



SIVANANDA YOGA

VEDANTA CENTRE SINGAPORE

October 2011 Newsletter

Happy
Deepavali

Yoga Centre Close on:
5 & 26 Oct 2011

Weekdays Beginner
Course Starts on
10 Oct Monday 8.00pm



Why do we light a lamp? In Indian culture

In almost every Indian home a lamp is lit daily before the altar of the Lord. In some houses it is lit at dawn, in some, twice a day - at dawn and dusk - and in few it is maintained continuously. All auspicious functions and moments like daily worship, rituals and festivals and even many social occasions like inaugurations commence with the lighting of the lamp, which is often maintained right through the occasion.

Why do we light a lamp? Light symbolizes knowledge, and darkness ignorance. The Lord is the “Knowledge Principle” who is the source, the enlivener and the illuminator of all knowledge. Hence light is worshipped as the Lord Himself.

Knowledge removes ignorance just as light removes darkness. Also knowledge is a lasting inner wealth by which all outer achievement can be accomplished. Hence we light the lamp to bow down to knowledge as the greatest of all forms of wealth. Knowledge backs all our actions whether good or bad. We therefore keep a lamp lit during all auspicious occasions as a witness to our thoughts and action.

Why not light a bulb or tube light? That would remove darkness. But the traditional oil lamp has a further spiritual significance. The oil or ghee in the lamp symbolizes our vaasanas or negative tendencies and the

wick, the ego. When lit by spiritual knowledge, the vaasanas get slowly exhausted and the ego too finally perishes. The flame of a lamp always burns upwards. Similarly we should acquire such knowledge as to take us towards higher ideals.

A single lamp can light hundreds more just as a man of knowledge can give it to many more. The brilliance of the light does not diminish despite its repeated use to light many more lamps. So too knowledge does not lessen when shared with or imparted to others. On the contrary it increases in clarity and conviction on giving. Its benefits both the receiver and the giver.



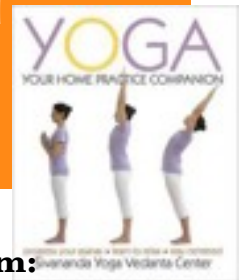
Beginner Course Starts 10 Oct Mon 8pm

Receive a step-by-step introduction to yogic postures and breathing exercises in addition to yogic theory studies. Discover how the five points of yoga -proper exercise, proper breathing, proper relaxation, balanced diet, and meditation and positive thinking, will support your yoga practices and a healthy lifestyle. Through this course, you will build a solid foundation for a stable and joyous yoga practice that will last you a lifetime.



Curriculum:

- The Sivananda asana sequence
- Pranayama (breathing exercises)
- The five points of yoga (proper exercise, proper breathing, proper relaxation, proper diet, positive thinking, and meditation)



Course meeting dates for Weekday course, every **Monday & Friday 8.00-9.30pm:**
October: 10, 14, 17, 21, 24, 28, 31. November: 4.

Class duration: 90 minutes.

Fee: \$220 for 8 classes + 2 ongoing classes + YOGA Your Home Practice Companion Book.

Natarajasana The Dancing Siva

Nataraja is one of the names given to Siva, the Cosmic Dancer, who is often depicted in this position. It is said that when Siva brings down his foot the universe will be destroyed and a new world created. When you come into Natarajasana or the variation, lean forward to help you pull the leg up, then try to straighten the body again. Keep the standing leg firm and straight to stabilize yourself. When your head is vertical, the emphasis is on an upward movement, while dropping the head back turns the pose into more of a backward bend and requires greater balance and control. In the classic pose just one hand holds the raised foot; but two hands achieve a fuller stretch.

Full Natarajasana

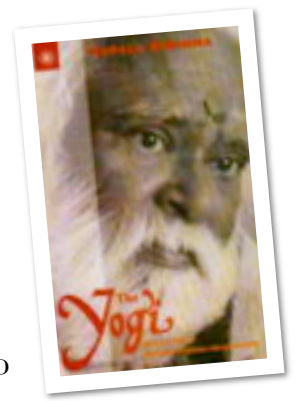
As well as developing balance, this advanced pose provides a full backward bend to the upper body.



Finding the Guru

The Yogi, Portraits of Swami Vishnudevananda

By Gopala Krishna



What is a *guru*? Literally *gu* means “darkness” and *ru* means “light.” A guru leads one from darkness to light. A guru is a man or woman spiritual teacher who leads their students to God-realization. They can be famous men and women, like Mahatma Gandhi or Anandamayi Ma, or someone who is known by only one student. A guru is not an ordinary teacher; he or she is a God-realized soul or on the path towards universal consciousness. The guru imparts spiritual knowledge to the student, pointing the way towards the truth, but the student achieves liberation through his or her own effort.

