



Article: SANTOSH / Contentment

Guru's Teaching: Jesus Said, Empty Thyself

Sharing from Student: Neyyar Dam Yoga Vacation Sep'09 by Ang Lee San

Special Class: Satsang & Foundation of Yoga: YAMAS (Restrains)

Centre Close On: Monday 21 Dec'09 - Sunday 3Jan'10

**Happy Holidays From Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre Singapore**

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### **SANTOSH / Contentment - article**

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When I was a child, my mother would often admonish me to try to find contentment in my life. As I grew older, the word "contentment" itself began to repel me, bringing to mind the image of fat cows lazily chewing their grass in a sun-drenched field, with nothing else in the world to do and nothing to think about. It was difficult for me to understand why my otherwise energetic mother would want to encourage me to give up all my driving ambitions to "make something" of myself. My mind equated the words "fat", "lazy" and "contented"; I couldn't understand her wishing me to be any of these things.

I felt a burning desire to see everything and do everything and learn as much as I could. Even when I started practicing yoga seriously, when I was around 21 years old, I saw it as an energetic means to know the world as well as all that is beyond it. For me the goal was to reach that state of **Satchidananda** (existence, knowledge, bliss absolute). It seemed some high and distant goal that I must exert very hard to achieve

Then I embarked on a diligent study of Raja Yoga. To my surprise I found right there in the second of the eight limbs (ashtanga), under niyamas (observances), the contentment (Santosh) that my mother had been telling me about. How was I to reconcile this with my ideal of constant and energetic striving? After much deliberation the real meaning and spiritual value of Santosh started to clarify itself in my mind.

I came to understand that my mind was always restless on account of greed: greed for new experiences, new tastes in food or new acquisitions that I didn't really need. On account of this, I could feel myself being burned by an internal fire that was consuming my prana (energy) slowly but surely. Although I was diligently doing my yoga practice, I frequently found myself exhausted without knowing why. Often I found that I put out more energy into obtaining things than I received in return. It was not unusual to find myself dissatisfied with my own behavior and that of others. The relish with which I surrounded myself with things didn't seem to last.

Santosh came as a powerful antidote for the poison of greed. It seemed like I had been for a long, hard walk in the hot sun and was suddenly refreshed by a delicious plunge in the Ganga river. Then I read in a book by Swami Sivananda that "There are four sentinels who guard the domain of Moksha (liberation). They are Shanti (peace), Santosha (contentment), Satsanga (company of the wise) and Vichara (right inquiry). By encouraging myself to befriend one of these guards, I found myself in the company of his colleagues. My life and sadhana (spiritual practice) took an upward turn.

The wonder is that although we all know that contentment is a virtue that gives peace of mind, few of us try to develop it. It seems that the increasing speed of modern life has caused many of us to lose our powers of discrimination. Our understanding gets clouded, intellect perverted and memory gets confused by greed, as well as its accompanying passion. On account of this we find it increasingly difficult to develop the basic virtue of contentment—or even understand.

As a yoga teacher, I have found that many people actually fear contentment, as I did. They worry that it will make them lethargic and lazy. Without it they see themselves as exerting and energetic. However, contentment can never make anyone idle. It is a sattvic (pure) virtue that propels the individual towards peace. It gives strength of mind and checks unnecessary and selfish exertions. It calms the mind and opens the inner eye of intuition. The contented person is able to work energetically and peacefully, with a one-pointed mind. All the dissipated rays of the mind are collected and available for use.

Santosh means never looking back, being content in the present and striving to improve the future. As I began to develop this virtue, I realized how much time and energy I had wasted in reprimanding myself for mistakes that I had made last year, last week or yesterday. Some days a vast portion of my energy would be consumed by the thought that I shouldn't have done something, or I should have done it in a different way. It seemed that I regretted so much and, instead of learning from my mistakes and moving on, I was

letting them devour me.

Through my daily meditation and introspection, I began to intuitively understand that past is past; no one can change it. Even one split second after an action has taken place, it cannot be undone. Once something is said, it can never be unsaid. Even the present, that fleeting instant when the future becomes the past, cannot be changed. By the time you realize what is happening, it has happened and is in the past. But I found that this was not a depressing train of thought. In fact the understanding and practice of Santosh was quite a liberating experience. It helped me to learn the true meaning of contentment. It showed me a practical method to stop wasting precious energy on which I could not change. It enabled me to focus on positive improvements in my life, on how I could best use my energies.

