



**Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre  
Singapore  
February '10 Newsletter**

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**From Centre: Centre close from Thursday 11 Feb to Tuesday 16 Feb**

**All the classes resume on Wednesday 17 Feb**

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## **Five Point of YOGA - article**

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The Yogi sees life as a triangle. Birth is the first point of this life triangle. Its upward line represents the growth period; the top dot, youth; the downward line, decay. The last point is death, but the base line of the triangle is life hereafter, which ends in birth again. The growth period, known as the "anabolic process," reaches a plateau at about the age of 18 or 20 years. During the "youthful" period of life the rate of cell rejuvenation exceeds or equals cell decay. In a normal person, the body maintains this healthy, youthful state until about 30 years of age. At around the age of 35, the decaying or "catabolic process" begin to predominate, the anabolic process decreases and the body machine starts its decline. This process later results in the state termed "old age: with its accompanying ills and despair, both physical and mental. Inconvineince

Yogis, however, say that we were not born merely to be subject of pain and suffering, disease and death. There is a far greater purpose to life. But the spiritual investigation of life's purpose requires a keen intellect and strong will, the products of a healthy body and mind

purpose requires a keen intellect and strong will, the products of a healthy body and mind. For this reason, the ancient sages developed an integral system to ward off or retard the decaying or catabolic process, and to keep the physical and mental faculties strong. By closely observing the life-style and needs of the modern men and women of this planet I have synthesized the ancient wisdom of Yoga into five basic principles, which can be easily incorporated into everyone's own pattern of life. These principles are:

1. Proper Exercise
2. Proper Breathing
3. Proper Relaxation
4. Proper Diet
5. Positive thinking (deep philosophy) and meditation

**Proper exercise** acts as a lubrication system to the joints, muscles, ligaments, tendons, and so forth, by increasing circulation and flexibility. Yogic exercise can be compared to no others system in its complete overhauling of the entire being. A Yoga Asana (Posture) is meant to be held for some time (the term "Asana" means steady pose). Performed slowly and consciously, the Asanas not only produce physical benefits, but are mental exercises in concentration and meditation.

Yoga exercise focuses first on the health of the spine. The spinal column houses the center of the nervous system, the telegraphic system of the body. As a direct extension of the brain, the healthy spine aids in the health of the whole body. By maintaining the spine's flexibility and strength through proper exercise, circulation is increased, the nerves are ensured their supply of nutrients and oxygen, and the body retains its youthful state. As a Chinese proverb states, "Truly a flexible back makes a long life."

Asanas work on the internal machinery of the whole body, especially on such key pressure points as the Chinese acupuncture areas. Stimulation of these points increases the flow of nerve energy, or Prana (Sanskrit) or Chi (Chinese). The Asanas also affect the deeper and more subtle parts of the body. The internal organs receive massage and stimulation through the various movements of the Asanas and are toned into functioning more efficiently. As Yoga postures are always practiced with deep breathing, relaxation, and concentration, the Asanas also help to develop mental control. The mind that is unsteady by nature and constantly agitated by sensory inputs becomes withdrawn and detached from the objects of the senses freed from distractions, and slowly brought under control.

**Proper breathing** connects the body to its battery, the Solar Plexus, where tremendous potential energy is stored. When tapped through specific Yoga breathing techniques (Pranayama), this energy is released for physical and mental rejuvenation.

Most people use only a fraction of their lung capacity for breathing. They breathe shallowly, using a small part of the rib cage. Their shoulders are hunched, they have painful tension in the upper part of the back and neck, and they suffer from a lack of oxygen.

These people become tired easily and don't know why.

What the unfortunate majority of us need these days is a breathing program that can help us at our desks, stoves, and machines. Tension and even depression may be overcome by proper diaphragmatic breathing.

By far the most important benefit of good breathing is concentrating the Prana, or nerve energy, which increases our vital energy level. Control of the Prana leads to control of the

mind.

All diseases of the body can be destroyed at the root by regulating the Prana; this is the secret knowledge of healing. Acupuncturists, shiatsu, faith healing, doctors with healing touch, and so forth, are all examples of the development of a high degree of conscious or unconscious control of the Prana. In ordinary breathing we extract very little Prana, but when we concentrate and consciously regulate our breathing, we are able to store a greater amount in our various nerve center and brain. One who has abundant Prana radiates vitality and strength, which can be felt by those with whom he comes in contact.

**Proper relaxation** cools down the system, as the radiator does for a car. Relaxation is nature's way of recharging the body. When the body and mind are continually overworked, their efficiency diminishes. In order to regulate and balance the work of the body and mind, it is necessary to learn to economize the energy produced by our body, which is the main purpose of learning how to relax.

