

SIVANANDA YOGALife

SUMMER 2017



INSIDE

SWAMIJI'S LIFE IN PICTURES
THE MYSTICAL ANAHATA SOUNDS
THE DEITIES OF INDIA: LORD GANESHA
THE BAULS: AN INDIAN DEVOTIONAL
TRADITION
THE SIX TASTES OF AYURVEDA

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KIDS' CAMP

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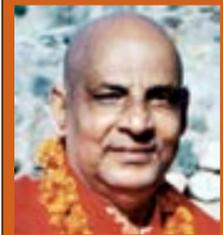
DEC 03 - DEC 12, 2017
SOUTH INDIA YATRA
DEC 04 - DEC 17, 2017



Neyyar Dam, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India, +91 9495630951, +91 9446089992
www.sivananda.org/ndam

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 Swaroopananda
Srinivasan
Swami Sivadasananda

Swami Kailasananda
Swami Sitaramananda
Kanti Devi
Prahlada



Swami Durgananda



Swami Swaroopananda



Srinivasan



Prahlada



Swami Sivadasananda



Swami Kailasananda



Swami Sitaramananda



Kanti Devi

Welcome

The year 2017 is the sixtieth anniversary of the establishment of the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre organisation and we celebrate with the publication of a beautiful new book on the life and teachings of Swami Vishnudevananda, our founder. We offer the book in honour of this great teacher, a yoga pioneer and missionary of peace. The message of Swami Vishnudevananda and of his teacher H.H. Sri Swami Sivananda Maharaj that the individual must change before the world can change is at the core of all yoga. Practise, practise, practise our teachers would exhort and gave us the inspiration and the tools with which to do so. And thus our organisation continues to offer the world-renowned teacher training course devised by Swami Vishnudevananda in twenty locations around the world, more than fifty times a year. Together with our Yoga Vacation programmes and a myriad of other yoga-related events as well as our courses and classes in our city Centres this message of peace is being

instilled in many thousands annually. As you will see in the article by Swami Sivananda on page 60 in the magazine we are told emphatically of the power of individual practice, of how one individual can affect the whole world. So we pass this message on and hope that the articles in the magazine will inspire and encourage you to continue to practise the ancient and profound teachings of yoga and vedanta. May the blessings of the Gurus and God be upon us all.

Om Shanti
The International Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres

Front cover: Swami Vishnudevananda at the Ashram in Neyyar Dam, south India



HEADQUARTERS

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

Est 1957

With ashrams and centres located around the world see page 84 for addresses

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

SIVANANDA YOGALife

Letters from A Master by Swami Sivananda	6	Yoga - A Culture of Peace by Srinivasan	48
Archives Karma Yoga Project	8	In Memoriam, Paul Magennis	51
Swamiji, Celebration of Swami Vishnudevananda's Life	9	The Sound of Music by Swami Sivananda	53
High Goals by Swami Durgananda	10	Yoga and the Five Elements by Swami Sivadasananda	54
The Names are Many but God is One	14	Just One More Story as told by Swami Vishnudevananda	56
Tribute to Swami Rajeshwariananda by Kalyani	15	The Sage's View by Swami Sivananda	59
Pattamadai, Tamil Nadu, India	18	Bring Peace to the World by Swami Sivananda	60
How Yoga Works by Chandrika (Cordula Interthal)	20	Tapas by Swami Sivananda	61
Keep Your Balance by P.C. Kapoor	22	The Six Tastes of Ayurveda	62
The Bauls	24	The Prison Project from the Ranch	64
The Deeper Path of Yoga Teaching for Healing by Swami Sitaramananda	26	Swamiji in South America	66
How to Protect the Mind by Swami Swaroopananda	30	101 Health Conditions Benefited by Yoga by Dr Timothy McCall	68
The Journey of a Soldier by Colonel V.S. Bhalothia	35	The Sedentary Society by Lila Saraswati Lolling	69
Likhita Japa by Swami Sivananda	36	Rural Health in India by Kalyani	72
The Deities of India: Lord Ganesha	38	Purify with Panchakarma by Dr. P.R. Vishnu	74
Golden Ghee	42	A Journey We Took by Ganga (Supreet K. Singh)	78
Thiruvalluvar by Dr. M. Rajaram	43	Sivananda Ashram and Centre News	80
The Flying Swami	44	Ashram and Centre Addresses	84
Meditation or Meditation? by Swami Vishnudevananda	46		

THE YOGA-VEDANTA FOREST UNIVERSITY
AIM: DISSEMINATION OF SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE

SHRI SWAMI SIVANANDA
Chancellor,
SHRI SWAMI CHIDANANDA
Vice-Chancellor,
SHRI SWAMI KRISHNANANDA
Pro-Vice-Chancellor.



P. O. SIVANANDA NAGAR
ANANDA KUTIR
Rishikesh (Himalayas)
Tel: "DIVINE LIFE"

5th November, 1956.

Sri Jogie Sookchan,

Revered Self,

Salutations and Adorations.

Thy kind letter.

Continue to maintain the Spiritual Diary. That is an eye-opener. You can easily find out your own defects and the progress you are making.

The Hindi Class is a marvellous thing. You can turn out dynamic work in dissemination of knowledge. You can train a number of students in the spiritual path. This is a Nish-kanya Karma Yoga, to give you Chitta Shuddhi. May the Lord bless you.

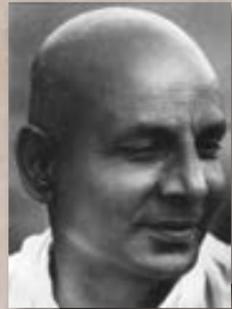
Bhastrika during Sirshasan is very bad. Do Bhastrika in a sitting posture. When you advance in your prayers, Japa, study of scriptures, all defects will vanish one by one. Be steady in your Sadhana. I wish you all success.

I do not have copies of Sandhyavandana. They are available at Madras. When devotees go to Madras, I will procure some copies for you.

With Prem and Om,

Thy Own Self

Sivananda
(SHRI SWAMI SIVANANDA)



THE YOGA-VEDANTA FOREST UNIVERSITY

AIM:
DISSEMINATION OF
SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE



ANANDA KUTIR P.O.,
Rishikesh (Himalayas)

Dated 30th Dec. 1953

Sri Jogie Sookchan

TRINIDAD.

Dear Atman,

Om Namo Narayanaya. Thy letter.

Regarding the posture (asana) for Japa and meditation, sit erect, with the neck head and the back in a straight line. This is most important. Herewith I am enclosing a prayer which is used here. When you pray, feel the Presence of God with you. He answers sincere prayers. He will guide you from within and give you spiritual strength. Always remember that you are His child. His Grace is ever on you. Yes, you can obtain the books from here, one by one.

Become a member of the D.L. Society. You will get regular spiritual guidance.

Serve your mother with bhava. See God in her. You will evolve quickly. May God bless you all.

Thy Own Self,

Ag

Sivananda

THE YOGA-VEDANTA FOREST UNIVERSITY

Propagates Yoga and Vedanta through regular course of Tuition and Training, Correspondence, Publication of texts, Photographs and Yoga Movie Films, Yoga Museum and Propaganda Tours



P. O. Sivananda Nagar
RISHIKESH
(Himalayas)

4th February, '57.

Sri. Jogie Sookchan,
Quire Road,
Freeport,
Corrupichaim,
Trinidad,
W. I. Indies.

Blessed Immortal Self,
Salutations and adorations. Om Namo Narayanaya.

Your kind letter of 11th January '57 together with spiritual diary for the month of December '56. I am happy to note your regularity in Sadhana. The period of concentration of two minutes appears to be too little. You may practise concentration for half an hour. Concentrate gently on the form of the Lord. Side by side, mentally repeat the Lord's Holy Name.

See the Lord in all forms. Look upon the world as a manifestation of God. See only the good in others. Keep up constant repetition of the Lord's Name. When you serve another, feel that you are serving the Lord in him. Do not see the material form, but the Divine in all. Whenever you do, do it as divine worship. May Lord bless you.

Thy own Atman,

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P. O. Sivananda Nagar
RISHIKESH
(Himalayas)

11th Dec., 1956.

Sri. Jogie Sookchan,
Quire Road,
Freeport,
Corrupichaim,
Trinidad, B. W. I.

Blessed Immortal Self,

Salutations and adorations.
Om Namo Narayanaya.

Your spiritual diary for the month of September '56. Kindly be regular in study of religious books. You may write Mantra for a few minutes daily. It is a great help to concentration. The period of concentration may also be increased.

Observe your conduct in daily life, every moment. Be aware of what you think, what you talk and what you do. A strict, disciplined life, combined with meditation, will lead to Self-realisation.

Never give way to despondency. Have faith, confidence, resolution and determination. Be an inspiration and light to all.

May Lord bless you.

With regards, Prem and Om,

Thy own Atman,

Sivananda

THE DIVINE LIFE SOCIETY

AIM:
DISSEMINATION OF
SPIRITUAL KNOWLEDGE



P. O. SIVANANDA NAGAR
Rishikesh (Himalayas)
Dated 1st Feb., 1945.

Sri. Jogiesookchan,
Quire Road, Freeport,
Corrupichaim,
Trinidad, B. F. I.

Blessed Immortal Self,

Salutations and adorations.
Om Namo Narayanaya.

Your diaries for October and November '54. I am glad to note your regularity in Sadhana. Kindly do more Japa.

Never look at a woman with lustful eyes. It may be difficult in the beginning, but practice will enable you to get established in purity. Meat, fish, onions, pungent articles are not conducive to purity and should be given up. Do not miss Japa and concentration on any day. May Lord bless you.

With regards, Prem and Om,
Thy own Self.

The Yoga-Vedanta Forest University
THE IDEAL HOME FOR SPIRITUAL UPLIFT

On the banks of the Holy Ganges in the sylvan solitude of the Himalayas
ANANDA KUTIR
P. O. SIVANANDANAGAR,
Dist Dehra Dun (U.P.)

Chancellor
SHRI SWAMI SIVANANDA

Ref. No. *ST* Jogie Sookchan,
Trinidad

Glorious Immortal Atman, Om Namo Narayanaya, Salutations & adorations.

Thy very kind letter of 9th inst. to hand. I was happy to go through it and note that your good self has acquired enough knowledge in wood-work and now intends to open a work-shop of your own. This is a good idea. And by the grace of the Lord you will succeed. Kindly pray to Sri Ganapati first, the remover of all obstacles and bestower of all success. May your desire be fulfilled!

Most of the earlier books are out of stock. A list of the now available books is enclosed. Kindly make a selection and order for the books you like to possess.

A saint possesses a melting heart, giving hand and kindly speech. Equal vision and self-less service become a part of his illumined nature. Even an aspirant should try to cultivate these virtues, if he wishes to reach the Goal soon. May you accomplish this grand Goal in this very life and rest in your blissful Atman!

Lord's pressed-- Kunkum and holy ashes, to be rubbed on the forehead-- is enclosed. It grants auspiciousness and purifies the mind.

May your life be endowed with health, peace, prosperity, success, bliss and Final Emancipation!

With regards, prem and Om,
Thy own Atman,

LETTERS FROM A MASTER

Letters sent by Swami Sivananda to his disciple Jogie Sookchan in Jamaica from 1953 to 1957

THE SWAMI VISHNUDEVANANDA ARCHIVES KARMA YOGA PROJECT

Experiencing the Teachings of Swami Vishnudevananda Today

One of our most valuable resources for the teachings of Sivananda Yoga continues to be the hundreds of inspiring lectures presented by Swami Vishnudevananda, recorded all over the world from 1969 to 1991. Swamiji was a dynamic teacher who communicated with warmth, depth, humour, passion and urgency. He delighted in word-play, story-telling and direct engagement with his audience and his lectures and satsangs were truly unforgettable. It was impossible to doze when Swami Vishnudevananda taught and his laugh was endearing and contagious.

So what was it like being with him during TTC or satsangs? What was it like to hear him give a public talk or join him in a campfire chat?

Many people feel they missed the opportunity to hear Swami Vishnu speak, but did you know that there are now over 600 audio files of Swamiji's lectures and satsangs available online? There are talks on over one hundred topics, covering every aspect of yoga philosophy, yoga practice and life itself, including Swamiji's enduring love of peace. New audio files are being constantly uploaded and you can listen to them at this link: <http://audioarchive.sivananda.eu/>

And while it is possible to listen online to the recordings, for the past three years a diligent group of karma yogis have been a part of the ongoing project of transcribing the material from the audio files with the ultimate goal of categorising and making it possible to publish the teachings for all to read. So don't miss this opportunity to engage with this remarkable teacher. If you would like to assist in the project to make more audio files available online, please email: sita@sivananda.net

If you are interested in being a part of the transcription team, please email: archives@sivananda.org

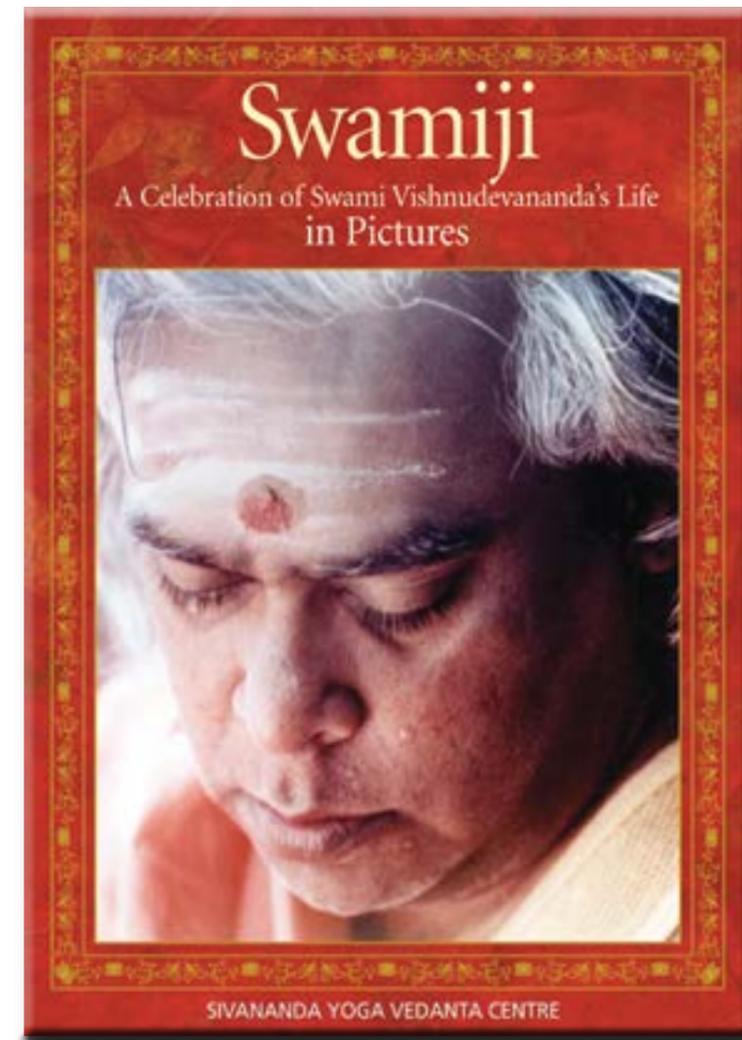
Whether listening to the archive tapes online or participating in their transcription, there is no better time to connect with and share the wisdom of our beloved teacher, Swami Vishnudevananda.



NEW PUBLICATION

SWAMIJI

A CELEBRATION OF SWAMI VISHNUDEVANANDA'S LIFE



This book, to be published in 2017 to celebrate 60 years of Sivananda yoga world-wide is an inspirational life in pictures of the great yoga pioneer Swami Vishnudevananda, known as Swamiji to his students and disciples. It takes us 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 with over thirty yoga centres and nine ashrams worldwide.

Sent by his Guru HH Swami Sivananda Saraswati Maharaj 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. His dedication, his infinite love and kindness, his devotion to his Guru, 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 brought to life here.

The wide-ranging collection of photographs is enriched with uplifting quotes and talks from the yoga master himself, who never wasted an opportunity to guide and help. Here are photographs of Swami Vishnudevananda with Mohammed Ali, whom he advised on breathing techniques, with Beatle George Harrison,

whom introduced to the world-renowned musician Ravi Shankar, and with Egon Krenz the President of East Germany whom he met after his dangerous flight over the Berlin Wall advocating peace.

The book gives 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. The Pictorial is a tribute to this life.



HIGH GOALS – WHERE



Expanding One's Potential

Every human being has a potential to grow, to discover new possibilities and to unfold the layers which cover the soul. It is not only the self-realised beings who have the possibility to experience the powers of the soul on a higher plane. These possibilities are given to every human being, as soon as he or she is manifested in the body. What is

wanted is an inner desire to experience more than the so-called "normal" life, which is mostly limited to self-preservation and reproduction. Modern science confirms that we use only a small part of the capabilities of our brain. Yoga systematically expands one's brain capacities, and helps to avoid old automatic thought patterns and emotions even under pressure and stress.

The Eight Steps

The essential precondition for the practice of Yoga is an ethical and moral attitude. This is presented by *Patanjali Maharishi* in the *Raja Yoga Sutras* in the form of the *yamas* and *niyamas*.

One approach to *raja yoga* is *hatha yoga* which is much more than physical exercises and a bit of *pranayama*. A sincere and regular practice of *hatha yoga* develops a sensation of purity of both the body and the mind. This is enhanced by the *kriyas*, which literally means 'act' or 'deed'. These *hatha yoga* practices cleanse the physical body by outer and inner means and were developed at a time when enemas and colonics were still unknown. There was no scientific evidence on fasting and nobody had a bath tub. There were only rivers or buckets.

Jala neti or nasal cleansing with salt water, is widely known today. *Nauli* or abdominal churning is very efficient for counteracting lethargy of the intestines due to a sedentary lifestyle. *Tratak* increases the power of the eyes. All these purification techniques for the physical body are part of *hatha yoga*. The results cannot come in a day, the system purifies itself through regular practice. Step by step we regain control over the physical vehicle. The outcome is the experience of living and moving in a physical body, rather than being moved by it.

The yogis advise us not to remain at the level of physical control and physical health, but to take the next step of *hatha yoga* which connects to the mental practices through *pratyahara* or, drawing the senses within. This is the foundation for moving on

to *dharana* or concentration. It is said that *dharana* is reached when the mind is able to focus on a specific object for 12 seconds.

Dharana is the doorway to meditation or *dhyana*. It is said that this corresponds to keeping the mind focussed on a single object for 2½ minutes. The final step of the *raja yoga* system is *samadhi*, which is meditation without any distraction from the outer world. In this state the ego melts with super-conscious awareness and it is said that it takes about half an hour of unbroken concentration to reach this state. The goal in *hatha yoga* is *samadhi*, the common goal of all yoga paths. *Hatha yoga* begins with the training of the *annamaya kosha* or food sheath as an important spiritual element. It is a sheath which surrounds the *Atman*, the soul, the divine consciousness. The next sheaths constitute the astral body. Through breath control, concentration and calming of all movements of the mind, it can be made completely quiet. This subtle astral body consists of three major functions or sheaths, which are considered *upadhis* or limiting adjuncts: *pranamaya kosha* or energy function, *manomaya kosha* or the function of mental perception and *vijnanamaya kosha*, the analysing intellect.

Purifying the Astral Body

If yoga techniques are not used to also purify the astral body, there cannot be any expansion of consciousness: everything we think or feel, any energy or emotion which we perceive is taken for real. We say, "That's how I am". This is *tamas*, the subtle lethargy of the astral body. It is subtle and on the physical level the person may be actually very flexible. *Tamas* can be really seen only on the astral level.

Overcoming the Thought 'I am the body'

The various sheaths have a substantial influence on our personal condition and on our understanding. They produce a limited awareness or tunnel thinking, the kind of gross and basic thinking which needs to be overcome. Being aware that we need to transcend the gross thought of, "I am the body" is *vidya*, knowing that we are living under these influences and need to work with them. This is a major step from the body to the mind and it requires time. The practice of yoga refines the senses; the way we think and perceive become clearer, the love which is inborn in us becomes purer, *raga-dvesha*, our likes and dislikes, are less pronounced and compassion is on the rise.



YOGA CAN LEAD US

by Swami Durgananda

Re-occurring Obstacles

The one common obstacle is that this process requires time. There will be periods where we think: "I do not want to carry on, I am too tired, I am too old. Let me continue after retirement etc." *Tamas* or lethargy is gaining strength. Some people say, "I will practise yoga when there is less pressure in my job". But is it not during such times of stress that yoga is the most important tool to reduce the strain on body and mind?

The Causal Plane

As our understanding and experience deepen we move into the *anandamaya kosha*, the causal body, where the soul has its most powerful expression. The soul, *Atman*, *Brahman*, is immaculate. The causal plane is reached in the state of *samadhi* as well as during deep sleep. Deep sleep is so important, because we reconnect to the powers of the soul. The dream state however does not reach the causal plane. Dreaming occurs on the astral plane. The quality of deep sleep provides real relaxation during sleep. If the astral body is purified by the practice of *hatha yoga*, we spend less time dreaming. Sleeping pills do not take us to the causal body. Sometimes you may feel refreshed and ready for the day after just six hours of sleep, whereas at other times you may sleep for eight hours and wake up exhausted and groggy. Improving the quality of sleep is part of physical hygiene, of taking care of our gross instrument.

The Power of the Soul

The function of the *anandamaya kosha* is to give expression to the power of the soul. More than in deep sleep, this occurs during *samadhi*, where it is experienced in a conscious way. The ego and the mind have only a limited expression in the causal body. It is still a dualistic plane and therefore not a level of absolute self-realisation. But the various elements of the astral body find rest and for the time being there is peace. The reality of the soul is realised as a fact, and this brings about a state of complete satisfaction.

On an unconscious level we always knew about the existence of the soul. Otherwise there would not be the strong endeavour to reach that state. We know that *shanti*, peace, exists. It takes profound analysis and contemplation to even come to an intellectual understanding of what the three bodies and their *koshas* really are and how they veil the reality of the soul. Once we understand this identification with the *upadhis* or limiting adjuncts, we can begin to free ourselves: "This is not what I am. These are just the vehicles of the soul. The power of the soul is what I truly am." It is the power of the soul that can change or purify the physical and the astral body.

Through practice of yoga and meditation we can experience that the senses are still present but do not drive us. We remain an observer even when we are angry or dissatisfied, when some

desires have not been fulfilled. This is a tremendous step ahead and shows that a holistic development of body and mind has started.

Avidya - Ignorance

There is no problem in feeling, "I am beautiful". The problem comes when the beauty fades. Feeling at a young age, "I am too obese" or "too ugly" is also a limitation. These perceptions are relative and could be seen quite differently in a different culture. The mind gets twisted by this kind of limited thinking, that becomes habitual. This is *avidya* or ignorance, the opposite of *vidya* or knowledge. *Avidya* consists of identifying with the limiting adjuncts. It is perception from the ego perspective and this is not what we are.

In general parlance, 'ignorance' relates to outer things, not knowing, not understanding or not being able to use something. In Yoga, ignorance or *avidya* means not knowing who we really are. *Avidya* means thinking, "I am the body". This is not difficult to comprehend intellectually, but when do we ever act accordingly in daily life? The main reason for this is that we are too involved emotionally. We get emotionally involved in thinking, "I am the body, I am male or female, I am a swami, I am a professor, I am poor, rich, tall or small, etc" and we do actually not want to give up this type of ignorance.

Avidya can be reduced with time, and then this kind of thinking will fade out. As soon as *avidya* disappears we know who we are, we know the unchanging truth, we know God. If you do not accept the word 'God', you can use the words truth, *Atman* or *Brahman*. This truth is realised inside and this is the great message of yoga: we

are not similar to God, we are one and the same. There is nothing higher or lower, bigger or smaller, there is only the one Self.

Continued overleaf

Brahman is Love

Bhakti yoga explains that this truth can be experienced as love. This is a wonderful concept: love, God, the Self, *Brahman*, *Atman* – it is all the same. The spark of love is in every being, and it is the same spark. Thus *jnana yoga* declares: "The Self in you is the same Self in me and all other beings." It can also be called love. Love works because it is in everybody. Everybody wants to feel this love. You fall in love with a person in whom you perceive this spark. Essentially we are love, we need love. If we are ready to selflessly give love to others, we will receive love. Yoga teaches how to share love selflessly with another. It requires an investment of discipline, patience and an unconditional attitude. Swami Vishnudevananda said: "You either become a monk or you live in a relationship. Both are difficult, as both require renunciation."

If the Self or the love have been found within ourselves, we realise that there is no difference between me and anybody else. The science of psychology only works because we all have the same problems. Yet we insist in seeing ourselves as a unique person. That is tremendous *avidya*, the root out of which the evil of 'me' and 'mine' arises. It is a mistake to think, "This belongs to me" and "I am like this". The truth is that we are all the same. What makes the difference is the limiting factors.

Realise the Self and Be Free

When the illusions have been removed, it is called 'direct realisation'. The central teachings of the *Upanishads* declare that *Brahman* alone is real, the Self within, whereas all else is not real because it constantly changes. This is what is meant by realising the Self and being free. Being free does not mean that you can do what you like. Being free means being free from attachments. For example, being free from attachment to what you are doing at present and also not being unhappy when it ends. Being really free is freedom from conditionings. It is true that we are free to do what we want, but that freedom includes having to face the consequences. If we smoke and just eat what we like, we may become sick. That means we must then also be free of attachment from our health, as our bad health is connected to our doing what we wanted to do. Freedom includes applying *viveka* or discrimination regarding our actions and taking responsibility for the consequences.

Accepting the Self

The experience of the Self or even a vague idea of the Self means not being in the past and future any more, but remaining increasingly in the here and now. Concentration will improve, fears will diminish and inner happiness will grow. *The Upanishads* declare: *When you see the Self, you do not see the world. When you see the world, you do not see the Self.* Why do we breathe? What makes us breathe? Is it a physiological function? Is it nature? Or is it what we call *Brahman*? Or God? We have to accept something that is higher than ourselves, otherwise the awareness of body and mind will be predominant and we may think it is the truth.

Freedom and Bliss

The closer you come to the Self, the freer you become, free from fear and anger. You feel like a complete being and this radiates around you. It is very different from the kind of fulfilment that can be found in the outer world where it is always mixed with the fear of loss, and loss itself. Inner fulfilment is complete, it makes us feel free; this state is expressed by words like bliss, peace, immortality, freedom. Keep up your patience and keep the spark alive by constant practice. Then freedom is waiting for you.

