



## SIVANANDA YOGA VEDANTA CENTRE SINGAPORE

MARCH'09 NEWSLETTER

### IN THIS ISSUE:

Article: Deepening the Yoga Experience

Sharing from students: Personal Yoga Experience, by Shir Khim

In Focus: The flexible truth about Yoga, interview with Janaki & Sumukhee

## Deepening the YOGA Experience

### March Announcement

Temporary stop for  
Tuesday 12.30pm Open  
class & Wednesday  
4.30pm Gentle class.

Change of Schedule:  
Tues Open class  
6.30pm  
Wed Intermediate class  
8.00pm

This article offers practical advice to help you with the inner experience of yoga. It is important to remember that progress in our practice should be approached in a holistic manner. If we experience difficulties in one aspect of our practice, we can balance these out by other aspects where we may be more proficient. In fact to be strong in one aspect does not necessarily indicate overall progress.

### Asanas and The Three Gunas

In order to increase harmony and peace within our lives, we need to be aware of the influence of the three gunas or the three qualities of nature. These are Sattva, Rajas and Tamas.

#### Connect with Sattva

Sattva is the foundation of creativity and inner peace. Watch the sunrise or sunset out in nature. At this time sattva predominates in the atmosphere and uplifts body and mind. Eat fresh and pure vegetarian food at times when the sun is high, rather than sunset. Water neutralizes energies. Take a shower before practicing yoga, but wait at least fifteen minutes after a yoga session before showering. The scent of sandal or rose from good incense or essential oil enhance sattva.

#### Avoid Rajas

Avoid all stimulants such as coffee, tea, alcohol, tobacco, drugs, garlic or any of the onion family, as well as synthetic alcohol-based perfumes. Loud music, too much talking, or association with large groups of people all increase rajasic energy.

#### Avoid Tamas

Meat and stale food, poorly-ventilated rooms, oversleeping, overeating, lack of cleanliness in your living space, and lack of physical exercise all increase tamasic energy.

## Positive Effects of Asanas on the Gunas

The energy changes experienced during asana practice are actually not an increase in quantity, as commonly perceived, but rather a change in quality. The vibratory level changes from tamas and rajas to sattva.

Imagine a yoga class where half the students enter with a rajasic energy. They are unable to relax, their breath is accelerated and they constantly adjust their pose. The other half of the class is in a tamasic state. Their bodies feel heavy, breathing is short and shallow, and the relaxation pose seems the only attractive posture for them. Now imagine the class is told to come into the shoulderstand and hold it

is short and shallow, and the relaxation pose seems the only attractive posture for them. Now imagine the class is told to come into the shoulderstand and hold it quietly for three minutes. Those students with rajas, will find the holding uncomfortable. Their minds say: "I need variation." As they hold the pose, after a minute or so their breath will automatically deepen and slow down, muscles will relax, and the energy will shift to sattva.

Those students with more tamas in their system will also find maintaining the posture uncomfortable. But their question will be "When can I return to the relaxation pose?" Holding the pose will stimulate the breath and heart beat, and tamas will be transformed into rajas and then into sattva.

The more we avoid tamasic and rajasic influences in our daily lives and the more contact we have with sattvic influences, the more quickly the asanas will change our vibratory level. With practice, even twenty to thirty minutes of asana practice will be enough to produce a change in the gunas. The practice of asanas gives us tremendous confidence to face whatever challenges life presents us with, because we begin to understand that creativity and peace are accessible with each session. More advanced yogis can change the gunas by mere will power.

## Pratyahara and Dharana in Asanas

The five senses function through the projection of prana or energy. It is an illusion to think that we take prana in when we use our senses. For example, for the ear to hear, nerve impulses travel back and forth between the central nervous system and the ear, and prana is projected towards the sensory object.

Through pratyahara or withdrawal of the senses, the senses become so well controlled that they simply follow the mind. If the mind does not want to hear sounds, the sense of hearing is automatically withdrawn. Asanas can help attain mastery over this limb of raja yoga.