Modern social life, food, work, and even so-called entertainments, such as rock "n" roll dancing, all make it difficult for modern people to relax. More of our energy is spent in keeping our muscles in continual readiness for work than in actual useful work done. Even while resting, the average person expends much energy through needless physical and mental tension. Thus, most of the body's energy is wasted.

Remember that in the course of one day our body usually produces all the substances and energy necessary for the next. But often all these are consumed within a few minutes by bad moods, anger, injury, or irritation that reaches a high degree of intensity.

During relaxation there is practically no Prana being consumed. Although a little is spent maintaining the basic metabolic activities, the remaining portion is stored and conserved. In order to achieve perfect relaxation, three levels of relaxation—physical, mental and spiritual—must be attained. No relaxation is complete until all three are reached.

**Proper diet** provides fuel for the body. The Yogic diet is a vegetarian one, consisting of pure, simple, natural foods that are easily digested and assimilated and that promote health. One should have a certain knowledge of dietetics in order to balance the diet. The body's nutritional requirements fall into five categories: protein, carbohydrates, minerals, fats, and vitamins. Eating non-processed foods directly from nature (preferably organic, free from chemicals and pesticides) will help ensure a better supply of these nutritional needs, since processing, refining, and overcooking destroy much of the food value.

There is a cycle in nature known as the "food cycle" or "food chain." The sun is the source of energy for all life on our planet. Vegetarians eat at the top of this food chain, since they eat plants that derive their nutrients directly from the sun.

The Yogic attitude toward diet is to "eat to live, not live to eat." The Yogi considers, using both his knowledge of nutrition and his internal experience, which foods can be consumed in what minimum quantity with the most positive effect on the body and mind, and with the least negative impact on the environment and least pain to other beings. When one has a vision of world unity, the hunger of others, the suffering of animals, and the condition of the environment are all part of dietary considerations. One of the first ways to take responsibility for the planet is by eating with consideration.

Fasting is also a part of the Yogic dietary regime. Fasting plus rest is nature's universal

prescription for all ailments, from fevers to broken limbs. Along with prayer, it is recommended by all religions for purification, self-discipline, and self-control.

**Positive thinking** (deep philosophy) and **meditation** put you in control. The intellect is purified. The lower nature is brought under conscious control through steadiness and concentration of mind.

Yoga gives a sublime practical philosophy. As the great Yoga Master **H.H. Swami Sivananda says**, “**The only basis of true and lasting unity of all humanity is the religion of the heart. Religion of the heart is the religion of love.**” And, “Samadhi (super-conscious state) is blissful union with the supreme Self. It leads to the direct intuitive realization of the infinite. It is an inner divine experience which is beyond the reach of speech and mind. You will have to realize this yourself through deep meditation. The senses, the mind and the intellect cease functioning. There is neither time nor causation here.”

**Yoga is a life of self-discipline built upon the tenets of simple living and high thinking.**

Please do not discount the value of the combined approach to Yoga self-culture. If you follow these five points, which compose a true holistic approach to the whole system of body, mind, and soul, you will gain strength and balance to face this decisive world era. When body, mind, and soul are healthy and harmonious, the higher mind can easily triumph over the vicious instinctive lower mind. Obstacles become stepping stones to success, and life is a school for the development of character, compassion, and realization of the Divine All-pervading Self. You will gain a new angle of vision of health and positivity. If you can heal your own body and mind, you will be capable of healing and taking care of the planet. I pray that you will practice the time-tested ancient techniques and philosophy presented in this book, and that you will attain Health, Happiness, and Eternal Peace. May lord bless you. Thy own Self. **OM TAT SAT**

**Swami Vishnu-devananda**

**The Complete Illustrated Book of Yoga**

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## Unity in Diversity - guru's teaching

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Behind the names and forms, there is the universal life or hidden Brahman or immanent God. Try to feel the reality underneath the forms. Scorn not the tiny creatures or the undeveloped beings. The same life that throbs or pulsates in you is throbbing in ants, dogs, elephants and all creatures. Realize your identity and intimate relationship with all creatures. There is only a difference in degree in manifestation or expression. All forms belong to God or Saguna Brahman.

What is common in sun, moon, stars, chains, walls, stones, animals, birds and human beings? Existence. A table exists. A tree exists. Existence is the Sat aspect of Sat-Chit-Ananda Brahman.

