

# YOGA

Year 7 Issue 2

February 2018

Membership postage: Rs. 100



**Bihar School of Yoga, Munger, Bihar, India**



## Hari Om

YOGA is compiled, composed and published by the sannyasin disciples of Swami Satyananda Saraswati for the benefit of all people who seek health, happiness and enlightenment. It contains information about the activities of Bihar School of Yoga, Bihar Yoga Bharati, Yoga Publications Trust and Yoga Research Fellowship.

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**YOGA** is a monthly magazine. Late subscriptions include issues from January to December.

**Published** by Bihar School of Yoga, Ganga Darshan, Fort, Munger, Bihar – 811201.

**Printed** at Thomson Press India Ltd., Haryana – 121007

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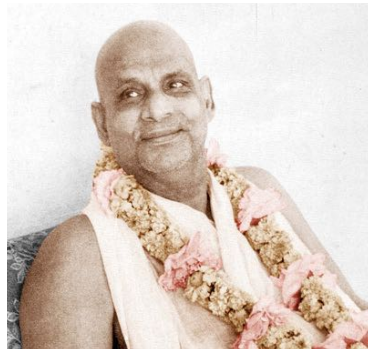
**Bihar School of Yoga**  
Ganga Darshan  
Fort, Munger, 811201  
Bihar, India

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*Total no. of pages: 58 (including cover pages)*

*Front cover: Sri Swami Satyananda at Ganga Darshan in 1977*

*Plates: 1–3: Ganga Darshan environs;  
4: Swami Niranjanananda at Ganga Darshan in 2016*



## GUIDELINES FOR SPIRITUAL LIFE

Whatever is held in the mind will be produced in the physical body. Any ill feeling or bitterness towards another person will at once affect the body and produce some kind of disease. Intense passions, long-standing bitter jealousy and corroding anxiety actually destroy the cells of the body and induce diseases of the heart, liver, kidneys, spleen and stomach.

Violent fits of hot temper do serious damage to the brain cells, they drain away energy and vitality, induce premature old age and shorten life. Therefore, one should be careful in one's thinking and in the selection of one's thoughts. Noble, sublime, loving and kind thoughts should be entertained at all times and a life of harmony, health and beauty will be enjoyed.

—Swami Sivananda Saraswati

**Published** and printed by Swami Gyanbhikshu Saraswati on behalf of Bihar School of Yoga, Ganga Darshan, Fort, Munger – 811201, Bihar

**Printed** at Thomson Press India (Ltd), 18/35 Milestone, Delhi Mathura Rd., Faridabad, Haryana.

**Owned** by Bihar School of Yoga **Editor:** Swami Shaktimitrananda Saraswati

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Year 7 Issue 2 • February 2018  
(56th year of publication)



## Contents

- |    |   |    |                               |
|----|---|----|-------------------------------|
| 4  | Like Water and Petrol                         | 38 | The Aim of Your Teaching      |
| 6  | Yoga: A Way of Life                           | 39 | Yoga for the Hearing Impaired |
| 11 | Pawanmuktasana 1                              | 44 | Yoga for Children             |
| 13 | Joint Mobility                                | 50 | The Light Illuminated My Life |
| 25 | Panchatattwas and Life                        | 52 | Investigating Indriya Nigraha |
| 33 | Integrating Yogic Practices with Out-Patients |    |                               |

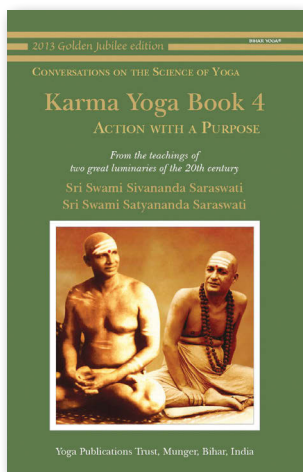
The Yogi is superior to the ascetic. He is deemed superior even to those versed in sacred lore. The Yogi is superior even to those who perform action with some motive. Therefore, Arjuna, do you become a Yogi. (*Bhagavad Gita VI:46*)

तपस्विभ्योऽधिको योगी ज्ञानिभ्योऽपि मतोधिकः । कर्मिभ्यश्चाधिको योगी तस्माद्योगी भवार्जुन ॥



# Like Water and Petrol

From Conversations on the Science of Yoga – Karma Yoga Book 4, Action with a Purpose



## Does active involvement in the world contaminate one's spiritual life?

*Swami Satyananda:* Many people regard spiritual life, including yoga, as separate from day-to-day activities and life in general, but this is completely wrong. A story is narrated in *Yoga Vasishtha* about a king who was overwhelmed by *vairagya*, the sense of dispassion. He renounced his kingdom and went away to practise meditation and

penance in the jungles far away from his kingdom. He left his wife, Queen Chudala, to rule the kingdom in his absence. The king did not know that Chudala was already an enlightened yogini. One day she realized that her husband was wasting his time and she decided to guide him.

She transported herself psychically to where her husband was sitting in meditation. The queen levitated in front of him and the king opened his eyes. "What are you doing here?" he asked. She said, "I am here to tell you that while ruling your kingdom I have attained siddhis, and that you, while doing sadhana and meditation in the jungle, are sleeping." Thunderstruck, the king realized that his wife was telling the truth. He asked his wife to instruct him on spiritual life. She said, "Material life can never contaminate spiritual life. Money and desires cannot touch the spirit, as they are eternally different entities."

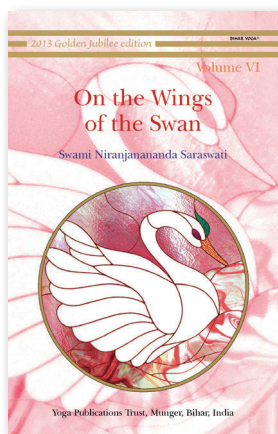
When water and petrol are mixed, they will always remain separate. Likewise, material life and spiritual life are

totally different. A person who thinks that worldly life can contaminate spiritual life is misguided. It is not necessary for an aspirant to evolve only through meditation. He can correct, formulate and affect the reorientation of his inner personality while working in the world. Therefore, one should not renounce the world, but use it in order to remove one's faults and imperfections.



# Yoga: A Way of Life

*From On the Wings of the Swan, Volume VI, Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati*



Whilst yoga has undergone changes in understanding, the tradition of yoga itself has not changed. Today we are still doing the same practices as Patanjali, without any modifications. We are still doing the same hatha yoga practices that sages Gorakhnath, Matsyendranath, Swatmarama and the literature talk about as they were practised thousands of years ago. The only change that has taken place is in our way of living, our way of knowing and perceiving things.

If yoga practitioners thousands of years ago used to live in mud huts, today the yoga practitioner lives in a house or apartment in Manhattan, Sydney, London, Rome or Moscow.

Yoga has not changed, the tradition is the same; only the way of understanding it has changed. What in the past was known subjectively through experience, we can know today through scientific means. If a person was ill, practised an asana, felt better and found that eventually the illness disappeared, it was a subjective experience, and the person said, "For this illness, this asana is beneficial." If you do the same thing today, the result will be the same, as the condition of the human body is the same and the asana is the same. However, today we can also verify the results using scientific methodology, therefore our appreciation has changed.

## **Levels of knowing yoga**

There are different levels of knowing yoga. The first is the ordinary yoga practitioner who learns from any yoga teacher,



in any centre, school or ashram, returns home and is satisfied with practising yoga for limbering and toning up the body.

The second level is developing some affinity with yoga, wanting to go deeper into the practices, so you become known as a novice or sadhaka. If kundalini yoga attracts you, you may decide to try all the practices to awaken your kundalini, go and live in an ashram, and develop some form of affinity with yoga. Or you may take a book, go to a farm or a community and do your practices there, in retreat, in seclusion. That is the novice yoga sadhaka.

The third level of yoga is experimentation. You experiment with the changes that you feel and experience through yoga. When you practise yoga you find you relax, you feel better, more optimism or pessimism is experienced, or more awareness comes, or more depression, or more anxiety. These are the experiences that can guide one further into the investigative process of yoga. Either you investigate it subjectively, alone or in a group, or you investigate in it a laboratory with instruments, with knowledgeable people whose expertise you can rely on. In this way, another step is

experimenting with the change and trying to understand the change that is happening when you do a practice.

Another level beyond that is going into a tradition and seeing the relevance of yoga from the beginning until the present, and seeing yourself as a part of that stream of thought. There have been many such household yoga teachers. BKS Iyengar is not a sannyasin, yet his entire life is devoted to the propagation of yoga. Dr Nagendra from Vivekananda Kendra is not a sannyasin, yet his whole life is devoted to yoga. I am talking here of the yogic traditions, not of the sannyasa traditions. Desikacharya, T. Krishnamacharya and Iyengar represent a tradition of yoga. People such as Swami Abhedananda and Swami Vivekananda represent another tradition of yoga. The tradition of Babaji, Sri Yukteshwara, Lahiri Mahashaya and Paramahansa Yogananda is yet another tradition of yoga. There is the tradition that emanates from Swami Sivananda through Swami Satchidananda, Swami Vishnudevananda, Swami Satyananda, Swami Venkateshananda, Swami Chidananda, and others of the Sivananda lineage. There are many traditions of yoga and many people have made such traditions or paths a part of their lifestyle, profession and expression in life; and then there have been some who have made yoga into a sadhana.

