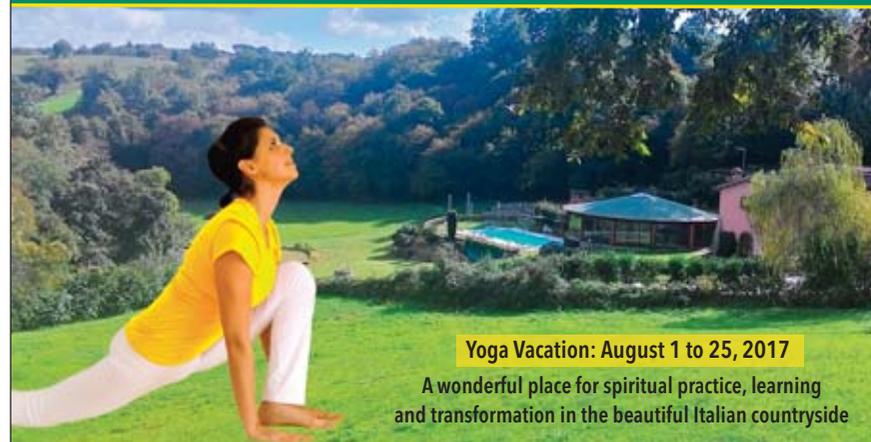
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Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha: The Four Great Goals of Life

By David Frawley (Pandit Vamadeva Shastri)

Our duty for health and well-being is not simply personal but extends to our family, community, nation, humanity and nature. It implies a seeking to alleviate all suffering and disharmony in the world

The River Ganges at Rishikesh in the foothills of the Himalayas

Dharma is the foundation of Vedic counselling, which can also be called "Dharmic counselling." This begins with an investigation into what our true dharma in life is and how it relates to the universal Dharma. But dharma is not just of one type only. Dharma refers to the right way of action and awareness on all levels of our being and our entire interaction with the whole of life. The way of Dharma is subtle and many sided. It cannot be reduced to a mere formula or routine but requires constant adaptation to the movement of life at every moment.

There is a famous Sanskrit statement from the Mahabharata that "Dharma protects those who protect Dharma." If we do not follow the way of dharma our lives can easily fall under forces of ignorance, disintegration and imbalance. Dharma is our greatest protection in life.

Physical and Psychological Health and Well-Being

Basic health and well-being for body and mind, what is called Arogya in Sanskrit, is the foundation of all our pursuits in life. If we are physically unwell we may not have the energy to pursue the other goals of life, even if we may have the talent or capacity to do so. Similarly, if we are psychologically unwell, our perception and motivation can be impaired. We can make wrong judgements that can cause us to deviate from our true path.

This fact of the primacy of health provides a special importance to Ayurveda in Vedic counselling, particularly Ayurveda's foundation of right life-style practices for body and mind. Ayurvedic living is the foundation of dharma for physical and psychological balance and harmony. Ayurvedic living is the foundation of dharmic living. Ayurvedic counselling is the foundation of dharmic and Vedic counselling.

Our duty for health and well-being however, is not simply personal but extends to our family, community, nation, humanity and nature. It implies a seeking to alleviate all suffering and disharmony in the world.

The Four Great Dharmas

There are four aspects of Dharma as mentioned in Vedic texts. The four Dharmas or ways of life, are also referred to as the four Purusharthas or goals of human life. While commonly known they are seldom deeply understood.

DHARMA	Living according to our inner purpose
ARTHA	Establishing goals and values that promote it
KAMA	Finding happiness in what we do based upon our Dharma
MOKSHA	Gaining the freedom of consciousness

Dharma, Artha, Kama and Moksha are called the four Dharmas. We can also refer to them as Artha Dharma, Kama Dharma and Moksha Dharma.

The Primary Dharma of One's Nature

Our primary dharma should rest upon and be part of the universal dharma, of which our soul is the manifestation. Dharma in this deeper sense should be the foundation of our

goals, enjoyment and seeking of freedom. However, this is not always the case, particularly today. Modern society usually places wealth and pleasure, aspects of Artha and Kama, before Dharma. Unless our actions are rooted in Dharma, an adharmic pursuit of the goals of life will not bring happiness and peace.

For a dharmic life, one must first ascertain our primary dharma as an individual soul. This consists of one's personal dharma, one's social dharma and one's duty to the universe as a whole. It is the purpose that we have come into this life in order to fulfill and reflects our karmas from previous lives. It is our duty as a Divine soul.

Dharma differs according to individual. Our individual dharma or svadharma is reflected in our doshas, gunas and karmas, as well as our unique capacities in life. It is usually reflected in our vocation and in our spiritual path. Ayurveda and Vedic astrology can help in determining it. A Vedic counsellor should learn this ascertainment of individual dharma as his primary or first task. We may have the dharma of an artist, and entrepreneur, a healer, a yogi or any number of possibilities.

Artha Dharma – Goals and Abundance

Artha refers to the pursuit of the goals and resources of life in a dharmic way. The non-dharmic pursuit of wealth and property is not covered here.

We must be very clear and careful as to the goals that we set for ourselves in life. The nature of the goal determines the nature of our striving and the type of energy that we will be creating. Dharmic goals are inclusive and considerate not isolating or promoting of conflict. Adharmic goals are those based upon violence, selfishness or division. They cannot take us to a meaningful and happy life. Dharmic goals promote dharma. They are goals that help the world overall.

Artha implies wealth and abundance, including money. Vedic thought, we should note, is not against accumulation of wealth. But it is important that wealth belongs to the Diving force, which means that it is used to promote higher causes not just personal enjoyment. To win wealth for the Divine is a great occupation to have and we should honour those who support Dharma with wealth used for the good of all. There should be abundance for everyone and this is possible when we cease trying to take things only for ourselves.

Kama Dharma

Kama Dharma refers to the pursuit of enjoyment, happiness, well-being and bliss through dharma (not just to any pursuit of desires). It does not encourage to run after a life of enjoyment only.

We have many modes and avenues of enjoyment available for us. We should seek those enjoyments that are ennobling to our spirit and help us develop a deeper taste, refinement and sensitivity, avoiding desires that wear us out or make us feel dull and heavy in the end.

We should learn to discriminate between the pursuit of desire and the pursuit of Self-realisation. Not all desires reflect our real needs, capacities and highest goals. Adharmic kama is the pursuit of desire for its own sake, pursuing self-indulgence and dissipation. It is desire that is against dharma and promotes conflict.

Happiness is our very nature. Bliss is our birthright. Our own Self-awareness is Ananda. But we can only experience this happiness in our outer life once we are rooted in right dharma and right use of our resources.

Moksha Dharma

Moksha refers to the pursuit of liberation and higher spiritual knowledge through dharma. It does not include the non-dharmic pursuit of religion, in which we are only seeking to convert others to a belief, or the pursuit of the spiritual life through escaping the world and not honouring one's duty.

We are all seeking freedom in life in various ways and like to have a greater space around us. Yet true freedom is not simply the freedom to get what we want but freedom from the pain and burden of desire, the freedom from outer or worldly compulsions. True freedom can only be found in Self-awareness. It is not the freedom to do but the freedom to be. Freedom from desire brings the highest happiness. The ability to get what we want only breeds further wants.

The traditional means of pursuing Moksha Dharma is Yoga in the broader sense of principles and practices that develop Self-realisation, primarily meditation. Freedom is the nature of consciousness, which is life unbounded space. We should not tie ourselves down by the power of attachment. To let go is the highest for of freedom. To be free in our awareness is to be one with all.

Integrity of the Four Dharmas

The four dharmas are not separate but form an integral whole rooted in each other. A proper dharmic orientation in life leads us to seeking dharmic goals and the right use of our wealth and resources. This grants lasting happiness and directs us to the freedom of the soul. Similarly, the spiritual life provides happiness (kama), right organisation of resources (artha), and fulfillment of duty (dharma).

Understanding your Individual Karma and Dharma

Karma and dharma are inherently linked together. We develop and transcend karma through dharma. Our karma or action, should be dharmic or in harmony with the great laws of life. Our dharma similarly must manifest in our karma or action. This creates two simple principles of dharmic action to follow.

AVOIDING ADHARMIC-KARMA	Avoid actions that do not support your life purpose or the good of all
CULTIVATING DHARMIC-KARMA	Let your actions reflect your dharma. Walk your talk and put your values and principles into manifestation

All dharmic action is a kind of Karma Yoga. Dharma begins with service to oneself and service to the whole of life. Karma Yoga is the way of Yajna, or making sacred. This supports Dharma, Working for and serving others is a way of inner healing and bringing out our deeper capacities.

Cultivating Higher Values

Dharmic living rests upon a value based education in which we promote enduring and universal values that benefit everyone. Dharma implies that we are ever striving towards something higher, seeking to unfold a higher consciousness in life. It requires effort on our part to improve our lives that directs us to a sadhana or spiritual practice.

Pursuing our dharma means that we are not just doing what we want to do but rather that we are pursuing a way of excellence in which we ever seek to grow, develop and transcend our previous limitations. Dharma means seeking the highest, not following what is convenient. Only when we achieve something new, extraordinary or beyond our previous capacities can we truly feel happy and fulfilled.

Dharmic living rests upon a value based education in which we promote enduring and universal values that benefit everyone. Dharma implies that we are ever striving towards something higher, seeking to unfold a higher consciousness in life.

Examination of Dharma

Part of knowing who we are requires understanding our dharma and discovering our highest purpose of life. Our life has a kind of mission that we must first fulfill. We need to know what this is in order to act in the most responsible and efficacious manner. Note a few key dharmic questions below:

- ✳ What is your real purpose in life? – not just short term goals or desires, but what you wish to achieve in your life as a whole and leave as your legacy.
- ✳ What is your real purpose in this particular life and incarnation? – What is your background as a soul with many births?
- ✳ What is your proper role in society? – How can you help others and help uplift humanity, without compromising your own inner purpose?
- ✳ What constitutes your true individuality? – Not merely what is unusual or special about you, but what is your unique essence that does not change throughout your life?
- ✳ Where does your true and lasting happiness dwell? – as apart from where we may derive the most pleasure or feel the most comfortable.