There is only an apparent, fictitious difference in bodies and minds. There are differences

in colors and opinions. Atman is the same in all. A thief, a scavenger, a king a rogue, a saint, a dog, a cat and a rat – all have the same common Atman. Ignore the false appearance and difference. Take out the essence of reality. From such practice you will derive inexpressible joy. All hatred will cease. You will develop cosmic love and unity of consciousness. This will be the rare magnanimous experience. This will eventually result in the Vedantic realization of Oneness, Advaita.

Excerpts from various writings of H.H. Sri Swami Sivanandaji Maharaj. We hope this select passages will provide a useful reading material to everyone who endeavors to lead a disciplined spiritual life.

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## Ayaz - inspiring story

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Ayaz, A mere slave, became the chief minister of Mahmud Ghazni. Mahmud Ghazni loved him intensely. This aroused the jealousy of the other ministers. They tried their best to make the emperor angry with Ayaz and send him away. All their efforts and tricks proved futile. Ghazni loved Ayaz all the more.

The ministers one day asked Mahmud Ghazni, "O adorable emperor! Please tell us why your love this slave so much." The emperor replied, "Yes, there is a positive reason for this. You will know after some time."

Some two months later the emperor called all his ministers, including Ayaz, and said, "My beloved ministers, tomorrow I will hide myself in the royal garden outside the city. Start looking for me early in the morning and find me before sunset. I will give rich presents to those who find me."

All the ministers gladly consented and went to their homes with cheerful hearts. Their minds were ever on the nature of the presents they would get the following day. They did not even get good sleep during the night.

That night the emperor ordered that all the streets leading to the city gates should be filled with groups of singers and dancing parties of young, beautiful damsels. Accordingly the dancers and singers filled the streets the next morning.

All ministers started for the city gates at dawn. On their way, however, they could not resist the temptation of listening to the music and witnessing the dance performances of the young, beautiful girls. Every minister thought within himself, "The garden in which the emperor is hidden is a small one. I will be able to find him in a few minutes. Let me enjoy the music and the dance. I have not witnessed anything like this in my lifetime. All these girls are expert songsters and dancers."

The sun was about to set. The ministers started in a hurry to the gates to reach the garden outside. But by the time they reached the garden, the sun had already set. To their shame and dismay they found their emperor in the happy company of Ayaz.

The ministers asked Ayaz, "When did you come here? Did you not witness the dancing and singing parties?" Ayaz said, "What dancing and singing parties? I did not see any. I came straight to the garden at sunrise and met my master. I have been with him all the

came straight to the garden at sunrise and met my master. I have been with him all the time since then.” The emperor said, “Look here, my beloved ministers! That is the reason why I love Ayaz intensely. His eyes see nothing but me, his heart has no place for anything except myself. How can I forget him. How can I cease loving him? He is dearest to me than life itself. How can I ignore him?”

You must also love the Lord with such wholehearted devotion as Ayaz loved his master. Your eyes should see nothing but the Lord. Your heart must have no place for anything but your Beloved. You must ever chant and sing His Name and glories. Only then will He enthrone Himself in your heart. He will Himself become your lover. You will dwell in Him happily forever.

*Inspiring Stories*  
**Swami Sivananda**

## Oatmeal with Sweet Potato & Apricot - eat wholesome

Stirring grated sweet potato and dried apricots into oatmeal produces an earthy sweetness with a heartier taste than fruit alone would contribute. This is a tasty and different way to start the morning.

Makes 2 to 4 serving

2 cups old-fashioned rolled oats

1 medium sweet potato, peeled and grated (about 3 cups)

4 dried apricots, chopped

3/4 teaspoon sea salt

Bring 5 1/2 cups water to a boil in a large saucepan. Stir in the oats, sweet potato, apricots, and salt and return to boil. Reduce the heat to very low, cover and simmer, stirring occasionally, until the oats are tender and the sweet potato is cooked, about 20 minutes.

Variation for sweet version:

Use apple instead of sweet potato, grated. Add 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon powder and some sugar to taste.

**3 Bowls**

**Vegetarian recipes from an American Zen Buddhist Monastery**

## Class Schedule - from centre

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	Beginner Course 11.30am- 1.00pm
12.30 - 1.15						Beginner	

1.45 pm							
6.30 - 7.45 pm	Beginner	Open	Beginner	Open	Beginner		
8.00 - 9.15 pm	Open	Beginner	Open	Beginner			

**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.

**Beginner Course:**

A systematic introduction to the theory and practice of yoga for beginners or for anyone looking to renew their practice. This is 8-weekly course takes a step by step approach for developing strength, flexibility, good breathing habits, concentration and relaxation.

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