### **Yoga as a sadhana**

There are many people who live alone and practise yoga, who describe the whole process, who are exponents of yoga. Yoga is not only the practice of asana, pranayama, kriya and kundalini techniques, hatha yoga and shatkarma; it is also imbibing a way of life, improving the quality of life, as indicated in the yamas and niyamas.

What are the yamas and niyamas? They are the awareness of and adherence to certain qualities and ideas that can uplift the human mind, emotions, character, psyche and personality. You become and are recognized as being a good person. If you develop the quality of ahimsa, non-violence, you will emanate



compassion. If you develop the quality of satya, truthfulness, you will emanate love. If you imbibe the quality of aparigraha, non-possessiveness, you will express simplicity and innocence. Each yama and each niyama will highlight a character of the human personality. When that character is highlighted then it becomes part of your expression, understanding, actions, behaviour, attitude and life. Therefore, yoga is not only techniques; it is also a lifestyle, known as the yogic lifestyle.

Beyond being a lifestyle, yoga is also a philosophy of life that gives strength to your mental character; a hope to hold on to and a motivation to experience something better than what you have experienced until now. In this way, it becomes a philosophy as well. Therefore, yoga is a technique, a way of life and a philosophy. The underlying current of all these three aspects of yoga is the personal effort that one puts into the sadhana. The sadhana is a willingness to act.

What is action? When you do an asana, it is an action. When you wake up in the morning, it is an action. When you meditate, it is an action. When you are silent, it is an action. When you are engaged in any activity, you are in action. Passivity is also action. This has been the statement of the *Bhagavad Gita*. Krishna tells Arjuna that action and inaction are two sides of the same coin. There is no such thing as inaction. When you are sitting silently, you are making an effort to sit silently. When you are enjoying nature and beauty, your perceptions are actively appreciating the beauty. You cannot say you are not doing anything; your senses and mind are involved. Even when you are in a state of depression you are still active: your thoughts are active, you are aware of the process that is taking place in the mind. Even when you sleep it is karma; it is an action that is being performed by the body, by you as a person. There is no inactivity. Therefore, if you think of karma as activity and inactivity, then there is no such thing as inactivity; life is nothing but one continuous karma. The underlying, connecting thread is the sadhana, the motivation to act.

## Clarity of mind

If one follows the sadhana of yoga, there are great possibilities, provided one does not measure everything in terms of money and power. It seems that today, due to the environment, everybody thinks in terms of money and power. Yoga is not anti-money and power; yoga is pro-you. It is not against materialism, for why renounce materialism? You can say it diverts the mind, yet who allows the mind to be diverted? If the mind is diverted, it means there is no mental clarity. If there is mental clarity, the mind will not be diverted. If you know where you have to go, then no matter how many stops you make on the way, you will be aware at every stop that you still have to go further.

You have to set a goal. You have to travel from this city to that city. You have looked at the map, you know where the good spots to stop are, but eventually you have to reach the city. Therefore, no matter where you stop, you will still want to continue moving forward. You do it as there is clarity in your life. If there is clarity, how can even materialism distract anybody? To obtain that clarity, sadhana is a must.

*– 27 January 2000*



# Pawanmuktasana 1

*Swami Kriyamurti Saraswati, Bulgaria*

One day I was approached by a woman whose seventeen-year-old son was totally immobile, without sensitivity to the body, unable to speak. For three years, the family had tried everything. They had also gone to India for therapy. They continued to go for massages and rehabilitation two days a week, but without any particular change. The mother asked me for help. Initially I was sceptical, I had no experience with disabled people, I did not know what to do, and whether to try at all. However, I told myself that at least I could see him and let intuition tell me what to do.

2 May 2017 – I visited the family. I saw a large wheelchair that was made for the boy's whole body. He could not hold his head and hands on his own. The legs were also moulded. He was sweating abundantly. Out of his mouth came only incomprehensible sounds, but he was looking at me with wonderful, deeply conscious eyes. I decided to try.

## **Practice and result**

We started with PM1. The mother observed the movements of the joints, while moving the various parts of his body. After the first week the boy became sensitive to one foot and began to make an effort to move it alone.

After the third week he became sensitive to the other leg and he began to make an effort to move it alone. He tried to talk. His hands began to relax from the blocked posture he had from the time of the crash.

After the fourth week he became sensitive in his hands. Meanwhile, his mother gave a yoga nidra for the body two to three times a week, and I had included him on my daily Mahamrityunjaya mantra chanting.

*18 July 2017* – The result is the following: the large wheelchair has been replaced with a lighter one. The head is not supported. He moves the left leg alone about eight times during the practice, trying to do it with breathing. He moves the right foot alone about three to seven times. The rest of the practices are made by the mother. He can raise his legs about 20 to 25 cm from the floor.

His mother told me, “I am very impressed and pleased! I noticed that after the morning practice he was having a calm day. There is reduced sweating and no spasms. The hands have less progress, but they still have some. He began to sing with the radio, which is also new. He is delighted to watch documentaries and music videos. He listens to a lot of radio and responds to comments, using words. Thanks for everything!”

*November 2017* – We have added TTK, sitting or lying down. He moves his left arm and shoulder alone. The right hip is also better. He bends the left knee alone. When he speaks, he makes meaningful sentences. A musician comes to him and he starts playing chords with his left hand.

For three years no muscle was functioning in the boy's body. He could not move; he could not speak. Now in seven months with yoga, his body has awakened to a new life. His mind seems to be born again. We continue the yoga practices with a lot of faith and great inspiration. I share this case with you because it can be useful to others.





# Joint Mobility

*Yordanka Aleksandrova, Anya Doncheva, Lyudmila Chervenкова,  
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## Summary

The purpose of the research is to investigate the effect of a three-month yoga program on joint mobility of old people with non-active lifestyle living in a retirement home.

## Methods

Thirteen people aged 69 to 89 years have been investigated. They have been asked to do some exercises of the Pawanmuktasana series 1 (anti-rheumatic group) for 3 months, 3 times per week, 30 minutes per every class. We checked the mobility of the cervical part of the spine (by centimeters) and also the following joints: shoulder, elbow, wrist, ankle and knee (by angularity).

## Results

We found statistically significant improvements in the unfolding of the cervical spine and the folding in the left elbow joint. There is a tendency of improvement of four other indicators. We consider that a prolongation of the exercise yoga period would lead to improvement in larger number of the researched indicators.

*Key words:* yoga, joint mobility, old people.

## Preface

The absolute and the relative number of old people (as part of the whole population) in all of Europe is growing. Bulgaria is one of the countries where this fact can be seen very clearly. At the moment statistic data shows that the Republic of Bulgaria is a country with predominantly ageing people [5]. A progressive decline of physical activity can be seen in old

people's lifestyle. The lack of physical activity is one of the reasons for reduction of natural joint mobility. Non-activity is an additional reason for further consequences of ageing [12]. This leads to bad quality of life for elderly people. Simple yogasanas can gradually rehabilitate and keep the volume of movement in the joints.

The word 'yoga' is derived from the Sanskrit root 'yuj'. It means 'integration, union, association' [6]. Yoga is a way of living aimed at achieving perfect control over mind, senses and body. Maharshi Patanjali first systemized it in the ancient text *Yoga Sutra*. He talks about raja yoga mainly as a means of purifying, educating, and disciplining the mind to direct its powerful energy to enlightenment of consciousness and using the potential and creative energy of human nature [16].

The person who lives according to yoga principles, adheres to the law of moderation at all times. It is imperative that asanas are performed on an empty stomach only. That's why three hours after a meal is a good time for doing yoga [6].

Hatha yoga is one of the most popular yogas among modern people. This yoga is mainly associated with physical body exercises – asana. Sage Patanjali said that in raja yoga, "Asana is a stable, non-tensioning and pleasant way of sitting." Asana is a body posture or slow and moderate movement combined with proper breathing and relaxation. Practising asana leads to a beneficial effect for the whole body. The effect of asanas is increased when it is done together with yogic breathing – pranayama [1, 2].

Nowadays many people are predisposed to immobilization by their lifestyle. For thousands of years, people have been active throughout their lives. The reason for many of their movements was survival. They moved to get food, escape predators and migrate to more favourable places and lands. Long days spent working on farms, long walking on the way to the city for school or purchasing products, and other factors in the daily lives of our ancestors, show that they had very little time to rest without movement.