Vedantic Scriptures

The Vedantic scriptures do not speak about religion nor relate to any specific religion. The inspiration that can be derived from this study is based on freedom from *avidya* or ignorance. Such scriptures are called *sastras*, like for example the *Brahma Sutras*. They speak about the inner Self or *Brahman*. Vedanta philosophy emphasises that there is much more than the body and the mind, more than the senses of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching can convey to us. They explain that it is possible to go beyond all that.

The Practice of Asking 'Who am I' ?

This requires more than just closing the eyes and focusing on the breath. Vedanta philosophy prepares us for recognising that we are more than the body and the mind. It requires a clear analysis: "Am I a body?" – the answer is "no". "Am I the mind?" – the answer is "no". "Am I the senses?" – the answer is "no". Each "no" simply means that we are not in connection with the truth, but still identifying with the non-Self which is subject to constant change. This condition is called *avidya*.

Seeing the Self in All

Realising that we are not any of the changing factors makes a difference in the ways we relate to our surroundings. We start to see the Self in everything, which is a very high experience. We can approach this experience step by step, understanding that neither we nor the others are the body. If we fall in love with a body, we have to face the fact that it will look very different 20 years later. If one loves the Self of the other, one remains free from attachment. This is *Vedanta*. Swami Sivananda says, that *Vedanta* leads to the destruction of selfish love. If you only love the body, it is egotistical, you love for selfish reasons. Swami Sivananda also describes how nature is teaching spiritual love and virtues. How adaptable is water, when it simply flows around the stones on its way. Or the sun that shines its light on all without differentiation. How much are we ready to adapt ourselves to circumstances and to open our hearts and our doors?

Vidyas – Vedantic Meditations

Swami Sivananda recommends the meditations on the words of wisdom called *vidyas*. These mystical meditations on *Brahman* are abstract, neutral and without any quality. All *vidyas* lead from the unreal to the real, from darkness to light, from mortality to immortality. They lead the soul to the supreme *Brahman*. The thinking of 'me' and 'mine' must be elevated to the universal 'I'. Then comes *nirvana*, illumination, realisation.

Sat Vidya

The first meditation is *Sat Vidya* from the *Chhandogya Upanishad*. *Vidya* is knowledge, *satis*, the highest. "In the beginning, my son, all this was only existence. Others say that there was only non-existence, one without a second. From non-existence came existence. But how is this possible, my son? How can existence come from non-existence? Therefore, my son, in the beginning there was existence, nothing but existence, without a second."

The essence of this *vidya* is also *Tat Twam Asi* (That Thou Art), the highest *vidya* or meditation: you are That, without a second, without any quality, without *raga-dvesha* (likes and dislikes).

In this apparent nothingness lies absolute fullness. This is *Sat Vidya*.

Bhuma Vidya

Next is *Bhuma Vidya* from the same *Upanishad*. *That where one sees nothing, hears nothing, and understands nothing is called infinite fullness. That where one sees a second, hears a second, and understands a second is called small and finite. That which is infinite is immortal. That which is finite is mortal.*

This *vidya* teaches the difference between the changing and the unchanging. When you sit and meditate on this, you forget all religions, you dive into the inner Self and find that truth which has nothing to do with Christianity, Hinduism or any other 'ism'. This is *Vedanta*. *Bhuma Vidya* is maybe the most important *vidya*. It summarises the result of all philosophical *Vedantic* enquiry. The One alone is Truth. The "I" is identical with this truth. If this *vidya* is understood, infinity is realised.

Purusha Vidya

A very interesting *vidya* is *Purusha Vidya*, that again is from the *Chhandogya Upanishad*. It describes human life as a sacrifice:

Human life is indeed a sacrifice. The first 24 years are the sacrificial offering of the morning, the next 44 years are the sacrificial offering of the midday and the next 48 years (up to age 116) are the third sacrificial offering. You become aware of the process of aging and you see that there is no time to waste. It is not the others who become old and die. It is everybody. The first 24 years relate to the morning. It is a time of awakening, like the early morning. You are waking up, but you are not really awake. The next 44 years are the sacrificial offering of midday. It means you continue to be active up to age 68. This requires, of course, a healthy life style without tobacco and alcohol, following a healthy diet, in other words: having a *sattvic* lifestyle. Up to age 68, the *sastras* say, things can be moved, both inside and outside. Up to age 116 comes the phase of the third sacrificial offering. This means that according to the *sastras*, a person can easily live beyond 100 years, depending on their lifestyle.

Swami Sivananda comments on this *vidya* by saying that a person should live for 116 years without disease. The five points presented by Swami Vishnudevananda (proper exercise, proper breathing, proper relaxation, proper diet, positive thinking and meditation) are the foundation, in order to start a reflection on the question "Who am I?"



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THE NAMES ARE MANY BUT GOD IS ONE

The Upanishads profess only one God—Brahman. God is certainly One, He has no second. The Absolute Reality must be one, there cannot be two Absolutes—Swami Sivananda

The Kena Upanishad says that the Supreme Reality is beyond the perception of the senses and the mind because the senses and the mind can visualise and conceive only the objects, while Reality is the Supreme Subject, the very precondition of all sensation, thinking, understanding, etc. No one can behold God because He is the beholder of all things

The Isavasya Upanishad says that the whole Universe is pervaded by Iswara or God, who is both within and without it. He is the moving and the unmoving, He is far and near, He is within all these and without all these.

The Katha Upanishad says God is the Root of this Tree of world existence. The realisation of God is regarded as the supreme blessedness or *sreyas* as distinct from *preyas* or temporal experience of satisfaction. His form is not to be seen. No one beholds Him with the eye. By controlling the mind by the intellect and by incessant meditation He is revealed. Those who know Brahman become immortal.

The Aitareya Upanishad states that the Supreme Atman has manifested itself as the objective universe from the one side and as the subjective individuals on the other side, whereby factors which are effects of God's creation become causes of the individual's perception, by a reversal of the process.

The Chhandogya Upanishad says that all this Universe is Brahman manifest, in all its states of manifestation. The Upanishad regards objects as really aspects of the one Subject known as the Vaishnavara Atman. It also holds that the Supreme Being is the infinite, or *bhuma*, in which one sees nothing else, hears nothing else, and understands nothing else except the Self as the only existence.

Brihadaranyaka Upanishad tells us that the Supreme Being is Pure Consciousness, in which subjects and objects merge together in a state of universality. The Supreme Being knows only Itself as 'I-Am', inclusive of everything. As He is the

knower of all things, no one can know Him, except as 'He Is'.

The Svetasvatara Upanishad says, Thou art the Woman, Thou art the Man, Thou art Girl, Thou art Boy. Thou deceiveth us as the old man tottering with the stick. Thou moveth everywhere, in the form of everything, in all directions. Thou art the dark-blue Butterfly, and the Green Parrot with red eyes. Thou art the Thundercloud, the Seasons, the Oceans. Thou art without beginning and beyond all Time and Space. Thou art That from which all universes are born. That alone is Fire. That is the Sun. That is Air. That is the Moon. That is also the Starry Firmament and That is the Waters. That is Prajapati. That is Brahman.



(from *Spiritual Import of Religious Festivals*, Swami Krishnananda)

त्वं स्त्री त्वं पुमानसि त्वं कुमार उत वा कुमारी ।
त्वं जीर्णो दंडेन वञ्चसि त्वं जातो भवसि विश्वतोमुखः ॥३॥

The Prasna Upanishad says that God is the Supreme Prajapati or Creator, in whom are blended both the matter and energy of the Universe. God is symbolised in *pranava* or *omkara*.

The Mundaka Upanishad gives the image of the Supreme Being as the One Ocean into which all the rivers of individual existence enter and with which they become One, as their final goal.

The Mandukya Upanishad regards the Supreme Being as the Turiya, or the Transcendent Consciousness, beyond the states of waking, dreaming and deep sleep.

The Taittiriya Upanishad regards the Reality as the Atman, or the Self, beyond the physical, vital, mental, intellectual and causal aspects (sheaths) of the personality. It also identifies this Atman with the Supreme Absolute, or Brahman.

A TRIBUTE TO SWAMI RAJESHWARIANANDA

by Kalyani

On the first anniversary of the Mahasamadhi of long-time staff Swami Rajeshwariananda, we write in memory of her life of almost thirty years of service at the Sivananda Ashrams and Centres in India.

Having retired from primary school teaching, Swami Rajeshwariananda was fondly known by the oldest staff at Neyyar Dam as 'Teacher Swami'. At the age of fifty she retired in order to serve at the Neyyar Dam Ashram. Here her experience with younger children was put to good use; in the many years that she assisted the annual Kids' Camp, not only did she teach kirtan and Bhagavad Gita chanting, but assisted with the personal care of the girls.

She also supported the nursery school run by the Ashram. And from time to time, she even used her skills to admirably attempt to teach non-local staff the local language Malayalam.

Most of her years of service were spent at the Neyyar Dam Ashram. The earlier years were spent devotedly keeping company with Swami Sivasaranananda ji, the mother of Swami Vishnudevananda, until 1992. However Mathaji, as she was respectfully addressed, also spent time at all the Centres and Ashrams in India encouraging the traditional practice of chanting Lalitha Sahasranama, Vishnu Sahasranama, Bhagavad Gita and reading Sri Ramayana and the celebration of the various festivals throughout the year. Her dedication to the Raja Rajeswari Temple at Neyyar Dam was exceptional. In the face of changing times and lack of understanding of temple culture, Mathaji taught the cultural practices to the many temple visitors as well as encouraging them with the chanting.

Mathaji enjoyed going on yatra to temples all over India, and she is widely remembered for her enthusiasm for chanting kirtan and mantra on the bus during tours. Mathaji was fervent

in her practice of likitha japa. And although writing became difficult, it was mental japa of Saravanabhava that took her through the pain of her final illness until her release on March 6 2016, the day before Maha Sivaratri. Her likitha japa was interred with her in an area (she had selected) behind the Siva Hall in the Ashram on Sivaratri Day. The Mahasamadhi puja conducted by Sri Harihara Chaitanya was attended by many who had known her over the years to show their respects.

Swami Rajeshwariananda was initiated into sannyas by Swami Vishnudevananda on January 1 1991. Despite her failing health she attended the puja conducted for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the initiation on January 1 2016 giving all present her blessings. She will be long-remembered, and missed for the outstanding example she set for the simple austere life of a sannyasin.



Kalyani is co-director of the Sivananda Dhanwantari Ashram in Neyyar Dam, south India.



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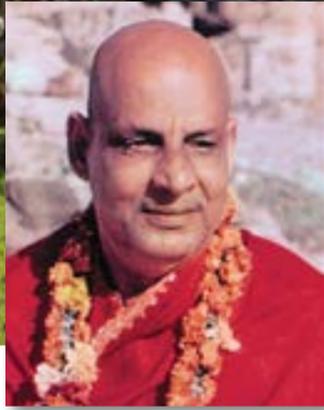
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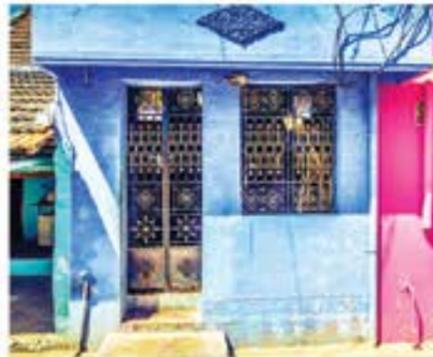


PATTAMADAI,

THE BIRTH PLACE OF SWAMI SIVANANDA

TAMIL NADU, INDIA

SWAMI SIVANANDA CENTENARY CHARITABLE HOSPITAL



‘Pattamadai is a lovely place with green paddy fields and mango groves all around. The water is sweet and health-giving. It is famous as the place where the finest grass mats are made....’

from Autobiography of Swami Sivananda

Opened in 1987 in Pattamadai, Tamil Nadu to commemorate the birth centenary of Swami Sivananda, the Swami Sivananda Centenary Charitable Hospital is a wonderful memorial to the selfless service of the poor and the sick that marked Swami Sivananda's life. Swami Sivananda was born in this quiet corner of south India and the Hospital is a spiritual centre of dedicated service. The Hospital serves the poor of the more than fifty villages within 100 kilometres of Pattamadai on a mainly charitable basis.

It treats daily an average of 300 out-patients and 40 ward-patients, as well as providing a 24-hour emergency service. It includes an outdoor dispensary, and 70-bed indoor facility, with a surgical, medical and maternity ward. It has three operating theatres, an X-ray department, a clinical laboratory, ECG and sonogram department. There is a resident gynaecologist, paediatrician and anaesthetist, providing round-the-clock care. Over the last thirty years of operation the hospital has treated well over two million out-patients and twenty-five thousand in-patients.

The hospital has visiting doctors, who hold orthopaedic, neurological, skin, dental, urological and ENT clinics. Patients suffering from rheumatism, arthritis, and orthopaedic complaints are served by an in-house physiotherapist. With the collaboration of the Aravind Eye Hospital in nearby Tirunelveli, free Eye Camps are conducted on a monthly basis.

No charges are made for consultations, for bed, nursing and diet for in-patients, nor for medicines and injections for all patients. In addition doctors and paramedics travel to outlying areas to treat those who are unable to come to the Hospital and to conduct Health Care Awareness Clinics.

The Hospital is a wonderful tribute to Swami Sivananda who declared that 'doing good to others is the highest religion'. It is there solely to serve, and was designed only as a temple of service, aptly reflected in its architecture. ॐ

For more information please contact The Swami Sivananda Centenary Charitable Hospital, Pattamadai-627 453, Tirunelveli Dist., Tamil Nadu, India email: sscch1987@gmail.com or sscch@bsnl.in



HOW YOGA WORKS – A SCIENTIFIC LOOK

by Chandrika (Cordula Interthal)



Yoga practice has many health benefits—these are the traditional yoga teachings. In recent years the scientific community has caught up to this fact with an increase in scientific research on yoga. In this article we will talk about how to understand scientific studies and the most researched topic: yoga and stress.

Yoga—A Spiritual Path

In light of the growing awareness of the health benefits of yoga and the creation of new fields like yoga therapy we should keep in mind that yoga is a spiritual path and its health benefits are 'merely' a step on the path to the highest goal. *This body is the moving temple of God. It should be kept healthy and strong. It is a vessel to take you to the other shore of fearlessness and immortality.* —Swami Sivananda

Yoga is a lifestyle and covers all aspects of life. Swami Vishnudevananda summarised this in the five points of yoga: asanas, pranayama, relaxation, proper diet, positive thinking and meditation. Most yoga studies look at the first three points: asanas, pranayama and relaxation. Although there is a wide variety of yoga styles in the scientific literature, most studies define asanas as postures that are held with a meditative component and relaxation elements.

With regard to asanas, most of us may have heard that sarvangasana is good for the thyroid—this is traditional yogic knowledge. While the yoga masters and the traditional scriptures detail the benefits of specific asanas, scientific research looks into the benefits of holistic yoga practice, for example a sixty-minute yoga class daily for twelve weeks. This approach makes research easier and it also more accurately reflects the reality of our yoga practice in daily life.

Yogic and Scientific Thinking

If you practise yoga regularly you have already had the experience of its health benefits (remember—wellbeing is an important part of health). The Western mind may find it difficult to accept the yogic explanation of how yoga works (three bodies, five sheaths). Scientific research may provide the last piece of the puzzle that we need to fully accept that yoga has many benefits and to be inspired to practise. Most scientific studies cannot and do not provide definite proof; they express this in phrases like 'there is evidence...'. Unfortunately, in our desire for getting yes or no answers, we are oftentimes tempted to simplify and take scientific findings as definite truth. With yoga studies it is especially important to be aware of this, because most studies on yoga lack the quality to give conclusive scientific proof of its benefits.

Here are some tips to help you interpret scientific studies correctly:

1) A good study uses as many test subjects as possible and tests them as long as possible. Good questions to ask are: How many people were tested? How often and how long did they practise yoga?

2) Results from prospective studies are more significant than from retrospective studies. In a prospective study the test is done first before the data is collected. For example having a group of people practise yoga for twelve weeks and then measuring blood pressure afterwards.

A retrospective study (case study) uses information from the past. For example comparing blood pressure in people that have practised yoga regularly for the last year against those who have never practised yoga.

3) The more studies that are done on the same topic with the same results, the more significant these results become. For example ten different studies showing that yoga lowers blood pressure is better proof than one study (reproducibility).

4) It is important to read the conclusion of the study carefully. 'We couldn't find any evidence for the effectiveness of yoga on lowering blood pressure' can mean that the question remains unanswered because the study lacked the necessary quality.

'We found evidence for the association between yoga and lower blood pressure' is not yet definite proof; it means the two may be linked but it may not necessarily mean that yoga causes lower blood pressure and may mean further research is warranted.

Yoga and Stress

One of the best examples of scientific research on yoga is on its beneficial effects on stress, because there is so much data on it. Before we talk about stress we have to understand health and wellbeing, which is the constant change between two opposing systems in our body—the stress response and the resting state of relaxation. These two systems exist in a natural state of balance and regulate the subconscious functions of our body. They are linked in such a way that if one is activated, the other is down-regulated and vice versa. It is just as the yoga masters teach us, a healthy life is a balanced life.

Relaxation is the normal resting state of our body in which the parasympathetic nervous system (PNS), the rest and repair system, is active. It is responsible for maintaining life including the impulse to breathe.

If we need to become active the stress response, the sympathetic nervous system (SNS, fight or flight system), is turned on. It mobilises energy reserves, activates the cardiovascular system (this also involves the release of epinephrine into the blood) and increases muscle tone. The SNS works closely together with the HPA system (hypothalamus-pituitary-adrenal system) which produces cortisol and is part of the hormone system. Both systems form one functional unit: the SNS/ HPA system. The main regulator of both systems is the hypothalamus, a small region in the brain.

Stress – Knocked Off Balance

Negative stress is a product of our modern way of life: the excessive and overly-long activation of the SNS/HPA system at the expense of the PNS. Our body has been knocked off balance and this can lead to fatigue, pain and disease.

In this situation a vicious cycle unfolds. Repeated activation of the stress response makes the brain more receptive to stressful stimuli and quicker to activate the SNS/HPA system. At the same time the natural off-switch of the HPA axis stops working. Under normal circumstances the HPA axis turns itself off once cortisol levels are high enough. Excessively elevated levels of cortisol override this mechanism resulting in a continuous, unfettered production of cortisol.

We are all familiar with this situation. If you experience a large amount of stress you find it hard to relax, even after the stress is over. Your brain is still on alert, the SNS/HPA system is continuously active, and the PNS is suppressed.

Research on Yoga and Stress

The following is a summary of the many scientific findings on the topic:

Yoga turns OFF the stress response

In the brain, yoga inhibits the two areas of the hypothalamus which activate the stress response:—the areas responsible for activating the sympathetic nervous system (SNS) and the HPA axis. This stops the vicious cycle of continuous activation of both systems. In the body this effect can be seen in both the nervous system and the hormone system. Dialling down of the SNS results in lower blood pressure, a slower heart beat and less catecholamines (epinephrine and norepinephrine) in the blood and urine. Inhibition of the HPA axis leads to lower blood cortisol levels.

Yoga turns ON the relaxation response

PNS activation can be measured by a more flexible heartbeat (increased heart rate variability) and greater sensitivity of baroreceptors, the internal blood pressure sensors. These additional findings also show that yoga reduces stress: yoga reduces blood sugar levels, inflammation markers, other hormones, pain medication use, and risk factors for heart disease.

Pranayama

Interestingly, breathing exercises alone also have a relaxing, stress-reducing effect. A slow breath with a long exhalation is a proven method of lowering blood pressure. It almost goes without saying then, that alternate nostril breathing also has been found to lower blood pressure. Alternate nostril breathing is another very nice example of restoring the balance between the SNS and the PNS. Studies have found that unilateral right nostril breathing activates the SNS, while unilateral left nostril breathing activates the PNS and alternate nostril breathing activates the PNS.

Meditation

Studies have shown that meditation reduces the activity of the SNS and increases the activity of the PNS. This effect was strongest in higher states of meditation.

Positive Thinking

Positive psychology researchers have found that cultivating positive thoughts and emotions activates the PNS. In turn, the more relaxed an individual is to start out with, the more positivity he or she develops, showing nicely how the aspects of a holistic yoga practice boost one another.

Conclusion

Asanas, pranayama, positive thinking and meditation activate the relaxation system and take us out of the constant activation of the stress system. They restore balance and allow for constant harmonic change between both systems. In other words: they induce health and wellbeing. ॐ

Some interesting links

Yoga and Stress
www.journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/2156587213503344
www.altmedrev.com/publications/17/1/21.pdf
www.health.harvard.edu/mind-and-mood/yoga-for-anxiety-and-depression
www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/?term=yoga+stress+review
 General health benefits of yoga
www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3193654/
www.hindawi.com/journals/ecam/2012/165410/
www.iayt.org/?page=HealthBenefitsofYoga

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KEEP YOUR BALANCE by P.C. Kapoor



Balancing (equilibrium) brings Bequanimity. Lack of equilibrium brings just the opposite. We feel out of control when we lose our balance, and the ego hates to lose control. When we balance, we align our body's centre of gravity with the earth's gravitational field. Quite literally, we place ourselves in physical equilibrium with

a fundamental force of nature. We cannot achieve this harmony by remaining still. We must refresh our balance moment after moment in a sustained effort to centre and re-centre. When we are successfully able to do this, it brings our flesh and bones into balance, along with our nerve impulses, thoughts, emotions, and our very consciousness, hence calming us.

A great way to find our balance is by performing balancing asanas. These asanas develop and stimulate the cerebellum in our brain. The cerebellum controls the balance and motion of our body. Normally, human beings have uncoordinated movements, requiring their bodies to constantly compensate this lack of balance to avoid falling over or knocking against things. This inefficiency of humans results in expending a huge effort to achieve simple results, thus creating considerable additional stress in the body. The balancing asanas quieten subconscious and unconscious movements by inducing physical balance. They still the brain centre or cerebellum, and bring balance to the physical body through the pituitary gland. During the inverted asanas, extra blood travels to the brain, nourishing it with oxygen and nutrients and improving the functioning of the hypothalamus. As the moving body attains balance it becomes increasingly free to rely on other forces, such as gravity, to support and propel it. This way it conserves its own energy and achieves grace and fluidity of motion.

Even relatively simple balances like Vrksasana (Tree Pose) demand our full, wakeful attention. The instant we lose focus, we fall over. There is an unavoidable immediacy to these balancing asanas. Standing on one foot, we naturally drop extra-

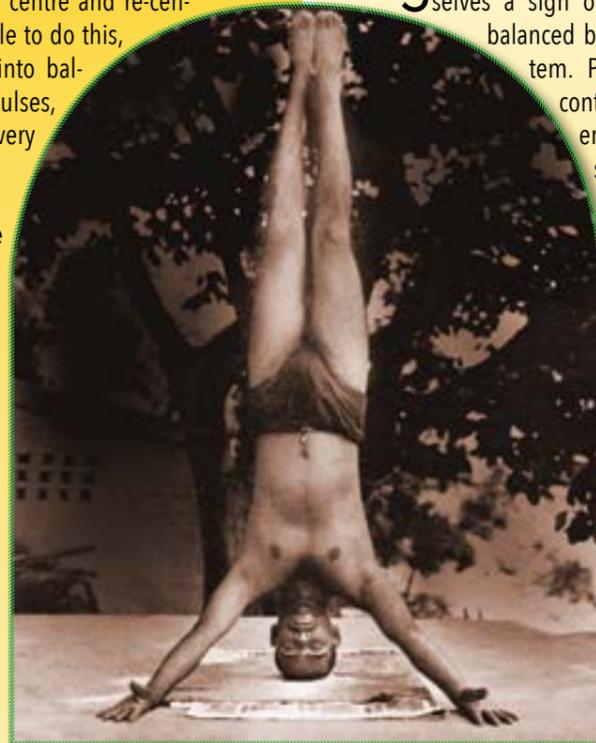
neous thoughts to focus on the task at hand. That is why these poses can instil a deep sense of calm even though they require intense, unwavering alertness. In addition to promoting concentration and calm, these poses strengthen our muscles and build our coordination and balance, improving our manner of standing and walking. They also impact how we perform many of our everyday activities. These benefits may in turn prolong our lives, helping us avoid falls that often lead to injuries and death among the elderly.

Strength and flexibility in postures is not by themselves a sign of progress. A smooth, rhythmical, balanced breath is. It relaxes the nervous system. Practice of balancing asanas with controlled breathing increases vital energy, and fine tunes the nervous system to eventually lead to control of the mind. The focus required to perform these asanas with steadiness develops concentration and balance at the emotional, mental and psychic levels. These asanas are especially noted for balancing the nervous system and removing stress and anxiety. For relief of excessive tension these postures should be held for as long as possible. Practice of these asanas helps us to face a challenging task while staying mentally calm and detached.

As well as the physical benefits of balancing postures (see page on left) there are mental and pranvic benefits also. The mental benefits of balancing asanas include improved concentration and greater clarity of thought, increased ability to deal with complex situations without suffering from stress, overcoming mental disorders, overcoming sluggishness (tamas) and hyperactivity (rajas), and better emotional control.