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The Yoga of Relationships

How our relationships can help us come closer to our true self

By Kaivalya (Carmel Johnson)



The wisdom in the teachings of yoga has helped many people to find more balance in their lives, and one of the areas it can bring balance to is our relationships. Just as yoga teaches us how to keep our bodies supple and strong, our minds steady and calm, and our diet simple and pure, it can also teach us how to have healthier and more harmonious relationships with our partners, families, friends and colleagues, and, most importantly, with ourselves.

There is a great deal of suffering in today's relationships, particularly with the increasing speed of modern life, which is also becoming increasingly impersonal and virtual. The traditional models of society have been abandoned in the name of more freedom, a freedom which has often brought with it a lot of confusion and alienation.

As mankind has fallen from the Golden age of Satya yuga into the Dark age of Kali yuga, relationships, like everything else in creation, have become less sacred and harmonious, and more influenced by the materialistic and egoistic values which dominate

modern society. In a world where the illusions of fame, fortune and power are prized, relationships are often reduced to something one consumes and throws away at will.

The concept of Dharma, Cosmic Law, has been lost, and we are no longer able to perceive the correct path or how to behave in harmony with the rest of the universe. This loss of correct perception and awareness has led to increased misunderstanding and conflict, and more insecurity, anxiety, depression and solitude. Marriages break up more frequently as we live longer and have more choices, and families become increasingly dysfunctional as overworked and often absent parents have little time to give their children any real attention or proper values.

The positive side to these changes is that we are now more acutely aware of how ephemeral and ultimately unsatisfying our attachments to our relationships really are. The fear that everything changes in life (that people leave us or die) has always been difficult to accept, but now that we can barely "keep up", we are pushed sooner to find a deeper meaning and more lasting happiness behind it all. That is where the teachings of

yoga come in, by reminding us that although we are incarnated beings with physical bodies whose needs have to be met, and with minds to help us meet those needs and explore the world, deep down at the core of our being we are much more... we are a soul, Atman or the Self, pure consciousness, eternal and unchanging. By identifying with this deepest part of our being, our true nature, which is also the true nature of the entire universe, and therefore also of all the people we are involved with, we automatically feel connected to them in the deepest most unalterable way, which eliminates our need to possessively attach ourselves to them in our desperate attempt to keep them near us to fulfill our needs.

The word yoga itself means union – this is the wonderful message of yoga: that we are all One, that we are all made up of the same vibrating cosmic energy and therefore already intricately connected. This cosmic energy manifests itself in all of us, in all of our diversity, and instead of clinging to these

We need to fully understand that the happiness we feel when we connect with another person doesn't come only from that person, but also from the experience of oneness we feel when we connect with them, and this oneness can be experienced at all times, because it is found in the deep silence within us, the eternal source of all life. This infinite source of oneness is true unconditional love, the only love which can really nourish us, which doesn't go away when the person with whom we've experienced that love goes away. The only way we can feel and stay connected to that love is to do sadhana, spiritual practice.

Yoga offers us many ways to practice this connection: asanas, pranayama, relaxation, proper diet, positive thinking and meditation – just to name Swami Vishnudevanda's 5 points – but also by following the 4 paths of yoga: selfless service to others with Karma yoga, devotion and chanting with Bhakti yoga, intellectual discrimination and study of scriptures with Jnana yoga, and the systematic control of our body, prana and mind through meditation with Raja yoga. All this leads to the same goal: to have a sufficiently solid connection to this oneness, this deep inner unconditional love, to no longer have the need to be dependent on our partners, children, parents or friends, so we can instead simply appreciate their independent existence and share the experience of life alongside them.

This is not to minimize the role of these people in our lives. On the contrary, they have a very important role to play in our spiritual progress, which is essentially to help us increase our capacity to love. It is through our relationships with others that we learn to resolve conflict, to forgive, to understand other points of view, to tolerate and accept, to have compassion and kindness, and also to truly get to know ourselves. If others weren't there as mirrors to show us our weaknesses and limitations by bringing out our often hidden emotional reactions, we could continue to ignore them and never grow beyond them.

It is easy to retire from the world in a cave and stay calm if there is no one there to disturb us or test us. In the world, we have to "adapt, adjust, accommodate" mainly because of other people, especially in intimate relationships where it is even more difficult to hide. Our partners, children, parents and friends are very close to us and force us to deal with emotional reactions and deep-set subconscious conditioning we would often prefer to ignore. As the saying goes, "your enemies are your best teachers". The people closest to you are in fact doing you a favour, they are helping point out exactly where you need to grow, correct your vision, let go and transcend, in order to become more streamlined and travel more swiftly on the spiritual path. It's even possible for us not only to forgive, but to feel gratitude towards the people with whom we experience conflict and pain for the valuable lessons we learn.

The yogis tell us that the important relationships in our lives are Karmic: we have come together again in this life to resolve

issues that we have been working on for many lives. Relationships are therefore one of the most powerful forms of sadhana, if we perceive them as such, and do not run away from them when the real tapas (austerity) starts.

Relationships, like sadhana, do not consist only of conflict, pain and tapas. It is also through relationships that we learn how to love and be loved for who we truly are: the soul deep within us all,

and not the external appearance that may be so temporarily pleasing. And when we feel deeply loved for who we really are, the Self within, we can learn to love ourselves that way too, and often correct a lack of self-love perhaps instilled at a young age by unconscious though well-meaning parents.

Many of the conflicts we experience with others are external projections of conflicts we experience with ourselves, due to subconscious conditioning in childhood. It is important to discover and understand these inner conflicts and their subconscious sources in order to see how they affect our perceptions and reactions in our adult relationships. It is only when we are finally able to look beyond our conditioning and perceive the divine nature in ourselves, that we can perceive the divine nature in our partners, children, parents and friends. In fact, in a couple relationship, it is precisely by connecting on all the levels of our being: physical, mental, emotional, intellectual and spiritual that we can truly merge in the way that we were intended to, able to surrender ourselves to become One, and in this fusion with the divine, able to create new life. If we do not respect the sacred nature of the couple relationship, or any relationship for that matter, that is, its fundamentally spiritual nature, we will continue to see our partner or child, parent or friend, as one whose only role is to make us happy. This leads sooner or later to conflict and suffering, since no manifested being, necessarily obeying the laws of this impermanent world, can be a permanent source of happiness. Only the spiritual source inside each of us can do that, the deep well of peace we have painstakingly built with our daily sadhana.

Therefore, relationships are actually another powerful motivating

factor for doing sadhana. Without a solid practice of finding peace and contentment within, we will continually be vulnerable to searching for it outside, in our partners, children, parents and friends, or even in our teachers, students, colleagues and neighbours. With the help of our practice, we understand that the success of our relationships depends on the success of our sadhana.

Once we see that relationships are a form of sadhana, we can use many of the yogic tools to improve them. We can see any sacrifices of time and effort in a relationship as a form of Karma yoga, performing our duty for the common good. We can use Jnana yoga to continually discriminate between the deep unchanging Self and the ephemeral, changing body and mind. We can perceive ourselves and each other as temples of the divine, and offer the devotion of Bhakti yoga to each other's divine nature. Finally, we can practice the Yamas and Niyamas of Raja yoga, to avoid the pitfalls of our lower nature, by maintaining an attitude of not willfully hurting each other, telling each other the truth, controlling our senses and animal nature and sublimating our sexual urges by raising them to the higher levels of consciousness in our upper chakras to include heart (anahata chakra), communication (vishuddha chakra), and intuitive awareness (ajna chakra) in our relationships.

Relationships also help us cultivate simplicity, humility, honesty, purity, contentment and endurance, in order to be able to abandon our ego's desires more and more, so that the good of the whole, the couple, the family or the friendship, can flourish. It is when we understand that the well-being of the relationship is also the source of our own well-being that we can easily let go of our ego's desires in favour of what the relationship needs. Similarly, the best partner or friend is one who helps us come closer to the Self, the absolute oneness, and who is on the same spiritual path, where both have the goal of serving the same higher, "nobler" cause together. If we share the common goal of connecting to the source through our practice, we have a deeper, more solid bond than simple mutual attraction, which can fade with time. The saying "those who pray together, stay together" is even truer for those who meditate, serve and practice sadhana together.

In ancient India, when man was still in harmony with all of creation, he understood intuitively the real role of relationships in our spiritual evolution, and devised a careful system of sadhana to educate and prepare himself for life, and stay connected to the oneness. He saw life as an evolution through four phases of life: the four ashramas. If man lived to be 100 years old, his life would have 4 periods of about 25 years each. Until the age of 25, he would be in the phase of Brahmacharya, which literally means: conduct which leads to Brahman, the state of oneness and wisdom, where he would live with a guru and learn the spiritual teachings on how to behave correctly in life through the study of yoga, meditation and the scriptures.

Then from 25 to about 50, he would begin the Grihastha phase, and become a householder. That is when he would go out into the world and live out his Karmic duties by practicing a trade to make a living, and starting a family. He would continue to practice the ethics he had learned during the Brahmacharya phase, which had in fact been a necessary prerequisite for a successful and virtuous experience of the Grihastha phase.

Then at age 50 or so, when his children had grown and had families of their own, and his work in the world had been

accomplished, he was ready to retire to the forest to meditate and take up his spiritual practice once again, and teach and counsel the younger generations. This is the Vanaprastha phase, and is considered a most productive and rewarding time, when the true purpose of life, Self realisation, can be embarked upon again in earnest.

Finally, at age 75 or so, he would be ready for Sannyas, renunciation. He would forgo all attachments to his material life, his home, his family and relationships, and all his possessions, in preparation for the final renunciation at the end of his life: death.

It is through our relationships with others that we learn to resolve conflict, to forgive, to understand other points of view, to tolerate and accept, to have compassion and kindness, and also to truly get to know ourselves.

This system gives us a different perspective on the role of relationships in our lives: they are mainly there as learning steps, necessary challenges in our spiritual evolution, whose ultimate goal is to be free from all worldly attachment. At the end of a long life of sadhana, there is a deep, complete understanding that external attachments are superfluous and no longer needed, because the awareness of already being fully connected to the entire universe has taken over: **All is One, Aham Brahmasmi: I am Brahman**, the Ultimate, Indescribable, Absolute Reality.