During the middle of 20th century due to technologies, the greater number of people using cars and the work in offices began gradually to reduce the level of physical activity. Despite the technological advances of humankind, people's bodies still need a lot of movement. Today, when there is a great choice in almost every aspect of life, many people choose to spend their time and day immobile. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that the lack of physical activity is associated with 3.2 million deaths per year. The most frequent consequences of inadequate physical activity are cardiovascular disease, diabetes, reduced blood circulation, confused thinking (lack of concentration), loss of muscle strength and bone strength [4].

Definitely, yoga is one of the most effective ways to help increase the activity for the elderly people. Practising appropriate asanas leads to movement of the joints and muscles and elimination of stiffness of the body. Thirty-minute practices for improving the volume of joint movement performed on a daily basis can greatly increase joint mobility and flexibility. Regular physical activity can also be anti-stress and leads to loss of anxiety, as well as reduce depressive symptoms [7]. Physical activity is one of the most important things that can be done to keep the joints healthy. Older people



who have not a physically active lifestyle, put themselves at risk to decrease their muscle mass by 40 percent and joint mobility by 10–40 percent in different parts of the body [12].

Yoga has the right asanas even for people who already have arthrosis or other chronic diseases of the locomotor system. The reduction in bone density is a significant health and social problem in the late age. A study, using a 12-minute daily program with 12 selected yoga poses for 2 years, reports an improvement in bone density in the spine and femur area of practitioners who already have mild osteoporosis or osteopenia [11].

We would like to focus on the ability of the elderly with their personal efforts to improve their lifestyle, as well as their health, self-esteem and overall personal attitude towards life according to and/or despite the conditions in which they live.

### **Purpose of the study**

To see what will be the effect of a three-month yogic exercise program on joint mobility in elderly people with an inactive lifestyle.

### **Hypothesis**

We suppose that the three-month practice of yoga exercises described in this report will alleviate existing pain and increase the level of freedom and movement of the examined joints.

### **Persons investigated**

The study includes 13 elderly people (12 women and 1 man) aged 69 to 89 years (average age 79,8 years, standard deviation = 6,44), living in the retirement home 'Longevity', Sofia, Bulgaria, who have not practised yoga until the present study. Criteria for including people in the study: they have to live in this home, have a desire for participation in yoga classes, be able to understand instructions of the yoga teacher and have no acute or chronic illnesses that make the participation in the survey contraindicated (confirmed by a doctor from the retirement



home 'Longevity'). Regarding the need to use a walking aid, the people surveyed are classified as follows: 4 people with independent gait, 6 people using a walking stick and 3 people moving independently with a walker-construction.

The investigated persons have several different diseases, which were treated according to the current medical practice and are listed in Table 1:

**TABLE 1**  
**Diseases of investigated persons**

<i>Disease</i>	<i>Number of persons</i>
<i>Arthrosis (gonarthrosis and / or coxarthrosis, spondyloarthrosis, etc.)</i>	9
<i>Hypertension</i>	7
<i>Diabetes</i>	3
<i>Ankylosis</i>	1
<i>Chronic arterial insufficiency of the limbs</i>	1
<i>Ischemic heart disease</i>	1
<i>Stomach ulcer</i>	1
<i>Lumbar radiculitis</i>	1
<i>Gout</i>	1

### **Organization of the survey**

The study was conducted on the territory of the retirement home 'Longevity' starting on 15th January and ending on 15th April 2017 (three months). Three times weekly (on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays) thirty-minute group yoga classes appropriate for this age group were held during this period. Altogether 39 classes were conducted, with 11 of the participants attending 100 percent and the other two attending 95 percent of the classes. There were no dropouts during the study.

Immediately before and after this three-month intervention, some tests were performed to investigate the volume of motion and movement pain.

## **Characteristics of applied yoga exercises**

The series of exercises performed by the participants in the study was appropriate to their physical and mental capabilities, the illnesses they had and the basic requirements for conducting a group procedure with this contingent. The participants were motivated to be regular and they were. Precise, complete and comprehensible explanations about the exercises were given. The exercises were arranged starting with the easier and were gradually followed by the more difficult ones. The individual approach was always respected.

The research is based on practices from the first group of the Pawanmuktisana series, the anti-rheumatic group [6]. All exercises are performed from the initial pose, sitting on a chair. During a class movements are made up to 5 times for each type of movement for each joint. The tendency for each participant was to perform the movement in the largest, painless and possible volume of movement for each joint.

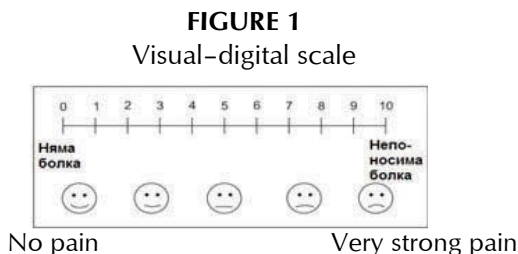
Typically, the exercises were performed with very slow speed. The speed of movement is such as to fold and unfold the fingers for 15 seconds. This slow speed is according to the yoga philosophy of moving problematic joints and also requires more awareness and better control over the performance. Exercises included in the study are described in Appendix 1.

## **Instrumentarium of the study**

We checked the volume of movement by measuring the following parameters that have been measured at the end of the maximum possible movement of each joint:

1. Volume of movement in the cervical portion of the spine (centimetry chin-sternum and ear-acromion);
2. Volume of movement in the joints of the upper limb: shoulder joint (unfolding and folding), elbow and wrist joints (flexion and extension), wrist joint (ulnar and radial outlet) measured in degrees by the methodology SFTR;
3. Volume of movement in lower limb joints: ankle and knee joints (folding), measured in degrees by SFTR.

The pain during movement in all tested joints was detected with a visual-digital scale (Fig. 1).



### Statistical processing

The statistical processing of the results was carried out with a specialized statistical program: SPSS.19. Confidence Interval (CI) was determined to be 95%. The normality of the distribution of the primary data from the first and second tests was determined by the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test. The distribution of the data for the volume of movement for almost all variables was normal in both studies. In this case, we used the t-test to compare the dependent samples. Only the primary data on folding and unfolding of the left shoulder joint as well as all the pain data were not with normal distribution, so we used a non-parametric test, Wilcoxon's test, for the comparison of dependent samples.

### Results

Statistical results of the examined cervical spine mobility parameters are presented in Table 2. They show a statistically significant increase in beard-sternum distance when moving the head back, which is an average of 0.75 cm greater after the experiment. This indicates that the volume of movement in the cervical spine in the backward direction has increased after the applied yoga program. The second result, which has a statistically significant improvement, is folding in the left elbow joint (increased on average by 4.18 degrees). We have no data on whether this mean improvement in flexion of the elbow joint is a clinically significant difference in this contingent.

**TABLE 2**  
**Statistical results on the surveyed indicators for cervical spine mobility (centimetry)**

	<i>n</i>	<i>I test</i>		<i>II test</i>		<i>a</i>
		<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	
<i>Beard-sternum distance (forward head bend)</i>	13	3,54	1,9	3,0	1,87	0,068
<i>Beard-sternum distance (head backward)</i>	13	14,15	2,7	14,9	2,23	0,006
<i>Distance ear-acromion (to the side to the right)</i>	13	6,92	2,9	6,0	1,73	0,159
<i>Distance ear-acromion (to the side to the left)</i>	13	6,54	3,23	6,1	1,5	0,577

*Decrease in average values shows improvement. Compare t-test to dependent samples.*

All other results on volume of movement indicators have no statistically significant change. But four of them have a strong tendency to change, namely: distance beard-sternum at head forward inclination, unfolding right wrist, radial movement in the right wrist, unfolding in the right ankle joint. We may assume that extending the program or day-to-day work with the same exercises would result with statistically significant changes in indicators that have a strong tendency to change in the direction of improvement.

We compared the results of the study of motion pain in all tested joints using statistical methods, but there were no statistically significant changes. Pain is a factor that depends on many indicators. Perhaps there is a necessity for a longer activity period (more than 3 months) and/or a greater number of classes.

Statistical results of the investigated indicators for the volume of movement of the upper limbs are presented in Table 3.