The pranvic benefits of balancing postures are also powerful. The prana when consciously controlled is a strong vitalising and regenerating force. Once prana is controlled, it can be manipulated for self-development for healing apparently incurable diseases and also aids in helping to heal others. ॐ

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Swami Vishnudevananda



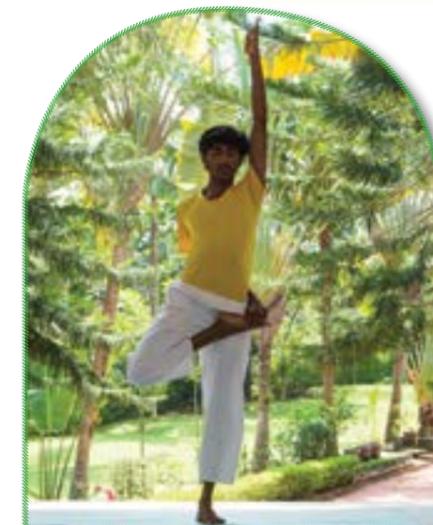
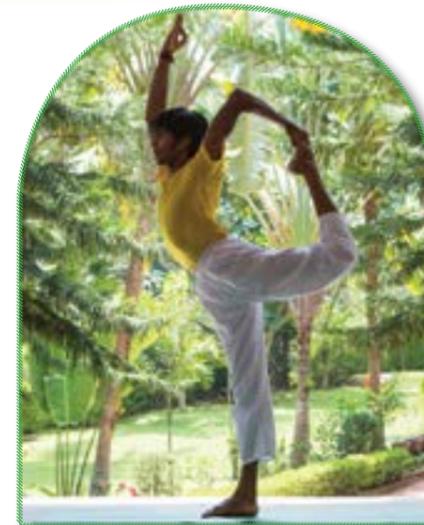
Mayurasana (Peacock) stimulates the metabolic processes increasing secretions from different organs. It harmonises the glands of the endocrine system and stimulates elimination of the toxins from the blood. The digestive organs are massaged and intestinal peristalsis is stimulated—easing constipation, diabetes and sluggishness of the liver and kidneys.



Garudasana (Eagle) strengthens the muscles of thighs and calves and the knee and ankle joints. It tones the nerves and loosens the joints of the legs and arms. This asana firms the upper arms, stretches the shoulders and opens hips. It also works on the abdominal muscles and brings a fresh supply of blood to the kidneys. It relieves sciatica and rheumatism.



Kakasana (Crow) improves physical control and coordination, revitalises the nerves, helps develop strength and flexibility in the muscles of the wrists, arms and shoulders. Legs, hips and back are also made strong. Kakasana also stretches and lubricates the joint tendons and ligaments of the upper body, expands the chest and increases breathing capacity.



Natarajasana (Lord Siva's Dance Form) and **Vrksasana (Tree)** balance and centre the body. These asanas improve physical control, coordination and alignment, balance the nervous system, and strengthen leg and ankle muscles and stretch the entire body. The Tree posture especially helps stabilise the pelvis, elongates the spine and increases the flexibility of the inner thighs.

THE BAULS

The Bauls are mystic minstrels living in rural Bangladesh and West Bengal, India. The Baul movement, at its peak in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, has now regained popularity among the rural population of Bangladesh. Their music and way of life have influenced a large segment of Bengali culture, and particularly the compositions of Nobel Prize laureate Rabindranath Tagore. Bauls live either near a village or travel from place to place and earn their living from singing to the accompaniment of the lute dotara, the ektara, a simple one-stringed instrument, and a drum called dubki.

Bauls belong to an unorthodox devotional tradition, influenced by Hinduism, Buddhism, Bengali Vaishnavism and Sufi Islam, yet distinctly different from them.

Bauls neither identify with any organised religion nor with the caste system, special deities, temples or sacred places.

Their emphasis lies on the importance of a person's physical body as the place where God resides.

Bauls are admired for this freedom from convention as well as their music and poetry.

Baul poetry, music, song and dance are devoted to finding humankind's relationship to God, and to achieving spiritual liberation. Their devotional songs can be traced back to the fifteenth century when they first appeared in Bengali literature.

Baul music represents a particular type of folk song, carrying influences of Hindu bhakti movements as well as the shuphi, a form of Sufi song. Songs are also used by the spiritual leader to instruct disciples in Baul philosophy, and are transmitted orally.

The language of the songs is continuously modernised thus endowing it with contemporary relevance. The preservation of the Baul songs and the general context in which they are performed depend mainly on the social and economic situation of their practitioners.



Incurable Desire

Is there any cure for desire-diseases?

Oh, Sakhi! Please tell me of one.

Desire in the morning,

Desire in the night,

Desire throughout the day.

If I forsake desire,

Desire nonetheless comes to catch me

Another way.

Better would be the funeral pyre,

Then, at least, the whole man would burn;

But the fire of desire

Kills not, just sears, keeps on searing.

Sarat sings:

Oh, lovely Radha,

In the end you stand lonely,

Except for the desire;

Is it the one who heals

The wounds of all wordly desires

The one you desire?

Sarat

Parvathy Baul is a practitioner, performer and teacher of the Baul tradition from Bengal, India. She is also an instrumentalist, storyteller and painter. Parvathy performs at the Sivananda Ashram in Neyyar Dam, south India.

Photo credit Ila-Reddy

THE DEEPER PATH OF YOGA



Yoga Life brings definite and visible benefits in the physical and mental health of individuals. It is multifaceted and deep. The yoga teacher who teaches *Yoga Life* needs to have in-depth knowledge of how to coach individuals, not only in the practice of asanas and pranayama, but also in ways of physical, mental and spiritual relaxation; in how to adopt a proper diet and lifestyle that increases prana; and in positive thinking and meditation. The yoga teacher acts as a spiritual guide or counsellor in the four paths of yoga, guiding in the practice of selflessness, of selfless love, of self-analysis and self-enquiry.

We recognise Sri Krishna, who counselled Arjuna on the battlefield, as the first yoga counsellor or spiritual guide. Yoga is taught on the battlefield of life. We struggle to find peace and happiness while dealing with life's challenges, a process which causes wear and tear, and may create disease of body and mind. Health of body and mind and spiritual health are clearly interrelated. Spiritual insights bring about improvement in mental health and automatically induce the physical process of healing. Once disease has manifested in the physical body however, it is more of a challenge to reverse the process and effect healing. Health and healing are a dynamic and ongoing process, not separate from but connected to the individual's degree of self-knowledge and realisation. Self-knowledge, divine grace and faith play an important role in the journey towards well-being.

Swami Sivananda tells us that we are author of our own health and well-being. We often fail to realise that physical health depends on mental health, tending to view our physical ailments as something happening to us from the outside, and often suddenly. In fact, disease is frequently a wake-up call, a lesson about ourselves and an opportunity for self-transformation. Traumatic events or difficult karmic situations are often hidden and untold, leading to disease. The spiritual element is ever-present in all cases but often down-played and misunderstood. We do not know that being spiritually healthy leads to mental and physical health. We do not know that the function of the mind and the body cells are regulated by the Atman, the Indweller. We do not know that healthy relationships and emotional balance are part of the well-being equation. The holistic, therapeutic approach of yoga addresses this complex issue of body-mind-spirit connection and interdependence.

The following case studies of yoga students illustrate this inter-relationship, the importance of spirit, and the benefits brought about by adopting an integrated yogic lifestyle. Each case shows a motivated individual and a spiritual teacher who coaches the individual in daily practice.

Margaret was a 30-year-old yoga student who suffered from chronic fatigue syndrome and anorexia nervosa.

Margaret immersed herself in the yogic life, taking up residency at the Ashram to help restore equilibrium. After many weeks of experiencing a beneficial yogic community life and developing a positive relationship with the swami resident teacher, she revealed a history of severe sexual abuse within the family when she was young which had led to confusion, undermined a healthy approach to her body and robbed her of her desire to live. Oftentimes, she was unable to feed herself, unable to stand or walk normally, could only crawl to the bathroom, and became totally inactive. On good days, she was open and dynamic in such a way that no-one would have known of her problems and disabilities.

I observed that daily yoga practice over a sustained period helped to regulate and unblock her energy. Asana practice wakes tamas, calms rajās and nourishes sattva. For healing of the whole being—body, mind and spirit—energy must flow, and the mind must be calm so that the true spirit that is the intelligence governing the body and mind can be revealed. Her yoga practice gave her the strength to face the root cause of the problem and led her to confiding in me her history, an act which was the beginning of her healing journey. She became devotional and actively maintained a loving relationship with her chosen form of God. She started to manifest love and trust again. Her daily participation in group satsangs, meditation and awareness practice brought her a better perspective on life. The episodes of excessive fatigue and anorexia lessened, restoring an improved quality of life. According to yoga philosophy, if the mind is not peaceful (sama), then it is not possible for the individual to connect to his/her spiritual being, resulting in distortions of reality and self-perception. Many are victims of abuse. Yoga practice along with a pure lifestyle restores peace of mind and connection to the Self. This in turn balances the movement of healthy prana in the body and mind. I have often observed the impact of a safe environment and a loving, supportive spiritual life in healing.

TEACHING FOR HEALING

Swami Sitaramananda

Yoga Life in an Ashram or Centre often provides an alternative loving family. A supportive, loving and respectful relationship with a spiritual human being is an important element in the process of restoring self-love and respect. It reflects back the reality of who the individual really is as opposed to a distorted image created by the mind and its past experiences.

Michael was a 45-year-old retired naval officer, suffering from leukaemia.

A supportive spiritual coach and a loving community, a practice of selflessness and self-worth, daily practice of yoga asanas and pranayama led to counselling sessions which revealed a previously untold story of abuse from authoritative spiritual figures in childhood.

Michael started a daily practice of asanas and pranayama. He worked on the practice of forgiveness, and actively cultivated detachment from the past. He worked on maintaining constant awareness of his thoughts in order to replace deeply-ingrained negativity with positive thoughts. Slowly his faith and trust were restored.

Michael's story confirms how re-connection to the spiritual helps to heal body, mind, spirit relationship. His disease went into remission and he was given a clean bill of health.

Oftentimes when people experience psychic, mental, or emotional problems and tension in the body it is found that they breathe only through one nostril. In such cases, by practising alternate nostril breathing (anuloma viloma), and balancing the breath through both nostrils they find considerable improvement in their condition. The ability to relax increases through proper breathing—tension is released, prana is recharged, heralding a calm mind, and renewing the connection with the true Self that promotes healing. Pranayama is an essential element of hatha yoga for healing.

Mark was a 40-year-old male, brought by his family to the Ashram in a partially catatonic state, needing constant care.

He was slowly introduced to gentle asana practice, daily chants and proper nutrition and over time came back to life to tell a story of guilt and shame acquired in early life, including a background of drug abuse. After many years of regular yoga practice, he became a dynamic karma yogi, developed a down-to-earth approach to spiritual life, was able to successfully complete yoga teacher training and began teaching yoga.

How did this healing happen? During yoga practice, peace comes to the physical, mental and spiritual bodies. In deep relaxation, the practitioner rests in the causal body, and releases negative karmas carried in the subconscious. The practitioner connects with the true Self and develops a proper perspective on life, finding contentment irrespective of circumstance.

Rose was a 35-year-old female yoga teacher who experienced a serious accident in which she broke both her hips and legs.

Counselling from her yoga teacher helped her to maintain positive thinking while in pain and during surgery. She was able to heal quickly. Gentle adaptive and restorative hatha yoga practice helped her regain mobility and a good range of motion after surgery. She regained her full range of functioning and is a grateful and active yoga teacher with a strong daily practice. She says that yoga saved her during and after the accident.

Yoga teachers should have a basic knowledge of how to adapt postures to specific conditions. Many come to yoga for restorative purposes and gentle, adapted yoga postures are required to assist them.

Lanny was a 24-year-old female yoga student, suffering from severe acne, her face disfigured with pimples. She had poor self-esteem and suffered from depression.

She sought yogic counselling and received advice on positive thinking and how to foster detachment from a demanding relationship with her mother. She was advised to adopt a regular hatha yoga practice, changed her diet and modified her lifestyle. She received herbal therapies prescribed by an ayurvedic doctor. Her condition improved and she regained self-confidence and now leads a creative and positive life.

The emotions and the mind affect the health of the body. A yoga teacher should be able to give simple advice on how to calm the emotions, how to deal with relationships and how to use the wisdom of ayurveda for simple ailments as well as for detoxification. *continued overleaf*



Health and Absence of Health is Threefold

A state of physical health exists when all organs function optimally under the intelligent control of the mind. Mental health prevails when the mind is calm and able to focus. Emotional health is achieved when there is an absence of negativity towards others, when there is universal, unconditional love. Spiritual health is when we are connected consciously to our spirit. Maintenance of health consists of the yoga practices that remove the obstacles to good health. Connection to spirit manifests as self-love, self-care, creativity, calmness, equanimity, presence, connection with others, and balance in thought and action. Lack of connection to spirit manifests as restlessness, darkness, mental fluctuation, living in the past, fear, anger, blaming and emotional dramas. In all situations of pain and suffering that which is missing is connection to spirit, and that which is effective in alleviating suffering is connection to spirit. If we can bring about that connection, mental and physical symptoms are alleviated, and the body-mind complex heals itself.

Yoga Practices and Connection to the Self

Mental or physical disease is a symptom of lack of connection to the spiritual aspect of our being. Connection becomes blocked, and there is a tendency to mis-identify or distort the idea of self. Conventional healing methods are often ineffective in these cases. A classical yoga practice brings the ailing person back to a natural undistorted connected state. Yoga has the capacity to counteract the forces within the individual that tend to lead him or her to extremes. These negative karmic patterns are frequently reinforced by upbringing and relationships, and it can take considerable time and constant awareness to re-establish healthy patterns. The presence of a spiritual guide or yoga teacher is often necessary during this time. Sometimes, after reaching the lowest point, the individual may catch a glimpse of reality but cannot sustain their efforts. Regular yoga asana practice and the practice of self-restraint regulate the emotional upheavals and bring contentment and peace. Yoga requires concentration and counteracts the tendency of the mind to wander, to escape into fantasy, to reinforce mistaken ideas. Having attained health the individual needs to sustain this by regular sadhana, reinforced in a community situation, or satsang. It is difficult for an individual to maintain regular practice on his or her own due to deeply ingrained negative habits. The home environment often reflects the disease. Spiritual community or satsang provides a healing environment.

A yoga teacher who cares for the students becomes a spiritual guide and health counsellor in a larger sense. The yoga teacher is to have an understanding of the deeper aspects of yoga techniques, be able to adapt postures and classes to specific individual conditions, and to be able to help an individual through knowledge of yoga psychology and philosophy. The teacher should have an understanding of the basics of ayurveda; as well as of jyotish to help determine the karmic tendency.

Yogic methods are always the same: understanding that the connection to spirit is the main key to healing. This connection will be attained by a return to conscious breathing, practice of asanas, deep relaxation, proper nutrition, positive thinking and meditation and by attending yoga retreats, by moving out of isolation, and by cultivation of devotion, trust, faith and detachment.

Aids to Healing

Daily asana and pranayama

An understanding and empathetic teacher

Detachment

Community life

Self-study

Eradication of bad habits or addictions

Healthy diet

Seclusion and satsang, yoga retreats

Emotional sublimation, kirtan

Karma yoga

Concentration

Forgiveness, acceptance

Regularity, moderation, daily routine

Moderation of senses

Positive self-image

Self-expression

Listening

Relaxation, awareness

Bodywork, massage



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HOW TO PROTECT THE MIND — PRANAYAMA, MANTRA AND THE POWER OF GOD



Question: In the Bhagavad Gita (Chapter 6.19) Lord Krishna says, *As a lamp placed in a windless spot does not flicker, to such is compared the yogi of controlled mind, practising yoga in the Self or absorbed in the yoga of the Self.* In his commentary on this verse, Swami Sivananda says, *This is a beautiful simile. Yogis quote this simile very often when they talk of concentration or steadiness or one-pointedness of the mind.* Can you please explain this verse as well as Swami Sivananda's commentary?

Answer: This indeed is a beautiful simile. The flame in a windless spot is an analogy to the mind of the yogi or the mind of the meditator. Why do we need an analogy? Because it is very difficult to understand the human mind. The mind is not very tangible. The moment you look at thoughts, they disappear. Therefore, in this verse, Lord Krishna is using a beautiful analogy in order to describe the meditative mind and compare it with the mind which is unmeditative and uncontrolled.

The Flickering Mind and the Meditative Mind

When the mind is uncontrolled and unmeditative, it is like a flame that is exposed to the wind. If you look at a flame in a windy place, you can see that it flickers all the time. Similarly, our mind in the unmeditative state flickers all the time. There are many vrittis or thought waves in the mind and each one of them has a different content. This is how the mind looks when it is unfocused. On the other hand, when the mind is in a state of meditation it is steady like a flame that is protected from the wind. What is the definition of the meditative state?

According to the teachings of yoga, for the mind to be in a state of meditation, four conditions need to be met. First, the mind has to be **pure** or sattvic. In other words, a mind in a meditative state consists mostly of sattvic vrittis (pure thought waves), while the rajasic and tamasic vrittis (active and lethargic thought waves) are restrained. The second condition is that the mind has to be **one-pointed** or in a state of ekagra. This is a state in which only one vritti or thought wave is allowed in the mind. The third condition is that the one-pointedness of the mind needs to be **continuous** and unbroken. The analogy for this continuity or unbrokenness is the flow of oil from one vessel to another. If you take two vessels, one of them filled with oil and the other empty, and you pour the oil from the full vessel into the empty vessel, you will see a continuous flow of the oil. Similarly, the one-pointedness of the meditative mind is unbroken and continuous. The fourth condition is that the meditative state is **effortless**. In meditation (dhyana)

na) there is no effort at all. In concentration (dharana) there is still effort. We try to focus the mind, but the mind by habit is outgoing and turbulent due to the many unfulfilled desires. Therefore, concentration is a process in which the mind sways away and the practitioner has to constantly return it to the point of concentration. A certain kind of struggle is involved. But when we are successful in this struggle, when we attain dhyana or meditation, there is no more struggle and the practice becomes effortless. To summarise, when the mind is pure and one-pointed, and when this one-pointedness is continuous and effortless, this is dhyana or meditation.

Protecting the Mind

Lord Krishna says that the meditative mind is like a flame that is protected from the **winds**. What are those winds which cause the flame (or the mind) to flicker?

In the yogic scriptures, it is said that the winds are the prana vayus, the currents of life-force that cause our mind to be turbulent and unsteady. Vayu is the cosmic element that controls the life-force, also known as 'wind' or 'air'. The currents of prana or the currents of life-force are the winds that make the mind turbulent and restless.

How do we protect the mind from those winds or pranic currents? If we take the analogy of the oil lamp and the flame, in order to protect the flame from the wind, we need to place a protective shield over the flame. Normally, we put a glass shield over the lamp. This allows us to be able to still see the flame but at the same time the flame is protected from the wind. When such a shield is placed over the lamp, the flame is undisturbed by the wind and therefore is steady.

Similarly, when the mind is undisturbed by the currents of life-force it is also steady. In fact, the natural state of the mind is a state of one-pointedness, relaxation and stillness. However, in order to be in that natural state, the mind has to be protected from the pranic currents. How can we protect the mind from those pranic currents?

Pranayama

The yogic scriptures describe different methods for protecting the mind. One well-known method is called pranayama. Pranayama means control of the prana, or control of the life-force by using breathing techniques. Controlling the mind itself is very difficult. However, controlling the prana through breathing techniques is easier. Therefore, the practice of pranayama is considered an excellent way to attain mind-control.

The breath is directly connected to the prana and the prana is directly connected to the mind. Hence, pranayama is a very good method to protect the mind from the winds or the pranic currents. Any person who practises pranayama can experience how the mind becomes peaceful, steady and one-pointed during the practice. And if you practise pranayama regularly and over a long period of time, you reach a point of effortless in the practice, where you do not need to make any effort to attain that state of peace and steadiness of mind.

It must be emphasised that when we talk about pranayama, we talk about the path of hatha yoga, which includes also the practice of yoga asanas or yogic postures. The practice of yoga asanas goes hand in hand with the practice of pranayama. We must practise them together. Yoga asanas prepare both the physical body and the astral body for the practice of pranayama. Thus, hatha yoga practice, and particularly pranayama, is a wonderful method to protect the mind from the winds or pranic currents. By controlling the pranas, which cause the mind to be turbulent, the mind becomes steady and one-pointed and can enter into the meditative state or a state of dhyana. Nevertheless, there is a problem with this method. The problem is that the moment you stop the pranayama, the mind becomes turbulent again. Therefore, it is important to learn about other methods, higher methods, for protecting the mind from the pranic currents.

Controlling the Mind Itself

One such method, which is higher than pranayama, is a mental method in which, rather than working with the breath, we work directly with the mind itself. In other words, we control the pranas or the life-force currents by bringing in a power, which is higher than the prana. Is there such a power in the universe which is higher and stronger than the Universal Prana? To answer this question, we will share a story from the Upanishads.

In the Upanishads, there is a discussion about the different gods who control the elements in creation. Those gods are

Bhumi Devata, the god of earth, Varuna Devata, the god of water, Agni Devata, the god of fire, and Vayu Devata, the god of air (or wind or prana). These gods are intelligent entities that control principles within the universe. They represent certain 'positions' within the universe. According to the yogic scriptures, the god that controls all the other gods is Vayu Devata, or the god of air. And because Vayu Devata controls all the other gods, the Universal Prana or the universal life-force controls all the other principles in the universe. In other words, if you control the prana, you control everything else. The question rises – is there a power in the universe that is higher than prana?

Iswara: The Highest Power

In the Kena Upanishad, there is a story that provides an answer to this question. This is a story about the Devas or the gods (those principles that control the elements in the universe) who defeated the demons in a war. Following their victory, the gods became very proud. They believed that they were extremely powerful entities in control of much in the universe. They also believed that their victory had come to them from their own power, not realising that their victory was only due to the Grace of the Supreme Being.

In particular, Vayu Devata, the god of air, became very proud because he was the most powerful god in control of all the other gods. One day he was in the company of other gods and suddenly a yaksha, a spiritual being, appeared in front of them. None of them could identify the being, so they approached him, in an attempt to find out. The spiritual being showed them a blade of grass. He first approached Agni Devata, the god of cosmic fire, and asked him: 'You are such a powerful god. You control the cosmic fire. You can burn anything in the universe. Can you burn this blade of grass?' And the god of the cosmic fire with all his might tried to burn that blade of grass, but was unsuccessful. He could not burn it. The yaksha said: 'How is it possible? You burn everything; you burn entire universes; you cannot burn this blade of grass?'

And Agni really tried, but he could not burn the blade of grass. Then the yaksha approached Vayu Devata, the god of cosmic air, who, being the Universal Prana, is considered the most powerful among all the gods. The yaksha asked Vayu Devata: 'Can you blow away this blade of grass?' Vayu Devata tried with all his might but he could not even bend the blade of grass. *continued overleaf*

The yaksha asked: 'How is it possible? You control everything, you blow away everything, how come you cannot blow away this little blade of grass?' But Vayu Devata, despite all his attempts, could not blow away the blade of grass. Then the yaksha revealed itself as the Divine Mother. The Divine Mother is the dynamic aspect of God. In India, when they speak about God, they do not speak about God only as the Divine Father. They speak about God also as the Divine Mother. So the Divine Mother appeared in front of the gods who were very proud of their power and told them: 'You think that you are so powerful, but look, you cannot even move a little blade of grass if I don't give you the permission. Without My permission you cannot move even a little petal, you cannot do anything.' When she said 'without My permission', She meant the permission of the Absolute Reality, of Iswara, the Lord. What She was telling them was: 'You think you are powerful, but you have no power whatsoever.'

What happened? Why was Vayu Devata, the god of air, unable to blow away even a little blade of grass? Because the One Ruler of all took his power away. Iswara in the form of the Universal Mother simply took the power away from Vayu Devata and within a moment he had become nothing. This is an important point that we need to fully understand: The power of Vayu Devata, the god of air, was given to him by Iswara, by the Lord. In other words, the power of the Universal Prana does not **belong** to the Universal Prana. It is **given** to the Universal Prana by the Absolute Reality, by the Universal Mother. The gods had become so proud but within a moment the Divine Mother took the power away from all of them, including Vayu Devata. He could not blow away even a small blade of grass. In just one moment She took the power away from Agni Devata, from the god of cosmic fire. He could not burn even a small blade of grass. The Divine Mother was the one who gave them the power and She was the one who could also take away that power.

Now, who is that Absolute Reality? That Absolute Reality is your own Self or the Atman. The Atman is Pure Consciousness. Pure Consciousness is the One who gives the power to prana, therefore, He is called in the scriptures, the 'life of life', or the 'prana of prana'.

We can control the mind by doing pranayama or breathing techniques, but this is not the highest method. There is a higher method in which we connect with the all-pervading Consciousness, and thus we control the prana itself. Consciousness gives the power to prana; Consciousness controls the prana and everything else.

That Which Protects the Mind is Mantra

So, what is the higher method of controlling the mind? The higher method of controlling the mind, which is higher even than pranayama, is japa. Japa means a rhythmical repetition of the mantra, a rhythmical repetition of the Divine Name. The Divine Name embodies the all-pervading Pure Consciousness. The power of the Name of God is infinite. Therefore, when the yogis were asked to define a mantra, they said, *mananat-trayate iti mantraha*—that which protects the mind is a mantra. Protects the mind from what? Protects the mind from those pranic currents which make the mind turbulent, and which make the mind ignorant.

Thus, the mantra is like a shield that protects the mind from those winds, or the pranic currents. When the mind is protected in this way, it assumes its natural state which is a state of meditation, one-pointedness, purity, steadiness and stillness. Japa, repetition of the mantra, is a very simple method that can be utilised at any time. This is a higher method because the mantra controls the prana itself, directly. The prana has no power at all without Consciousness, which is behind it. And the mantra is Pure Consciousness embodied in a sound structure. Therefore, by the practice of japa or the repetition of the mantra, a protective shield is built around the mind and the mind becomes meditative. And there is no power whatsoever that is able to penetrate this shield.

Swami Vishnudevananda told me: 'Utilise two methods for controlling the mind—pranayama and japa. Through pranayama (and the yoga asanas that must be practised together with the pranayama), you control the prana. But then, do japa. It is a much higher practice. It controls everything. The Name of God, the name that embodies the infinite Pure Consciousness, controls everything.'

So this is what we do. We practise pranayama and we do japa, and then the mind becomes like a flame which is steady in a place without wind. This is how Lord Krishna describes it in the Bhagavad Gita. And Swami Sivananda calls it a wonderful analogy, a wonderful simile, very easy to understand. OM TAT SAT



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

*Swami Swaroopananda, Acharya - Spiritual Teacher and Lineage holder, Bahamas and Israel
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THE JOURNEY OF A SOLDIER

Colonel V. S. Bhalothia, SM, VSM is a veteran who retired in 2009 from thirty years' of service in the Indian Army. After retirement he completed the Sivananda Teachers' Training Course at Neyyar Dam in April 2010. Below is an edited letter he wrote to an erstwhile colleague.