More and more I began to realize that by my present effort, I could change the future. I could do so with increased vigor because my energy was not being drained. This is, of course, an understanding and acceptance of the law of Karma. The knowledge that I myself was the author and creator of my present situation taught me how I could guide my future. It gave me solace, peace and strength. It helped me to solve my own difficulties and problems in life. I began to understand that Santosh. I bliss the divine nectar that brings peace and happiness in life.

## **LOKA SOMASTA SUKHINO BHAVANTU**

**May the Whole World Attain Peace and Happiness**

*By Swami Saradananda*

*A senior disciple of Swami Vishnu-devananda*

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## **Jesus Said, Empty Thyself - guru's teaching**

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Jesus said, empty thyself. What will happen when empty? "I will fill it". Until you removed the dirty water, He cannot fill it. Sadhana (spiritual practice) is emptying the dirty water that's built up over millions of years. And you will not be empty: it is not one cup. You have an ocean of dirty water there. And you have to remove that ocean of water with a spoon.

How long it will take? It will take as long to reach the Godhead, also. I am not exaggerating. Unless God's grace comes. So, try to empty it with a spoon, and let the grace of the Godhead remove it, because you will have not time to empty all this dirty water yourself. You will be removing it with your effort, with your own will power, and God will say, "Oh, my God, he's trying, let me give him a hand".

Once I was witting on my pond and I saw a small bug in the water. He was trying to escape, but he could not. So what did I do? After walking a little bit, "Oh I don't want to get my feet in the cold water". I changed my mind and waked in to save him. He just got out and took his time. So also with God. Merciful. If I can be merciful to a small bug, do you think that the infinite, merciful God will not see that you are suffering, how much you are

suffering? But when he sees that you are sincere, that the effort is sincere and honest and you are really struggling, then He can not bear to see you suffering so much. At that time He will empty the ocean for you. You have to only try to do a little bit. He will do more. But you have to practice. Do not depend upon anybody. You work and his grace will come to you. Only when you work. Empty the ocean. And then he will fill it up with all knowledge.

***Final Instructions***  
***Vishnudevanada Upadesa***

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## **Neyyar Dam Yoga Vacation Sep'09 - sharing from student**

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I arrived at the ashram late at night. The guard went to find the reception and after registration, I was handed a pillow and bed sheet and a mosquito net. In my mind, I went like “okay...., lee san this is not a hotel”, but nothing prepared me for the shock when they opened the door to my room.

The door revealed 2 wooden plank beds with thin mattress and relatively dusty. I won't say more but it is certainly not welcoming. I thought ok, maybe I will change to a better room in the morning I tried lay down on the mattress to get some sleep.

In the morning, when there is more light, I surveyed my surroundings again. The ashram was beautiful, peaceful, green, lots of flowers. I went for yoga practice and was very happy for a while.

Second day, I went for my first satsang. When I (not a religious person) heard the chanting and singing, in my mind... were the following: oh oh... what is this?? What did I get myself into? My fellow participants were totally into the singing and making a lot of noise with the musical instruments. I pretended to look at the chant book provided throughout the satsang.

Then it was meal time, was told to sit in silence and eat your food. Have to eat with fingers, a bit hard to manage at first with all the gravy but soon got a hang of it. Food was nice. I thought ok, not too bad.

However, when dusk falls, and I returned to my room to my spartan bed, I couldn't help

However, when dusk falls and I returned to my room to my spartan bed, I couldn't help but feel sorry for myself. What did I get myself into? I left a clean and cushy bed in Singapore to come to this? I thought I was tough but my emotions say otherwise.

The toilet was not working and I saw a large cockroach.

I called my husband to get me out of there. My husband, who was unfortunately on a overseas working trip scrambled to find options. The next day, husband presented me with the grim news that if I want to come back immediately; I have to pay another \$700 which is the same as flying back to India again for another trip. The miserly me decided it was not worth it. I thought about the participants and many were Europeans with a few from the States as well. If they could tolerate it (the spartan living conditions), why can't I? I decided to slough it out.

I chatted with Shir Khim before my trip and she said cheerfully I will survive. I did, with some afterthoughts (see below). I stayed the original 10 days and at the end of the 10th day, I was bit sad to leave such a peaceful oasis.