**TABLE 3**  
**Statistical results on the surveyed indicators for the volume of movement of the upper limbs**

	<i>n</i>	<i>I test</i>		<i>II test</i>		<i>a</i>
		<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	
<i>Shoulder joint unfolding (right)</i>	13	133,54	18,04	134,62	21,55	0,446
<i>Shoulder joint unfolding (left)</i>	12	130,83	17,94	129,2	21,62	0,317*
<i>Shoulder joint folding (right)</i>	13	131,00	24,06	131,15	24,68	0,886
<i>Shoulder joint folding (left)</i>	12	127,92	22,51	127,1	21,89	0,458*
<i>Elbow joint folding (right)</i>	13	124,31	5,040	125,00	6,46	0,337
<i>Elbow joint folding (left)</i>	13	121,62	8,6	125,8	6,72	0,028
<i>Wrist folding (right)</i>	13	47,46	13,43	46,92	10,32	0,655
<i>Wrist folding (left)</i>	13	47,69	9,04	48,85	11,02	0,190
<i>Wrist unfolding (right)</i>	13	48,15	10,05	50,38	7,21	0,083
<i>Wrist unfolding (left)</i>	13	48,77	6,03	48,85	5,46	0,944
<i>Wrist ulnaric unfolding (right)</i>	13	21,54	6,17	21,46	6,02	0,944
<i>Wrist ulnaric unfolding (left)</i>	13	22,15	4,86	20,85	3,44	0,202
<i>Wrist radial unfolding (right)</i>	13	22,62	4,464	23,69	3,33	0,063
<i>Wrist radial unfolding (left)</i>	13	23,54	3,31	24,31	2,1	0,436

*Compared with t-test for comparison of dependent samples; \* Wilcoxon test for the comparison of dependent samples. Increasing average values shows improvement.*

Statistical results of the investigated indicators for the volume of movement of the lower limbs are presented in Table 4.

**TABLE 4**  
**Statistical results on the surveyed indicators**  
**for the volume of movement of the lower limbs**

	<i>n</i>	<b>I test</b>		<b>II test</b>		$\alpha$
		<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	
<i>Knee folding (right)</i>	12	95,83	30,06	97,08	27,34	0,389
<i>Knee folding (left)</i>	13	90,77	38,56	91,54	38,21	0,337
<i>Ankle folding (right)</i>	13	23,38	11,44	23,54	10,78	0,798
<i>Ankle folding (left)</i>	13	22,38	8,69	23,92	9,04	0,104
<i>Ankle unfolding (right)</i>	13	12,23	5,85	13,38	6,13	0,082
<i>Ankle unfolding (left)</i>	13	13,85	2,76	15,77	3,24	0,054

*Compare t-test for comparing of dependent samples. Increasing average values shows improvement.*

## Discussion

The type of yoga exercises described in this study and the peculiarities of the persons studied (age, illness, etc.) are such that the exercises applied by us can generally be referred to as kinesitherapy for the elderly [3]. As such, yoga can find its place in the overall treatment, restoration or at least alleviation of various disease symptoms in a natural way, by activating the body's own mechanisms of healing [3, 8].

With this study, we would also like to draw attention to the possibilities of yoga with regard to such accessible, grouped, inexpensive and individually adapted effects on the state of the elderly people.

In later years with the increase of age there is usually a progressive reduction in the volume of movement in the joints. Having this in mind, we do consider as a good result

the improved mobility we have found in two of the tested indicators and the strong tendency for improvement in four more of them.

During the study, we also witnessed positive changes in the mental state of the investigated persons, which we have described extensively in another report. These results are a reason to believe that the development of application of yoga with regard to elderly people can be beneficial to practitioners in particular and to the whole of society in general.



Our opinion is confirmed by other studies conducted with a similar age group that reported positive changes in spine mobility. An increase in quality is achieved due to the performance of appropriate asanas. The period during which the practices are conducted is longer (20 weeks) compared to our research and other asanas are practised [8, 9, 15].

Other studies similar to ours using chairs for yoga practices in the elderly also show improvement in body functions and improvement in mental states when compared with control groups [13]. Similar to our results, some authors report that the application of an eight-week yoga exercise program on a chair shows improvement in body functions without affecting the pain level in elderly patients with arthrosis [14].

On the other hand, a review of published experimental studies on the treatment of patients with knee arthritis indicates that the use of 40 to 90 minute sessions with yoga exercises lasting at least 8 weeks show pain relief and improved function that can be detected after two weeks of intervention [10].

## **Conclusion**

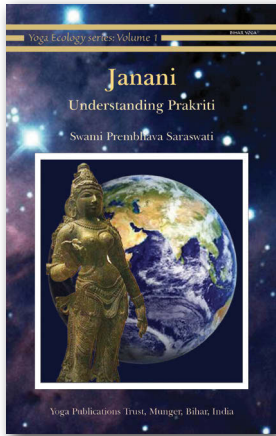
This three-month program of yoga exercises improved the cervical spine unfolding and left elbow folding of elderly people with a non-active lifestyle. Although the other measured movement volume indicators did not change significantly, four of them showed a strong improvement trend. Perhaps the prolongation of the activities would lead to an improvement of more than the surveyed indicators.

We should keep in mind that at this age the usual tendency is to decrease the volume of movement and to increase pain. In this case even the results we achieved through yoga exercises that show the maintenance of the available volume of movement and its improvement in some of the examined joints can be considered a good result for a three-month program.

For complete practice outline and bibliography, please contact: Yordanka Aleksandrova, e-mail: yordana007@gmail.com

# Panchatattwas and Life

From Janani, Swami Prembhava Saraswati



In yogic and vedic sciences, there are five elements, the *panchatattwas*, that provide the building blocks for the whole manifest and non-manifest Prakriti.

The tattwas exist from the most subtle cosmic level to everything one can see, feel and think about on Earth. It is the same tattwas that exist everywhere in nature: in the stars, star dust, soil, trees, oceans, in cars and computers, the organs and cells of the body, the quality of thoughts, feelings and actions.

	Prithvi Earth	Apas Water	Agni Fire	Vayu Air	Akasha Ether/ Space
Nature	heavy	cool	hot	erratic	mixed
Quality	weight, cohesion, solidity, support, strength, base	fluidity, contraction, emotion, memory	heat, expansion, light, prana, power of change, destruction	motion, movement, gaseous, weightless, instability, breath	diffused, space-giving, motionless, all-pervading, sound
Colour	yellow	white	red	blue-grey	black, colourless
Tanmatra	smell	taste	sight	touch	sound
Function in the body	skin, blood vessels, bone structure	all bodily fluids	appetite, thirst, sleep, digestion	muscular expansion, contraction	space

The tattwas are the same in every place, and therefore the physical or manifest response of those elements is recognized as the same. Lightning will always be lightning whether it is on Earth or Jupiter or in some far distant nebulae. Water molecules will be the same whether they are on Earth or Mars or floating in a comet. They are the same elements; it is the different permutations and combinations that cause differences in the nature.

— Swami Niranjanananda Saraswati

The true tattwa is a quality and energy. It is not the flames that burn or the soil in the garden; these are the physical manifestation of the quality of the tattwas.

### **Macrocosm and microcosm**

The vedic seers believed that the panchatattwas are present in the microcosm – the body, mind, personality and ego; and in the macrocosm – the universe, our planet and human civilization. They believed the state of the macrocosm reflects the state of the individual microcosm and vice versa. Knowing that it is our responsibility to purify the elements within and















without, they devised diets, natural medicines and lifestyles which guided people to live a balanced life, in harmony with the forces of Prakriti around them.

For example, *prithvi* is the earth tattwa. In the Vedas, Mother Earth is known as *Prithvi Ma* and *Dyaus Pita* as Father Sky. Together they are the universal parents of all creation.

Prithvi Ma is the basis of all existence on the planet; it is she who upholds and supports all things, she protects, shelters and feeds. All plants, crops and food come from her. Without her support existence is not possible. Prithvi is stable, fertile and forgiving, wide, motionless, patient and strong. These qualities of Prithvi Ma, the Mother, are the qualities of the prithvi tattwa that exist from the subtle to the gross.

Prithvi tattwa governs the forests, mountains, rocks and deserts. It requires the presence of all the others tattwas (fire, water, air and ether) to form, and all other elements exist within the earth element. It is the base, the support from which all elements converge, mix and create.

In the same way, in our physical body prithvi tattwa gives structure through the bones, and provides the pathways in the body through which other elements flow. For example, the bones of the spinal column contain and support the four other tattwas in the following forms: the spinal nerves are the manifestation of agni tattwa, the blood flowing in the spine is apas tattwa, the moving joints of the spine are vayu tattwa, and the space between the joints and ligaments is akasha tattwa. All function together within the body to maintain a healthy and strong body.

In the pranic and mental bodies the tattwas control and influence the character and personality. A person with a strong prithvi tattwa is responsible, reliable, patient, steady and stable. A weak prithvi tattwa would make a person rigid, stubborn, tamasic, lazy and dull.