Dear Melville
Within a week of my arrival here at the Ashram I realised that in more than one way, starting from the daily routine in a barrack/dormitory to everything else, there are so many similarities in the life of a yogi and a soldier. After all they both are working for the same goal, though the means adopted are different.

MOTTO After a soldier finishes his training, he takes a pledge to defend his country, and to do that 'no land will be too far, no sea will be too deep and no sky too high' for him. Therefore a soldier is always ready to make the supreme sacrifice for the sake of his country. His own well-being and interest always and every time comes last. A yogi goes a step further. After his initiation, he renounces everything in this world, and owns nothing thereafter. From thereon, he works for the well-being of entire humanity.

MISSION The mission of a soldier and a yogi is same—to enforce/restore/bring peace in this universe, though they achieve the goal by different means. A soldier uses forceful and violent means, killing the external enemy with the help of guns, tanks and missiles. The peace so achieved is fragile and invariably not long lasting. On the other hand a yogi does that by killing the enemy within to bring permanent and everlasting peace. Swami Vishnudevananda used to say, 'Do whatever you can to bring God's energy to this universe so that there will be some peace here.'

TRAINING A yogi and a soldier are equally ruthless when it comes to training. Swami Vishnudevananda would say 'the more we practise, the better we become'. How true. Similarly the training motto of a soldier is 'the more we sweat in peace-time training, the less we bleed in war.' Swami Sivananda wrote 'an ounce of practice is worth a ton of theory'; no different from the army dictum that one reconnaissance on the ground is worth one hundred times of planning on a map/sand model.

DISCIPLINE Since hanging up my Army uniform, the only other place I have found which has a discipline akin to that

in the army is this Ashram. There is discipline in terms of punctuality, obedience of orders, food distribution, allotment/execution of duties for the karma yoga and everything else that is done here. Like in the Army, here too a class starts (with the chanting of OM of course) on the dot of the scheduled time. A soldier obeys the orders of his superior even if it costs him his life. Similarly a yogi surrenders to his Guru, no questions asked.

And by the way my dear Melville, why don't you enjoy this everlasting joy yourself by joining the next TTC (not the Tank Technology Course we have but the Teachers' Training Course!!!!). Yoga practitioners from all over the world come here for a full one month for the coveted Yoga Siromani degree.

Before I wind up let me give you some practical tips which will help you once you are here.

(a) For accommodation, I suggest you opt for a dormitory because there is never a dull moment in there!!

(b) Everybody out here including staff, students and volunteers emit lots of positive energy.

(c) Be it food, your character or the quality of a teacher or a student, everything under the sun gets characterised into three categories—sattvic—pure, rajasic—stimulating or tamasic—rotten.

(d) In the Ashram, we are served sattvic food only and that too twice a day. The philosophy here in this regard is eat to live and not live to eat.

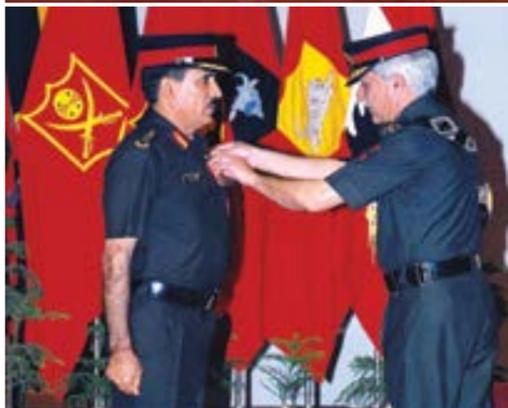
(e) I know it will be difficult for you to leave non-vegetarian food. I suggest you watch two documentaries—Food.Inc and Earthling.com.

In the end, I pray that may the God Almighty always show you the way to physical, mental and spiritual rejuvenation and enlightenment.

May God bless you. With love Viru.

Afterword

The developments since the time I wrote this article is that my entire family is now a yoga family including myself, my wife Santosh and my daughter Dr Shveta, each one of us having done TTC, ATTC and Sadhana Intensive and my son Parth, is presently attending yoga vacation at the Meenakshi Ashram, Madurai. We have founded a community yoga teaching initiative, 'door2yoga' in Jaipur, India, offering free yoga camps and motivational talks to various segments of society. ॐ



SIVANANDA YOGA

Health, Peace and Unity!

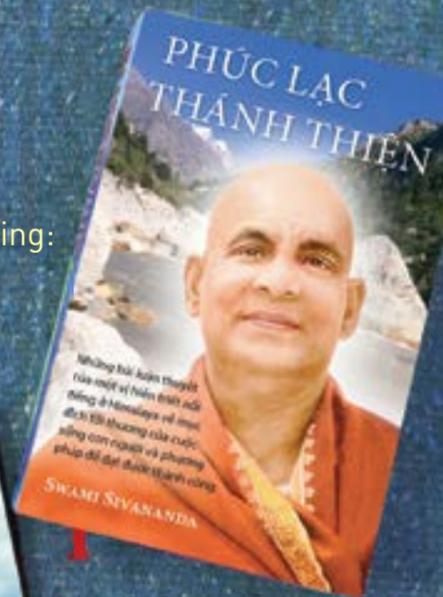
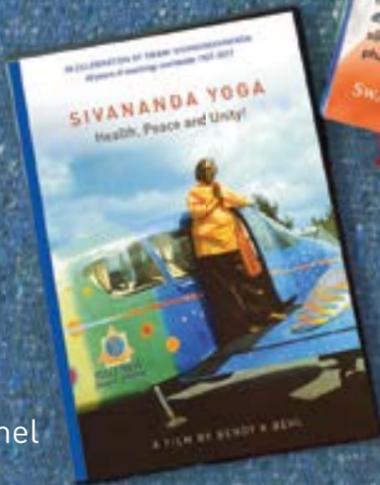
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NEW Vietnamese translation of *Bliss Divine*

LIKHITA JAPA

by Swami Sivananda

For half an hour daily write in a note-book your *Ishta mantra* or guru mantra. Write clearly in ink. On Sundays and holidays do this for one hour. This is *likhita japa*.

You can develop a wonderful power of concentration....

Likhita japa is very efficacious. It helps the *sadhaka* in concentration of the mind and gradually leads to meditation.

The aspirant should select the mantra of his tutelary deity according to his liking and inclination. There is no restriction about any particular script. It may be written in any language.

The following rules may be observed while practising mantra writing:

- Regularity and punctuality should be observed. This itself will bring the requisite help and be of the utmost help to the *sadhaka*.

- Physical and mental purity should be observed. Before sitting for mantra-writing the face, hands and feet should be washed. Effort should be made to keep the mind pure during mantra-writing. Drive out all worldly thoughts.

- Continue to sit in one pose as long as possible. Frequent change of a pose or *asana* should be avoided. Sitting in one *asana* will increase your power of endurance and also considerable energy will be preserved.

- Observe silence during the practice. Too much speaking results in waste of energy and waste of time. Silence helps in an increased out-turn of work.

- Avoid looking hither and thither. Fix your eyes on the notebooks. This will help concentration of mind during the practice.

- Repeat the mantra mentally also while writing it in the notebook. This will make a threefold impression in your mind. Gradually your whole being will be involved and engrossed in the mantra.

- Fix a particular number of mantras for one sitting. This will keep your practice intact and you will never get out of touch with the mantra.

- When you have once started the practice, do not leave it till you have finished the daily quota of one sitting.

- Do not allow your mind to be diverted to other engagements, as this will be an obstruction in the *sadhana*. Have at least half an hour's writing at one sitting.

- To help concentration, one uniform system of writing from top to bottom or from left to right, may be maintained during a particular sitting. The whole mantra should be written at once in continuity. Do not break it in the middle when you come to the end of the line.

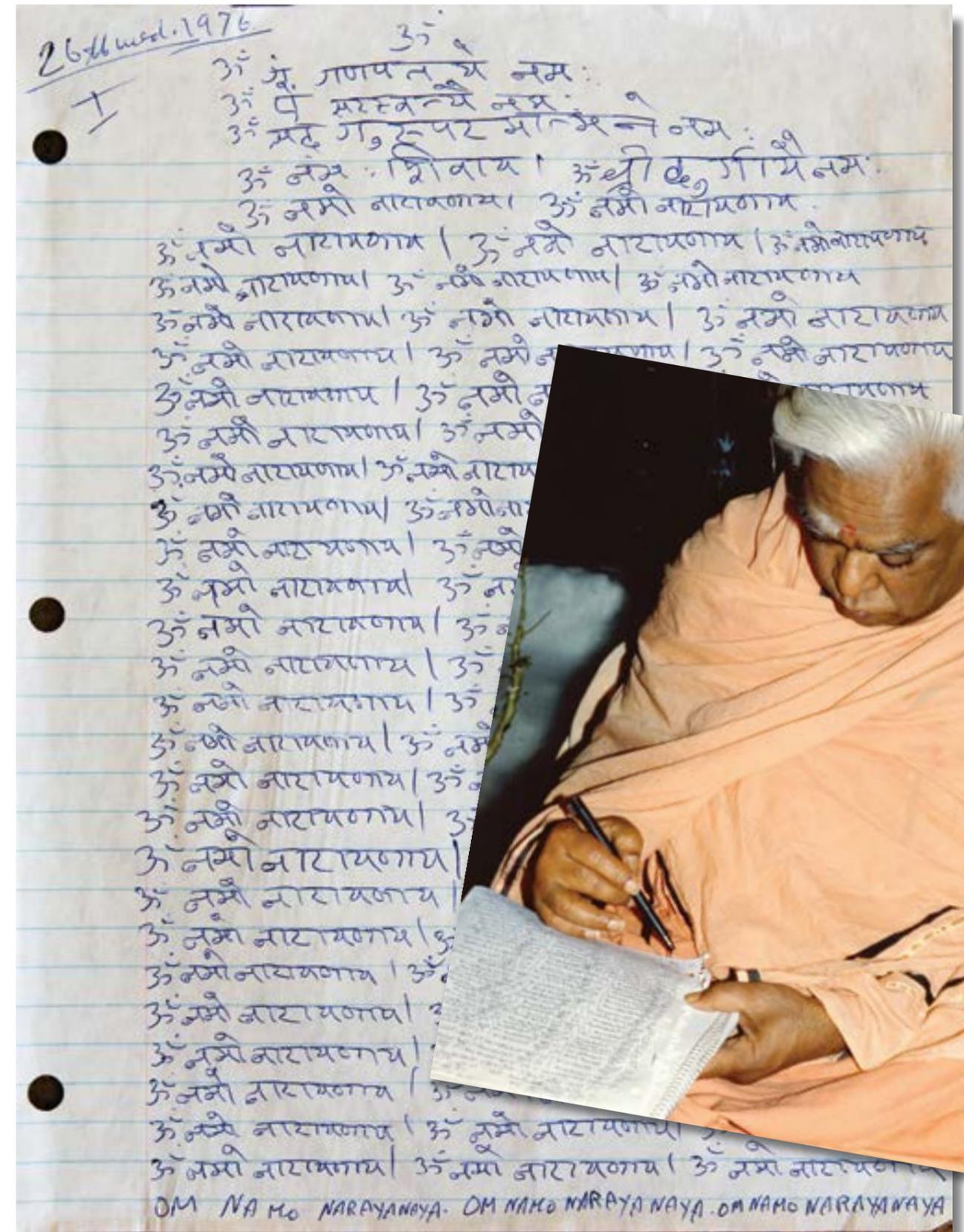
- When a mantra is selected by you, try to stick to it tenaciously. Frequent change of mantra is not advisable.

The above rules, if strictly observed, will help you much in your quick evolution. You will develop wonderful concentration. By prolonged and constant practice the inherent power of the mantra (*mantra-shakti*) will be awakened and will fill your very existence with the divinity of the mantra.

The notebook should be well kept and treated with respect and purity. When complete it should be stored in a box and kept in your meditation room in front of the Lord's picture. The very presence of these mantra-notebooks will create favourable vibrations requisite for your *sadhana*.

The benefits of mantra writing cannot be adequately described. Besides bringing about purity of heart and concentration of mind it gives you control of *asana*, control of sense organs—particularly the eyes and tongue—and fills you with the power of endurance. You attain peace of mind quickly. You approach nearer to God through *mantra-shakti*. These benefits can be experienced only through regular and incessant practice. Those who are not conversant with this yoga should start the practice immediately and even if they take to this practice for half-an-hour daily, they will realise its benefits within six months. ॐ

Right: Swami Vishnudevananda writing the mantra *Om Namo Narayanaya*. Original copy of his *likhita japa* pictured.



LORD GANESHA

'**Lord Ganesha** is the elephant-headed God. His Names are repeated first before any auspicious work is begun, before any kind of worship is begun. He is the Lord of power and wisdom, harmony and peace. He is the eldest son of Lord Siva and the elder brother of Kartikeya. Known by many as Ganapathi. He is the Lord who removes all obstacles on the path of the spiritual aspirant, and bestows upon him worldly as well as spiritual success. Without the grace and help of Sri Ganesha nothing whatsoever can be achieved. No action can be undertaken without His support, grace or blessing.

Pray with faith and devotion that Lord Ganesha may remove all the obstacles that you experience on the spiritual path. Worship Him at home, too. Have an image of Lord Ganesha in your house. Feel His presence in it. Take fresh spiritual resolves and pray to Lord Ganesha for inner spiritual strength to attain success in all your undertakings. May the blessings of Sri Ganesha be upon you all! May He remove all the obstacles that stand in your spiritual path! May He bestow on you all material prosperity as well as liberation!—*Swami Sivananda*

Ganesha's Birth

Once upon a time the Goddess Parvati (consort of Lord Siva), while bathing, created Ganesha as a pure white being out of the mud of Her body and placed Him at the entrance of the house. She told Him not to allow anyone to enter while she went inside for a bath. Lord Siva Himself was returning home quite thirsty and was stopped by Ganesha at the gate. Lord Siva became angry at being obstructed and as He thought Ganesha was an intruder He cut off Ganesha's head.

When Parvati came to know of this she was sorely grieved. To console her grief, Lord Siva ordered His servants to cut off and bring to Him the head of any creature that might be sleeping with its head facing north. The servants found only an elephant in that position. The sacrifice was thus made and the elephant's head was brought before Siva, who then joined the elephant's head onto the body of Ganesha.

Ladoos and the Moon

Lord Ganesha is very fond of ladoos, sweet balls of rice flour. On one of His birthdays He was going from house to house accepting the offerings of ladoos. Having eaten a good number of these, He set out moving on His mouse at night. Suddenly the mouse stumbled--it had seen a snake and became frightened--with the result that Ganesha fell down. His stomach burst open and all the ladoos came out. But Ganesha stuffed them back into His stomach and, catching hold of the snake, tied it around His belly.

Seeing all this, the moon in the sky laughed heartily. This unseemly behaviour of the moon annoyed Ganesha immensely and in his anger He pulled out one of His tusks and hurled it against the moon, and cursed that no one should look at the moon on the Ganesh Chaturthi day. If anyone does, he will surely earn a bad name, censure or ill-repute.

The Brothers

Ganesha and His brother Lord Subramanya once had a dispute as to who was the elder of the two. The matter was referred to Lord Siva for the final decision. Siva decided that whoever would make a tour of the whole world and come back first to the starting point had the right to be the elder. Subramanya flew off at once on his vehicle, the peacock, to make a circuit of the world. But the wise Ganesha went, in loving worshipfulness, around His divine parents and asked for the prize. Lord Siva said, "Beloved and wise Ganesha! But how can I give you the prize; you did not go around the world?" Ganesha replied, "No, but I have gone around my parents. My parents represent the entire manifested universe!" Thus the dispute was settled in favour of Lord Ganesha, who was thereafter acknowledged as the elder of the two brothers.

The Mahabharata

One day Sage Veda Vyasa decided to write a story which became the great epic known as the Mahabharata. He needed someone of the highest calibre of intellect and wisdom to write down the story as he dictated it. He decided that Lord Ganesha would be a good choice. Ganesha agreed to the task but stipulated that Vyasa should not stop dictating, even for a moment or Ganesha would leave. Vyasa agreed but added his own stipulation that Ganesha would not write down a word without understanding its meaning. In this way, Vyasa in order to have time to compose the next lines, would offer some very difficult riddle for Ganesha to inscribe. Ganesha had to think before writing it down, thus giving Vyasa time to ponder a little. At one point, Ganesha's stylus broke. He could not stop writing so he broke off one of his tusks and started writing with it. In this manner the great epic Mahabharata was written in two and a half years. ॐ

Painting by Rajesh, priest at the Sivananda Meenakshi Ashram, Madurai



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Yoga Vacation also available during the month of October.

For more information email: registrations@sivananda.org

GOLDEN GHEE

Modern science now verifies what Ayurveda has said for thousands of years: **Ghee** (a form of clarified butter) has a host of health and cooking benefits and is excellent for the mind and spirit. Use sparingly in place of cooking oils and butter.

Ingredients

1lb (500 gms) unsalted organic butter

Equipment

A medium sized heavy-bottomed pan

A fine wire mesh strainer

Cheesecloth

Clean air-tight, lidded glass jar for storage

Method

- Cut the butter into cubes and place in the saucepan.
- Heat the butter over medium heat until completely melted. Stir occasionally.
- Simmer with small bubbles at low heat for 10-15 minutes. During this time, the butter will go through several stages. It will foam, then bubble, then seem to almost stop bubbling and then foam again. When the second foam occurs, the ghee is done. At this point, the melted butter should be bright gold in colour and there should be reddish brown pieces of milk solids at the bottom of the pan.
- Take off the heat and let cool slightly for 2-3 minutes. Then slowly pour through the wire mesh strainer lined with several layers of cheesecloth.
- Pour the ghee into the storage jar. Ghee will last up to several months at room temperature or even longer in the refrigerator.

Tips to Remember

Use only cheesecloth (muslin) to strain.

Be patient while heating the butter. Do not move away from the pan. You need to be on hand constantly firstly to make sure all the milk solids separate and secondly to prevent burning.

The Benefits

- Many oils and butter break down into free radicals at high heat. Ghee does not. It is a stable fat, excellent for sautéing and baking.
- Good for those who are lactose or casein intolerant.
- Contains high levels of vitamin A and K.
- Increases digestive power.
- Contains a significant level of butyric acid, known to inhibit cancer cells.
- Reduces inflammation in the gastro-intestinal tract.
- Rich in Omega 3 fatty acids; promotes a healthy cardio-vascular system.
- Strengthens the immune system.
- Boosts energy levels.
- Protects eye health.



Two thousand years ago there flourished in south India a poet by name Thiruvalluvar. He is regarded as an avatara (incarnation) of Brahma. His teachings can be found in the book **THIRUKKURAL**. They contain the essence of the Vedas, the Upanishads and the six Darshanas.

Extracts from Thirukkural by Dr. M. Rajaram

Dr. M. Rajaram is a trustee of the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre organisation in India.

SPEECH

- ☞ Always utter fruitful words
Never utter futile words.
- ☞ Who extols virtue openly but not in the heart
Is, by mean backbiting, exposed.
- ☞ Worse is to smile before and slander behind
Than to decry virtue and do deeds not good.
- ☞ A single harmful word uttered
Turns all good things bad.
- ☞ Control your tongue if not anything; otherwise
A slip of the tongue brings evils.
- ☞ Fire-burns certainly heal inside
Tongue-burns will only abide.
- ☞ The words uttered by the righteous
Are sweet, kind and guileless.
Kind words with a smiling face
Are better than gifts of grace.
- ☞ Smiling face, loving eyes and kind words—
Virtue lies in these signs.
- ☞ Fruitful, polite and pleasant words
Beget happiness and fortunes.
- ☞ Knowing well the pleasure of sweet words
Why cast bitter ones at others?
☞ Using bitter words instead of pleasant
Is like preferring unripe fruits to ripe.

DESIRE

- ☞ When desire, the woe of woes, dies
Eternal bliss ensues.
- ☞ Give up your insatiable desires
And gain eternal joy.
- ☞ No other greater fortune is here or there
Than the fortune of having no desire.
- ☞ Virtue lies in fear of desire
As desire is the deceiver.
- ☞ Desire is the seed of ceaseless births
For all living things at all times.
- ☞ If you desire for anything, desire for no births
Rebirth comes not if you give up desires.

COMPASSION, KINDNESS, FORGIVENESS, TOLERANCE

- ☞ Who performs charity without sympathy
Is like an unwise man seeking reality.
- ☞ Wealth of wealth is the wealth of kindness
Worldly wealth even the mean possess.
- ☞ Imagine yourself facing the stronger
While you oppress the weaker.
- ☞ To bear with others' evil is a good trait
Better it is to forget it.
- ☞ Practise and preserve patience
To retain one's perfection.
- ☞ Avenger's joy lasts only for one day
Forgiver's fame stays till Doomsday.
- ☞ Though others do intolerable harm, pity them
And better it is to do no evil to them.
- ☞ Conquer men who do evils by arrogance
Simply by your tolerance.
- ☞ Better are they who endure bitter insults
Than those who fast and do penance.
- ☞ The whole world surely belongs to those
Who are kind and aware of duties.
- ☞ Showing kindness and patience even to those
Who hurt is the chief of virtues.

WISDOM

- ☞ Those with wisdom have everything
Fools with everything have nothing.
- ☞ Wisdom is to speak in terms simple and clear
And grasp even subtle matter.
- ☞ Wisdom restrains the wayward mind
And leads it from evil to good.
- ☞ Wisdom is to live in tune with the mode
Of the changing world.

ANGER

- ☞ Forget anger towards anyone
For it begets evil and pain.
- ☞ All good wishes are obtained instantly
If one's thoughts are anger-free.
- ☞ Anger is bad before the powerful
Worse it is before the feeble.
- ☞ Is there any greater foe than anger
Which kills joy and laughter?
- ☞ To guard yourself, keep wrath at bay
Unchecked, anger will yourself slay.

THIRUVALLUVAR

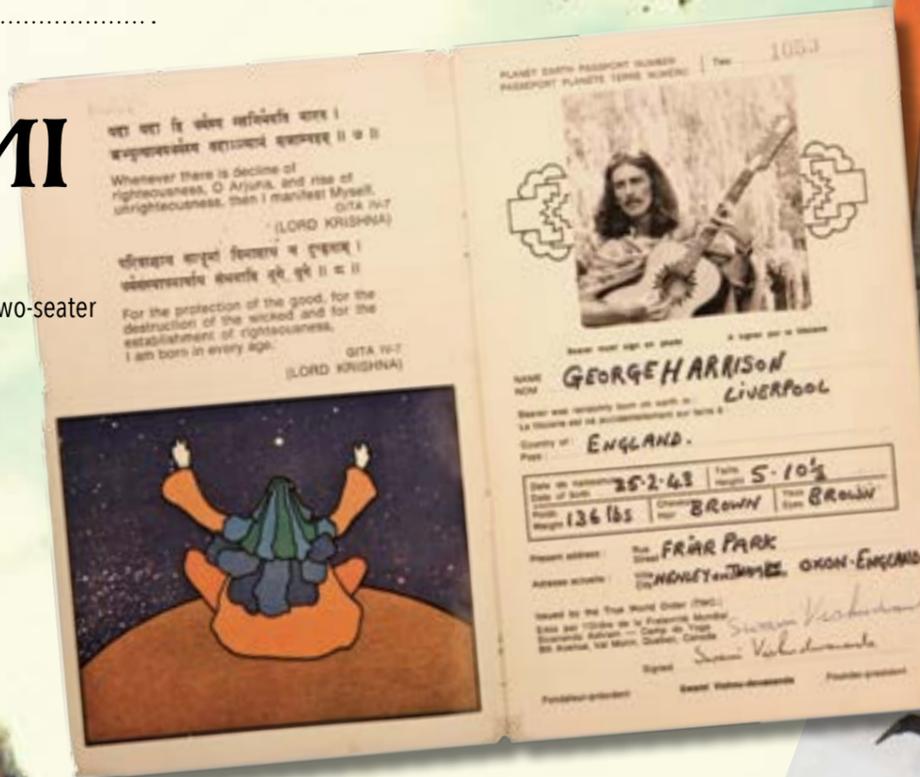
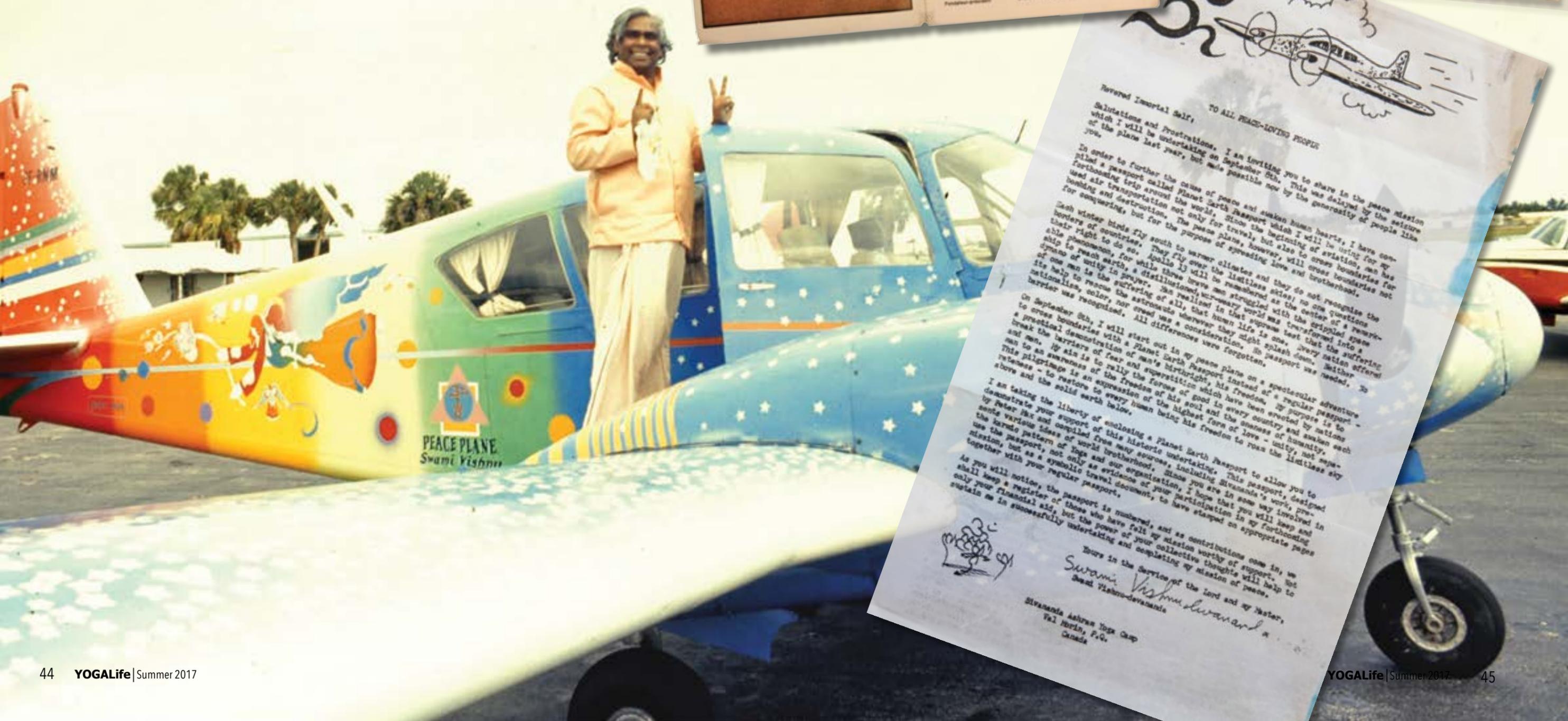
*The 133-foot tall statue of Thiruvalluvar at Kanyakumari, the southern most tip of India.
Yoga Vacation day trips are taken from our Ashram in south India to Kanyakumari.*

THE FLYING SWAMI

In 1971 Swami Vishnudevananda embarked on a series of peace missions to trouble-spots of the world in his two-seater Piper Apache plane, armed only with marigold flowers and his own Planet Earth Passport.