So yoga philosophy is clear that the relationships we have in this life are not the aim of life: our relationships are part of our experience of being alive, and are there to help us reach our ultimate goal, which is spiritual enlightenment. Yet as we become more centered in our Self, we are able to become clearer and purer conduits for the unconditional love that is the source and sustainer of the entire universe, and to truly nourish and bring relief to the people close to us, and even to those who aren't. It is in fact in environments like ashrams and other spiritual communities that relationships have the best chance of being successful, because they are sustained in a sattvic life-style, balanced and harmonious, with support for couples and families to work on the spiritual evolution that will guarantee that they can meet the challenging demands involved in any relationship.

May the Sivananda Ashrams and Centres continue to reach out to everyone looking to find help and relief in the wisdom of the teachings of yoga, particularly in the area of their relationships, where a great deal of support can be found ■

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From Karma to Dharma:

The way to peace and true happiness

By Swami Sitaramananda



Yoga teaches us self-effort to control the mind and be conscious and wise about our choices

Karma, destiny and self effort

In life, we always have free will to choose even though these choices are limited. It is said that the present life and its circumstances are the result of past lives' thoughts and actions. The present thoughts and actions come from past lives according to the law of karma – the law of action and reaction. What happens today is already predetermined even though we do not know from when and how things will manifest. The challenges of this life are opportunities for growth and for liberation in the future.

We might have free will, but we need to think well about our choices so that what we do leads us to peace and happiness and not to suffering. When we are acting out of past habits and are powerless to change our character and attitudes, we are bound and not free. Yoga teaches us self-effort to control the mind and be conscious and wise about our choices. This will eventually free us from the tendency to reproduce the same mistakes.

Managing karma implies that:

1. We care about our present duty
2. We focus on becoming fully developed
3. We accept all tests and challenges as being temporary.

Some karmas are pleasant and some are not. We reap the fruits of the seeds we grow. Good actions bring their own results and bad actions bring their own consequences. There is no accident or haphazard events in this world.

The root cause of karma resulting in life's struggle

If we enjoy peace now, it is because we have contributed to the peace of someone in the past. If we suffer from loneliness, it is because we have created isolation for somebody. If we face a situation that seems like a choice between being violent or disrespectful to win or being compassionate and humble and lose, it is because in the past when confronted with similar situations we have chosen the former. We are experiencing a similar situation again as a chance to make a different choice. Similarly, if we have the possibility to gain something by lying or manipulating a situation, we need to choose honesty and straightforwardness instead and find strength in having a good character and being ethical. Genuinely helping another person to attain more material comfort in their life will manifest in ours as a boon of good fortune.

Karma does not work differently at work and in private life. By improving your character at work you will improve your happiness at home. By improving your relationships at home you will be more successful in your business as your energy will flow better. Cultivating contentment with what you have already been given releases you from the constant restlessness of desiring more. Giving freely and charitably results in greater wealth coming your way. Stinginess, conversely, brings with it a sense of lack, of never having enough. Maintaining pure intentions, which come from your heart, brings lasting peace of mind; whereas sometimes following the head and at other times the heart will bring confusion, fragmentation, and problems in the future.

Seeking inspiration from wise people and avoiding back-biting and gossiping will attract supportive people that will be key to your success. Conversely, negativity, divisiveness, bringing your competitors or co-workers down will come back to you in the form of stress and fear. Inflexibility and lust for control bring to you more situations that you can't control. Letting go of the need for control and realising that you may not be aware of subtle forces at work gives insight into the interconnectivity and self-regulating nature of creation. Everything is, in fact, perfect; we just fail to see it. Cultivating belief in this truth brings great peace and relaxation.

Stopping the wheel, turning karma into dharma

Karma can be understood and released. The knowledge of how we create karma allows us to realise that we live our limited and separated life increasing our karmic debts as day by day. With every incident and encounter, we keep reacting from our ego. Thus, we become victims to the results of the past, and follow helplessly our destiny, confirmed in our idea of separation and limitation. We accept life as misery and often try to escape in addictions or a life of crimes, of numbness, carelessness and self-destructive habits. More material gain produces more stress and less peace. Growing spiritually requires that we turn our karma into dharma.

Dharma is duty. It is transforming the same binding action or desire into an unselfish duty. It means putting the ego at the service of others and the greater good. Not thinking of ourselves first and only, but sharing in everyone's happiness, being an honourable contributor to the betterment of society, and opening oneself to the whole of creation will turn karma into dharma. It will improve life in all its aspects. The result is not necessarily immediate; patience and knowledge of how karma works will see you through to the benefits.

Dharmic life brings happiness

Happiness comes from peace of mind and unhappiness comes from restlessness of mind. Yoga teaches the practice of restraint of thought waves to find contentment and break through the karmic accumulation.

In our pursuit of happiness, we made many mistakes, and created endless karmas. In our feverish world of competition, where everybody is looking for answers outside, we believe that happiness is in material possessions and sensual comforts. We think that our happiness has to be at the expense of someone else's happiness, so we compete and make sure we get the best part of the cake. We fear that someone else's happiness is at our expense, and become jealous and envious. We believe in the world of quantifiable objects and think that material things are limited, that we need to secure them not to lack. We become greedy, stingy, and inconsiderate. In a world dominated by business and finances, we believe that the value of a thing depends on its financial value and that all is measured by money. We reduce life to business transactions. We do not see the intangible, the spiritual, the sublime and the divine. We believe in external success and not in inner peace as success, and are thus pulled in all directions by our ambitions and desires. It seems that there is no end to our desires. When one is fulfilled, ten others come to assail us. We want always more: more name,

more fame, more success. We are in the "me" and "mine" egoistic generation. There is no place for the "we" and "thine", the collective and the community.

Yogis assert that in order to find happiness, we need to achieve peace of mind first. This means that we need to recognise that there is no end to desires, that the objects desired are in fact our own projections and illusions. We eventually learn to turn within, avoid the dual tendency of attraction and repulsion, always running towards something or running away from something. This is when yoga and meditation come into our life, as we develop a taste for peace and understand that it comes from within. We decide to consciously make an effort to be calm and focused within. When we are content, we have more chance to live in the present. The mind is less agitated and stops escaping in the past and the future, missing out the solid present. When peace of mind is established, we are able to perceive our true nature which is happiness itself.

Yoga teaches us to calm down, breathe, and turn inward to renew our sense of self and purpose.

Detachment is the key to releasing karmic debts and achieving freedom

The key to improve our lives, work, and relationships lies in stepping back and re-evaluating who we are and what our priorities are. Stepping back, or detachment, is being aware of oneself. This means not losing the big picture for the details. We need to continuously pay attention to where we are compared to the whole journey of life and see if we are still on track for true happiness. Yoga teaches us to calm down, breathe, and turn inward to renew our sense of self and purpose.

The problem about detachment is that people tend to think that if they detach they will miss something, and that life will pass them by, leaving them in a worse position than before. However, nothing is lost by turning inwards. On the contrary, this will give us greater insights into our strengths and weaknesses, which can be applied in our life's situations. The problem is that we tend to undervalue the importance of looking inward and relaxing the mind to connect to ourselves.

How can Yoga help?

Classical yoga gives equal value to self-effort and relaxation. In a classical yoga class, students learn to come into a posture with control, hold it and breathe deeply to dissolve discomfort or tension, and come out of the posture with control. There is relaxation and breathing in between the postures and an emphasis on self-awareness throughout. Postures lead to meditation. Regular practice will help us to slow down and realise that seeking happiness outside of ourselves leads us nowhere. Yoga shows us a way out.

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The Sivananda Yoga Teachers' Training Experience



The first Sivananda Yoga Teachers' Training Course was taught by Swami Vishnudevananda in 1969. Since that time over 39,000 students from all over the world have undergone the training. Here are two personal experiences from recent graduates of the course.

Personal Experiences of the Teachers' Training Course

Yoga is a Gift

I enter the Centre on a bright sunny afternoon. Immediately something inside me tells me something special exists here. An inner subtle presence in me seems to be linked to this space. It is the same air I am breathing, but something here is beyond words. A harmony, a colour of life, a vital preserved energy. I walk into the Asana classes, the students are getting ready in silence for their class. I can sense a true respect for what will be taught. The teacher starts the class, she chants. Her voice is profound, the sounds and vibrations seem connected to a higher sphere, I can feel a gentle release inside me, a peace within. I know this is the right place. I know something miraculous happens here. My mind cannot grasp it, only deep inside me I sense a truthful pure impulse that I have to train within the Sivananda Yoga Centre.

The TTC begins a few days later

Like a child I sense my whole being ready to learn. I know nothing. I will let myself be open to the teachings of the Masters. Day by day, gently, something inside me opens to new dimensions. The physical awareness of my body grows, the voice gets released in chanting in Kirtan, the spiritual practices gently guide me. Challenges happen and I suddenly realise there are beautiful challenges that are meant to be. I surrender and decide to go with the flow. I realise there is a "Big Picture". Day by day light comes within. The group grows and learn together, and I can now clearly see that each step of each one of us counts.

An instrument: journey through a body, a voice, a spirit.

I start to grasp deep inside that we are instruments for something bigger, and if we are brave enough, if we surrender, the flow of energy comes to us and the instrument can play its part into the world. If there is a sacrifice to the higher consciousness, light and energy can flow and the knowledge that we are always held and protected comes to us.

Stillness discovery

One afternoon, during asana classes, a real stillness appears to me for the first time. The experience is both from beyond and within, there is no duality there. The inner being opens up and is suddenly at rest. A whole new dimension has been open in my existence and I realise: there lies the gift of Yoga, there lies what can be given to others. We can transmit to others the tools to access rest and inner peace.

Become a child and learn: exist

It is almost the end of my TTC, I can see the transformative experience that each one of us has been through. I see more clearly within and without. I look at the others: their eyes are brighter, the smiles and laughter are truthful, the bodies are lighter. People seem to be dancing through their lives. I understand I have been given a gift through this experience with them and that there is no time to loose now. Each breath counts in this existence.

Mirabai

Student of the Sivananda Teachers' Training Course, London, UK, Autumn 2016

Personal Experiences of the Teachers' Training Course

A Life Changing Experience

It would not be a lie to say that the experience of taking the Sivananda Teachers' Training Course changed my life. I came to the Sivananda Ashram in Orléans, France, with some experience of yoga and a certain familiarity with the Sivananda organisation. It was still very different from what I expected. It was, in fact, much better. Speaking of the Ashram alone, it is a place with very high energy and dedicated people. The Ashram is in the midst of nature and stumbling across the occasional wild rabbit was a pleasant side experience during the course.