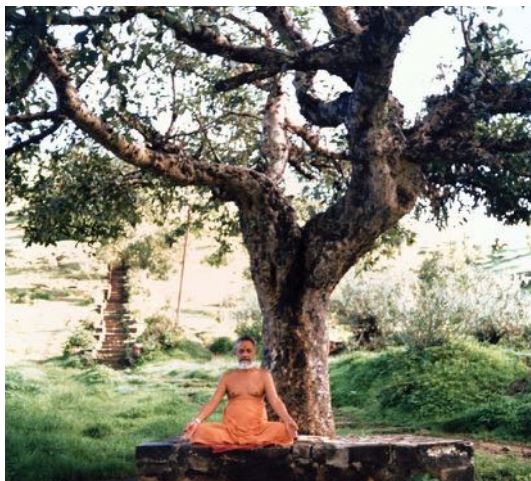
The purification of the macrocosm and the microcosm must go hand in hand so as to reach a point where the inner and outer worlds reflect each other. The external environment



can definitely influence the state of mind. Everyone will have experienced the impact of walking along a noisy, polluted city street, in contrast to a walk in a peaceful garden surrounded by the sounds of birds and a gentle breeze. Similarly, when the mind is clear and positive, even the most difficult situations in life can be managed.

You can connect to the prithvi tattwa within and without through simple practices of yoga ecology such as Ashwattha aradhana, where you connect to the prithvi tattwa through your tree. This tree manifests all the qualities of prithvi: supporting, protecting, sustaining, nurturing and providing. Through this practice you begin to awaken the pure quality of the prithvi tattwa within and you become that – through communication the tree's consciousness awakens and blossoms with your care and connection.

The yoga and yajna taught by Sri Swami Satyananda aims to purify the individual and the environment simultaneously through the purification of the panchatattwas, so that one may live in harmony with oneself and the world around. The world is perceived from each person's level of awareness. Raising the level of awareness and extending one's consciousness to encompass the Earth in all her beauty is yoga ecology.



# Integrating Yogic Practices with Out-Patients

*Swami Vishwashakti Saraswati, Acharya Satyananda Yoga, Slovenia*

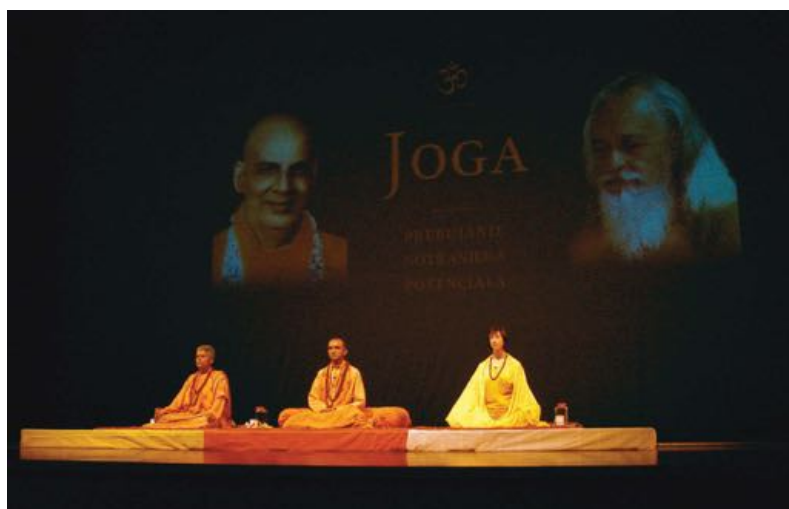
As an ayurvedic physician, marma therapist or acupuncturist, and homeopath I have worked with out-patients since 1991. In my practice I integrate yoga as well. To each of my patients I prescribe yoga as a therapy. Yoga therapies are different and depend on the condition and disease of the patient. However, there is a red thread of yoga therapies which I prescribe to all of my patients. So, I decided to write about the common red thread of yoga therapies, and I hope that many of you who are working with out-patients will find it helpful.

## **Shatkarmas**

To each patient I first of all prescribe jala neti kriya, one of the techniques of shatkarmas. For the last twenty-six years of my practice I have recognized jala neti kriya as an essential practice for health, which is useful to all patients, no matter which kind of health problem they may have.

I live and practise in Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia. The climate is most of the year humid, damp and cold, full of rain or snow. So the respiratory diseases, such as cold, bronchitis, asthma, pneumonia, allergies of the respiratory system are very common diseases in Slovenia. I prescribe and introduce the practice of jala neti with one litre of warm saline water. Results are more than excellent.

Patients are thankful because their health condition improves progressively. This is a well-known fact. What is specific is that I insist with the correct way to practise the kapalbhathi style of breathing while they are drying their nostrils. Doing kapalbhathi breathing they are stimulating manipura chakra, which is the centre of the element of *agni*



or fire. If agni is activated then the coldness, cough and the lungs become dry and without phlegm and this is essential for these types of health problems.

Kapalbhati breathing is also stimulating the forehead region, it means cleansing the sinuses of the forehead, which are congested. It causes the feeling as if the world is closed and jammed, and patients have a lot of headaches. Immediately after jala neti these sensations vanish. This is important for patients as it gives them relief. Besides, kapalbhati is stimulating the eyebrow centre and introducing calmness of the mind and emotions. This is important, for such patients have a lot of fear as they do not breathe properly or sufficiently and this causes fear of a next attack, especially in asthmatic patients.

The kapalbhati style of breathing also stimulates the colon and improves the digestive process. According to ayurveda and marma therapy, while the lungs and respiratory systems are working insufficiently, the colon is in deficiency. It means that the patients have poor elimination of waste products. This condition is unhealthy and makes the patients' health condition more difficult. For any respiratory disease it



helps to have a clean colon. According to ayurveda and marma therapy, the colon is the seat of the vata humour, which is the *vayu* or air element, and *vayu* signifies the psychic condition. Therefore, a clean colon means a clean psychic state. If necessary, I introduce them also to laghoo shankhaprakshalana kriya.

The kapalbhathi style of breathing is also stimulating muscles of the lumbar region. It means, if the patient is suffering from lumbago, or chronic pain in the lower back region, it will help to strengthen the muscles of this region, make them strong and give relief to lower back pain.

Definitely, kapalbhathi breathing is helpful for patients suffering from depression. Agni is very low in such patients causing fear, a feeling of low energy and they are without willpower. As kapalbhathi stimulates manipura chakra and agni, the energy condition improves and willpower returns. Patients feel full of energy and less depressed. It is also useful for nervous, angry and aggressive patients, as they release their agni through the kapalbhathi breathing.

I have to mention also patients with hyper or hypotension, cardiac and lung disease. To them I recommend jala neti kriya, which is a simple and easy practice for common and non-yogic patients with great benefits and a sure way to health.



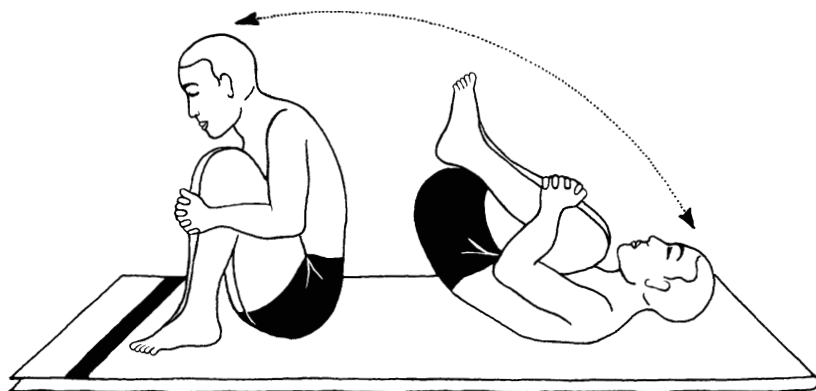
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## Asanas

The next practice, which I recommend to my patients is 30 minutes of yogasanas. These asanas are based on the condition and disease of the patient. At the beginning, I explain to them why they should practise yoga from the physiological and psychological aspect. Then they receive the explanation and pictures of the specific asanas. For the first three months they practise pawanmuktasana series 1 and five asanas from the second part: supta pawanmuktasana, jhulana lurkhasana, supta udarakarshanasana, shava udarakarshanasana and naukasana (please note that patients are not yoga practitioners).

According to marma therapy, through these asanas patients firstly clean their nadis and eliminate stagnation and blockages of energy from the nadi flows. Secondly they establish a free flow of energy and at the end ensure the regeneration and revitalization of the entire energy system. According to my experience, these asanas are suitable and highly useful for all conditions.

Pawanmuktasana series 1 has huge beneficial influences for the rheumatic patients, but besides this it is a highly beneficial series for all diseases. According to marma therapy, they are the most beneficial asanas for the entire body, mind and energy systems. Frankly speaking, if we are doing pawanmuktasana series on a regular basis we do not need any other yogasana.



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After three months I introduce patients to surya namaskara and shashank bhujangasana and advise them to first become friendly with surya namaskara and then to start with shashank bhujangasana. Later on they practise alternatively on a regular basis one of these two practices and once or twice a week pawanmuktasana 1. The results of these specific asanas are highly beneficial for all aspects of body, mind and energy systems.