His aim was to show the futility of divisions and to emphasise the need for co-operation and harmony between peoples and countries of the world.

Here is the letter he wrote to students, disciples, the press and the general public shortly before his boundary-breaking expeditions, and a copy of the Planet Earth Passport that George Harrison of Beatle fame endorsed in one of their meetings.



TO ALL PEACE-LOVING PEOPLE

Revered Immortal Self!

Salutations and Prostrations. I am inviting you to share in the peace mission which I will be undertaking on September 5th. This was delayed by the seizure of the plane last year, but made possible now by the generosity of people like you.

In order to further the cause of peace and awaken human hearts, I have compiled a passport called Planet Earth Passport which I will be using for my forthcoming trip around the world. Since the beginning of aviation, man has used air transportation not only for travel, but also to cross boundaries for bonding and destruction. The peace plans, however, will cross boundaries not for conquering, but for the purpose of spreading love and brotherhood.

Each winter birds fly south to warmer climates and they do not recognize the borders of countries. They fly over the limitless skies; no one questions their right to do so. Apollo 13 will be remembered as the center of a remarkable phenomenon, for while these brave men struggled with the crippled spaceship to reach earth, a disillusioned, war-weary world was transformed into a drama of unity in prayer. We realized in that supreme test that the suffering of one man is the suffering of all, that in that moment every nation offered its help to rescue the astronauts wherever they might splash down. With nationalities, color, nor creed was a consideration. No passport was needed, no barrier was recognized. All differences were forgotten.

On September 5th, I will start out in my peace plane on a spectacular adventure to cross boundaries with a Planet Earth Passport instead of a regular passport - a practical demonstration of man's birthright, his freedom. My purpose is to break the barriers of fear and superstition which have been erected by nations and men. My aim is to rally the forces of good in every country and awaken each man to an awareness of the freedom of his soul and the oneness of humanity. This pilgrimage is an expression of the highest form of love - unity, not separation - to restore to every human being his freedom to roam the limitless sky above and the solid earth below.

I am taking the liberty of enclosing a Planet Earth Passport to allow you to demonstrate your support of this historic undertaking. This passport, designed by Peter Hux and compiled from many sources, including Swami's work, presents various ideas of world brotherhood. Since you are in some way involved in the karmic pattern of Yuga and our organization, I hope that you will keep and use the passport, not only as evidence of your participation in my forthcoming mission, but as a symbolic travel document, to have stamped on appropriate pages together with your regular passport.

As you will notice, the passport is numbered, and as contributions come in, we shall keep a register of those who have felt my mission worthy of support. Not only your financial aid, but the power of your collective thoughts will help to sustain me in successfully undertaking and completing my mission of peace.

Yours in the Service of the Lord and my Master,
 Swami Vishnudevananda
 Vishnudevananda Ashram Yoga Camp
 Val Hovin, P.Q.
 Canada

MEDITATION OR

There is a great desire in all human beings for peace of mind. However yoga tells us that there is nothing in the material world which can provide such peace. If we were to ask the rich of the world if they were satisfied with their lives, most would say no. Most would admit to some dissatisfaction, some unhappiness, some emptiness. We may live in the gutter or a palace and everywhere in between, but there is nowhere in the outside world where our minds can find complete peace. Even if we were to extend our lives by one thousand years it would not make us happier. It is yogis who are the happiest—if anyone in the world has freedom, it is they. They have no attachments, no worry about death. It is only when we withdraw from the world and touch the silence within that we can understand the meaning of peace.

We rush from experience to experience, but wherever we go our mind comes with us and the world remains the same. Only after many years of practice of withdrawing our mind from the external world, through the practice of meditation, are we able to obtain a glimpse of this inner peace, a peace which is indescribable. However there is no easy way to attain it. It is

not possible to secure it in ten easy lessons as is commonly believed in the West today. We do not understand what it means to draw the mind inwards; we connect to the external world only. We believe meditation is a waste of time. We have no idea of the immense peace and satisfaction that comes with meditation. But discipline, order and systematic practice are necessary to bring the mind under control and make headway in meditation. In the early stages the mind will deceive us, progress will be slow and difficult.

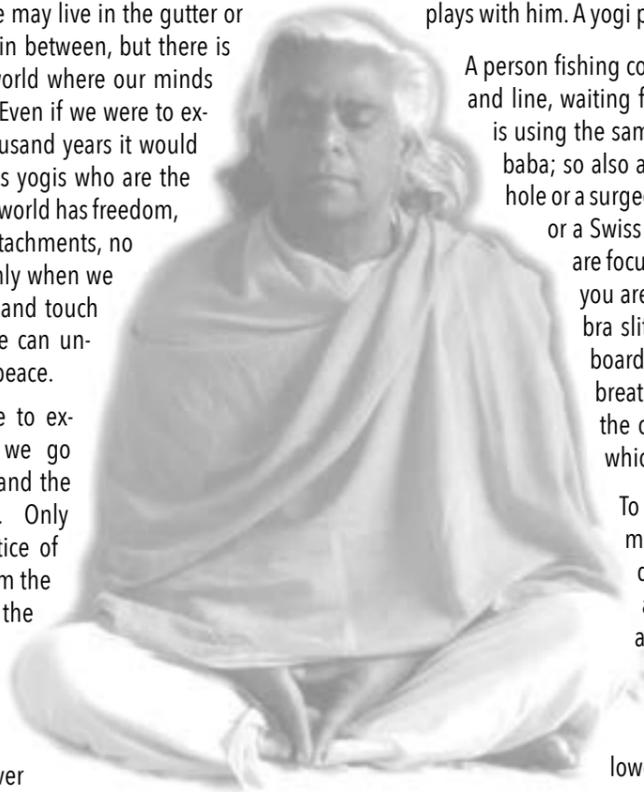
During meditation subconscious thoughts rise to the conscious level, and distract us, sapping our confidence in our ability to meditate. These disturbances however should not be suppressed, as this only creates tension, but disregarded. Turn the mind to another channel!! The mind insists we obey it—jump when it says jump, eat when it says eat. The secret is not to play along with the thought—observe it and it will disappear. In one minute there may be sixty thoughts. However, with continual practice the chanchala-

ta, the restless mind, will quieten and we will reduce the thoughts to fifty, then thirty a minute. Gradually, slowly we will have complete control over the mind instead of the mind having complete control over us. As a result, we develop extraordinary abilities and influence. Swami Sivananda would say 'An ordinary man's mind plays with him. A yogi plays with his mind.'

A person fishing concentrates intensely on the fishing rod and line, waiting for the moment for the fish to bite. He is using the same technique as any yogi, guru, rishi or baba; so also a golfer trying to put a ball into a small hole or a surgeon using a knife for a delicate operation, or a Swiss craftsman putting a watch together, all are focussing the mental thought rays. Imagine you are sitting in your chair at home and a cobra slithers in and disappears behind a cupboard. You will come to a standstill, even the breathing will stop as you focus on locating the cobra. This is the level of concentration which is required for meditation.

To attain this degree of concentration we must have control over the prana. We slow down the breath and even completely arrest the breathing (kevala kumbhaka) and the mind stills. Kumbhaka, retention of breath, slows down the functions of the autonomous nervous system. Blood pressure and the pulse rate lower and we become calm and peaceful.

Is there any difference between one kind of meditation and another kind? Is there a difference between types of meditation? This is a little like asking a shopkeeper which brand of sugar is sweeter. If the shopkeeper has X brand of sugar and the neighbouring shopkeeper has Y brand, both will claim that their brand is better than the other's. Is there any difference between one or the other? Why is one brand of sugar more popular? The answer is because of advertising. The more the name of a product passes into the subconscious mind, the more the mind will accept that product. There is no difference for the mind, as long as the label says that it is particular and superior. If you go to the doctor and get a prescription for aspirin and he charges \$5 and another who is more famous gives you the same aspirin but charges \$100, naturally you will get the benefit from the second doctor's aspirin because you have had to pay more!!!



MEDITATION?

by Swami Vishnudevananda

In the same way one guru can claim that his form of meditation or mantra or method is superior to another. In all walks of life, from doctor to doctor or drink-maker to drink-maker or from guru to guru there are different ways to sell the same product. One kind of meditation technique may appear to be more attractive because it may be well publicised or endorsed by stars or famous people. And yet it is nothing more than a brand name. Just as politicians create various slogans or sound-bites to attract the attention of the voters like 'law and order', 'peace with honour' etc., so in the same way yogis, gurus, babas and rishis advertise their product to attract students by using various brand names, such as 'Raja Yoga Meditation', 'Kundalini Meditation', 'Jnana Yoga Meditation', 'Laya Yoga Meditation', 'Buddhist Meditation', 'Tantra Meditation' or even 'Bio-Feedback Meditation.'

It does not matter what the brand name is, in meditation the aim is the same—to keep the mind focussed on a particular object or idea. Wherever there is intense concentration of the mind on any object there is complete peace and relaxation for the mind.

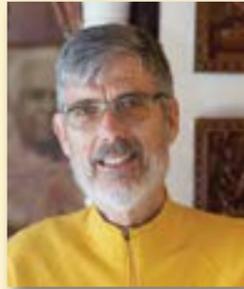
Various masters have developed different types of meditation—but what object or idea should you meditate on? X Brand of meditation will tell you to focus on a sound of a syllable or a mantra; Y Brand of meditation will tell you to meditate on a dot, on a light or the form of Lord Krishna, Jesus or Buddha; Z Brand of meditation will tell you to meditate on an idea such as Soham—I am He, or Aham Brahmasmi – I am Brahman, I am That I am. Beginners should focus the mind on sound (mantra), and more advanced students may concentrate on concepts, ideas or chakras. However there are no set rules—those who are drawn to sound should meditate on sound, visualisers should visualise. There are no secrets in meditation, only different methods.

But the reader should understand the general meaning and technique of meditation before taking to any form of practice, and know that all forms of meditation will lead you to the same transcendental state, or supra-sensual state, or samadhi. This is the goal of meditation irrespective of what mantras or forms or ideas you meditate on, or what type of guru or baba you follow.



BUILDING GLOBAL PEACE FROM WITHIN

Peace is the happy, natural state of man. It is his birthright. War is his disgrace.... Peace, to be lasting and constructive, must be achieved through God. There can be no peace without the Lord or God. Root yourself in peace or God. Now you are fit to radiate peace. - Swami Sivananda



The absence of peace poses the greatest challenge for modern civilisation. As individuals we face an epidemic of suffering minds out of balance in a world of constant overstimulation driven by power, pleasure, fear and hatred. As a civilisation we are intent on war, with over forty wars going on consistently for years; and with the capacity of MAD (Mutually Assured Destruction), it is only time before a proxy war turns into a full-blown world war clash of empires that leads to global self-destruction. Yoga practice offers not only a general attitude of peace, recognising unity in diversity, but offers a vast collection of specific antidotes to the multi-layered conflicts of modern life. Lack of peace is suffering which incites the escalating spiral of more conflict, and more suffering. Yet, even temporary peace gives temporary repose and happiness; and each time we recognise the source of peace within, the habit of turning to peace rather than power of arms is strengthened. As direct experience through yoga practice, peace becomes the inspiration of our faith, and supreme peace shines on the horizon as the goal of life.

The great yoga masters have shown by their examples that by making peace their 'bottom line', the seemingly never-ending suffering of drama in daily life is transformed by the direct experience of peace, replacing such distractions as attachment to material wealth and comfort, conspicuous consumption, sensual pleasure, negative emotions, fear, and insecurity. Yoga simply put is a practice of 'attach and detach' - attach to God, to the good and beautiful; and detach from dysfunctional habits, attitudes, and emotions.

Through the self-transformation that is the fruit of sustained yoga practice experienced as inner peace, we build faith through experience. With this faith the paradigm of the possible is expanded, and we can envision physical and mental health. As mental health is the basis of healthy relationships, working on peaceful relationships becomes the next step to our yoga practice. Just as the practice of hatha yoga gives us the experience which builds not only physical and mental health, but the faith that this health is even possible, the practice of yama and niyama (the ethical foundations of yoga), karma yoga (actively caring for the world and others), bhakti yoga (devotion that allows us

to rest in God), and jnana yoga (the philosophy of unity in diversity), we learn to cultivate respect and peace where there was fear, prejudice, anger and hatred. Once we truly begin to see that healthy relationships transform our lives with meaning and love, that experience-based faith can be brought to our communities, corporations and nations. With a vision of peace, compassion, unity and sustainability as the natural outcome of healthy relationships, the focus of Western civilisation on power, pleasure and profit is seen as the obstacle to peace and happiness, rather than the goal. World peace is not only possible but the condition for the survival of life as we know it on the planet.

The foundation of world peace is laid by first acknowledging and honouring the whole world as family. Through enabling practitioners to experience inner peace, yoga empowers people to be courageous and humble messengers of peace. The practice of yoga provides pathways of health, integrity and resilience to a chaotic world out of balance. Yoga as the quest for peace realigns our energy, attitude, priorities and relationships, as well as providing the knowledge and the discipline to develop the skills and clarity necessary to live according to our ideals. The Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres, in the tradition of Swami Sivananda, practise a yoga of synthesis, which integrates yoga's rich culture of a multifaceted approach to mastering body, energy, mind and attitude, with knowledge, understanding, and mystical experience of peace. Hatha, raja, karma, bhakti, and jnana yogas each offer skillful strategies for tapping inner peace and efficiently living peace. Before we examine each of these strategies, we need to understand the obstacles to peace that our yoga practice empowers us to overcome.

Each of the yogas is guided by an understanding of the qualities of nature that influence our reactions, perceptions, and motivations. Classical yoga philosophy recognises three main qualities or gunas, which are the very fabric and movement of nature. These qualities, when guided by the integrative intelligence of Nature, are observed as instinct, or genetic tendencies, masterly woven into the intricate web of life. The changes of the seasons, the stages of life, the distinctive characteristics of all organisms, the physical laws, chemical atomic structure, the movement of the planets, stars and galaxies, birth, growth, decay, and death, are all the play of the gunas. Skill in yoga is measured in our ability to live in harmony with these changes, and transcend the drama the untrained mind creates reacting to the natural changes of the world.

Of the three gunas, sattva holds the key to transforming suffering into peace. The sattvic mind is a quiet mind - peaceful, aware, and compassionate, seeing unity and respecting diversity, loving and attracted to truth or dharma. Rajas and tamas are the bipolar pathways of the mind. The rajasic mind is driven by greed, lust, anger, jealousy, and vanity. It objectifies the world into emotionally charged pieces - likes and dislikes, superior and inferior, worthy and unworthy. The world is to be possessed and dominated.

Happiness is conditional on possessing, consuming and controlling those objects of desire; and escaping everything that the mind finds disagreeable or painful. The tamasic mind is depressed. It is lost in negative emotions of fear, hatred and despair. Not only is the mind distracted by rajas or lost in the suffering of tamas, it habitually reacts to that suffering with instinctual self-protection, externalising the suffering, lashing out at the

Yoga is the path to sattva. In cultivating sattva, peace itself becomes both the daily reference and the supreme goal. In contrast, modern civilisation, not knowing peace or even how to truly relax, seeks happiness in a dysfunctional, superficial lifestyle. Selfish vanity manifests as the three universal defects of the human mind - impure attachments (mala); agitation and distraction (vikshepa); and ignorance of the true Self (avarana). The three gunas are always at play in nature, and the human mind is no exception. However, through continuous practice, sattva or purity, can become the dominant guna or quality. As the mental experience of tamas is suffering, with the practice of awareness of that state, and skill in various yoga practices, tamas can be overcome. Similarly, the agitated, desire-driven rajas can be transformed into sattva. Because the fruit of practice becomes increasingly more enjoyable and natural, yoga is its own reward. With skilful discrimination to attach to the good and the beau-

HOW TO ENGAGE IN PEACE

- ॐ Step out of denial. Human behaviour is destroying the world with global warming, war, pollution, exploitation, destruction of natural resources and diversity of life, starvation, waste.
- ॐ Ask the karma yoga question: How can I help? Practise compassion: serve, love, give, purify, meditate.
- ॐ Recognise the vanity of all 'isms'—sexism, racism, communism, capitalism, nationalism, imperialism, colonialism, egoism are all enemies of peace. Stand up against violence. Meet hatred with love, fear with courage. Maintain dharma with humility and non-violence.
- ॐ Find inner peace. Do sadhana to find that peace. Spiritual practice is service because it provides the energy to work. Service is sadhana as it purifies the heart and builds virtue.
- ॐ Honour the sacred; honour the Commandments (tapas); Know God (swadhyaya); Love God unconditionally (ishwara pranidhana).

- Be pure (saucha); Be happy and grateful (santosha). To remember the divine name in daily japa is the easiest way to practise all of these niyamas.
- ॐ Meditate. Meditation is bathing in the light of the sacred. Make meditation the background of your asana and pranayama and service.
- ॐ Promote peace. Peace is possible. War is criminal. Protect the oppressed. Protect the planet.
- ॐ Model sustainable living. Recycle to create zero waste. Only a net zero carbon footprint will insure a habitable planet for future generations.
- ॐ Practise charity, public service, activism, education, sustainable technology.
- ॐ What is the purpose of life? What does it mean to be human? We are asleep. Wake up and live responsibly and compassionately.

world in violence, prejudice, lust, greed and jealousy. Blinded by vanity, it has no awareness of the suffering of others or the damage that it is wreaking upon the world in which it dwells. If pleasure, power, and profit are the bottom line, the bipolar rajasic and tamasic dramatic suffering of the mind is aggravated by rajas, and/or beaten into the despair of tamas. If peace is the focus, then the mind enlightened by truth or sattva, gravitates towards the peace of silence.

tiful, and detach from habitual suffering, morality becomes a path to freedom rather than imposed external authority. Add a little humour and humility, and the classic yoga practices and positive philosophy can tame and channel our energy. Emotions are transformed into blissful devotion, and attitude positive full of light. Finally, yoga promises that when the mind attains absolute silence in peace, it becomes a pure mirror reflecting the universal, unchanging reality and final liberation from suffering attained.

continued overleaf

Yoga turns the mind inward in introspection, self-discipline, meditation and realisation of the pure mind behind the gross material mind. Yoga guides the practitioner through five progressively peaceful states of mind:

1. **Mudha** - the dull, cloudy, low energy state of mind. Depression. Tamasic energy.
2. **Kshipta** - agitated monkey mind, that is driven, reactive, full of drama that lacks focus. Anxiousness, lust, passion, fear. Rajasic energy.
3. **Vikshipta** - gathering state of the mind. Concentration with effort. Abhyasa (continuous practice) and vairagya (letting go of distraction). Rajas is transformed into sattwa.
4. **Ekagrata** - one pointed meditation, the fruit of practice of abhyasa and vairagya, with duality - subject and object. Sattvic mind.
5. **Niruddha** - the waveless state beyond thought. This is the goal of yoga, asamprajnata samadhi. Pure consciousness transcends the gunas and the mind.

Working through the stages of yoga, we are given the tools to transform depression, anxiety, distraction and drama-filled suffering, to the pure mind and finally attain supreme peace.

Pranayama (mastery of the subtle breath or prana) is a powerful practice of awakening from mudha, directing kshipta by calming the breath and concentration on inner peace, and gathering the scattered rays of the mind (vikshipta). The subtle work of pranayama is pratyahara (abstracting the mind from emotionally reacting to sense stimulation) and dharana, (concentration on the breath and mantra), turning the mind inwards to focus on baseline of inner peace beyond the noise and distractions of the mind. This baseline of peace becomes the foundation for progressively deeper meditation and the samadhi or superconscious realisation. All intuitional knowledge is accessible with a quiet, peaceful mind.

Yoga shows the way, and offers the experience of peace incrementally, empowering, balancing, and freeing the practitioner from suffering, step-by-step. At each step faith is deepened through progressive experience of peace. Positive physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual habits are developed. Tamas or darkness is gradually purified from the mind, and rajasic or selfish desires are transformed into healthy desires, and eventually into pure sattva or peace. The practitioner not only becomes more self-confident and aware, but is also more comfortable with and aware of others.

Peace is not only a personal practice, but something that can be shared in each and every interaction with the world. The teaching of yoga is a vast culture of peace that nourishes the practitioner, who becomes aware of suffering, then uses that awareness to transform it into light or sattwa. The ignorance that is the root of suffering is universal. Through karma yoga, one realises that helping others is really helping oneself. Then yoga becomes a mission of peace to be realised and shared. Conflict and war, no matter what the relationship - friend, family, neighbour, or enemy, is failure. The inner resolution, as well as the external resolution of conflict, becomes the core sadhana, or spiritual practice which informs all other yoga practices. Each transformation of conflict into peace is a stepping-stone to a quiet mind and a peaceful world. Every resolved conflict, whether within ourselves, with our loved ones, co-workers, nation or on the international stage, is an expression of respectful 'skill in action'. To advance in yoga is to advance in peace by living peace. Life is sacred and glorious, as the quest for and the realisation of love, peace and wisdom.

Ultimately, intuitional knowledge is the key to finding not only inner peace, but transforming conflict into peace. In a conflict situation there are always three 'truths': my truth, your truth, and the truth. The power of intuition allows us to step outside of our vain attachment to emotion and perspective and to hear compassionately the opposing perspectives, and to renounce both in search of the truth. But you do not need to attain the highest intuitional realisation of truth to practise truth. Every aspect of yoga practice is becoming more skilful in truth. Peace is a sign that we are getting closer to the truth, both personally, and in our understanding of the world. Each day offers us an opportunity to engage in a world that is deprived of peace, to grow in peace, and become a messenger of peace. This does not mean to run away from the world, but to build our strength—physical, energetic, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual, to spiritualise ourselves and all of our relationships. Yoga is transformation. Hear the call of peace, of dharma, of truth and let your practice tune you to become an instrument of peace. ॐ

*Srinivasan, Acharya - Spiritual Teacher and Lineage holder, US East Coast and Chicago
email srinivasan@sivananda.org*

PAUL MAGENNIS



At the age of 79, Paul Magennis, our retired gardener, left his body in March 2017, after a long illness. Paul was the longest-serving staff member at the Sivananda Yoga Ranch, joining staff in 1982 and completing his TTC in September of that year. From the beginning Paul focused his service in the Ashram garden. With love, creativity and passion for feeding people, Paul created the gardens and greenhouse upon the depleted shale soil of the Ashram. He planted trees, constructed a large functioning greenhouse, and always had many projects in hand— heirloom tomatoes, asparagus beds, kiwi trellises, strawberry patches, currants, potato runs, herb gardens, and even greenhouse figs. His dry Irish humour and tenacity always animated his work; and countless guests and young staff apprenticed with him not only in learning a love for gardening, but in developing character. He was a humble friend and mentor to many. We offer thanks for the unwavering service and undaunted spirit that he brought to the Ashram for so many years, and pray that his memory will continue to inspire young aspirants in courage and humble service.

Srinivasan, director and Acharya, Sivananda Yoga Ranch ॐ



I am sorry to see Paul leave us. He was really a fighter and warrior. My heart goes out to his soul. I think we all learned from his silence. He was a doer.

Swami Padmapadananda

I am very sorry to hear of Paul's departure from this plane. I only met him a few times at the Ranch, but was inspired by his dedication and positive spirit.

Swami Kailasananda

Paul Magennis was a wonderful, beautiful, dedicated, silent witness and soul. He was the silent yogi and Master Gardener for over 30 years of karma yoga and service to the Sivananda Yoga mission. A constant selfless servant at the Yoga Ranch will be deeply missed.