The classes and lectures were highly inspiring and we didn't want to miss any. Learning the yoga postures step-by-step and getting to teach them was a joy. Even when our joints and muscles felt somewhat tired, we could still get a lot out of the classes. The intensity of the classes increased over the course of the month, but it felt natural. Once in a while our bodies needed a break, but it very much seemed like all of the amazing and experienced teachers had heard the "my body is so sore", "my knees hurt" or "my neck feels funny" type of complaints before we could express them, showed understanding and helped us to get over the aches and pains and move on.

The great bonus of four weeks of yoga classes twice a day is a wonderful lightness of the body, an increased flexibility, a sense of balance and agility that you never thought you could reach.

Once we started teaching each other in groups, it all finally felt real. At first it was quite nerve-racking, but just as with anything else, we grew, we received feedback and we improved our teaching skill with each session. What was most important was that we stuck together, we supported and helped each other.

No one is perfect at the beginning, but that's also not what was expected of us, neither by our teacher, nor by our fellow students. Some took the teaching certificate home with the clear intention of teaching, some did not, but everyone can decide that for themselves.

The lectures were a similar experience, yet much more on the spiritual and intellectual side. We started with everyone sitting on a meditation cushion, but as time went by, some of us shifted to

a chair which felt like a welcome relief to our tired backs and knees... The lecturing swami gracefully commented on this: "That is how I can tell we are at week four – the number of chairs"!

But all the sitting was worth it. In just 4 short weeks we were able to dive into Vedanta, a fascinating ancient philosophy system, still completely relevant in our modern time.

We learned about the inspiring lives of Swami Sivananda and Swami Vishnudevananda, studied the Bhagavad Gita, practised sanskrit chanting and much more.

What I personally like most about Vedanta philosophy is that it is adaptable to and most certainly compatible with any faith and any religion. The participants of the course were from all walks of life, all kinds of backgrounds and religious or spiritual beliefs, but I never heard a single person complain that the teachings that they received disturbed their beliefs. On the contrary, they all felt like I did, that it is universal and works with all faiths.

We also covered anatomy – which was directly connected to the benefits of Yoga – and meditation, a highly fascinating subject. It was certainly good to hear that I wasn't the only one to have trouble with it and to fall asleep repeatedly, but even better to learn how to stay in the moment and be focused.

What really made those four weeks the most incredibly inspiring time of my life, were the people around me: the teachers, who were also guiding us by offering helpful insights both on the spiritual level and the more practical side of life. I also appreciated the guest speakers, who brought their own spark into our experience. Finally, I felt very connected to my fellow trainees: we felt like one big family supporting each other.

Throughout the course, we felt part of an extended family, and taken seriously if we had a problem we needed to address or if we simply needed guidance in our personal journey. I came out feeling almost like a different person – energised, inspired and filled with gratitude and awe for this incredible experience.

Vani Devi (Vera Zoller)

Student of the Sivananda Teachers' Training Course, Orléans, France, Summer 2016





Ayurveda and Diet

By Janet Gomez

An introduction to Ayurveda and three delicious recipes that can help the body to maintain balance during the changing seasons

Ayurveda (ayur meaning “life” and veda meaning “wisdom”) is considered the oldest medical system in the world. It has its origins in the ancient Vedic writings of India dating back over 5,000 years. This “science of life” offers a unique system based on an in-depth study of (our) nature and on its particular features to maintain life through form and promote health through, among other things, diet.

In Ayurveda, diet is the most important factor to prevent disease and increase energy and health. Individuals eat to enhance their sense of balance, particularly with optimal digestion, by choosing food appropriate for their constitution. The result is a clear mind and more energy to enjoy the chosen lifestyle.



Elements and Doshas

According to Ayurveda there are 5 elements, Ether, Air, Fire, Water and Earth, and the creative energy of the universe produced three attributes, the three gunas – satva, rajas and tamas. Satva reflects truth. Rajas reflects the desire to move. Tamas reflects the desire for inertia.

Satva is the attribute which represents the greatest level of awareness. The five senses and their corresponding organs were thus produced from it. The five senses were created because there are five elements which make up the world and the senses were required to perceive the elements accurately.

From tamas the five subtle elements, five entities perceived by the senses, and the five dense elements, ether, air, fire, water and earth, evolved.

These five elements are in all energy and matter. The subtle vibrations of aum produced Ether. This began to move, producing Air. Movement of air produced friction and the Fire element. The heat of Fire dissolved ethereal elements producing Water, which solidified to form the molecules of Earth.

Our body is a microcosm of nature containing the five

elements. Ether is the space within our body, i.e. body cavities, while Air is space in movement, i.e. muscle movement. Body temperature and digestion are functions of the Fire element. Water manifests itself in bodily secretions. Earth is represented by solid structures – bones, nails.

The Three Doshas

The five elements appear as three principles or “doshas” – Vata, Pitta and Kapha.

Vata

Vata’s main element is Air and is contained by Ether, i.e. the body’s channels, especially the colon. It governs movement. It can be seen as the force directing respiration. Vata is dry, cold and light.

Pitta

Pitta’s main element is Fire and is contained in water, i.e. the protective fluids of the body. Pitta governs transformation. In Ayurvedic nutrition the transformation of food into nutrients that our bodies can assimilate is an example of an important pitta function. Pitta is oily, hot and bright.

Kapha

Kapha’s main element is Water and is contained by Earth, i.e. the body’s structures, especially the lungs. Kapha governs growth and protection. An example is the mucous lining of the stomach, protecting the tissues. Kapha is wet, cold and heavy.

An Ayurvedic approach to the seasons

In Ayurveda, autumn is the season when the Vata principle manifests. Generally a windy time of year, it is dry(ing) and colder than the summer months. It is important to ensure that our diet has more liquid to counteract the drying effect of the season. It should also contain warming foods, herbs and spices.

Soups using local seasonal root vegetables are simple dishes to add to our diet, especially those with warming spices and herbs such as fresh ginger, turmeric, and parsley and thyme. Hearty protein-rich soups made from mung beans, lentils or other beans with oils like sesame oil or ghee are excellent for managing the lightness and dryness of Vata. The role of meals during this season is to help us feel comforted to manage fear or anxiety.

Seasonal Ayurvedic Recipes



Spicy Autumn Pumpkin Soup

Serves: 4

Ingredients:

3 tbsps olive oil & sesame oil (50:50) or ghee
 ½ tsp cumin seeds
 1 generous tbsp fresh ginger (peeled and chopped)
 ½ tsp chilli powder (optional)
 ½ tsp coriander powder
 ½ tsp turmeric
 ½ tsp black pepper
 500g pumpkin (diced, de-seeded, optionally peeled)
 Salt to taste
 fresh parsley (chopped)

Method:

1. Heat oil/ghee in a pot. When hot, add cumin seeds. Sauté until brown.
2. Add ginger, chilli and coriander powder, turmeric and black pepper. Stir well.
3. Add pumpkin. Mix well.
4. Add salt. Mix well. Leave to cook for a minute.
5. Add enough hot water to cover the pumpkin.
6. Leave to simmer for approx. 20 – 30 minutes.
7. Blend, if desired, and garnish with parsley before serving.

Autumn spices: ginger, turmeric, cardamom, cloves, cinnamon, thyme

In Ayurveda winter is the season when both the Vata and the Kapha principles manifest. Winter brings thoughts of cold and damp weather, nature slowing down, heaviness, producing dullness but also stability. The food we eat/want to eat reflects our body's and mind's desire to find balance. We tend to go for more warming dishes seasoned with heating herbs and spices like cumin, black pepper, cloves, cinnamon, cardamom, thyme, parsley, turmeric, and ginger (fresh to balance Vata or powdered to balance Kapha). Baked or slow cooked dishes are good examples. To manage the heaviness it is important to add these spices and herbs since our meals at this time are nourishing but may be challenging to digest.

Here are a few tips on how to "antidote" certain heavy foods that we enjoy eating during winter.

1. If serving cheese at the end of the meal, add black pepper.
2. If serving avocado with the meal, add lemon juice and black pepper.
3. If baking biscuits/cookies or pies, add dry ginger.

Later in the season eat more leafy greens.

Winter spices: ginger, cloves, cinnamon, cardamom, black pepper, cumin, thyme, parsley



Simple Spring Sunflower seed sauce

Ingredients:

Juice of 1 lemon
 Extra virgin olive oil (enough for smooth paste)
 ½ bowl organic sunflower seeds (soaked overnight)
 Salt (to taste)
 2 tbsps chopped ginger
 Black pepper

Method:

1. Rinse the sunflower seeds.
2. Put all the ingredients in a blender and blend until smooth.
3. Serve.

Spring spices: cloves, turmeric, fresh ginger, and chillies

Spring is the season of kapha. Cold and damp continue to dominate, but there is also a certain amount of movement. It is a good time to use the rising energy of spring to clear out on a physical and emotional level. Use warming spices, like cloves, turmeric, fresh ginger, and chillies (in moderation), to speed up circulation. Enjoy lighter, easily digested foods in the morning and evening and fresh, organic, local produce, where possible. Include cooked foods, warm or at room temperature, and some raw foods towards the end of spring.



Cooling Spicy Summer soup

Serves: 4

Ingredients:

4 medium courgettes/ zucchini
 3 tablespoons ghee/coconut oil
 1 teaspoon fennel seeds
 ½ tsp cumin seeds
 ½ tsp turmeric powder
 ¼ tsp black pepper
 water
 salt to taste
 1 tsp coriander powder
 parsley (optional)

Method:

1. Wash the courgettes. Cut them into slices.
2. Heat the oil/ghee in a pot. When hot, add cumin and fennel seeds. Sauté until brown.
3. Add turmeric powder and black pepper and stir well.
4. Add the courgettes.
5. Add 1 tsp coriander powder and salt to taste.
6. Add enough water to cover the courgettes, cover and leave to simmer for 10 minutes.
7. Pour the pan's contents into a blender. Blend for 10 – 20 seconds.
8. Serve with chopped parsley.

Summer spices and herbs: fennel, coriander, mint and basil

Summer is the season of the pitta principle. Heat and light dominate during this season. The summer heat means that there is much movement and energy, which can be a positive or negative source of stimulation. Cooling spices, for example fennel and coriander seeds, and fresh green herbs, for example, mint or basil, are best at this time. It is important to increase consumption of green or pale fresh fruits, vegetables, and salads and fresh, organic, local produce, where possible as well as cereals and grains like rice, barley, or millet.