Did I learn more about myself? I sure did. Never realize I was such a wimp.

I killed the cockroach. Om.

#### After thoughts

Having led a hectic 10 years of working life, I decided to take a hiatus from work and ditched that irritating blackberry. It never felt better.

I wanted a clean break from everyday life i.e. away from family and friends for a while and do some personal reflection and going to the ashram seem to be a logical choice. (No phone, no newspaper, no internet, which is what I need!)

Nothing prepared me for what I was to experience at the ashram.

For the first time in 32 years, I am no longer multitasking. Back home in Singapore, I maxed out every single minute while I was awake, multitasking. For instance I will boil water, watch the tv, flip through some newspaper and sms friends. Before I go to bed, I must surf the internet for that handbag that I spotted. Sounds familiar?

At the ashram, one activity is done at any time. At meals, we eat silently, just chewing food till your plate is finished. During yoga practice, we focus on that particular posture at that moment. When we have satsang, we focus on that particular verse at that moment. It is not specifically planned, but somehow there is focus and meaning in every single little thing we do at the ashram.

It forced me to slow down.

I must say I have never liked vegetables. The 10 day vegetarian diet brought a refreshing

clarity to my mind that I was surprised. My thoughts were clear and logical and I managed to think through some issues that have been bothering me.

The lectures, diet, karma yoga (volunteer service) brought a holistic perspective on the practice of Yoga. It is no longer just physical exercise. It is not about being able to do a posture perfectly. In fact the postures were there so that one can sit comfortably to meditate. Though I am not successful so far in meditation, I believe in achieving that, one will be calmer and more at peace with oneself.

The basic conditions of the ashram are instrumental in driving home the fact that one's mind can be restless while at vacation in a 5 star resort resting on plush pillows while one can be totally be at peace and relaxation lying on a spartan mattress.

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I--  
I took the one less traveled by,  
And that has made all the difference  
...Robert Frost

The decision to go to the ashram was made on a whim, after all it is India but going to the ashram has made all the difference.

*Ang Lee San*

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## **Satsang & Foundation of Yoga: YAMAS (Restrains) - special class**

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**Date:**

Friday, 11 December 2009

**Time:**

8.00-9.30pm

**Venue:**

Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre  
21B Bukit Pasoh Rd

**Fee:**

Free of charge, all are welcome

**Program:**

- 30 minutes silent meditation
- Kirtan chanting
- Topic: Yamas (Restrains).

If you are not progressing in your asanas, pranayama and meditation practice, chances are the foundations are not laid properly. What is the role of ethics in yoga and how do we benefit by leading an ethical life in the world that often prompts us to act against these ancient guidelines?

This session focuses on the Five Yamas (Restrains): Non-violence, Truthfulness, Non-

This month we focus on the Restraints (Yamas): Non-violence, Truthfulness, Non-stealing, Chastity and Non-acquisitiveness. January we will continue with the Observances (Niyamas).

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## Class Schedule - from centre

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Time	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
9.30 - 10.30 am						Satsang	
10.00 - 11.15 pm							Beginner
10.45-12.00pm						Open	
12.30 - 1.45 pm						Beginner	
6.30 - 7.45 pm	Beginner	Open	Beginner	Open	Beginner		
8.00 - 9.15 pm	Open	Beginner	Open	Beginner	Special Class		

### DESCRIPTION:

#### Satsang:

25 mins silent meditation, followed by devotional chanting and an informal talk on the practical philosophy of Yoga and Vedanta. Kirtan (chanting) books are provided. The program is free and open to all.

#### Beginner:

Class includes Pranayama (breathing), Sun Salutation, a regular series of asanas, and relaxations. This class provides an ideal introduction for students who are new to yoga and who need to learn a better foundation. Students will learn coordination between breathing and postures, gaining more flexibility.

#### Open:

This class is open for intermediate and advanced students. The class includes Pranayama (breathing), Sun Salutation, 12 basics postures (and their variations), and relaxations. Students will practice and be assisted in their individual level of competency. Not suitable for beginner.

#### Special Class:

Check at [www.sivananda.com.sg](http://www.sivananda.com.sg) for program details.

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**Serve, Love, Give, Purify, Meditate & Realize**