Raghu Rama

One of the most amazing things Paul taught me is that when you show tenderness and kindness, patience and love, you can break anyone's shell. He taught me the beauty of sitting in silence and enjoying the brilliance of the sun, flowers and bees. He taught me how to take life's setbacks as best you can and share a smile with your friend, even if you're in pain. I will miss him. *Jaya*

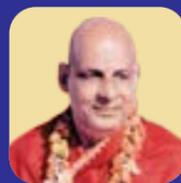
When I moved to the Yoga Ranch at the age of 10, Paul became a part of my family, a dear friend and a grandfather in a way. Whenever I needed someone to listen to me or to cheer me up with a

wonderful dry sense of humor, there was Paul. Paul was always there. He would work long solitary hours in the garden listening to classical music on the radio. He would work with karma yogis teaching them how to work the land. He never complained. Paul was very wise and often silent, but when he did speak he often made me laugh. Paul was stoic and stubborn, a bit of a rebel, noble and kind. He was a great listener and a wonderful teacher thanks to his patience and humor. Paul would enjoy the Ashram desserts regardless of the fact that he was told to avoid them. He would tell me, "I know I'm not supposed to eat this, so get me another bowl." I love you Paul. The Ranch will not be the same without you. *Sivakami*

I met Paul in 1985. He was very supportive and listened attentively to my struggles during the TTC. It was his support that got me through the demands of the training. He quietly listened, always smiled, and softly encouraged. He loved the Ranch and the garden. Paul had so much knowledge that he was always willing to share. Deeply connected to the earth, he enjoyed helping karma yogis learn how to provide food for the Ashram. This was how he nurtured. Paul was like the trees he planted. Rooted and always there. Paul will be missed for a long time to come and may his spirit, like his garden, continue to nourish us. *Karen L. Arthur*



YOGA
SIVANANDA
SOUTH AMERICA



Swami Sivananda
(1887-1963)



Swami Vishnudevananda
(1927-1993)



THE SOUND OF MUSIC

by Swami Sivananda

Amidst the exuberant rain forest in the coast of Brazil

TTC - January 6 to February 2 (Spanish, English and Portuguese)
ATTC - January 6 to February 2 (Spanish and Portuguese)
TTC Refresher - January 22 to 28 (Spanish and Portuguese)
Yoga Vacation - January 6 to 21 (Spanish and Portuguese)

In front of the majesty of the Andes Mountain and crystalline lakes in Argentina

TTC - March 4 to April 1 (Spanish)
Sadhana Intensive - March 4 to 18 (Spanish)
TTC Refresher - March 23 to 28
Yoga Vacation - March 9 to 18
Special Eastern Yoga Retreat - March 29 to April 1

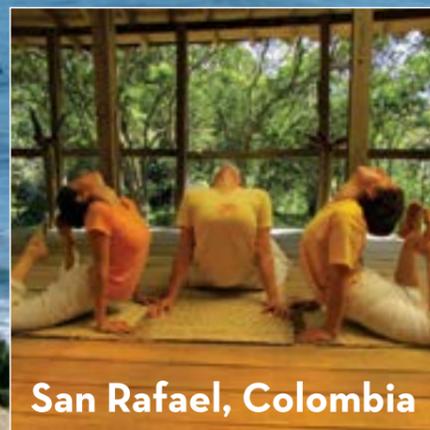
Peaceful place surrounded by the virgin jungle in San Rafael, Colombia

TTC - July 1 to 29 (Spanish)
ATTC - July 1 to 29 (Spanish)
Yoga Vacation - July 1 to 29

2018 *Amazing nature in South America*
To enjoy your Teacher Training Course / Advance Teacher Training /
Sadhana Intensive / TTC Refresher / Yoga Vacation



Bariloche, Argentina



San Rafael, Colombia



Garopaba, Brasil

Anahata sounds are the mystic sounds heard by the yogin during his meditation. They are a sign of the purification of nadis (energy channels). Some students can clearly hear them through one or the other ear and some through both. There are loud as well as subtle sounds. From the loud, one will have to contemplate on the subtle and from the subtle to the subtler. Anahata sounds are also termed omkara dhvani. They proceed from the anahata centre of the sushumna nadi.

Sit in your usual asana. Close the ears with the thumbs. Hear and minutely observe the internal sound through the ears. The sound that you hear from within will make you deaf to all external sounds. Close the eyes also. In the beginning of your practice, you will hear many loud sounds. Later on they are heard in a mild way. The mind having at first concentrated itself on any one sound fixes firmly to that and is absorbed in it. The mind becoming insensible to the external impressions, becomes one with the sound as milk with water and then becomes rapidly absorbed in chidakasa (mind-space). Just as the bee drinking the honey alone does not care for the odour so also the chitta (mind), which is absorbed in the inner sound, does not long for sensual objects, as it is bound by the sweet smell

or nada (sound) and has abandoned its flitting nature. The mind gets absorbed along with prana by constant concentration upon nada. Different kinds of sounds can be heard. The first is the sound chini (like the pronunciation of the word); the second is chini-chini; the third is the sound of a bell; the fourth is that of a conch; the fifth is that of a lute; the sixth is the sound of cymbals; the seventh is the tune of a flute; the eighth is the voice of a drum (bheri); the ninth is the sound of a double-drum (mridanga); and the tenth is the sound of thunder.

You cannot expect the sound immediately after you close your ears. You should concentrate and keep your mind one-pointed. The particular sound that you hear today, you may not hear every day. But you will hear any one of the ten anahata sounds.

This is laya (absorption) through nada, the anahata sounds.



YOGA AND THE FIVE ELEMENTS

by Swami Sivadasananda



Yoga describes the physical body as a composition of the five elements earth (prithvi), water (apas), fire (agni), air (vayu), ether (akasha). Its stages of existence are birth, growth, change, decay, and death. Made of food, these elements will go back into the food cycle after death. To the view of the analytical eye of the yogi we are not the body.

The five elements combine and separate again and thus make a very temporary product. And who will say that he or she is just earth, water, fire, air and ether?

Visualising Oneness through the Elements

But there are also some practical observations of the elements which can expand the awareness. Yoga can make you see Oneness in each element.

Earth When you stretch the muscles, fascia and bones from the toes to the neck in the asana, visualise how the movement connects you with the element earth in the body. Feel the gravity and how the body is connected with the element earth. Whether you practise with your mat in a garden or on the top floor of a high-rise building, the experience of gravity is the same. That is the quality of the element earth. It reaches from your mat to every place on the globe, even if there is an ocean in between. Inch by inch there is a firm connection of earth along the bed of the sea. The element earth is One.

Water Water is in the clouds, the rivers and the oceans. The heart pumps and the blood circulates. Over half of our body is made of water. You can focus on this connection when you take a shower, when you drink water or when the water leaves the body during urination. Our body is constantly connected with water. The element water is One. That feeling of Oneness is really relaxing. Tension is only possible when there are two, not when there is just one.

Fire How wonderfully hatha yoga supports the regulation of body temperature. When there is a change in climate, asana and pranayama help the body to adjust with ease. One third of the calories we eat is used to create heat in the body. Really there is no moment in our life when the body is not connected to the element Fire. Fire is One.

Air Air is movement. The earth and the planets constantly move in their orbits. When we breathe and when we move, we are connected to the element air. Inside the body there is constant exchange of chemical elements, for example oxygen and carbon dioxide, which is facilitated through breathing. The element air is One.

Space Earth, water, fire, air are all contained in space. During pranayama (breathing exercises) and savasana (relaxation pose) you visualise and feel the connection with space: there is space all around you and the same space at the centre of each atom of the body. The element space is where the prana flows. Space is One, prana is One.

Mind as the Sixth Element

When Yoga speaks about the five elements, it suggests that the mind should be understood as the sixth element.

An eternal portion of Myself having become a living soul in the world of life, draws to itself the five senses with the mind for the sixth, abiding in Nature.
Bhagavad Gita XV-7

As far as thinking is a physical function of the brain, this makes sense. Each neurone or brain cell is intimately connected to the metabolism of the five elements.

While each element expresses this Oneness, the mind however seems to be very different in each person. When do we ever think the same thought?

Also in our attempts to feel that Oneness in the silence of meditation, most of the time the mind produces thoughts which are not related to Oneness at all.



Yoga and Nature Analogies

In its holistic approach yoga presents simple analogies which relate to the five elements and help us to visualise Oneness also on the level of the mind.

When you walk higher up in the mountains, beyond the level where trees or grass grow, the presence of the rocks can have a strong impact on the mind. Meditating on the top of a mountain can connect you to a sense of firm and changeless existence which emanates from the mountain itself and tunes the mind to Oneness.

The sun shines on the oceans producing clouds. The wind moves the clouds towards the mountains, where they release the rain. From the mountain water flows through various fountains, creeks, rivers and streams and finally merges with the ocean.

Comparing our individual existence with a drop of water, we can visualise how we come out of Oneness and return to Oneness.

Fire transforms. Oil is a sticky substance which can make permanent stains. You confine it in a sealed bottle. But if oil is placed in a lamp and channelled upwards through a wick it can become transformed into a flame which spreads light and heat. Similarly, if we sit in the meditation pose properly relaxed and with regular breathing, awareness of the body can be drawn away from the limbs into the spine. Gross physical consciousness can be transformed into the subtle awareness of Oneness as you meditate on the various chakras or energy centres of your spine.

The air moves. When it drifts over a pile of rubbish it has a bad smell. Later on it flows through a rose garden and is filled with a pleasant perfume. But neither the smell of rubbish nor the rose perfume has an influence on the nature of air. The air is detached and simply moves on. Similarly the thought wave of the mind moves. It is actually neutral. Whether it carries a sense perception, an emotion, a memory, an abstract idea or an intuition, the thought wave in itself is not affected by these different thought contents. This can be experienced by mentally repeating a mantra. The mantra is not the name of an object but a mass of consciousness expressed through a particular sound. This is why the mental sound of the mantra can absorb the variety of thought contents such as sense perception, emotion etc. When you meditate with a mantra you can sense the universality of thought. In yoga it is called Hiranyagarbha or cosmic mind.

Space appears to be separated into various individual spaces with specific volumes. If you pour water from a jar into a glass, it is obvious that there is less space in the glass than in the jar. Yet on a deeper level the idea of various separate spaces is an illusion: if you move an empty glass from one room to another, will the amount of space of the glass now be missing in the first room? Obviously this is not the case! This illusion of individual space is easier to sense when the space in the glass or cup is empty. It is given as an analogy for consciousness. For all practical purposes, we are distinct individuals with different experiences, talents and capacities. During meditation we try to empty the mind. When we become aware that the mind is actually an "empty glass", individual consciousness dissolves into universal consciousness.



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JUST ONE MORE STORY.....

as told by Swami Vishnudevananda

Swamiji was a master storyteller with a seemingly endless repertoire. He would teach complex philosophical ideas and to make sure we got the point he would reinforce his talk with a story. "Just one more story....." he would say. —Gopala Krishna from The Yogi

The Man in the Boat

Once upon a time there was a philosopher-scientist. He knew all subjects—chemistry, biology, physiology, physics and more. One day he was being taken across a large river in a boat by an old boatman. The river was calm. It was sunset and a soft breeze was gently blowing. Everything was idyllic and the philosopher-scientist was relaxed and happy. As he looked at the boatman, wrinkled and illiterate, he asked him whether he had ever gone to school. The boatman replied that he hadn't, he had never had any time. The philosopher-scientist, filled with intellectual pride, castigated the boatman for wasting his life in not getting an education, and told him that he should have learned at least how to read and write. As he was admonishing the poor man, a big storm started to brew and the boat began to rock and roll in the river. It was on the point of capsizing. Now it was the turn of the boatman to ask the questions. 'Do you know how to swim dear sir?' he inquired of his passenger. 'No' replied the philosopher-scientist with great fear in his eyes. "Dear sir you have wasted all your life. Your chemistry, biology and physiology are not going to save you now. You should have spent some time in learning to swim."

It is the same with all of us. We are like the philosopher-scientist. We know about the functioning of the lungs, liver, spleen, kidney and pancreas. We know about mental strain, mental health. We know about catabolic and anabolic processes. We have learnt it all and yet we still eat junk food, we still waste our time on idle gossiping. What is the purpose of your degree? You have no mental control. Discipline—that is what yoga gives you. What you are lacking is discipline, practical discipline. Apply the five points of yoga and be free.

The Fakir and the Sheik

Once upon a time a Muslim fakir (ascetic) went to Mecca for a pilgrimage. All kinds of people go to Mecca; rich merchants, the poor, the educated and the uneducated. A rich sheik was there with his ornate tent, adorned with gold and silk—just like a palace. He had servants and attendants and horses and more accompanying him. The fakir had only a small water vessel, the clothes he was wearing and nothing more.

The fakir and the sheik met. 'You are going to Mecca? With the purpose of renouncing all and seeing God?' the fakir asked the sheik—barely concealing his sarcasm. The sheik replied in the affirmative, that he was doing just that. 'How can that be?' asked the fakir 'You have all this luxury surrounding you, you are deceiving yourself.' 'Perhaps', mused the sheik. 'Stay with me kind sir, and you can teach me the art of renunciation.'

The next day the fakir led the sheik, who had now left most of his possessions behind, to walk with him. After fifteen miles or so the fakir suddenly remembered that he had left his water pot in the tent and wanted to turn back. The sheik turned to the fakir, 'You are attached to that pot, otherwise you would not be thinking about it. We have plenty of pots here. You are unable to renounce it. I renounced all my possessions when I joined you, all the luxuries have gone from my mind. But you still have a worthless pot needling you.'

The sheik taught the fakir a lesson—that renunciation is in the mind.

Rat, Cat, Cow, Wife

Once upon a time a young enthusiastic aspirant, wanting to rid himself of all attachment went to the forest and sought a teacher's guidance. He told the teacher that he wanted to be a disciple. 'I want to renounce everything. I am fully detached. I hate this world and everything in it.' The teacher looked at him with a keen eye and told him, 'Very well, I will take you as my disciple. But I have to leave tomorrow for a lecture tour and during that time you must stay in my hut here and take care of everything. I will return in six months.'

The teacher left and the disciple started to do a little meditation, a little pranayama and a few asanas. He had renounced everything and had only two loin cloths for clothing, one to wash and one to wear. After meditation one morning he looked up and saw a rat chewing the loin cloth that was drying in the sun. What to do? He knew that he couldn't keep chasing the rat as his sadhana would be disturbed.

So he got a cat to rid himself of the rat. The cat did its work, but now the disciple had to feed the cat. He had to find milk. He went to the local village and begged for milk for the cat. But that didn't leave him much time for his meditation and pranayama. Why not get a cow and that way I won't have to keep walking to the local village, he thought. He acquired a cow. But now he had to look after the cow and the cat and himself. Still less time for meditation and pranayama. I need someone to take care of the cow, he mused. So he married. Now he had a wife and a cow and a cat and himself.

After a few months the teacher returned and saw a whole family living in his hut. 'You told me you were a renunciate... Hmph!! I'm not sure your definition of a renunciate is the same as mine!!!' Everything that the disciple had 'renounced' had returned to him.

Here is a story about attachments. This is how they come—slowly, slowly they creep. We do not know, we do not notice, how they insinuate themselves into our lives. They are very subtle. This is why an aspirant should have purity, in order to understand how easily trapped he can become through attachment.

The Ghost in the Tree

Once upon a time there was a ghost that lived in a banyan tree on a hilltop. Very few ventured there in the day, and no-one at night. Anyone who went up at night never returned alive.

One day a local villager decided he was going to go up to the hill to prove everyone wrong. 'I don't believe in ghosts or spirits. It's all nonsense, just imagination.' he told his friends. They egged him on, offering a large reward if he dared to go at midnight and return safely. The villager, puffed up with the pride of his own courage was eager to set off. The villagers however wanted proof if they were to hand over the reward. No-one would accompany Mr. Courage, so the villagers devised a plan to give him a marked nail and hammer. He was to hammer the nail to the tree and later on in the day the more brave amongst the villagers would go and check that the nail had been hammered in.

At midnight the whole community assembled. The hammer and nail were duly handed over and the lone villager walked slowly up the hill. It was not long before shapes started to appear before him, aahhh, he thought, only leaves fluttering in the wind, not the ghost, and what's that noise, that rustling.. could it be the ghost...It was almost midnight, he ran the final stretch at break-neck speed, hammered the nail into the tree and turned to run down. But his upper cloth was caught by the ghost and pulled off him. He dared not turn round to claim back his cloth, only ran and ran down to safety. Trembling, shaking and stuttering he fell into his bed, shivering with fever and by the next morning he had died. His friends went to check the tree. There was the nail and the cloth, both hammered into the tree. There was no ghost. He had imagined it all.

This is how our minds function. Fear is the thing by which our protection is lost. A positive person has nothing to fear because he has inner spiritual strength, he repeats his mantra and he always keeps God in his mind.



Swami Vishnudevananda with students at the Sivananda Yoga Camp.



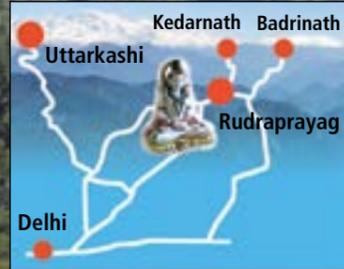
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THE SAGE'S VIEW

by Swami Sivananda

The man who stands up to his neck in cold water has a twofold experience. His head is exposed to the sun, his body to the cold water. He experiences both heat and cold. Such is the experience of a liberated sage. He has double consciousness. He enjoys the bliss of Brahman, but also has the experience of this world. He is like a man who knows two languages.

Just as the pot in which asafoetida or onion is kept emits a certain amount of smell even when it is cleaned several times, so also, a small trace of ignorance still remains in the mind of a sage. The jivanmukta (liberated sage) has a consciousness of the body in the form of an impression in the subconscious mind. That is the reason why he eats and drinks. Though the instinctive mind with low desires is destroyed, the pure mind does not perish in the liberated sage. How will he be able to engage himself in worldly activity without an instrument, namely, the mind?

The phenomenal universe does not vanish from the vision of the liberated sage. He sees the world as a dream within himself. Just as the mirage appears even after the illusory nature of the water is understood, so also, the world appears for a jivanmukta even after he has attained Self-realisation, even after he has clearly understood the illusory nature of the world. But, just as the man who has understood the nature of the mirage will not run after the mirage for drinking water, so also, the sage who is liberated will not pursue sensual objects like the worldly-minded people—though the world appears to him.

That is the difference between a worldly man and a liberated sage.

The jivanmukta beholds the one reality or God everywhere and in all things. For him there is no distinction between a rogue and a saint, gold and stone, honour and dishonour. He actually feels that all is himself only—that snakes, scorpions, tigers, bears and lions are as much part of himself as his own eyes, nose, ears, hands and feet. He is one with the flower, sun, ether, ocean, mountain and sky. He has cosmic vision and cosmic feelings.

The state of a jivanmukta is the be-all and end-all of existence. There is fullness in this state. All desires are burnt. It is a state of absolute and perfect satisfaction. There is no gain greater than this; no bliss greater than this; no wisdom greater than this.

There, at the summit of the hill of eternal bliss, you can see the sage or jivanmukta or a full-blown yogi. He has climbed the stupendous heights through intense and constant struggle. He did severe, rigorous spiritual practices. He did profound meditation. He spent sleepless nights. He kept long vigils during several halting stages. He persevered with patience and diligence. He surmounted many obstacles, conquered despair, gloom and depression. He is a beacon-light to the world now. Remember that he was also rotting in those days in the quagmire of births and deaths, like yourself. You can also ascend to that summit if only you will.



BRING PEACE TO THE WORLD

by Swami Sivananda

Blessed Immortal Self,

You have read many books and listened to many discourses. You have shown appreciation and interest in the sacred scriptures. You have developed faith in the greatness and the glory of the sages and saints of ancient India. But do not forget that this is not enough. The world wants much more from you, you who have love for humanity, who wish for the world peace and prosperity. What are you going to do? Have you bestowed thought on that?

Do not feel that you are only an ordinary individual, one in millions. Do not think that unless you have co-operation from thousands and thousands all over the world, nothing of real importance will be done. No; you forget that every thought sent out by you—you, the humble individual that you think you are—every thought sent in the proper manner, with full trust in God, in pure unselfishness, has behind it the support of all well-wishers, embodied and disembodied. You do not know how many great well-wishers of the world are everywhere in spirit ready to give invisible help to selfless workers.

Every thought that you send out is a vibration which never perishes. It goes on vibrating every particle of the universe and if your thoughts are noble, holy and forcible, they set in vibration every sympathetic mind. Unconsciously all people who are like you, take the thought you have projected and in accordance with the capacity that they have, they send out similar thoughts. The result is that, without your knowledge of the consequences of your own work, you will be setting in motion great forces which will work together and put down the lowly and mean thoughts generated by the selfish and the wicked.

Just as the sun goes on continuously converting into vapour ev-

ery drop of water that is on the surface of the earth and just as all the vapour thus rising up gathers together in the form of clouds, all the thoughts that you project from your own lonely corner will mount up and be wafted across space, join similar thoughts projected by those who are like you and, in the end, all these holy thoughts will come down with tremendous force to subjugate and destroy the evil forces which at present threaten to overpower the good.

If every reader of this message makes it a point to devote one hour every day in meditation, to the projection of peace thoughts, there will be thousands of people doing the same thing every day and the total effort of such combined thought projection is inestimable. Not only will there be the individual force of every such person acting in co-operation but the additional strength received from Invisible Helpers, the ever-present Masters, the Videhas, who will silently guide all and make them pursue the right path. They are the great Beings who enter into the intellects and emotions of every good and pious person and use the person as an instru-

ment for serving mankind.

Will you not, therefore, make now this New Year resolve of devoting at least one hour every day to project thoughts of peace so that the present troubles and turmoil of the world may cease? This is a very simple thing that you can do—yet the response from the Almighty and His agents will be of great value. Make your own individual appeal to God and ask Him to send you Light to help humanity for the establishment of peace and promotion of happiness.



May Lord bless you all with a happy New Year of peace, plenty and spiritual evolution!

Swami Sivananda



TAPAS

by Swami Sivananda

Tapas—austerity of the mind and body—means that you should be able to bear heat and cold, physical discomfort and fatigue; as well as insult, injury, persecution and any sort of humiliation. You should always be able to keep your mind and the senses ever pure and carefully guarded.

That which purifies the impure mind is tapas. That which regenerates the lower animal nature and generates divine nature is tapas. That which pleases the mind and destroys lust, anger, greed is tapas. That which destroys tamas and rajasa and increases sattva is tapas. That which steadies the mind and fixes it on the eternal is tapas. That which arrests the outgoing tendencies is tapas. Desire moves the senses. Desire can be controlled only if the senses are curbed. That which destroys desires, egoism, likes and dislikes and generates dispassion, discrimination and meditation is tapas.

Tapas is of three kinds: physical, verbal and mental.

Physical Celibacy, service of guru and saints, practice of non-violence are some of the practices of tapas for the body.

Verbal To speak the truth, to observe the vow of silence, not to hurt others by unkind or harsh words, to speak words that are beneficial and to study the scriptures are all tapas of speech. Mauna is verbal tapas. Exercise control over speech through vigilance and discipline.

Mental This tapas is more powerful than physical tapas. He who bears heat and cold does physical tapas. He increases his power of endurance, but he may not be able to bear insult, he will be easily upset by a harsh or unkind word, he may take revenge and do 'tit for tat'. He has no control over the mind,

he has disciplined only the physical body. To keep a balanced mind in all conditions of life, to bear insult, injury and persecutions, to be ever serene, contented and peaceful, to be cheerful in adverse conditions, to have fortitude in meeting danger and to have presence of mind and forbearance are all forms of mental tapas.

Poise, mental restraint, purity of nature, one pointedness of mind, mental happiness, cheerfulness and cleanliness of life are all tapas of mind. Philosophically, meditation is the highest form of tapas. Fixing the wandering mind on God or Brahman is great tapas. Enquiry and deep meditation are the highest tapas. Sense control, pranayama, concentration and samadhi, practice of contentment, peace, enquiry and company of the wise, the nine modes of bhakti and yama and niyama are great tapas.

The tapas performed by those with the utmost faith, without desire for fruit and harmonised, is

sattvic or pure. That practised with the object of gaining respect, honour and worship and for ostentation is rajasic, unstable and fleeting. That done under a deluded understanding, with self-torture or with the object of destroying another is declared to be tamasic or of darkness.

By tapas the mind, speech and senses are purified. Fasts and all religious observances that are laid down in scriptures and the rules of yama and niyama, asana, pranayama etc. come under tapas.

Manu says 'He whose speech and mind are pure and ever carefully guarded obtains all the fruits that are obtained by means of vedanta. By the performance of tapas, all afflictions and impurities can be destroyed.'



THE SIX TASTES OF AYURVEDA

As is the food, so is the mind, so goes the Hindi proverb. Our lives are shaped by our diet. In many of the ancient scriptures of yoga we are directed to take proper care of our diet:--

The following unhealthy food items should be avoided: stale and reheated, very dry and very sour food; also food that is very difficult to digest..... Hatha Yoga Pradipika 1.60

The foods which increase life, purity, strength, health, joy and cheerfulness, which are savoury and oleaginous, substantial and agreeable, are dear to the sattvic people. Bhagavad Gita XVII.9

In Ayurveda, the ancient medical science of India, one way of assessing a balanced diet is through the six tastes. Each taste (*rasa* in Sanskrit) affects both the mind and body and a meal is only considered fully nutritional and satisfying when all six tastes are present. *Rasa* has many additional meanings—essence, enthusiasm, juice, among others—all conveying the sense of fullness and joy necessary for life; *rasa* has a deep significance for mental and physical health.



SWEET—in carbohydrates, protein, fats
Grains, rice, all sweeteners, dairy, starchy vegetables, sweet fruits, coriander, fennel, mint, nutmeg, tarragon, vanilla, basil.
Physical effects: Nourishes, builds and strengthens body tissues; in excess causes obesity, diabetes.
Mental effects: Soothing, calming, satisfying; in excess causes lethargy and anxiety.

BITTER—in alkaloids or glycosides
Leafy greens, green and yellow vegetables, coffee, dark chocolate, cumin, dill, fenugreek, saffron, turmeric.
Physical effects: Cleanses and detoxifies, reduces fat and water excess, antibiotic; in excess creates gas, upset stomach, tissue depletion.
Mental effects: Diminishes food cravings, clears senses and emotions; in excess increases anxiety, fear and insomnia.



PUNGENT—in volatile oils
All peppers, chilli, garlic, leek, onion, radish, mustard, cardamom, cloves, ginger.
Physical effects: Warms body, stimulates metabolism and digestion, relieves nerve pain; in excess causes thirst, depletion of reproductive fluid, back pain.
Mental effects: Opens the mind and senses; in excess causes irritability, anger and impatience.



SALTY—in mineral salts
Celery, sea vegetables, natural salts, soy sauce, tamari.
Physical effects: Maintains mineral balance, lubricates tissues, stimulates digestion; in excess causes wrinkles, baldness, loss of strength and thirst.
Mental effects: Enthusiasm, calms nerves, stops anxiety; in excess generates cravings, anger, impatience and lethargy.