SPICE Information

Cardamom *Elettaria cardamomum*

Originating from India, cardamom belongs to the same family as ginger. This aromatic seed is used more in the East and in Arab countries than in the West where it is used mainly in sweet dishes.

It is considered to have numerous medicinal properties: digestive, carminative, stimulating.

It can ease acidity in the stomach, is a breath freshener and, when added to milk, neutralises its mucus-forming properties. It also detoxifies caffeine in coffee. It is heating and hot and sweet in taste.

Cinnamon *Cinnamomum zeylanicum*

Authentic cinnamon comes from the cinnamon tree, a small tree that grows mainly in Sri Lanka.

One of the oldest spices known, its existence is mentioned in the Egyptian scrolls, Sanskrit texts and the Bible.

Cinnamon is considered to be antiseptic, stimulating and antispasmodic. It eases digestive problems such as flatulence and indigestion. It is a breath-freshener and helps to strengthen gums. It is heating, and pungent and sweet in taste.

Cloves *Syzygium aromaticum L.*

The clove tree, which originated on the Maluka Islands, is grown in Tanzania and Madagascar.

Cloves help in digestion and absorption. They also have many medicinal properties, e.g. stimulating, carminative, expectorant, antiseptic, local anaesthetic (especially for toothache). This spice is very heating and is known particularly for its spicy flavour in cooking.

Coriander *Elettaria cardamomum*

Coriander comes from the Mediterranean and is among the most ancient spices known. Its seeds could be found in Egypt 3,500 years ago. Its leaves emit a strong smell.

Coriander is known for its medicinal properties, in particular its carminative and digestive qualities (especially for children). It enhances the assimilation of starchy foods and root vegetables, aids digestion and eases flatulence. It is cooling, and pungent and sweet in taste.

Cumin *Cuminum cyminum*

Cumin is a spice originally from the Mediterranean. The seeds are often confused with caraway which is from the same family. The black cumin used in Indian cooking is smaller and has more flavour and aroma.

Considered to manage flatulence and strengthen the digestive system, cumin has stimulating and alterative properties. It is heating and pungent and bitter in taste.

Fennel *Foeniculum vulgare*

Fennel comes from the Mediterranean, where both the vegetable and seeds are known. It enhances digestion.

Fennel is calming and has several medicinal properties: carminative, diuretic, antispasmodic. It works well to improve "digestive fire", to ease gastric pain and to assimilate fatty foods. It is cooling and has the sweet and slightly pungent taste.

Ginger *Zingiber officinale*

Ginger comes from South-East Asia and is grown in most tropical countries. Its aromatic and medicinal properties have been known for thousands of years and they include stimulating, and digestive qualities.

Ginger eases flatulence, colds and cough. It works on all tissues, aids protein digestion and reduces the effect of uric acid in the body. It is heating and pungent and sweet in taste.

Pepper *Piper nigrum*

Pepper comes from India and is one of most used spices worldwide. The pepper tree only grows in humid, hot tropical climates. The white, black and green seeds all come from the same plant but are different states of its development.

This spice has numerous medicinal properties – stimulating, expectorant, carminative and antibacterial. It contains piperine which encourages secretion of saliva and gastric juices.

Pepper is heating with a hot taste. It increases appetite, helps relieve bloating and digestion of dairy products.

Thyme *Thymus spp vulgaris*

This Mediterranean herb has been eaten for medicinal properties for thousands of years. There are approximately sixty types.

Thyme has antispasmodic, carminative, stimulating, aphrodisiac, expectorant and antiseptic properties. Its taste is pungent and it is heating.

Turmeric *Curcuma domestica/longa*

This root, sold as a powder after being cooked and dried, probably originally came from Indonesia and Arabia where it has been eaten for thousands of years. It was introduced into Europe by Arab traders.

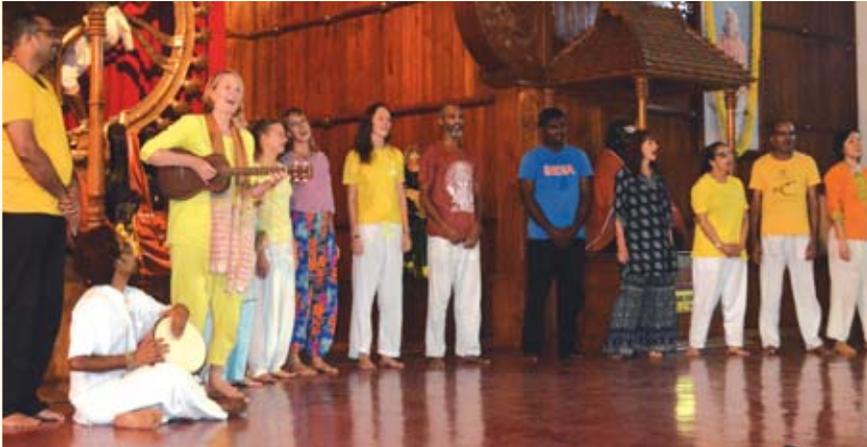
It has a balancing effect, enhances digestion, particularly of proteins, and improves the metabolism. It is heating, and pungent and bitter in taste. Turmeric has stimulating, antibacterial, alterative and vulnerary medicinal properties and black pepper enhances its effect.

The doctor David Servan-Schreiber in his book *Anti-cancer* says "a spice with astonishing properties – turmeric ... one of the most common ingredients used in Ayurvedic medicine for its anti-inflammatory properties."

Janet Gomez Has studied nutrition, ayurveda and yoga. She is a Sivananda yoga teacher and an ayurvedic nutrition adviser. She is the author of the book (in French) *Easy ayurvedic recipes*. Her web site: nutrijyoti.ch

SIX Chanting Practice Tips

By Jody Tull (Jyoti)



“Kirtan melts the heart, fills the mind with purity and generates harmony and Divine Love. He who chants the name of God forgets the body and the world. The devotee enters into the superconscious state by singing devotional music. The name of God generates God-consciousness in the purified mind and becomes the direct cause of your highest realization.” – Swami Sivananda

If you're reading *YogaLife*, chances are that you've already experienced chanting. Many people would like to participate more fully than they do... but they hold back, because they're not sure if they "can". Sharing your voice is a way of sharing your authentic and courageous self, and becoming who you were meant to be. It brings clarity of expression and clarity of thought. You can learn to fall in love

with your own voice, turning singing into an enjoyable, restorative, healing form of worship. Like anything worthwhile, doing so is a process that takes discipline and time. I believe almost anyone can sing. With 5 – 10 minutes per day of practice, you really can learn to listen more deeply developing an attitude of reverence for your voice as being precious and God-given.

Follow these six tips when practicing for 5 – 10 minutes a day

1 Prioritise getting to know your breath. It's your most precious asset. Squeeze out the air from your lungs, like squeezing water from a dishcloth. Pause at the end of the exhale. Round the upper back slightly forward, then focus your mind on the journey of the inhale, and fill the back of the ribcage and chest cavity with air. Then lift from the waist and open the chest (as if in the fish pose). When you feel as though you might burst, pause at the end of the inhale. While exhaling, hum for the entire duration of the exhale. Feel as though you are gently squeezing all the muscles along the spine – lifting up from waist and opening the chest.

2 While humming through the exhale, be aware of a vibrational charge in your body. At the end of the inhale, hum to generate a buzzing behind your nose, forehead and face, and try to extend it to your head and beyond, extending out like branches on a tree. Experiment with high medium and low pitch, loud and very soft volume and imagery, e.g. feeling as though the whole of your ajna chakra (the region between your eyebrow and behind your forehead) is a singing bowl. Once you activate resonance in the ajna chakra (probably the most easy to feel), shift the awareness to your root (first) chakra at the base of your spine and hum to activate resonance there. Repeat the experiment in the second, (belly) third, (solar plexus) fourth (heart) and fifth (throat) chakras. Especially effective is to hum one of the charkas through the exhale of anuloma pranayama. You will notice that resonance comes easily in some of the chakra centers and not at all in others. If you experience no resonance, it's an indicator that you have blocked energy which will be released (by sounding) in time and with practice. This is something we explore in "Finding Your Voice" workshops. Once the supported exhale activates increased resonance through the hum in each of the chakras, you will feel more alive, present and free.

3 Repeat exercise 2 using a supported flow of (1) vowels, A, E, I, O, U (2) consonants, L...mmm, V...mmm, R...mmm, Y...mmm, (3) mantras and (4) chants. A firm support comes from slightly tensing the diaphragm and intercostal (rib) muscles; it feels a bit like squeezing toothpaste out of the tube. Think of your body as being like a sounding board, like the whole of a harp or bass violin or tabla drum. I like to think of the inhale as being like the tide of the ocean going in, and, the exhale as being like the tide of the ocean going out.

To increase resonance even more, experiment with significantly dropping the jaw and rounding the lips in order to shape and resonate the Ooom sound. At first the vibrational buzz might feel diminished... but it's only an adjustment into activating sound with the mantra. Experiment with different sound sequences: Om moves into Aaaaaoooooommmmm... to Ma Ooom... to Om Namō Narayanaya... to Om Nama Sivaya. Remember to set up the sound and to frame the sound with the silence of your elongated inhale. By enjoying and resting in the silence of the inhale, you become increasingly aware of your sound riding out your exhale, like a surf board riding the waves of the ocean. You'll soon notice you are no longer fearful of

what others will think, more tuned into and trusting of your inner voice.

4 Improvise in the space of one exhale, changing pitch between sliding from high down to low, or low up to high to form a melody – not just listening through your ears, but listening with your whole body. Inhale deeply and then improvise (enjoying whatever rhythms and pitches come out) while singing your name 3 times. And again. Imagine listening from your root chakra, then from each of the other chakras. Notice how your body receives and digests the sound ripping the chakra through one exhale. Long pause, long relaxing inhale and repeat the experiment again. Discover yourself resonating silly, playful, mournful, even outrageous sound sequences through the duration of one long exhale. Sometimes your sounding will activate important and powerful releases. Don't be surprised or put off by an outpour of tears or laughter. This is good!! Guaranteed, you'll feel completely refreshed and clean... It's like you've given the inside of your body a shower. Jiggle and drop your jaw, tense and relax your shoulders, neck, face and other body parts as you would do in a yoga class. Aim for the relaxed sensation of savasana. Think of Krishna's flute – pure unobstructed energy pouring through the instrument. As you become more comfortable singing and expressing your authentic self, you become the instrument!! Become aware of the sound singing you and of creative ideas bursting in your second chakra.