### **Pranayama and yoga nidra**

The next practice is nadi shodhana pranayama. At the beginning I recommend to do only 11 rounds and the ratio 1:1. After three months they become more alert, concentrated, with better capacity of the lungs, better and undisturbed nadi flow and of course with peace and calmness of mind. At that time they receive the specific pranayama for a specific condition.

Next is the pearl of all practices, yoga nidra. Each of my patients does yoga nidra on a regular basis. They love it and appreciate the influence of yoga nidra in every sense.

Yoga nidra is the awareness of the body, mind and energy condition. I can feel how their awareness is becoming better and better. With the sankalpa they direct it towards their disease. They have self-confidence and they believe that it will be fruitful and that they will solve their health problems. This belief is the most useful point and it works. The patients are happy and I am satisfied with the result. It is the most important target to make them healthy.

As ayurvedic *ritucharya* or seasonal purification I also recommend to my patients to do the entire shatkarma process for the purification of the mind, body and energy system in autumn or spring.

I integrate the yogic practices with ayurvedic *dinacharya* or daily routine, with marma therapy or with homeopathic remedies. I can say that the results are very positive. A little bit of asana, pranayama, shatkriya and yoga nidra, and the patient's problems are solved.

# The Aim of Your Teaching

*From May I Answer That, Swami Sivananda Saraswati*



**In my work of spreading the knowledge of yoga, do you have any special advice to give me?**

Side by side with instructions on practical yogic processes, place always stress upon the great importance of *sadachara*, right conduct, yama and niyama. Inspire the students with noble idealism. Spur them on to strive for a life of lofty virtue, active goodness and selflessness. You must stress the need for self-purification and self-mastery.

The true inner yoga is the transformation of the essential nature of man. The lower human nature should gradually give place to an illumined divine nature through a process of spiritualization of the entire being of man. This should be brought home in an effective manner, yet with great sympathy, understanding and insight. The aim is to attain divine consciousness.

# Yoga for the Hearing Impaired

*Sanjiv Chaturvedi, Bangkok*

My first experience teaching to a group with disabilities was in India where I had the opportunity to instruct a class of children who were either visually or hearing impaired. Needless to say, the requirements of teaching the blind and deaf are different but thanks to the flexibility and accessibility of Satyananda Yoga, I was able to accommodate both disabilities in one session. Through regular practice, the children began to reap the benefits of yoga and a relationship based on trust developed between them and myself.

This experience was my stepping-stone in instructing a group of hearing impaired adults in Bangkok. I have been teaching this group for one year now with the help of a Thai sign language interpreter. I wanted the students to bring their awareness to their body and breath and turn their focus inward, the goal of all yoga practices for any beginner and a challenge for people who rely solely on their vision to receive instructions.

## **Challenges**

Instructions must be received visually, not through sound. This means all visual instructions through the sign language interpreter must be given prior to commencing the practice. Also two to three hearing and experienced practitioners are necessary to demonstrate the asanas, stationed in strategic locations in the classroom so that the students can see and understand what they should be doing during the class. This also frees me from having to stand at the head of the class and it allows me to give hands-on adjustments to the students individually.



Fostering breath and meditative awareness with eyes open rather than the customary eyes closed takes more practice.

Language and cultural issues were also hurdles needing to be overcome. My verbal explanations of fostering awareness of specific body parts and the breath, basic understanding of integrative yoga, benefits of the specific practices, and clarifying misunderstandings of yoga all had to first be translated into Thai, and then, into sign language. Communication was made possible by this two-step translation process and by taking the time at the beginning of the class for the students to see and understand the sign language instructions.

Unlike hearing students, the hearing impaired cannot listen to instructions while they engage in the asana. By briefing the students prior to the practices, they are motivated and excited about their participation. The instructions must be clear, brief and pertinent as to not confuse the students or waste class time.

### **Practice sequence**

I use two or three hearing demonstrators placed in various vantage points in the classroom so that all the students can see at any given point. A sign language interpreter must be present.

## Pre-asana preparations

*Understanding the practices and their benefits:* Students sit, watch and comprehend the explanations relayed to them by the sign language interpreter in order to understand the practices they are about to engage in. Focus on awareness, benefits and cautions must be clearly communicated.

*Fostering breath awareness:* Students sit comfortably on the floor and focus on breathing with their eyes open to receive instructions. They practise two to three minutes of slow abdominal breathing while keeping one hand on the stomach to learn correct breathing.

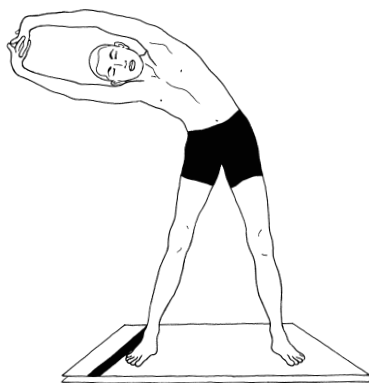
*Rubbing palms of the hands:* Students place the palms on closed eyes to stimulate the brain cells and to become alert and focused.

## Asana sequence

Before any practice I explain the benefits in an interesting manner to make them feel excited and eager to do them with more focus.

*Pawanmuktasana series 1 or 3:* Any combinations of PM1 and or PM3 to release stiffness and to improve the flow of prana are beneficial. These practices make them feel at ease and confident to try more asana.

*Standing poses:* Combination of the following standing poses: tadasana, tiryak tadasana and other sideways stretching



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poses, trikonasana, kati chakrasana and other standing spinal twist poses, hasta utthanasana, padahastasana, standing asanas like druta utkatasana, samakonasana, balancing poses like vrikshasana and eka pada pranamasana.

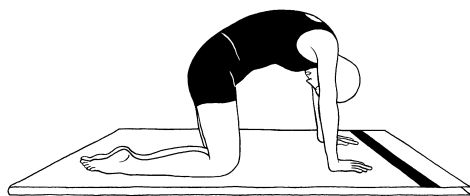
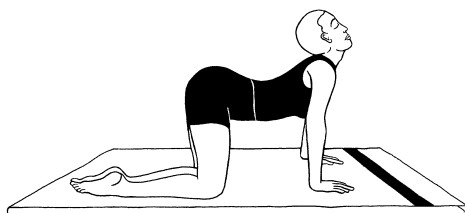
Most of them never do any yoga, so even these standing poses create some pressure and stretching effects on their body so they feel like something is going on in the body. In the beginning it looks challenging for them but slowly they start doing it easily and feel satisfied with their improvement.

*Lying down poses (Pawanmuktasana 2):* These abdominal practices are always attractive for beginners because they feel pressure in their abdomen and think that they are burning fat. They become more eager to try and continue.

*Pawanmuktasana 3:* During this group of practices, they feel a stretch in their whole back and in the pelvic organs. These practices are not difficult to do and can be done with open eyes looking straight ahead, but at the same time they are challenging too.

*Backward bending and spinal poses:* Marjariasana, vyaghrasana, bhujangasana, dhanurasana, ushtrasana. These asanas are effective to boost confidence. With interesting explanations about the benefits, students feel very happy to do them.

*Sitting poses:* Vajrasana, simhagarjanasana



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*Inverted poses:* Sarvangasana

*Relaxation:* Shavasana

*Pranayama:* Panting dog breathing, kapalbhati, nadi shodhana, bhrumari.

This is a moment of reflection for the students to observe the difference in their body, mind and breath after the practices.

*Clapping:* As reciting the *Om* mantra is difficult for the hearing impaired, the students clap their hands together to feel the vibration that their hands have created. This develops a sense of unity and wholeness.

### **Benefits of yoga practices on the hearing impaired**

Popularity of our yoga class among the hearing impaired has been constant since the start. Now over 30 students participate each month to enthusiastically reap the benefits of yoga. Over time, practices have become easier and familiar to them. Physical, mental and emotional benefits are evident, as the students have gained more confidence to face the challenges of society.

A yoga session catering towards their needs, equipped with a sign language interpreter and demonstrators creates a safe haven for them to take an inward journey within themselves. At the end of the class, the students enthusiastically ask me numerous questions on yoga which they normally would not be able to ask without an interpreter. Their dedication to practise yoga motivates me to continue teaching this class. The group motto the students themselves have created is “Yoga through our EYES, connected through our HEARTS.” They are indeed understanding the true spirit of yoga.



# Yoga for Children

*Aparna Singh, Delhi*



It is said that change opens new doors, adds another path in life's journey and it was with this spirit that we moved to New Delhi in the year 2009. I became a member of the Officers Wives Association which goes by the name of 'Pragya'. As a welfare measure for families, 'Pragya' was looking for a yoga teacher. With my background of teaching yoga to women in Dhaka and Lucknow, I volunteered to take the yoga classes, as I thought that in this way I would contribute in a constructive manner.