ASTRINGENT—in tannins
Apples, pears, pomegranate, cruciferous vegetables, potato, lentils, dried beans, tea, bay, caraway, coriander, dill, fennel, oregano, parsley, turmeric.
Physical effects: Cleanses blood, maintains blood sugar levels, dries moisture and fat; in excess causes gas or constipation, heart pain and thirst.
Mental effects: cools hot-headedness, clears senses and emotions, increases energy; in excess creates anxiety, fear and insomnia.



SOUR—in organic acids
Citrus fruits, berries, tamarind, tomato, pickled and fermented food, yoghurt.
Physical effects: Stimulates appetite and digestion, strengthens heart, relieves thirst; in excess engenders loss of strength, fever, thirst.
Mental effects: Enhances intellectual activity; in excess creates resentment, jealousy, anger and impatience.



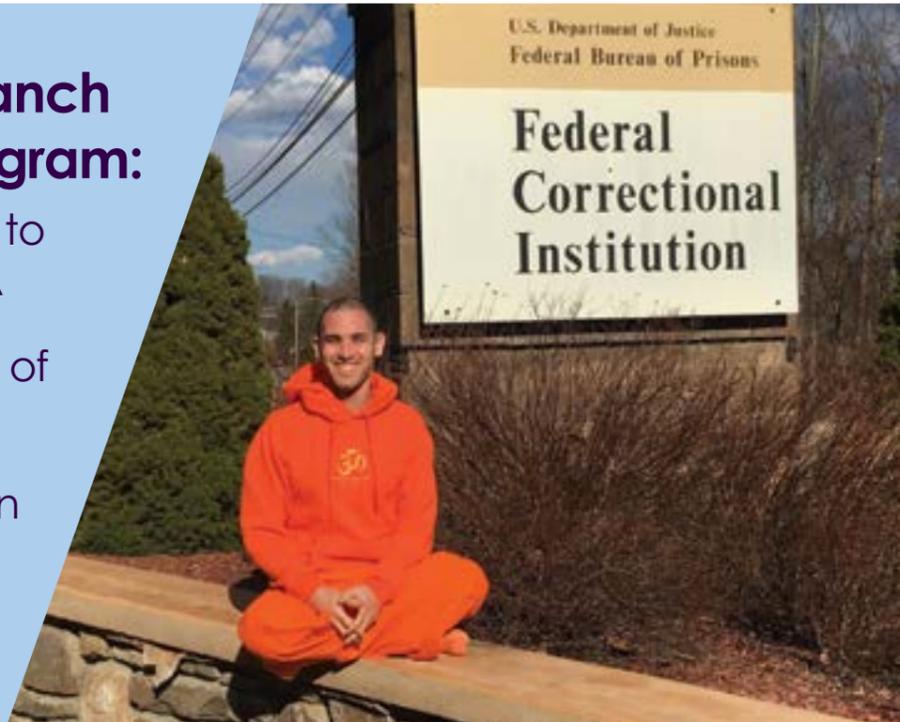


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2015 Prison TTC student
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SWAMIJI IN SOUTH AMERICA

by Kanti Devi



One of the most remarkable periods of my life was the year 1976. It was in that year when Swami Vishnudevananda visited South America for the first time. Swamiji could feel the call of many beings who were waiting for him, and without hesitation decided to make the long journey from Canada to Uruguay.

One year earlier, I had performed my Teachers' Training Course (TTC) in the Bahamas. After the course, I stayed in the Ashram for the Congress of Yoga Teachers and then accompanied Swamiji in the peace mission flight to Cuba. Swamiji promised to visit South America. In January 1976, recently married, I travelled back to the Bahamas with my husband Chandra, who went there to take his TTC. At that moment Swamiji reaffirmed he would soon visit South America.

as he waved his hands greeting us. He quickly came to us and wiped our tears smiling and saying with tenderness and perhaps with a certain reminiscence, 'this country looks like India'. The simplicity of the airport, the fact that people had to search for their suitcase by themselves in long rows of luggage lined up near the runway, reminded Swamiji of his beloved country. Together with Chandra, we had begun the setting up of a Yoga Centre in an affluent location near the sea. Upon arrival, Swamiji walked every corner of the Centre blessing the place with his attendance.

Every day we enjoyed together a walk along the coast. We did not talk too much, it was not necessary. It was in the quiet silence that I could perceive the divine grace dwelling in him. The entire programme was very successful. All the participants were absorbed by his teachings



Even today I remember the joy we felt when Swamiji announced he would be in Montevideo for a week at the end of November. It was a blessing and at the same time a challenge—the event would take place at the same time that I was expecting my first child. But we were full of energy anticipating the longed-for moment, so we quickly organised the schedule of public lectures and also several radio and TV interviews. Everything flowed easily, all doors opened to welcome Swamiji. At last, on a bright and pleasant morning Swamiji arrived in Montevideo. Chandra, María Gil and I were waiting for him at the airport with a garland of flowers. It is difficult to find words to describe the overwhelming emotion that we felt. It was like a dream... Swamiji in Uruguay—a small country, almost lost in the South American continent, a country with little remarkable in it, where most of its few inhabitants did not speak English. In spite of all this Swamiji was here.

I remember his tiny figure leaning out of the door of the plane. The wind fluttered in his hair

and great charisma. His energy was inexhaustible, he gave lectures, yoga workshops and meditation throughout the day.

Swamiji received with great love and simplicity whatever was offered to him, whether it was food, accommodation or anything else. And his love and great understanding were shown even in our mistakes and difficulties.

Swamiji returned to Uruguay four more times. In 1986 he made a short tour to Argentina, Brazil, Chile and Uruguay. In this last country he led the first Yoga TTC in South America. He not only directed all the activities of the course, but at the same time was planning the celebration of Master Sivananda's birth Centenary. In the small room he occupied during the TTC in Uruguay, located on top of a hill in Piriápolis, Swamiji developed the idea of celebrating the Centenary with a 'human mala' (rosary), with people linking hands uniting India from north to south, while chanting the mantra for peace *OM Namó Narayanaya*.

But this is another story... *Kanti Devi*



Centres

Montevideo, Uruguay

Founded by Swami Vishnudevananda in 1976, the Centre is located in a traditional house, with a large space for classes, courses and workshops.

Its library, open to teachers and members, has more than one thousand books on spirituality. The Centre has published many Spanish editions of the works of both Swami Sivananda and Swami Vishnudevananda. This year we will start classes for women prisoners and other special programmes.

Buenos Aires, Argentina

Founded in 2000, many staff and karma yogis have contributed to the growth of the Centre, now established as a thriving spiritual Centre and community. Today the Centre has expanded with three resident swamis and more than thirty outside teachers. In addition the swamis tour frequently throughout South America, bringing yoga to new areas as well as supporting the TTCs.

Neuquen, Argentina

The Sivananda Yoga Centre of Neuquen has been serving the community for six years. The Centre spreads the teachings of yoga in the Argentinian Patagonia. We are run by karma yogis and local teachers; now, we are looking for a permanent resident staff. The celebration of this sixth anniversary will be an Open House with pujas for Swami Sivananda, and along with visiting swamis we will hold special workshops and our traditional Yoga Retreat in Las Grutas beach.

Porto Alegre, Brazil

Founded in 2001 the Centre supports the international courses in Brazil. We have published *The Complete Illustrated Book of Yoga and Meditation and Mantras* in Portuguese. Two teaching videos about yoga, to be found on our website have been filmed here. We have two large and light-filled rooms and also a large wooden deck in the garden, all ideal for yoga practice.

Sao Paulo, Brazil The Centre is the youngest of the Sivananda Centres in South America. It was opened just one year ago.

This year the Centre will be strengthened by the arrival of four newly-graduated teachers. The activities are already scheduled until June, the month in which we plan to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Sivananda organisation.

Affiliates

Medellin, Colombia

Atman Yoga has two Centres as well as an extensive karma yoga programme in which we bring yoga to public parks and to prisoners, the homeless, orphans, elderly, drug addicts, etc. Our latest project, the Sivananda Vana Durga Ashram Yoga Sanctuary in San Carlos situated in an idyllic part of the country and ideal for yogic sadhana is to be inaugurated with our first TTC and ATTC in July 2018.



Franca, Brazil

Yoga Hall is located in a modern building near the commercial area of the city. We have a comfortable room in which about twenty students practise hatha yoga, and a large parking that we use for open classes. All the activities are carried out by three yoga teachers: Narayan, Sivani, Niranjana, and one karma yogi: Robert.



Santa Cruz, Bolivia

Founded in 1996 the Centre has three active yoga teachers: Janaki, Kevala and Radha. The daily activities start early in the morning with arati and spiritual readings for the students. Other activities are group meditations and celebration of spiritual holidays. The staff also includes secretary, Ana, and two karma yogis, Elsa and Sara. We are expanding to include more monthly workshops and yoga retreats.



Viña del Mar, Chile

Since 2011, the Centre has grown steadily, providing more and more people with a range of yoga classes, meditation and workshops. Over the last two years, Centre directors Karna and Shivani have been joined by newly-trained teachers enabling us to expand our class and course schedule. We will be moving into a more spacious facility with an extra asana hall and rooms to accommodate resident staff in the near future.



Kanti Devi, Acharya - Spiritual Teacher and Lineage holder, South America, e-mail: kantidevi@sivananda.org





101 Health Conditions Benefited by Yoga (as found in scientific studies as of October 2016)

- | | | |
|--|--|---|
| 1. Alcoholism and Other Drug Abuse | 37. High Blood Pressure | 71. Post Coronary Artery Bypass Surgery |
| 2. Alzheimer's Disease | 38. HIV/AIDS | 72. Post-Heart Attack |
| 3. Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis | 39. Hypothyroidism | 73. Post Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator (ICD) |
| 4. Anxiety | 40. Infertility | 74. Post-Joint Replacement |
| 5. Asthma | 41. Inflammatory Bowel Disease | 75. Post-Operative Recovery |
| 6. Atrial Fibrillation | 42. Inguinal Hernia | 76. Post-Polio Syndrome |
| 7. Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) | 43. Insomnia | 77. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) |
| 8. Autism | 44. Irritable Bowel Syndrome | 78. Pregnancy (Normal and Complicated) |
| 9. Back Pain | 45. Kidney Failure | 79. Prenatal/Postpartum Depression |
| 10. Balance Problems | 46. Lung Cancer | 80. Pressure Ulcers |
| 11. Breast Cancer | 47. Lymphoma | 81. Prostate Cancer |
| 12. Burns | 48. Menopausal (and Perimenopausal) Symptoms | 82. Psoriasis |
| 13. Cancer (General) | 49. Menstrual Disorders | 83. Pulmonary Hypertension |
| 14. Carpal Tunnel Syndrome | 50. Mental Developmental Impairment | 84. Restless Leg Syndrome |
| 15. Chronic Fatigue Syndrome | 51. Metabolic Syndrome | 85. Rheumatoid Arthritis |
| 16. Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (e.g. Emphysema) | 52. Migraine and Tension Headaches | 86. Rhinitis (Inflammation of the Nose) |
| 17. Cognitive Impairment | 53. Multiple Sclerosis | 87. Schizophrenia |
| 18. Computer Vision Syndrome | 54. Muscular Dystrophy | 88. Scoliosis (Curvature of the Spine) |
| 19. Congestive Heart Failure | 55. Neck Pain | 89. Sexual Dysfunction |
| 20. Cystic Fibrosis | 56. Neurocardiogenic Syncope (Fainting) | 90. Sexual Trauma |
| 21. Depression | 57. Neuroses (e.g. Phobias) | 91. Sinusitis |
| 22. Diabetes | 58. Obesity/Overweight | 92. Skeletal Muscle Pain Syndrome |
| 23. Drug Withdrawal | 59. Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) | 93. Smoking Cessation |
| 24. Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy | 60. Organ Transplant | 94. Somatoform Disorders |
| 25. Eating Disorders | 61. Osteoarthritis (Degenerative Arthritis) | 95. Stress |
| 26. Endometriosis | 62. Osteoporosis | 96. Stroke |
| 27. Epilepsy | 63. Ovarian Cancer | 97. Thoracic Hyperkyphosis |
| 28. Fatigue | 64. Pain (Chronic) | 98. Total Knee Arthroplasty |
| 29. Fibromyalgia | 65. Panic Disorder | 99. Traumatic Brain Injury |
| 30. Fractures | 66. Parkinson's Disease | 100. Tuberculosis |
| 31. Gait (Walking) Problems | 67. Performance Anxiety | 101. Urinary Incontinence |
| 32. Gestational Diabetes | 68. Periodontitis | |
| 33. Guillain-Barré Syndrome | 69. Pleural Effusion (Fluid in the Lining of the Lung) | |
| 34. Heart Disease | 70. Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome | |
| 35. Hemophilia | | |
| 36. Hemorrhoids | | |



Timothy McCall, MD is a board-certified specialist in internal medicine, a yoga therapist and a long-time practitioner of yoga and meditation. He is the author of *Yoga as Medicine*, medical editor of *Yoga Journal*, and co-editor of the first medical textbook on yoga therapy, *The Principles and Practice of Yoga in Health Care*. He teaches Yoga As Medicine Seminars and Teacher Trainings worldwide. www.DrMcCall.com

THE SEDENTARY SOCIETY

by Lila Saraswati Devi



In today's modern society, people around the world are beginning to suffer from the impact of a sedentary culture. According to Dr. James Levine, director of the Mayo Clinic-Arizona, *Sitting is more dangerous than smoking, kills more people than HIV, and is more treacherous than parachuting. We are sitting ourselves to death.*

This statement can be quite shocking for someone to hear, especially for those of us who sit the majority of the day. Global studies have shown that on average, people sit for 7.7 hours a day, and some results estimate up to 15 hours a day. But it is not just sitting that is reeking havoc on our system. A recent study reveals that adults in the United States spend nearly half a day staring at a screen. This dangerous combination increases the risk of organ damage, obesity, back/neck pain, shortness of breath, pranic depletion, high blood pressure, diabetes, depression, and more. In fact, the immobile lifestyle has become such an epidemic that some scientists have termed it "the sitting disease." However, there is hope.

As Swami Vishnudevananda taught, traditional hatha yoga practices are a source of healing for a variety of physical, mental, and emotional imbalances. It seems there could no better time, or reason, to develop a daily practice to help the body counteract the impact of sitting and an increasingly immobile lifestyle.

Five Tips to Combat a Sedentary Lifestyle

● **Pranayama** Every Morning - Pranayama has many benefits, mainly to increase the amount of overall prana, vital energy, in our system. Fluorescent lighting, computers, and a stressful work environment are known for depleting prana. By practising pranayama every morning before leaving for work, the system is kept energised, calm, and purified. Three rounds of kapalabhati and a minimum of eight rounds of anuloma viloma will do the trick. If there is the opportunity, then a few rounds of anuloma viloma during the day will have an immediately re-energising effect.

● **Surya Namaskar** (Sun Salute) Twice Daily - By practising six rounds of surya namaskar every morning before sitting at the desk and every evening at home, the spine is kept healthy and strong and reduces the pressure on the sacrum that accumulates when seated. Also, increase in circulation keeps the heart strong and removes the accumulation of toxins.

● **Simple Stretches** Every Hour - Stretch, bend, and twist ten minutes for every hour seated. Simple chair stretches and standing forward bends will keep the body supple. Combine the movements with deep abdominal breathing or full yogic breath.

● **Eye & Neck Exercises** - The sitting posture often creates muscular tension in the head and neck region. By practising head and neck exercises during the day, this area is relaxed and kept in proper alignment.

These are great exercises to add to the ten minutes of simple stretches recommended every hour. The eye exercises are especially beneficial if you are in front of a screen for many hours. It is recommended to rest and exercise the eyes away from the screen at least every two hours.

● **Use a Standing Desk** - Doctors and scientists are increasingly recommending the use of standing desks. By using a standing desk the risk of weight gain and heart disease is diminished, blood sugar levels lower, back pain reduces and mood and energy levels improve. Reducing sedentary time can improve physical, metabolic as well as mental health. If you plan to start using a standing desk, it is recommended you split your time 50/50 between standing and sitting.

The five tips mentioned above are simple but very effective guidelines that can help combat a sedentary lifestyle. By following the five points of yoga established by Swami Vishnudevananda— proper exercise (asana), proper breathing (pranayama), proper relaxation (savasana), proper diet (plant-based), and positive thinking and meditation, we experience first-hand the positive effects on our mental and physical health. ॐ



Lila Saraswati Lolling is the teacher of the Adapted Sivananda Yoga Course and has been interpreting and assisting the Sivananda Teachers' Training Course into American Sign Language since 2008.
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China

Daily Classes
At Chengdu Center



Yoga Teacher Training
Course / Yoga Vacations
Sept. 9–Oct. 7, 2017
Sept. 8–Oct. 7, 2018



Vietnam

New ashram open year-round:
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(in Dalat, near Tuyen Lam Lake)

Yoga Teacher Training Course
July 8–Aug 5, 2017
Nov 11–Dec 9, 2017
Feb 24–Mar 25, 2018

Sivananda Yoga Health
Educator Training
Jan–Dec 2018

ATTC
Mar 12–Apr 8, 2018

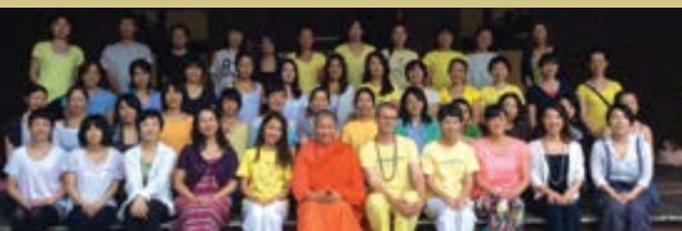
Yoga Vacations, Residency
and Seva Study
Year-round at K'lan resort

Daily classes and
residential programs
Year-round at SYVC Ho Chi
Minh and SYVC Dalat



2017/18

Sivananda Yoga in ASIA



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Retreat near Taichung

Programs with
Swami Narayananda
Sept 2–3, 2017



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RURAL HEALTH IN



Over the years the Indian Central Government in Delhi has imposed and funded various praiseworthy schemes for State Governments to implement for the eradication of tuberculosis, iodine deficiency, malaria and other mosquito-spread diseases, leprosy, blindness and so on, and State Governments have also developed their own programmes

for the welfare of their populations with immunisation programmes, control of stray dogs, anti-mosquito measures and programmes for specific groups such as women and children. However due to the vast population of the country and difficulties with resources—whether for geographical, financial or other reasons—many in remote areas, still suffer from poor health and disease. The issues are manifold. Maintenance of health is not dependent on medical facilities alone; clean water, balanced diet, sanitation facilities, education are important factors also. Nevertheless, all three of the Indian Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre Ashrams, which are located in rural areas, are contributing towards the health of the many poor people living in the surrounding relatively-isolated villages, by providing free medical help.

The Traditional Ayurveda Approach at Neyyar Dam, Kerala

The arrival of the monthly one-day free Ayurveda Medical Camp is noticeable at the Ashram with the considerable increase in sound of auto-rickshaws passing by during the 6am meditation time. On this morning, even an extra bus is added to the route to the Ashram's nursery school buildings, the venue of the Camp, to cope with the number of people wishing to attend. Since July 14, 2010, the number of patients has steadily risen to the present numbers of



800–1000 each time the Camp is conducted.

Dr Vishnu, the Neyyar Dam Ashram senior Ayurveda doctor heads the team of eight to twelve Ayurveda doctors who provide free consultations checking blood pressure, weight etc., diagnosing conditions and writing prescriptions. They will each see 80–100 patients between 9am and 4pm.

The Sivananda Institute of Health Ayurveda Clinic in the Ashram is empty as the staff are all busy in the Medical Camp pharmacy, packing the free prescriptions, enough for two weeks, perhaps a month. Another team of Ashram staff maintain order at the Camp, managing a token system and organising the serving of free tea, rice and dal, and then cleaning up. It is a much appreciated team effort which enables everything to flow smoothly despite the huge numbers.

There is still a preference for the traditional natural approaches to good health, reflecting the conservative nature of the region. The majority of patients are above fifty years of age, many suffering from simple backache or painful varicose veins or joint problems such as osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis which are becoming increasingly common. There are also many skin complaints, gynaecological problems and so on.

Ayurveda is considered



to be more successful in treating many of these conditions and less damaging for the body as a whole.

INDIA *by Kalyani*

By the grace of Master and Swamiji the Ashram is blessed to be able to provide these free consultations, oils and medicines. As the Sivananda Institute for Health in the Ashram develops in the near future, we hope that our services to the poor may also expand.

Free Medical Camp, Netala, Himalayas

Since 1998 we have been conducting a free weekly Medical Camp at our Sivananda Kutir, Netala, Uttarkashi in the Himalayas.



A local doctor, Dr. Chandok provides consultations and free medicines every Sunday for nearby villagers. The service is greatly appreciated as medical facilities are limited in this remote part of India.

Swami Sivananda Rural Hospital, Kadavur, Madurai

is the result of Dr V. Narayanasamy's endeavours to serve the villagers in the vicinity of our Ashram to the north of the city of Madurai in Tamil Nadu. Dr Narayanasamy, as a Trustee of the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre organisation in India, was instrumental in the birth of the Ashram itself, locating and assisting in the purchase of the land. The running costs of the Rural Hospital are partially funded by the Ashram. Dr Narayanasamy has provided the building (at his Nursing Home at Kadavur, a five-minute walk from the Ashram) and also furniture and equipment through the Vikram Hospitals

which he has established in the city of Madurai. He also engages the medical staff.

The project began in 2006 as an Accident/Recovery Centre. In 2013 it became the Sivananda Rural Clinic with two nurses on hand for first aid services. In 2016 with the donation of an ambulance from Mr Vishnu, Toronto, it became the Sivananda Free Rural Mobile Clinic.

The hospital has one doctor, a field health supervisor, seven rural health nurses and two central health nurses. These are supported by a driver and a cleaner. Further specialist services are provided free by a number of consultant doctors particularly when speciality

Outpatient Camps are arranged. An average of 40 patients a day visit the Centre; 1,250 a month, 15,000 a year. Speciality Camps have been particularly well-attended: Surgical Camp was attended by 558 and the Eye Camp by 506; Women's Health Camp by 975 and Diabetes Camp by 1,066. On these occasions as well as free medicines, free food and transport were provided. The Mobile Clinic covers ten villages. We are pleased to say that this seems to have been the inspiration for the Madurai City Corporation to also provide mobile health services to cover the many more villages around the city. These services are essential for the villagers with limited transport facilities. Dog and snake bites, fevers for example require urgent attention. Screening for symptoms of diabetes, cancer etc. is preventative and will be appreciated more as time goes on.

With Swamiji and Master's blessings, we look forward in the future to serving the local people further with a free/low cost Ayurveda hospital on the edge of the Ashram.



Kalyani is co-director of the Sivananda Yoga Dhanwantari Ashram, Neyyar Dam, south India.

PURIFY WITH PANCHAKARMA

by Dr. P. R. Vishnu BAMS, MD



Panchakarma is a formidable Ayurvedic treatment to detoxify and purify body and mind. It is known for its beneficial effects on overall health, wellness and self-healing. In Sanskrit pancha means five and karma, action. Panchakarma consists of five different actions to eliminate the waste components and toxins that accumulate over time in our body and to restore the natural rhythm of the three doshas, an Ayurvedic term relating to the physiological energetic principles through which the body and mind function. The term dosha in Sanskrit means error. When the doshas are out of balance, either by too much or by too little, disease will follow.

The miracle of the human body is that it has a natural healing intelligence, which is capable of constantly renewing and rejuvenating itself. However when dosha imbalance and a weakened digestive capacity allow the accumulation of toxic impurities—known in Sanskrit as ama—in different parts of the body both physical and mental well-being diminish. The result is disease. The process of panchakarma is a very powerful therapy to eliminate the accumulated toxins from the body, improve the metabolic rate and digestive fire, bring balance to the doshas and bringing vibrant health.

Since Ayurveda is preventative as well as curative, one does not need to have a specific problem to benefit from panchakarma. Classical texts of Ayurveda recommend that maximum benefit from panchakarma occurs when treatment is performed on a regular, seasonal basis, three to four times per year. However, this may not be practicable for most, but even once a year will have a profound purifying effect. In the stressful environments in which many of us now live, toxins gradually accumulate in the body causing disease. Panchakarma is designed to restore the body's natural balance. In just two weeks this powerful healing therapy can leave the body younger, healthier, stronger and free from chronic ailments and the mind calm, stress-free, and relaxed with optimum health and well-being.

In the stressful environments in which many of us now live, toxins gradually accumulate in the body causing disease. Panchakarma is designed to restore the body's natural balance. In just two weeks this powerful healing therapy can leave the body younger, healthier, stronger and free from chronic ailments and the mind calm, stress-free, and relaxed with optimum health and well-being.

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Stages of Panchakarma

There are three stages in panchakarma therapy, each as important as the other.

1. purva karma (the preparatory stage)
2. pradan karma (the treatments)
3. pachat karma (post-treatment)

PURVA KARMA—Preparatory Stage

There are several techniques used in the initial purificatory process.

Snehana The patient drinks medicated oil or ghee and is massaged with medicated oil. This lubrication enables easy elimination of the **fat-soluble** toxins and removes blockages created by metabolic waste.

Svedana Here heat is applied to open the pores and channels for ease of elimination of **water-soluble** waste. Techniques used include steam bath, hot bundles, leaf bundles, powder bundles, among others.

PRADAN KARMA—the Five Actions—Treatment Stage

Vamana (emesis) Therapeutic-induced vomiting reduces the imbalance of kapha dosha.

Virechana (purgation) Medicated purgation through the bowels, eliminates imbalance of pitta accumulated in the liver and gallbladder.

Sneha Basti (oil enema) Anally-administered medicated oil or ghee lubricates the large intestine, balancing vata.

Kashya Basti (decoction enema) Anally-administered herb-infused decoction high in electrolytes and alkalinity helps neurological, auto-immune and degenerative conditions.

Nasyam (nasal medication) Medicated oil or powder introduced through the nose reduces kapha imbalances above the clavicle region.

PASCHAT KARMA—Post Treatment Stage

It is very important to maintain a pure vegetarian diet and healthy lifestyle for one month or at least equal to the length of the treatment after the therapy and to take rasayana herbs (revitalising herbs) during this period of readjustment.