5 Begin to build your chanting repertoire by choosing several favourites to learn by heart and sing throughout the day. It is not required, but very helpful and rewarding, to have an ally or two, who will, on a regular basis, sing with you. Better yet, in addition to attending Sivananda Satsang, establish a neighbourhood weekly singing circle. Teach each other your favourite chants and songs, welcoming in an abundance of silence and gratitude as you come together in worship. During Kirtan singing, I have formed the habit of inhaling deeply as I silently connect to the sung call. It's the best way I've found to stay present, practice the deep listening during the inhale while connecting to the divine intention of the solo singer. By doing so, I'm primed to express the response through my sounded exhale.

6 Enjoy!!!! Let go of the temptation to judge your sound. Instead, tune in deeply and be in awe!! Attend Sivananda Satsang and volunteer to lead a chant. During moments that require a lot of courage (like leading a chant for the first time) or tense moments at home or at work, be aware of a silent om resonating you at the base of your spine. This will ground you and relax tense vibes and work miracles in transforming the tension into calm.

Jody Tull (Jyoti) is a composer and performer with an MA in Music from Columbia University; she is also an experienced yogi and heads a local Sivananda affiliated Centre. She has combined her expertise in music and yoga to develop techniques that help people who do not yet love and respect their own voices. Her website: www.beinawe.com

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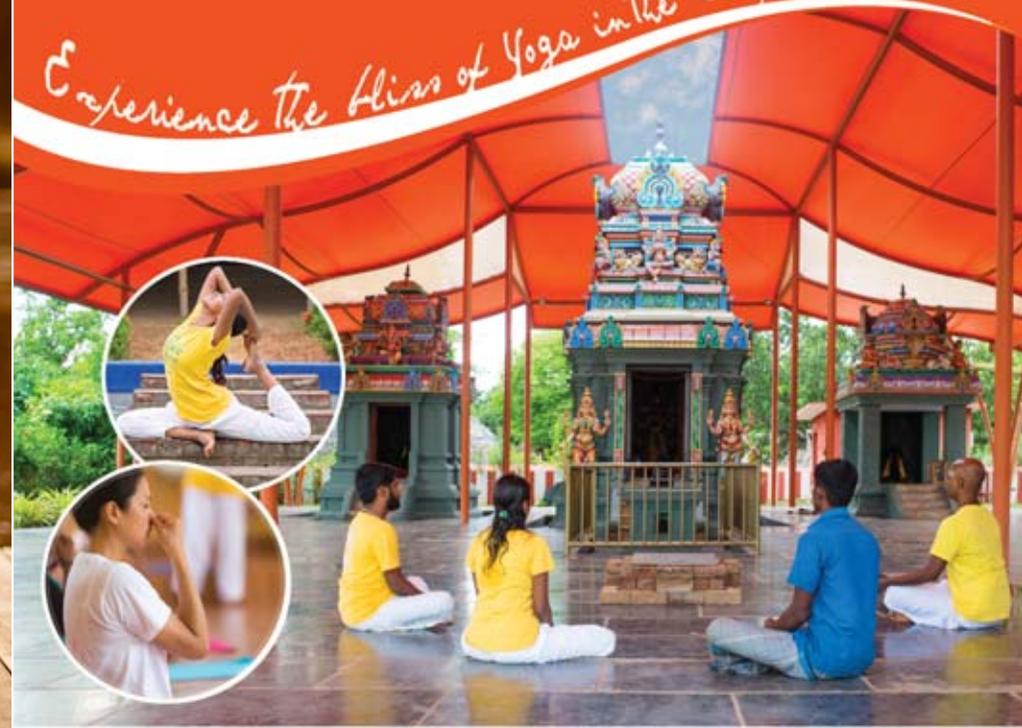
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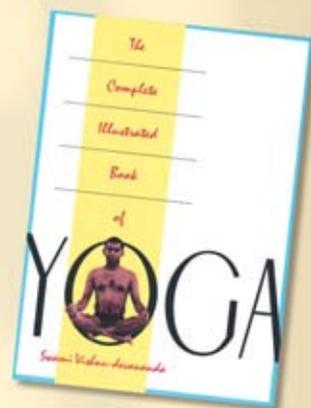
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Prison Yoga Outreach Project Prison Project Report

By Swami Paramananda



It was a special year for the Prison Project due to the fact that we were able to conduct a full length Teachers' Training programme within the walls of a correctional facility not far from the Ashram.

During 2015 we spent \$6,843.56 on our prison project. Through donation, we were able to raise the funds to provide prisoners with tuition, uniforms, and books. Some of the graduates of the first Sivananda prison TTC started teaching within the prison, the other prison inmates and a few others who are soon to be released are very keen to further their training and are very inspired to teach yoga outside of the prison walls. All of the graduates recognized the profound impact the yoga training had on their lives and on their wellbeing and they are striving to maintain yogic discipline. By the Guru's grace we will be able to conduct another prison TTC in the near future.

Karma Yogis continue to teach regularly at another prison nearby the Yoga Ranch once a week. In addition, we were able to send copies of *Complete Illustrated book of Yoga* (236 books) and educational material to inmates throughout the country.

Donations

To make a direct online donation please visit:
sivanandayogaranch.org/prison-project-program

or please contact:

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Sivananda Ashram Yoga Ranch
P.O. Box 195, 500 Budd Road,
Woodbourne, NY 12788, U.S.A.
Tel.: +1 845 436 64 92 • Fax: +1 845 363 46 31
E-mail: yogaranch@sivananda.org
Web: www.sivanandayogaranch.org

All information will be treated with confidentiality.

Here are some extracts from letters we received during the last year:

Dear Friends of Sivananda Yoga Ranch

"I am composing this letter to express my gratitude... I have found great relief in my life since my start in the practice. Thank you for your help and guidance. I send my most loving blessings to all of you at the Ranch."

– KJ

"I have been having difficulty with the transition from the 6th – 8th asanas of soorya Namaskar. Thank you for taking the time, effort, and cost to provide this information to those of us who would otherwise not be able to find and utilise it to attempt to better our minds and bodies."

– ER

"Although I've only begun to read it and practice, it has already started to make a profound difference within. Also as a Catholic, the principals and philosophy seem to go hand-in-hand and also helps to make sense of many questions regarding my religion. Once again, thank you for this book."

– AJ

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Ashram and Centre News

BERLIN, GERMANY

Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre



The spacious, renovated yoga hall

From October to December 2015 the main yoga hall on the first floor was enlarged and renovated with a new wooden floor. The new asana space can accommodate 80 students and can be divided into three smaller halls with movable walls. This includes the meditation room, where a new altar will be installed soon. The boutique and reception area on the ground floor got a face lift as well, giving the Centre a fresh and modern look. In January 2016, at the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Centre, the new hall was inaugurated with a one-week yoga and music festival. Please come and visit.

www.sivananda.org/berlin

CHENG DU, CHINA

Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre

After one year of operation in Cheng Du, South West of China, the Centre moved to a better and larger location, nearby. It is located in a three-level townhouse, next to the subway, near the 2nd ring highway. Chengdu is the 5th mega city of China in size and importance, famous for its old taoist monasteries, its modern skyscrapers, and specially its famous bears, the Pandas! Come visit Sivani and Saraswati, the 2 main chinese staff.

The new Centre is located at:
Fengge Yayuan 8-3-10
1 Xin Xi Wang Road, Chengdu
Sichuan, China 610041

www.sivanandayogachina.org



Above: Staff and Karma Yogis. The new building where the Centre is situated

MEDELLÍN, COLOMBIA

Affiliated Sivananda Yoga Centre (Atman Yoga)

While carrying out the fourth TTC to be held in Colombia in the mountains of Antioquia, teachers visited the city of Medellin, for the official inauguration of the Yoga Centre located at El Poblado.

The activities began with a yoga class that included not only the room but also part of the garden and pool area. Students and teachers from the region came and participated in the programme.

Kanti Devi, Yoga Acharya for South America, led the satsang and gave a very inspiring talk to all participants. Swami Premananda performed a beautiful puja to the Masters and their blessings were very present on this special day. Prasad and dinner were offered at the end.

www.atmanyoga.co



LONDON, UK

Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre



The renovated entrance to the main yoga hall

The London Centre has transformed!

The air of renewal can be felt throughout the centre which is transforming itself into a true City Ashram. Two extensive renovations, a complete new and inspired staff team and 3 TTC's a year have all contributed to this important stage of change and renewal.

The process of transformation gradually took place over many months of building works – including a phase where the house was fully open to the sky with the removal of the entire roof The passages between the three buildings on the street side and an additional loft allowed the Centre to evolve from a separate set of 3 premises to a unified Ashram with inner connections.

Upon entering the centre, one finds oneself in a welcoming new reception and sitting area featuring warm colours, views of the Peace



Ashram and Centre News



The new reception area

Garden and an abundance of natural light streaming in from the floor to ceiling windows. Walking through the Peace Garden, one arrives at the newly refurbished asana hall entrance. This bright space is accessible via a glass covered external corridor where the shoe racks are placed. Apart from the male and female changing rooms, this new area includes a spacious lobby with chairs, lockers for storing valuable personal items, and a separate cleaning room.

The new reception and asana hall entrance stand out as a true homage to the teachings of Master and Swamiji and have been very warmly received by all the students and well wishers of the Centre.

We look forward to welcoming you to the renewed London Centre!

www.sivananda.co.uk

MADRID, SPAIN

Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre



Participants of the Easter family retreat held in Almeria, Southern Spain

The International Easter family retreat took place in Almeria, Southern Spain. An oasis of light near the natural park of Cabo de Gata, the one week retreat brought together over 70 students from Norway to Latvia, Germany and France. Fifteen children joined the kids programme and enjoyed very much the friendly environment. We are looking forward to have it again next year.

www.sivananda.org/madrid

MADURAI, INDIA

Meenakshi Ashram



One of the new dorms



The Ongole cows



The monthly Sivananda Rural Medical Camp

The recently completed "Ganga Nivas" and "Yamuna Nivas" provide over one hundred and fifty dorm beds, eight spacious double rooms and eleven single rooms with attached bathrooms. Two rooms have been added to "Shanti Nivas", for housing of staff. A meditation and asana sala was made in the traditional manner with thatched roof and cow dung floor. Three Ongole cows are now housed in a new gosala. The Ashram is looking more beautiful with the addition of paved paths, lights and many plants. The vegetable garden has been providing a steady supply of organic vegetables.