It started with a five-day camp followed by regular classes twice a week. The group consisted of a vibrant group of young mothers with school-going children. Yoga being in fashion, a desire to remain healthy, manage minor health issues and remain in shape had brought most of them together. By attending regular classes and practising at least mantra and TTK at home, in a few months they had started experiencing

yoga. Gradually an understanding was emerging of a holistic integrated concept of yoga rather than just a physical practice.

I do not remember what motivated me to share the idea of starting yoga for children to these young mothers. Inspired by a mother's instinct to give all experiences to their children, instantly, they were ready to have a three-day camp during the next mid-term break for children. The participation was very encouraging; the Community Hall was absolutely packed, and most children were in the age group of 6 to 10 years. The kids enjoyed the camp, mothers too were delighted that the children had found some outlet to fill in their time during the break. The children requested for regular sessions. Thus began my journey with 20 kids, initially in a very spontaneous manner.

### **Complete and holistic**

We started with one-hour classes thrice a week. The sessions would begin with *Om* chanting and Shanti Path, followed by chanting of the three morning mantras: Mahamrityunjaya mantra with the resolve for good health, strength and immunity; Gayatri mantra with the resolve of developing wisdom, understanding and creativity; and the 32 names of Ma Durga with the resolve of removing all obstacles from life. The chanting part was thoroughly enjoyed by the children. It was enchanting to see some really small kids, who otherwise were extremely distracted, sitting like yogis in deep meditative state, with the eyes firmly closed during the entire fifteen minutes of chanting.

The books *Yoga Education for Children Volume 1* and 2 published by the Yoga Publications Trust were of immense help to teach children asanas and other yogic practices with stories and games. Teaching pawanmuktasana part 1 in an invisible suit and TTK series as a tree in various weather conditions were an instant hit with the children. Even today, as teenagers, they refer to these asanas by the names learned as little ones.

Over a period of twelve months the children learnt all major groups of asana, namely, surya namaskara, vajrasana group, backward bending group, balancing group, inverted poses. I could see the impact of sedentary urban lifestyle melt away, as with time the children became flexible enough to easily slip into various poses and touch their toes without bending their knees. The sessions were enjoyed by the children, as they would look forward to the stories, yogic games or to just sing kirtan together, for we ended each session with a game or a kirtan.

The practices of abdominal, thoracic and yogic breathing techniques were introduced to them and thereafter nadi shodhana pranayama was taught. Doing bhramari was always fun for children. Breath awareness in shavasana really helped in quietening them from their hyperactive mode. One could clearly see the faces become calm and the postures stable, as the children became aware of their breath. As time passed, the elder group was introduced to the practice of trataka and yoga nidra also.

Once a month, they were introduced to havan. It was surprising that even in India havan was a new experience for so many children. They participated with excitement and



remained engrossed in the process of chanting and putting oblation into the fire by rotation.

Slowly, as the classes progressed, by rotation the elder children were asked to lead the class. This instilled confidence in them, making them little yoga teachers in their own right. These children are now able to lead a class of morning mantras and basic asana for their younger friends. For the past two years they have also led the session of asanas and pranayama for the families of the colony to celebrate the International Day of Yoga.

### **Lessons learnt for life**

The desire to learn yoga is fulfilled by many but very few have the discipline to do it regularly. Yoga classes are always easier to attend but doing yoga practices regularly on one's own is always the most difficult part. Regularity is one of the most important aspects on the yogic journey. The five capsules given by Swami Niranjan are a very practical way to make one's practice regular in our daily life. Hence it was emphatically stressed to do morning mantras, surya namaskara and nadi shodhana on a regular basis.

The cardinal difference when working with children as compared to adults is that their involvement is absolutely complete without any expectation, and the response is immediate, visible and vibrant.

During the course of these years, the kids developed a holistic understanding of yoga. In an attempt to showcase and share 'Our Understanding of Yoga', the children made a presentation for 'Pragya' members and parents. What came out was that the children understood yoga as a means to develop their potential and their concluding statement which stood out was:

"We are sure that the journey in yoga that we have started will help our personality to flower out in all fields."

Experiences shared with the children about my visits to the ashram stirred their curiosity. They were inspired by the



Bal Yoga Mitra Mandal and how such a large force of yoga consisting of just children had been created. They came up with questions about Swami Niranjana and the life in the ashram, which were ultimately answered by Swamiji himself in a special session during the Delhi Yoga Mahotsava in 2014. This interaction deeply impacted their young malleable minds, as they found inspiration in Swamiji's clear, simple yet profound words.

The parents of these children are in transferable jobs, so over the span of seven years many have moved to other cities, children have grown and new children have joined. The group is now divided into two, one consisting of the older kids and another for the younger.

For the children it is an opportunity to learn tools which could help them in their journey through life, but I realized its profound impact only now, when I got first-hand feedback from children and mothers about their experience with yoga for this article. It brought to light how yoga is a subtle force which can have far-reaching impact on the physical, mental and emotional development of children.



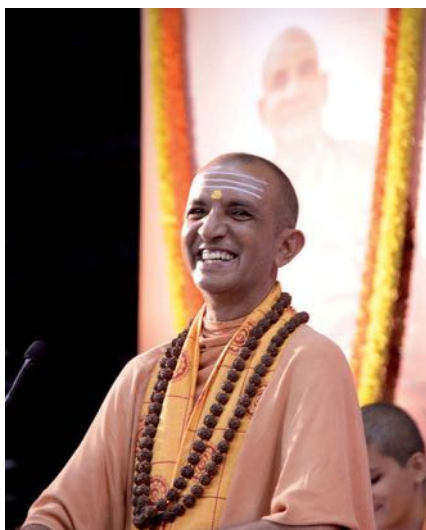
## Some of the children's feedback

*Minati Mishra, 14 years:* I attended yoga class for the first time when I was eleven years old in 2014. Apart from the classes I have not been very regular at home due to my studies and school.

Yoga has taught me to stay calm as I am a hyper and fidgety girl. I lose my temper very fast, so yoga has somewhere helped me cool down my temperament. I try to do breath awareness to manage my anger, it does work and sometimes I become my normal self.

*Ketan, 14 years:* I started doing yoga when I was ten. I learnt many things, asanas, pranayama and tools for relaxation and concentration. I do mantra regularly at night. Surya namaskara is another practice which I am doing regularly. Yoga has helped me in improving concentration. I used to get 40 percent marks in school and now I get 80 and 90 percent. All my friends were shocked to see my improved scores and asked me what my secret was. I told them I did surya namaskara and suggested they could also try and see its magic work.

I realized the importance of good manners when I heard Swamiji in Delhi Yoga Mahotsava, when he said that he did not like when someone misbehaves with anyone.



# The Light Illuminated My Life

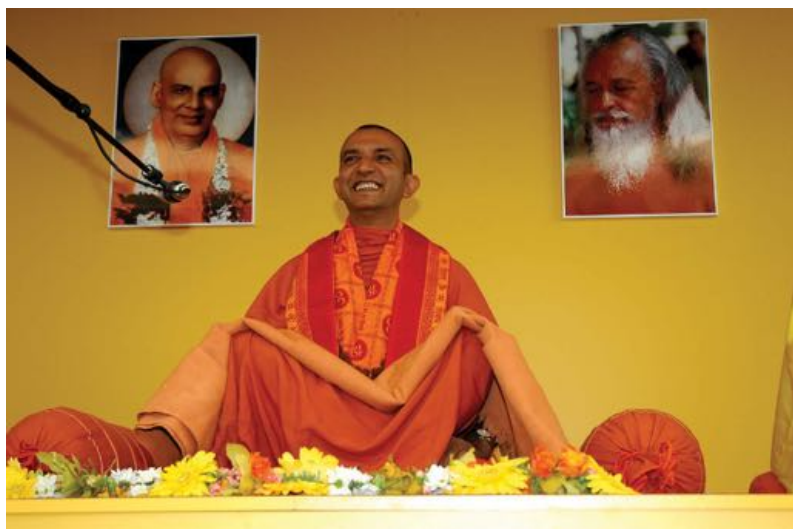
*Sannyasi Priyatma, Bulgaria*

The light illuminated my life when I met Satyananda Yoga in the image of my guru Swami Niranjan, twenty years ago. In my heart the image of my guru intertwines with the light images of Swami Sivananda and Swami Satyananda. When I say 'my guru' these three divine faces appear simultaneously as one indivisible whole.

I would like to share one personal story of the power of mantras and the spiritual practices, which our teachers have given as tools for overcoming the serious difficulties in life. My father was a talented opera singer and as most of the artistic people his soul breaks apart from deep inner experiences and strong emotions. Often the artist's inner world is so abundant and tense, that the heaviness of the outer world overtakes them as a dead-weight burden. In this situation 'help' comes as an old unwanted and unhealthy release – the alcoholic drink.