The Doshas

VATA

The principle of vata is action or movement. All movement in the body is governed by vata. Diseases caused by vata imbalance include neurological disease and degenerative disease. Conditions such as osteoporosis, osteoarthritis, Parkinson's, are attributable to vata imbalance as well as anxiety, insomnia, nervousness and hyperactivity.

PITTA

The principle of pitta is fire. Digestion, metabolism, hormones, temperature regulation, immunity are controlled by pitta. Diseases caused by pitta imbalance include metabolic syndromes, auto-immune disease, disease on the rheumatic spectrum, endocrine disease and digestive disease. Frustration, anger, irritability, and intolerance are all signs of pitta imbalance.

KAPHA

The principle of kapha is stability and lubrication. Lubrication of joints, memory, stability of mind, body fluids, weight are controlled by kapha. Diseases caused by kapha imbalance include obesity, excessive sleep, asthma, tumours. Depression, over-sentimentality, stubbornness, complacency are all signs of kapha imbalance.

Benefits of Panchakarma

- Increases immunity
- Promotes detoxification
- Increases energy levels, revitalises
- Anti-aging, has a profound rejuvenative effect
- Prevents neuro-degenerative disease
- Prevents bone-degenerative disease
- Increases metabolism
- Promotes weight loss
- Enhances the mind; promotes mental clarity and on a deeper level, enhances consciousness.



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Lord Dhanwantari, Divine Founder of Ayurveda



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SADHANA INTENSIVE

by Supreet K. Singh (Ganga)

*What you seek my love is inside you,
so dig deep my love dig a little more deep,
pick up a brush and colour it reap,
the beginning of you,
so beautiful so true,
so dig deep my love dig a little more deep,
see what makes you what you really seek.*

The following are some of the thoughts, that invoked the presence of so many of us at the Sivananda Ashram, Madurai, to experience the world of intense sadhana.

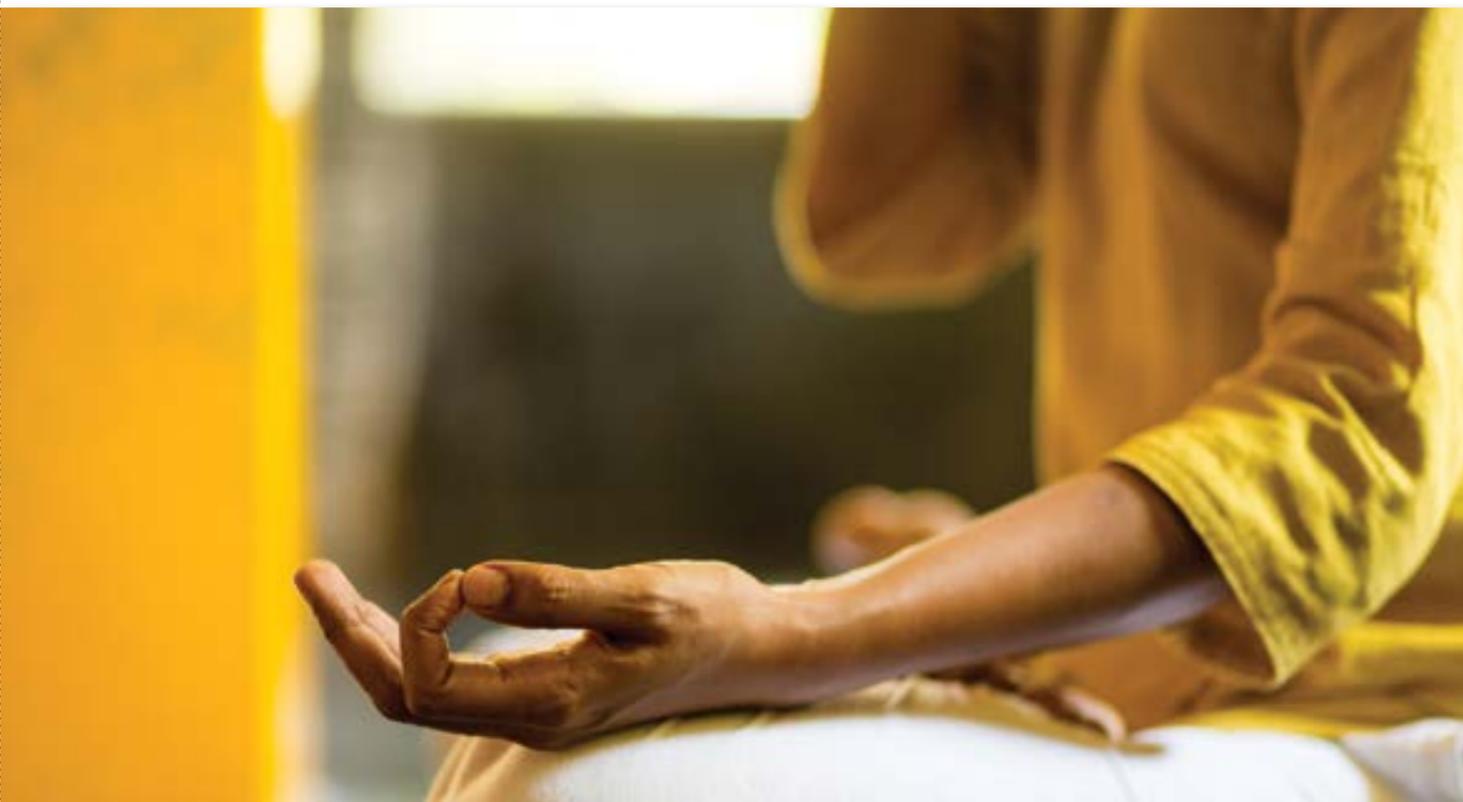
Surrendering our 'baggage,' and 'unlearning' what we had already learned, was not as great a challenge as developing self-discipline, becoming a disciple. A group of almost forty yoga siromanis (teacher training graduates) and yoga acharyas (advanced teacher training graduates) were here to practise asanas and pranayamas on our own without the presence of our guru. This seemed a daunting prospect.

We had a mix of yogis who ranged from silent introverts to talkative preachers. Some of us were seriously inclined to live in our own space for the full fourteen days of the programme, whilst others belonged to the social world of sharing conversations over meals, during the practice and the hours in-between. And then there were those who were already yoga bhaskaras, those who had been there and done it all before. Some of us were in awe of these few yogis, prodding them with questions on how, what, why, when. Well, they knew the drill and so they only smiled and encouraged us to experience rather than talk.

The fears were not only about the discipline or the early hours or of not doing it all right. There were more basic matters of survival, such as food, to consider. The initial excitement of fourteen days with sattvic food, of plain saltless khichdi (rice and lentils) was soon lost to inquiries on when would the addition of almond milk and payasam (south Indian dessert) be implemented. There were those who wanted to lose weight and were happy at the prospect of restrictions, but the good intentions were soon forgotten when tablespoons of ghee and bowls of payasam manifested. There of course has to be a mention of one student who dreamt and spoke only of spices, pickles, fried vegetables and stuffed nans. The Ashram food was not easy for her and her constant discussions of recipes did not make it easy for the rest of us!

We managed to muddle through the first few days with courage and determination, always encouraging ourselves and others with joyful visions of the treasure that awaited us on the fourteenth day. None of us knew what this treasure was, but we all were aware that this was a journey, that even though we all had to take it together, it would remain exclusive to each one of us, carrying us to what we were seeking for ourselves. And yes, most of us did not know what we were seeking.

The first day was a little difficult as there were almost thirty-five of us practising together. The shy ones were



inhibited while a few others were more exhibitionist, while others were in-between, trying to find their own space and struggling slowly to finish the practices. It was not always easy, but a few days of the programme helped us shed the exterior cloak of our individual lives and nudged us towards a path that went inwards. And that is when we were silent for the longest time.

The four to six hours of daily practice turned to six to nine hours and gradually we created our own individual space gently breaking our bodies and what existed inside.

A JOURNEY WE TOOK

Even though some would share and talk, the journey within was constant, alive and on-going. Through sleep, ablutions, practice, satsangs, meals, the tunnels inside each one of us kept growing and extending the walk. The pranayamas ignited candles in each of these tunnels and we slowly but surely expanded.

We became aware of ourselves, our strengths, our weaknesses, our joys, our despair, our desires and our existence. Every breath we took during our practice worked with us, on us; every second of those fourteen days, helped us shed our 'bag-

prana flow within and through us.

Some of us saw and fell in love with our kundalini and focussed on Her, to bloom and grow inside us, to help us open our hearts and souls to the universe. Some of us experienced the energy dancing within. Through sparkles and lights, through fragrances and music, we grew aware of all our senses and beyond.

The fourteenth day eventually dawned and we saw our own individual journeys clearly in the stark light of day. All of us gained something, some gained clarity, some peace, some the power of reflection and the power of healing through acceptance and self-love, to look inwards as much as outwards, realising what we are and what we seek.

The smiles and love that flowed from each one of us bound us in a peaceful, pure, spiritual wreath and we wear our experience with respect, reverence and love for our gurus, who guided us through this journey, a beautiful journey toward the discovery of the Self. ॐ

Reflections

The Course was a blessed experience. It gave me the opportunity to experience and appreciate the power of intense pranayama practices, under proper guidance and in an appropriate environment. I found myself releasing a lot of mental baggage and gaining more and more mental clarity as the days went by. I felt light, centred and grounded from within by the end of the Course. Saatvika

Each session was an immersion, exploration and discovery of not only my physical strength and vital energy through the asana and pranayamas, bandhas and mudras, but also of the mind and its vagaries, and learning to deal with what came floating up from the subconscious. Manjiri

The Course helped the body to break through its limit to a certain extent. The body was at one time trained to be a professional tennis player but never had it experienced that much of prana-charging in such a short time. After the Course, everything seems to be very easy. Efficiency and clarity enhanced. Tara, Yuehling Chen

It is a great tool to remove the clouds from the mind, develop the will-power and grow spiritually. It increased the vibrations of my vital forces. Natalia

gage', our past moments of sadness, our fears, our need for acceptance and acknowledgment. We flowered like the wild orchids in the untended gardens of utopia, free-flowing within ourselves.

The experience emboldened us and we allowed ourselves to express freely, to let our emotions and feelings pour out into the world, to the universe, to the energy that holds us together. Some cried, some laughed, some kept quiet and some aloof. We explored our bodies, our minds and our souls. We discovered our latent energies and worked towards letting the



Sivananda Ashram, The Bahamas

The Ashram garden on Paradise Island has been transformed this year. The loss of 50 trees in the aftermath of Hurricane Matthew was a great benefit to the garden, clearing space for light and flowers. The karma yogi gardeners who spearheaded the rebuilding used hundreds of bags of cypress mulch, topsoil and manure, and the Ashram's own compost, to revitalise the earth. They pruned shrubs and trees, planted colourful annuals and added hundreds of perennials, including hibiscus, ornamental ginger and West Indian jasmine. The Peace Pond was rebuilt and some felled trees were kept to become hosts to other flora.



Sivananda Ashram, Madurai, India

Recent projects at the Ashram include the construction of two houses for senior staff, Devi Nivas and Hanuman Nivas, extensive renovation of the Shanti Nivas teachers' quarters with the addition of a kitchen and a new roof. A number of new single and double guest rooms and additional dormitory beds have been built. The garden is continuing to develop. Additional land has been cleared and cultivated. At present, organic spinach, beans, tomato, cucumber, eggplant, watermelon, banana and lemon are all growing well.



Sivananda Kutir, Netala, India

In addition to new beds, plumbing, tiling of dormitory floors the Ashram has had some major constructional changes. The Bhagirathi building has been redesigned with a concrete slab roof allowing for an extra floor of accommodation. The ground floor of both Bhagirathi and Ganga buildings have been renovated to become two large dormitories, increasing the bed numbers. The newly-tiled courtyards, temple area and pathways of the Ashram with specially- created planter walls around the gardens give a beautifully tidy and clean appearance. And lastly the repair of the Ganga protection wall alongside the Ashram has been completed.



Sivananda Ashram, Neyyar Dam, India

Due to ongoing demand for accommodation we have upgraded the temporary Rama Krishna men's dormitory. The light-filled and airy space is appreciated by all. We are in the process of creating a very lovely water feature alongside the Dhanwantari Yoga Hall. Students will hear the beautiful sounds of moving water during their classes. Our murals around the Ashram were given a fresh coat of paint. They are now gleaming.



Sivananda Ashram, Orleans, France

The time from autumn to spring was a lively and beautiful time at the Ashram, despite it being off-season. Our All Saints Retreat filled the Ashram to full winter capacity and so did our winter highlight, the annual Christmas Retreat. Our November/December TTC received so many bookings that we decided to add an additional TTC in January. Even on such a short notice, the January TTC had over 30 participants, so we will make it a permanent date, bringing the Ashram up to five TTCs a year in addition to ATTC and Sadhana Intensive. The preparations for launching the new webpage finally came to an end with the shift to the new URL taking place in April. The change of system allows us to work on a much more flexible basis with updates and makes taking bookings much easier and efficient for our reception staff. Our dog Soma decided to leave his physical body in March, just a few days before his 15th birthday. He passed away peacefully and is hopefully enjoying doggie heaven now.



Sivananda Ashram, California, USA

Karma yogis have started to prepare the land in the Ashram valley for a French lavender field. We estimate we will have planted 2000 Grosso and Provence lavender plants by April 2017 to produce lavender hydrosol and lavender essential oils to be called 'Sivananda Essence' to be distributed to all. Provence and Grosso are known to be the best types of lavender plants with plentiful blooms and have the most peaceful, sweet, floral aroma.



Sivananda Ashram, Woodbourne, USA

The Ashram's new 93 kW solar installation became operational in February, which should provide nearly all the electrical needs of the Ashram, including car-charging facilities. Supporting the new solar panels, is a beautiful steel carport which will serve as the new Ashram parking lot, clearing the way for movable greenhouses for more year-round food production in the old parking area, and much landscaping opportunities for the spring, as we transform the entrance to the Ashram. Our Durga temple, which was originally opened by Swami Vishnudevananda, in the mid 1980s, went through a major reconstruction has also helped to uplift the Ashram's spiritual energy.



Dalat, Vietnam

There has been much activity in Vietnam these past months, the highlight being the opening of a new ashram location, near the city of Dalat, on January 1st. We have been blessed with the opportunity to use a large area of pine-forested land, with buildings for accommodation and for teaching, near Truc Lam Lake. Immediately after the opening ceremony we started to receive a steady flow of international guests, and during the month made final preparations to receive a group of 81 TTC students in February. A full programme of Yoga Vacations and courses is planned for the coming year.



Sivananda Retreat House, Reith, Austria

In the fall 2017 the Yoga Retreat House will be extended by a 400 square metre building: a yoga hall for 80 asana mats, reception and sitting area, boutique, ayurveda massage section, additional office space, and a storage and housekeeping section. The asana roof terrace will make it possible to have multiple open air yoga classes outside in the summer period. Additional location: Sivananda Yoga wellness vacations in the alpine oasis of Mittersill, Hohe Tauern, near Salzburg, continue from April to June and October to December. Rest and rejuvenation guaranteed!



Berlin, Germany

During a one week programme in January, black granite murthis of Lord Ganesha, Lord Krishna, Goddess Shankari and a Sivalingam were installed as part of the worldwide Sivananda Centres 60th Anniversary Celebrations. Students from Germany and Eastern Europe joined for the inauguration. The new altar is a jewel and a spiritual oasis in the middle of Berlin.



Chennai, India

The Chennai Centre has just completed the creation of a new reception area and boutique more immediately accessible to arriving students and enquiries. Also two new staff rooms have been made on the ground floor and three guest rooms on the third floor, which was previously the roof terrace. This is also now accommodating a new kitchen and dining room, and the remaining area of the terrace is now a covered hall with plenty of fresh air from the sides. The new rooms have enabled the house behind the Centre to be vacated for rental.



Chicago, USA

The Centre went through a major renovation this year with a remodelling of the entire first floor in the 100 year-old building. It was a much-needed update. The new Meditation Room, with cork floors and high ceilings is now a welcoming space for satsangs and workshops. Swami Satyapremananda moved to become staff at the Yoga Ranch in November 2016. The Center welcomed a new director, Radha, formally staff at the Yoga Ranch, who saw the renovations through along with Raghurama, project manager for the construction. The work was completed in time to be inaugurated on Sivaratri, adding blessings to the space.



London, UK

During seven days of festivities, homage was paid to 60 years of Swami Vishnudevananda's teachings worldwide. Swamiji's radiant image holding the globe was smiling from all corners of the Centre reminding us to think beyond self-created borders.

Celebrations began with a Festival of Yoga and Creativity, allowing all to awaken the inner artist. A pictorial overview of Swamiji's life led us through 60 years of memories, from the early days of arrival in the West to later years when a worldwide organisation was established. Throughout the week, the European Acharyas shared their love for Swamiji through their uplifting teachings and presence.



Munich, Germany

How many minutes of actual asana practice are you getting out of a 90-minute class? This year our in-house teachers' workshops are focussing on how to extend quality asana time for the students. By optimising the time for initial relaxation, prayers, pranayama and sun salute, precious time can be gained for asana correction, posture holding or variations. We are trying for a golden mark of pure asana time of 45 minutes.



New York, USA

The Center has been running smoothly with drop-in classes, courses, workshops and satsangs. We continue to offer deaf and gentle yoga, pregnancy, beginner and advanced level classes. We are currently rearranging the basement, organising the library on the top floor and working on an inventory for the bookshop as well as refreshing the stock of our boutique. Our brand new website went live recently and has been greatly accepted by our Center community and new visitors and students. We are currently working on implementing a new registration platform for the front desk along with a barcode system for our boutique sales.



San Francisco, USA

The Centre located in the Sunset district, offers asana classes several times a day for all levels of students—beginner, gentle and senior. Five-session courses on yoga, meditation and positive thinking are going well. Popular workshops include yantra painting, vegetarian cooking and themed asana workshops. We are establishing a monthly classical Indian concert series, featuring local musicians as well as those from India. We are eager to host the monthly weekend intensive modules for the first Sivananda Yoga Health Educator Training starting in June 2017.



Aluenda, Spain

A bilingual English/Spanish course is offered in August 2017 in the scenic village of Aluenda, 900m above sea level, nestled in the Sierra Vicor, near the Madrid- Barcelona highway. Enjoy health, inner learning and spiritual fellowship, including a refreshing dip in the salt water swimming pool.



Miaoli, Taiwan

An affiliated ashram has opened in Miaoli, near Taichung, Taiwan. Named 'Gokula', the Ashram is the fruit of efforts by founder Lakshmi, a TTC graduate who was inspired to create an Ashram in Taiwan following a visit to the Yoga Farm in California in 2009. Many Taiwanese students are already taking advantage of the opportunity to have a classical ashram experience close to home. High speed train links close by make the location easily accessible to residents of Taipei. The venture is being supported by regular visits from senior teachers of the Sivananda organisation.



Vienna, Austria

After re-locating the desk, renewing the slideshow screen and renovating the adjacent kitchen, the Vienna students feel even more at home in the oldest Sivananda Centre in Europe (founded by Swami Vishnudevananda in 1972). The students and teachers share health and peace of mind in this quiet central location of the Austrian capital.



Trivandrum, India

We are spending sometime in beautifying the outside of the Centre with many different kinds of plants and flowers. This is giving a new energy to the exterior appearance and is being appreciated by all our students and teachers.



Delhi Nataraja, India

The Centre continues to thrive with classes, courses, workshops, cultural activities and festivals. We conducted three well-attended teachers' meetings during the year. We celebrated the 2nd International Yoga Day with special yoga classes and increasing awareness through different media. We had two 15-day Kids' Camps during the year. We taught at the MSSS (Multiple Sclerosis Society of India), to employees of the Inter University Accelerator Centre and to the staff at the Ministry of Petroleum. We ran workshops on stress management for Power Grid employees in Jammu and a prenatal workshop at JJP hospital to fifty women. We seek the blessings of the Gurus to give the strength to continue in the coming years.

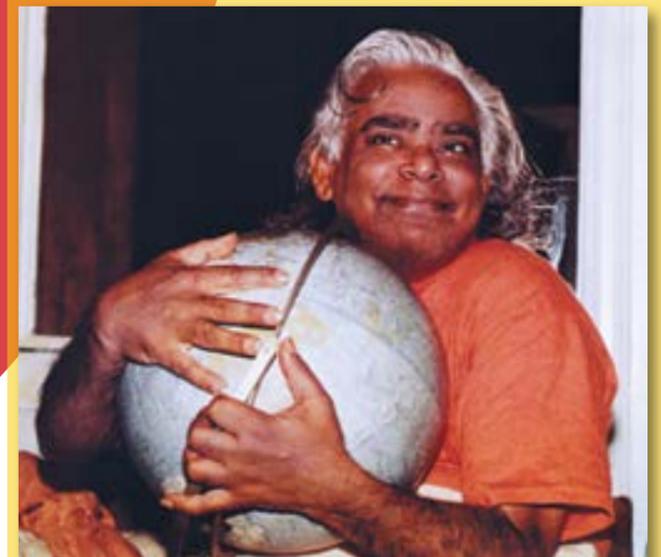


Delhi Dwarka, India

The main development has been the enlargement of the basement hall. The photo shows how the opening up of the areas outside the columns has added to the spaciousness of the hall. The occasion of the photograph was a bandhara for a large number of orphans from a local home as well as our students, on the occasion of Master's birthday. The boutique has been renovated and the brick section of our garden wall has been increased in height to reduce the number of snakes venturing in from the neighbouring park during the rainy season.



Please go to page 66 for News on the Sivananda Centres in South America.





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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WIDE CHOICE OF SEMINARS
All programmes in English and German



Ashram de Yoga Sivananda

Loire Valley, France



Yoga Vacations and Teachers' Training in France 2017

Teachers' Training Course:
 June 30 – July 28, 2017, (in English & French)
 July 30 – August 27, 2017, (in French)
 November 21 – December 19, 2017, (in French)

Advanced Teachers' Training Course:
 June 30 – July 28, 2017

Sadhana Intensive:
 August 13 – August 28, 2017



**SPRING FESTIVAL:
YOGA AND CREATIVITY**
 Celebrating 60 Years of Sivananda
 Yoga worldwide June 2 – 5, 2017

Certificate Courses 2017

The Yoga of Sleep with Dr. Rubin Naiman
Mantras – Sacred Sounds of Power
Swami Kailasananda
Science and Expansion of Consciousness
with Philippe Bobola
Indian Mythology with Philippe Bobola
Yoga & Meditation for Anxiety and Trauma
Healthy Cooking with Ayurveda

Further Training Courses for Yoga Teachers

TTC Refresher Course: (for Sivananda teachers only)
 June 20 – June 26, 2017

- Accessible Yoga with Jivana Heyman
- How to teach Yoga to Seniors
- How to teach Meditation and Mantra Chanting with Swami Kailasananda
- The Major Asana Cycles with Prema Bonansea



Sivananda Yoga Retreat House
 Founder: Swami Vishnudevananda, est. 1957
 Bichlach 40, Reith near Kitzbühel, Tyrol, Austria
 Booking: tyrol-reception@sivananda.net
 Tel: + 43 5356 / 6 74 04
 www.sivananda.at • www.sivananda.eu



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26 impasse du Bignon, 45170 Neuville aux bois, France Tel: +33 (0)2 38 91 88 82
 Email: orleans@sivananda.net • www.sivananda.org/orleans • www.sivananda.eu

The International Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Teachers' Training Course



Swami Sivananda
1887-1963



Swami Vishnudevananda
1927-1993



Dates and Locations 2017-2018

An intensive four week
immersion in the yogic
way of life

Open to students of all
levels

Certificate on successful
completion of course

Recognised by Yoga
Alliance

- Asanas • Pranayama
- Meditation
- Mantras • Vedanta
- Bhagavad Gita • Kriyas
- Diet
- Anatomy & Physiology

ALUENDA, SPAIN

August 5 - September 3, 2017

BARILOCHE, ARGENTINA

March 4 - April 1, 2018

BRACCIANO, ITALY

30 July - 27 August, 2017

CHENGDU, CHINA

September 9 - October 7, 2017

DALAT, VIETNAM

July 8 - August 5, 2017
November 11 - December 9, 2017
February 24 - March 24, 2018

GAROPABA SC, BRAZIL

January 6 - February 2, 2018

GRASS VALLEY, CA, USA

October 14 - November 11, 2017
May 12 - June 9, 2018

LONDON, UK

May 27 - June 24, 2017
September 2 - September 30, 2017

MADURAI, SOUTH INDIA

May 28 - June 24, 2017
October 15 - November 11, 2017
November 19 - December 16, 2017
January 7 - February 2, 2018
February 11 - March 9, 2018
May 27 - June 22, 2018,

MATA, ISRAEL

October 2 - October 29, 2017

NASSAU, BAHAMAS

June 3 - June 30, 2017
July 3 - 30, 2017
November 4 - December 1, 2017
December 4 - December 31, 2017
January 4 - January 31, 2018
February 3 - March 2, 2018
March 7 - April 3, 2018
April 6 - May 3, 2018
May 6 - June 2, 2018

NETALA, HIMALAYAS, INDIA

June 18 - July 16, 2017
August 6 - September 3, 2017
September 10 - October 8, 2017
April 8 - May 5, 2018
May 13 - June 9, 2018

NEYYAR DAM, SOUTH INDIA

November 5 - December 2, 2017
January 7 - February 3, 2018
March 18 - April 14, 2018

ORLEANS, FRANCE

June 30 - July 28, 2017
July 30 - August 27, 2017
November 21 - December 19, 2017
January 6 - February 4, 2018
May 5 - June 3, 2018

QUEBEC, CANADA

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

RUDRAPRAYAG, HIMALAYAS, INDIA

October 21 - November 19, 2017

SAN RAFAEL, ANTIOQUIA, COLOMBIA

July 1 - July 29, 2018

THAILAND

October 1 - October 29, 2017

TYROL, AUSTRIA

May 20 - June 18, 2017
July 29 - August 27, 2017
September 2 - October 1, 2017
December 16 - January 14, 2018

USTKA, POLAND

September 2 - October 1, 2017

NEAR VILNIUS, LITHUANIA

July 1 - July 30, 2017

WOODBOURNE, NY, USA

June 1 - June 29, 2017
August 3 - August 31, 2017
March 11 - April 8, 2018



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