Many people are benefitting from the Sivananda Rural Medical Camp being held every month with the help of a generous donor.

www.sivananda.org/madurai

MUNICH, GERMANY

Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre

The big event of this season was the Yoga and Music Festival in the Munich Sivananda Yoga Centre. Many students came to refresh their personal practice. Highlights were two inspiring lectures with Swami Durgananda, in which she shared her long-time experience and practical wisdom. Swami Sivadasananda taught Asana workshops to further train yoga teachers. In the evening we enjoyed uplifting readings from the yoga scriptures and beautiful live music.

www.sivananda.org/munich



Centre Reception



Ashram and Centre News

ORLEANS, FRANCE

Ashram de Yoga Sivananda



The TTC Refresher Course

A very active and inspiring season for the Orleans Ashram. Besides many special guest programmes for christmas, easter and our summer festival, the Ashram hosted also numerous certificate courses and teachers further training programmes. One of the highlights was the annual TTC Refresher week with over 140 participants. Under the able and loving guidance of Swami Durgananda, Swami Sivadasananda and Swami Kailasananda, a big Sivananda Yoga family gathered and enjoyed dynamic asana practice, how to teach workshops, inspiring lectures, vibrant satsangs with full-throated chanting and special Pujas and Homas led by the Ashram priests. The evenings were filled with joyful Raga concerts. A special treat was a streamlined version of one of the plays from Swami Sivananda's *Upanishad Drama* that Swami Sivadasananda brought to life with a group of talented and enthusiastic TTC Refresher participants.

Four TTCs as well as our annual ATTC and Sadhana Intensive course brought the special kind of energy to the Ashram which only spiritual discipline and intense practice are able to create. Our May TTC was our biggest spring TTC ever in the Ashram history.

Lots of landscaping work was done as well as the installation of a much needed enlargement of the septic tank. Our new forest platform was covered with a roof and mosquito netting just in time for the Sadhana Intensive participants to be claimed for their Pranayama practice in this pure, secluded and Prana charged spot, surrounded by trees and shrubbery. Final preparations are going on for the start of the construction of the Hanuman building, which will include two large teaching rooms, eleven en suite single rooms, and dormitory spaces. May the Ashram continue to be a home for many spiritual seekers to evolve, find inner peace and receive the blessings of Swami Sivananda and Swami Vishnudevananda.

www.sivananda.org/orleans

PARIS, FRANCE

Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre



Swamis, staff and students celebrate in front of the Eiffel Tower

We were blessed with a beautiful and peaceful yoga day celebration. On an early Sunday morning with Paris still in deep slumber, 250 yogis got together at the feet of the Eiffel tower for an inspiring yoga class with Swami Kailasananda. Accompanied by the sound of the sitar, and in perfect alignment with the spirit of the masters' teachings, the group set a meditative and joyful mood that made an impression on each and every passer-by. The class was simple and impactful, with a beautiful posture demonstration by Kailas and the presence of the Indian ambassadors, who were practicing in the first row. Admiring the Eiffel Tower from the Matsyasana posture, listening to Swami Kailasananda guide the sun salutation, and hearing the final prayer – in French! reverberating from the heart of the city... was indeed an extraordinary experience. Throughout the afternoon, the festivities continued at the Centre. Swami Kailasananda gave an inspiring lecture and we had three large classes in a row, all the while Swami Gopalananda led an uninterrupted chanting of "Om Namo Narayanaya" in the meditation hall. The day ended with a peace puja led by an Indian priest. It was a joy for all to spread Swami Sivananda and Swami Vishnudevananda's message of peace.

www.sivananda.org/paris



Asana Class in front of the Eiffel Tower



Ashram and Centre News

SAO PAULO, BRAZIL

Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre

In February 2016 the Sao Paulo Sivananda Centre was inaugurated. It is situated in a small house in the Vila Madalena neighbourhood.

The space was initially opened two years ago by Pranava, a Sivananda

teacher from Sao Paulo, who was unable to continue teaching there due to becoming a mother with other responsibilities! However she generously let the Sivananda Yoga Centre take it over.

Renovations were completed in April and the Centre was inaugurated in the presence of Kanti Devi, Yoga Acharya for South America, Chandrashekar and teachers from different cities of Brazil who joined the happy event. The programme started with meditation and a talk by Kanti Devi and continued with a yoga class held in the park just across the street in front of the Centre. There, the students enjoyed the class on a nice autumn day. After lunch Kanti Devi gave a special teachers' workshop on corrections in the postures and teaching aids.

Classes and activities continue and the Centre is open to students and teachers who wish to help with karma yoga.

www.sivananda.org/saopaulo



Outdoor yoga class in front of the Centre

KLOSTERNEUBURG, AUSTRIA

Affiliated Sivananda Centre

The affiliated Sivananda Centre in Klosterneuburg (about 20 km from Vienna), Austria celebrated it's 30-years-anniversary!

www.padmavati.net/yoga/yoga-zentrum.htm



One of the renovated Kailash double rooms

The last six months has seen a lot of construction and renovation in the Ashram. Akhandananda Kutir has been completely rebuilt with three staff rooms with attached bathrooms. Kailash double rooms have been extensively renovated with tiles and new bathroom fixtures. The kitchen has been relocated for more space.

www.sivananda.org/hetala

VIÑA DEL MAR, CHILE

Affiliated Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre

The affiliated Sivananda Yoga Centre in Viña del Mar started operating in early 2013. For over two years, classes and satsangs were held in a small apartment in a residential area of the town. As the centre became busier it was evident it needed to move to a bigger and more suitable location that could accommodate more students and more courses. In October 2015, with the presence of Yoga Acharya Kanti Devi and Swami Premananda, an official inauguration ceremony and puja were hosted to mark a new beginning. Thanks to Master and Swamiji's blessings, the Centre continues to thrive with beginners and meditation courses running parallel to open classes.

www.yogasivananda.cl



A Tribute to Dr Sastry PhD

When the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre received the news of the departure of Dr Sastry from this plane of consciousness earlier this year, it felt like losing a family member. The swamis and staff members who had the opportunity to meet Dr Sastry and be inspired by his presence and words felt his departure was a great loss to them personally, as well as to the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres and the world at large.

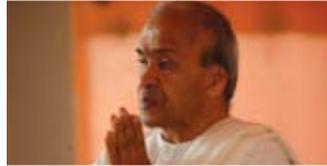
Dr Sastry had been a close friend and supporter of the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres for close to 3 decades and had inspired so many swamis, students, staff members and TTC students throughout this long association. His incredible energy, his total dedication to the spreading of the Vedic culture and its wonderful values were remarkable. He was a most inspiring example of dedication to his mission and duty.

He taught Sanskrit for many years during our Advanced Teachers' Trainings Courses at our Ashram in France, and inspired hundreds of students with his totally committed and enthusiastic style of teaching. Even the students with the most resistance to learning such a difficult language as Sanskrit fell under his charm, enthusiasm and patience, and felt compelled to study and learn it. His talks on Hinduism, the sages and great teachers of India left a great impression on the mind of the listeners.

The gusto he put into telling the stories of Hanuman in particular created a magical atmosphere in which the audience felt transported back to the heroic time of the Ramayana. His humility and unassuming ways were an example for everyone. He was the very incarnation of the qualities of adaptability, endurance of hardships and commitment to duty. His sense of humour made the deep teachings of the Indian scriptures light and easy to understand.

He was a great soul and is greatly missed. He must be rejoicing now in the peace of the higher planes of life. May his soul have rest on this higher plane of life and may he return soon to this physical plane to enlighten and inspire many souls to embrace the Vedic way of life.

The Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres



MEMORIES OF DR SASTRY

A Little Piece of Dr. Sastry

By Sara Rossi, student of the Sivananda Centre, London

It was a student of Dr. Sastry's for 16 years, and for ten of those we studied together the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali. Dr. Sastry would frequently remind me that he too was learning from our lively exchanges and there was never a dividing line between our joint explorations of the classical texts. Our classes were abundant with ideas, to-ing and fro-ing, batting and bowling across from each other; many insights were revealed and ideas explored. He was exuberant and sensitive, his knowledge was bone-deep and flowed through his veins. The varying shapes and sizes of the beads of our lives threaded through our sessions. For instance, a painting that I had been recently inspired by at the National Gallery in London, an asana I was exploring and working with, my work as a teacher and homoeopath, or his visit to the Isabella Plantation at Richmond Park would be thrown into the mix, "what does the Olive Tree by Braque mean to you Sara?" or "what does practising Oordhva Padmasana mean spiritually to you?" he would say and listen attentively to my answers. He shared equal interest in the painting as with the asana and would ask me further about Braque. Nothing was diminished or thrown away, everything seemed relevant. Fortunately, I took copious notes in exactly the way the classes took shape – lots of words, connections, drawings and directions that triggered all sorts of ideas during the days that passed from one class to the next. His style of teaching certainly deepened and encouraged free-thinking and free association and he was never dogmatic. He was brilliant, versatile and accurate with words and was a fine and true grammarian which I appreciated enormously. He seemed to relish the igniting of the texts and our discussions on one sutra could last sometimes for up to two hours or longer and when it came to studying the Gita I sometimes felt I was on a chariot.

His satsangs were full of stories and rhythm, told enthusiastically with so much heart and soul. They would blend and mingle with what I was studying with him at any given time. His satsangs were like a basket full of fruits, the freshness and nutrients of his knowledge I held and carried and could be delved into again and again. He was and remains like walking prasada.

The Spirit of Hanuman

By Narada, staff at the Sivananda Yoga Centre, London

The spirit of Hanuman is forever linked with Dr Sastry, as revealed during a yoga Teachers' Training Course in the Sivananda Ashram in Orleans, France, 2009. I was a student on that course, and recall being mesmerised by the way in which Dr Sastry pronounced the name of 'Hanuman' and 'God'.

What appeared to start as a one or two night lecture series was extended and extended by the course Directors, such was the popularity of the speaker and the way in which he brought the subject matter of Hanuman and Divinity to life.