Swami Vishnudevananda gave the following description of how he came to realize that Sivananda was his guru:

When I got my army leave, even before I thought of going home, (about 2000 miles south), I decided to go to Rishikesh and stay with Swami Sivananda in his ashram for two days. I wanted to learn from him and ask some questions. It was almost evening when I arrived at the ashram. Swami Sivananda was leaving his tiny office with some disciples, going down the hill to the back of the Ganges, where his cottage is situated. I was going towards the office and he was going out of the office, so I would come face to face with him.

Now I realized I had a problem. In India it is customary to bow our heads before all saints, all swamis, all holy people. Swami Sivananda was not only a swami and a holy man, he was also considered to be one of the greatest masters of India. But I was not ready to bow my head to anyone. I would not bow to any holy man, including Swami Sivananda, because after all, all human beings are equal. Why should I bow my head to him or anyone else? But I thought if I stood in front of him without bowing my head, it would be a rude way of behaving towards anybody, especially a

holy man. I didn't want to be rude to him, especially in front of his disciples. It was so awkward for me that I immediately left the path and hid myself in a corner, planning to let Sivananda and his disciples pass me by.

Sivananda continued coming down the path, and as he neared the place where I stood, he suddenly looked up and saw me hiding in the corner. He came straight towards me. “You have come from Jalandhur,” he said, and he bowed before me and touched my feet! I stood there like a statue. This great man, a giant actually, (of course he is a spiritual giant, but also physically he was quite tall, over 6 feet) bowed before a silly idiot stupid me, touching my feet. That touch, that action, shook my whole body. And that was the first time I ever bowed my head to another person. I fell at the feet of Swami Sivananda at that moment, with all my heart, with all my love. Until that day I did not think that any human being on this earth could make me bow my head, especially with such love and devotion.

Swami Sivananda taught me in this simple way. He saw what was hidden in my heart; he saw my dirt, my egoistic nature, and without hesitation he taught me great humility.

The higher you go into the spiritual heights the humbler you will be, and Sivananda proved that to a simple boy like me. At that moment I accepted him as my teacher, my Master, my everything. Swami Sivananda then asked me to stay for a couple of days. I answered, “Yes, I will stay.” Then he asked one of his disciples to take me to the kitchen and get me something to eat.

On that same first evening, just at sunset, all Sivananda's disciples assembled in front of the Ganges to worship the river. Was there any meaning in it? I thought that all of Swami

Sivananda's disciples must be illiterate fools. They didn't know anything about water or rivers. Water is made up to H₂O. I was a little scientific minded in my childhood; in school I learned chemistry, physiology, electronics, and so forth. Not only that, but in my chemistry class I myself made water out of hydrogen and oxygen. None of the disciples at Sivananda Ashram seemed to know anything about that. They were worshipping the silly Ganges!

Anyhow, it was a beautiful scene because of the sunset and the majestic Himalayas in the background and the flowing river. On either side the swamis in orange robes were sitting and meditating, chanting and bell ringing. It was very beautiful, no doubt about it, but for me worshipping the Ganges was just superstition. "It's just a river; what is this?" I thought as I watched the whole ceremony.

Then swami Sivananda came and joined his disciples. I couldn't understand that because even though the disciples might be illiterate, Sivananda was not. Before he became a swami he was a medical doctor. "A medical doctor who doesn't know this much, that water is made up of H₂O, what kind of doctor is he?" As i was thinking like that about Sivananda, he came to join the group. At the very moment that i thought, "How can a doctor not know anything about H₂O? Svananda turned his

head towards me gently-he said nothing-and then turned back again to join the worship of the Ganges.

Suddenly I saw no more Ganges; the river disappeared. In its place I saw a mass of light flowing river with message, "Everything is God, even this flowing river is God. Do not use your tiny intellect to understand God, the Infinite. Your intellect is finite; your understanding of chemistry, physiology, science, biology, physics, mathematics is nothing; your knowledge is so little, so finite, so tiny that you have not even touched one grain of sand on the vast beach. Far beyond your intellect, far beyond your understanding, lies inexhaustible knowledge and wealth, strength and power, peace and joy. Do not use your intellect to find the answers for God and his manifestations. Everything is God."

I learned two very difficult lessons on the same day. The first lesson taught me humility, because I thought I was very great. The second lesson taught me that I didn't know anything about anything. So I had two hard lessons that day. There was no more doubting Sivananda. That day was sufficient.



*Lead me from the unreal to the real;
from darkness to the light;
from death to immortality.*

Om, Santi Santi Santih

Om, Peace Peace Peace