Most of my memories are connected with a father who is touring or is drunk at home, with whom normal communication is impossible. The drunkenness brought with itself all its negative sides – scandals, tension, lack of adequate communication, fear of everything, even of common life situations. At a certain moment the consequences became very serious, he lost his job, his friends, his financial status, interest towards life.

My mother began to practise yoga sometime after me. Once on Navaratri, she decided to make a sankalpa with a prayer to the Divine Mother and Guru for help in our difficult family situation. She decided to become a vegetarian and to stop her favourite foods – meat, fish, eggs. For three to four years, every Navaratri she made that sankalpa. Regularly she practised Mahamrityunjaya mantra, Gayatri mantra, 32 Names of Durga.



Gradually, the miracle happened. My father didn't return on stage and to the job which he loved, but little by little he stopped drinking alcohol, he filled his time with gardening and carpentry, for which he is skilful, almost all the furniture at home is made by him. The communication with him became normal and pleasant. His habitual sense of humour came back. My greatest joy is that I have the chance to see his true self, deep and tender, to speak with him, to tell him that I love him, to see how he teaches my daughter to play the piano, to see how he hugs my mother with love and how he narrates to my husband stories about the work of the great artists.

The beauty of this life is in its simplicity, but how difficult it is to be achieved!

Thank you Swamiji, for the great effort which you make in order to uplift the level of our consciousness, to give us strength and faith in ourselves, to develop our human nature! Thank you for the tools and the knowledge you give us!



# Investigating Indriya Nigraha

*Sannyasi Vidya Kiran, Colombia*

During the Kriya Yoga Yatra 1 in 2016, Swamiji gave us a meditation practice for our kriya yoga sadhana. He told us to practise 7.5 minutes *indriya nigraha* and 7.5 minutes *danti*, sensorial restraint and mental restraint.

Swamiji said that we should choose a sense and block all the sensations of that sense and he gave us an example of how to practise *indriya nigraha*, “Burn an incense stick, smell it and block the smell. Say to yourself, ‘I don’t want to smell.’”



To do the practice I decided to work with one sense per month so I could deepen and perfect the practice. The first month I chose the sense of smell and did the practice as Swamiji had said, “smell it and block it.”

The second month I chose taste. I started to feel the taste in my mouth and then I blocked it, saying to myself, ‘I don’t want to feel this taste’. I blocked the sensorial perception, and repeated for a few times. Then I brought up a nice taste like banana, tangerines or chocolate or a taste I did not like, like rotten papaya and I blocked each taste. It was easier to block the ones I did not like.

### **Applying indriya nigraha in daily life**

I did this with all the senses. During the month of touch, a question arose in the mind, ‘What is it that I don’t like of this touch sensation?’ I started seeing and realizing emotions, mental programs and thoughts that were behind my likes and dislikes. The root cause of the likes and dislikes came to the forefront to be observed. The practice became deep, the mind became steady and I felt immense peace and stillness.

After a few months of practising indriya nigraha, I did it as a meditation during a one-hour boat ride when I felt a lot of pain in one foot. I could not move because of the high speed of the boat and the small place I was in. I started doing indriya nigraha, saying to myself, ‘I don’t want to feel this pain’. I blocked the sensation of pain and repeated it for a few times. The pain and discomfort went away.

Since then I use indriya nigraha every time my senses are reporting discomfort like itching, hot, cold, dryness, need to move, need to urinate when in a car, pain, noise, smell. The discomfort goes away and the mind remains calm.

It is also useful during long meditation practices. I do not have to do much, just notice the discomfort, look at it and block it. This practice of pratyahara helps me to control the mind by observing the sensorial activity, the mental activity, and the responses, and it gives me the ability to stop them.



## *Impenetrable Barrier*

Confronted by an impenetrable barrier,  
The future obscured  
By the weight of past struggles,  
Now has become torment and strain,  
An effort to fulfil hopes and desires  
That cannot be attained.

What are you seeking beyond your confusion?  
Your mind is broken, shattered, destroyed.  
Blindly in darkness you grope for the pieces  
To try to remake an impossible dream.  
For what you have lost, you never had gained.  
Only fantasy patterns remain.

Now where will you turn?  
Oppressed and bewildered,  
Tension created, energy dissipated.  
You rule not your thoughts,  
Command not your actions,  
So how can you make your destiny clear?

This pattern is different.  
As I watch in the sunlight, its petals unfold.  
Its motion is endless, its glory unceasing.  
I am not its master, but I give myself to it  
And float on the waves of a translucent ocean.

It surrounds and protects me, and opens my vision  
To horizons beyond my capacity to see.  
Yet it is not my image  
For I am lost within it.  
Within it is all.  
And all becomes one  
Grasping the strings of the universe,  
The world turns to its tune  
To reflect and resound  
With the soul of creation.

—Swami Satyananda Saraswati





## Yoga Publications Trust

### Hatha Yoga Yatra I Understanding Shatkarma

78pp, soft cover, ISBN: 978-93-84753-35-1

At the World Yoga Convention held in 2013, Swami Niranjanananda announced: "The first chapter of yoga propagation is over. Now the second chapter begins, which is focused on consolidation of yoga and better application of yoga, with sincerity, seriousness and commitment."

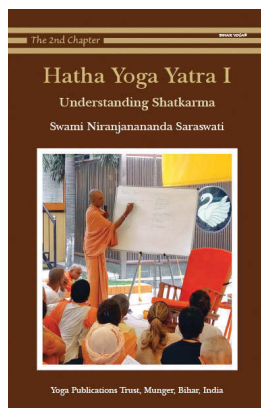
In writing the second chapter, a complete change in the training programs at Ganga Darshan Vishwa Yogapeeth has come about since 2016. Among these was Hatha Yoga – Module 1: Shatkarma Intensive, during which the focus was on understanding and applying the first stage of hatha yoga: shatkarma, or the six purificatory actions.

This book presents the satsangs given by Swami Niranjanananda during the program.

**Yoga Publications Trust**, Garuda Vishnu, PO Ganga Darshan, Fort, Munger, Bihar 811 201, India, Tel: +91-06344-222430, 06344-228603, 09304799615 • Fax: 91+6344+220169



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*New*



### www.biharyoga.net

The official website of Bihar Yoga includes information on: Satyananda Yoga, Bihar School of Yoga, Bihar Yoga Bharati and Yoga Publications Trust catalogues.

### YOGA & YOGAVIDYA Online

Bihar School of Yoga is happy to announce that the YOGA and YOGAVIDYA magazines are now available online at:

<http://www.biharyoga.net/bihar-school-of-yoga/yoga-magazines/>  
<http://www.biharyoga.net/bihar-school-of-yoga/yogavidya/>



YOGA and YOGAVIDYA magazines are also now available as a free app for IOS devices. The app can be downloaded from:

<https://itunes.apple.com/us/developer/bihar-school-of-yoga/id1134424786>

The app is being offered by Bihar School of Yoga as prasad for all yoga aspirants.

### Avahan Online

[www.biharyoga.net/sannyasa-peeth/avahan/](http://www.biharyoga.net/sannyasa-peeth/avahan/) provides online access to *Satya ka Avahan*, the bi-monthly magazine of Sannyasa Peeth, which contains the higher teachings of Sri Swami Sivananda, Sri Swami Satyananda and Swami Niranjanananda, along with the programs of Sannyasa Peeth.



## Websites



- Registered with the Department of Post, India  
Under No. MGR-02/2017  
Office of posting: Ganga Darshan TSO  
Date of posting: 1st-7th of every month
- Registered with the Registrar of Newspapers, India  
Under No. BIHENG/2002/6305

issn 0972-5717

## Yoga Peeth Events & Yoga Vidya Training 2018

<i>Feb 22-Jun 10</i>	Yogic Studies Course, 4 months (Hindi)
<i>Feb 14</i>	Bal Yoga Diwas, Children's Yoga Day
<i>Apr 8-14</i>	Hatha Yoga Yatra 1 & 2
<i>Apr 22-28</i>	Hatha Yoga Yatra 3
<i>Aug 6-11</i>	Kriya Yoga Yatra 1
	Kriya Yoga Yatra 2 & Tattwa Shuddhi
<i>Aug 20-25</i>	Kriya Yoga Yatra 3 & Tattwa Shuddhi 2
<i>Sep 17-23</i>	Raja Yoga Yatra 1, 2, 3
<i>Dec 25</i>	Swami Satyananda's Birthday
<i>Every Saturday</i>	Mahamrityunjaya Havan
<i>Every Ekadashi</i>	Bhagavad Gita Path
<i>Every Poornima</i>	Sundarkand Path
<i>Every 5th &amp; 6th</i>	Guru Bhakti Yoga
<i>Every 12th</i>	Akhanda Path of Ramacharitamanas

Please be aware that mobile phones are NOT permitted in the ashram.  
Ensure that you do not bring your mobile with you.

### ***For more information on the above events contact:***

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Website: [www.biharyoga.net](http://www.biharyoga.net)

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