Let us put this into its wider context. For many Westerners, the rich tapestry of the Hindu faith can appear completely alien at first sight. So many concepts, names, stories, and apparent contradictions in the values and actions of Gods in the spiritual texts. It is easy to get lost very quickly in story after story if one is not brought up in the Hindu faith, simply because there is not a foundation of understanding of what it all means. Dr Sastry really helped bring the theory to life.

As orators go, Dr Sastry was in a league of his own. By the sheer force of the way in which he pronounced "Hanmmmmmaaaaaaan", with a voice of melodious thunder, eyebrows stretching his forehead at the seams and eyes radiating the length

and breadth of the Ashram, the listener was immediately transported to a different mode of attention. When, in a similar fashion, he delivered the word "God" (Go-oooooooooooooooooooo-d), it was as if the listener was being forced to tune to divinity itself rather than a mere concept or name.

Such was the charm of the speaker that the courage was plucked up to ask the Dr his counsel subsequent to his talk. I say courage, because as a young spiritual aspirant without much clue as to the etiquette of seeking guidance from a teacher this was uncharted water. If any fears existed they were immediately allayed by the generosity with which the speaker responded. An invitation to meet for further discussion was offered and enthusiastically accepted.

One of the things that struck me when meeting Dr Sastry in the confines of a small room was how physically he appeared not to be the same size as he was witnessed on stage. It was as if Hanuman-like qualities of magnifying his presence when needed had been granted.

The personal guidance received when we met was of the kind that can be an inspiration for the whole of life. The spirit of Hanuman shone through in the insight that Dr Sastry shared: In essence, by serving those who are masters at serving the universe, one can realise one's potential in life.

The popularity of Dr Sastry's talks was so evident that when it came to the Teachers' Training Course 'Talent Show' (hosted as light relief for students during an intensive month of study) it was a gift of an act to celebrate the Dr's essence in the form of an impersonation. There are essentially two types of impersonation; one in which the audience is encouraged to laugh at the person who is being impersonated, and one in which those present naturally laugh with the subject of impersonation. Such was the affection for Dr Sastry and his lectures that it was easy for all to connect with a feeling of much warmth when reliving his talks in the form of an impersonation.

Like most of the great missions in life, there was a sense that everything was simply meant to be when sharing this impression on stage, and the performance was so popular that I was asked to repeat it during the course! Even now, students and staff who were in attendance that month recall the impersonation, prompting us to bask in the legend of Dr Sastry, messenger and servant of God:

"Hanmmmmmaaaaaaan".

Who was Dr Sastry?

Dr Satyanarayana Sastry was born in a traditional family of Sanskrit scholars and spiritual teachers in India. He worked as a Sanskrit professor in an undergraduate college in Karnataka for 22 years.

During 1989 – 92, Dr Sastry was a visiting scholar for the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan's U.K. centre in London. The Bhavan, has been recognised internationally as a major centre for promoting the intellectual, literary, ethical, educational, cultural and spiritual life of India.

In 1993 he migrated to the UK and until 2005 was Bhavan's Academic Director at the Manchester and London centres where he taught Sanskrit as well as spiritual subjects.

During his distinguished teaching career, Dr Sastry has conducted weekly Sanskrit classes at Oxford and Cambridge Universities; taught Sanskrit modules for Degree courses at other major academic institutions in England; adjudicated PH.D. awards; and taught Sanskrit in over 50 courses to date in India, UK and Europe, at all levels on a wide range of subjects, including religious, technical and classical literature.

The Swami Vishnudevanda Archives Karma Yoga Project



One of our most valuable resources for the teachings of Sivananda Yoga continues to be the hundreds of inspiring lectures presented by Swami Vishnudevanda, recorded from 1969 to 1991. While it is possible to listen online to the recordings, for the past year a karma yoga group has been transcribing the teachings into written form in order to share them further with all seekers of peace and joy through yoga.

We are looking to add to this skilled team of karma yogis. If you are interested in taking on the task of listening to systematically assigned parts of the archives and transcribing them into document form, this may be for you to consider, but only if:

- You have a good command of the English language and can type proficiently.
- You can dedicate 5 – 10 hours a week to the project to comply with a monthly deadline.
- You are highly organised and focused.

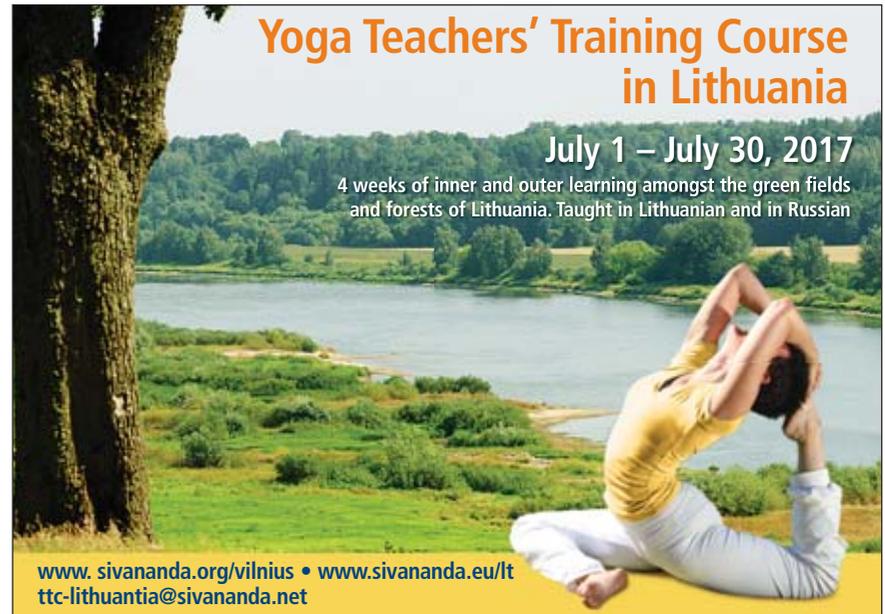
We specifically welcome those who are writers, editors and journalists on the Sivananda Yoga path. If chosen, you will be sent the transcription guidelines along with a timeline for your work. There are approximately 400 recordings. Please note that some of the material may be challenging due to Swami Vishnu's accent but it is all inspirational and a great way to connect to the teachings – at the source.

Please send your request to be a part of the project to Sita at archives@sivananda.org

Yoga Teachers' Training Course in Lithuania

July 1 – July 30, 2017

4 weeks of inner and outer learning amongst the green fields and forests of Lithuania. Taught in Lithuanian and in Russian



www.sivananda.org/vilnius | www.sivananda.eu/lt-tt-lithuania@sivananda.net



Sivananda Ashram Yoga Camp, Val Morin, Quebec, Canada



Sivananda Ashram Yoga Retreat, Nassau Bahamas



Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Dhanwantari Ashram, Kerala, India



Sivananda Ashram Yoga Farm, Grass Valley, California

Sivananda Retreat House, Reith near Kitzbühel, Tyrol, Austria

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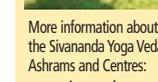
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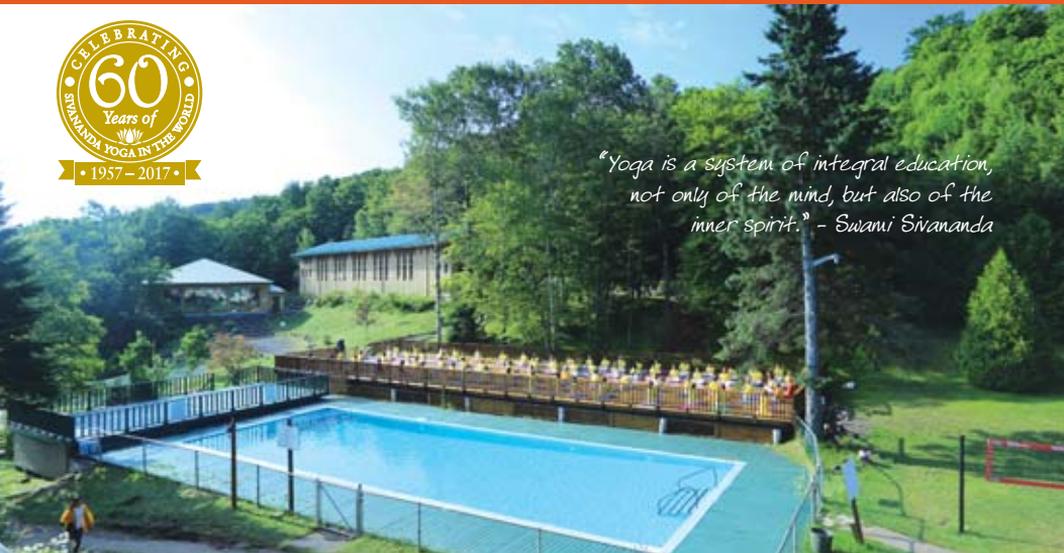
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CHENGDU, CHINA

September 9 – October 7, 2017

DALAT, VIETNAM

February 11 – March 11, 2017
July 8 – August 5, 2017

GAROPABA, BRAZIL

January 5 – February 2, 2017

GRASS VALLEY, CA, USA

May 6 – June 3, 2017
October 14 – November 11, 2017

LONDON, UK

February 18 – March 18, 2017
May 27 – June 24, 2017
September 2 – September 30, 2017

MADURAI, SOUTH INDIA

February 26 – March 26, 2017
May 28 – June 24, 2017

NASSAU, BAHAMAS

February 3 – March 2, 2017
March 5 – April 1, 2017
April 4 – May 1, 2017
May 4 – May 31, 2017
June 3 – June 30, 2017
November 4 – December 1, 2017
December 4 – December 31, 2017

NETALA, HIMALAYAS, INDIA

April 9 – May 7, 2017
May 14 – June 11, 2017
June 18 – July 16, 2017
August 6 – September 3, 2017
October 1 – October 29, 2017

NEYYAR DAM, SOUTH INDIA

January 8 – February 5, 2017
February 12 – March 12, 2017
March 19 – April 16, 2017

ORLEANS, FRANCE

May 3 – June 1, 2017
January 7 – February 5, 2017
June 30 – July 28, 2017
July 30 – August 27, 2017
November 21 – December 19, 2017

QUEBEC, CANADA

July 2 – July 30, 2017
November 12 – December 10, 2017

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October 21 – November 19, 2017

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January 21 – February 19, 2017
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