When we hold an asana we focus on the movement of prana in the body. We project prana to contract certain muscles and then withdraw it again to relax them. The movement of sense energy is similar, only the vibratory level is higher. During asana practice, we may feel subtle sensations in the body, such as body weight, a subtle warmth or the perception of infinity when we visualize the space in the atoms of the cells. These experiences turn the senses inward, thus avoiding, in a natural manner, the need to repress the outward-moving tendency. The sensory experience in asanas is so attractive, that these outward-moving tendencies are relinquished with little or no resistance.

The mind is prana at the highest vibratory level. Dharana or concentration is difficult because we must abandon all thoughts that distract us from the object of concentration. In asanas there are innumerable ways to help the mind concentrate. There is variety, and yet this variety is contained within one field, the body. We develop dharana by projecting mental prana onto that one field. The more we practice control of prana through asanas, the better the chance we have of experiencing dharana.

Swami Sivadasananda- Sivananda Yoga Life

---

## Personal Yoga Experience

In March and April newsletter, couple of students are so kind to share their personal yoga experience with us. Any reason, incident or calling that lead us to try yoga and continue practicing has reserved a special meaning and story telling topic.

For example, we have known Khim for more than 2 years, but only after reading her personal



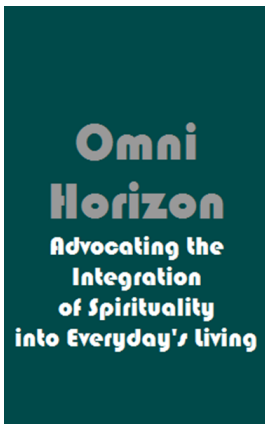
For example, we have known Khim for more than 2 years, but only after reading her personal experience, we realized that there are so many “aha” moments that we would have missed. Please read on...



I started yoga some years ago, because I heard a voice inside me telling me to 'do yoga'. It was during a time of mourning, after my granduncle's death. I felt an urge to start living consciously, because there wasn't a minute more to waste. And I happened to be reading a copy of Yoga Journal on the plane, when I heard that voice inside telling me to 'do yoga'. I had dabbled with yoga before, a few lessons here and there.. but never seriously. But I took that message seriously, and started looking for a place to do yoga. I tried many places, different styles, found some I thought I liked, but never with the full conviction until one day, when I stumbled upon a yoga class that began with a chant. The teacher didn't look like the typical yoga teacher that I've come to expect... must wear tank top to show off the lean arms, must not have any belly fat, must be super flexible, must be able to demonstrate fancy moves, the list goes on. For one, she was wearing loose clothes, long sleeves, and long pants. And she didn't play some fancy new age music, something which I thought was a must for a yoga class. Yet, I left the class feeling like it was my first, true yoga experience, even though I had been going for classes at different places for many months now. Something clicked. Everything started to make sense. This is what a yoga class should feel like, I remember thinking to myself. I went back to the teacher again, slowly but surely, and found out what I had been taking, was a Sivananda yoga class. And that was how it all began for me. Why did I find it so special.. well, it's hard to explain. But on a very simplistic level, the sequence makes sense. The idea that one asana follows another for a reason, because it is a counterpose, appeals to me. I had been to classes where the teachers actually asked us to choose what asanas we felt like doing. Do you want to focus more on your stomach today or do you want to work on your thighs, she asked. I thought perhaps she didn't have time to plan for her class that day. Anyway, I like the sequence of asanas in a typical Sivananda class. I like the fact that it starts and gives considerable time to pranayama - something most other classes I had attended neglected. I also like the fact that it doesn't shy away from intimidating asanas like headstand - something some teachers refuse to teach in a beginners class - because it believes it's an important asana. And I am also attracted to the idea of the 12 basic asanas - in the more or less fixed sequence, because it's something students can take home and practice on their own. I can't help but suspect some teachers are reluctant to teach a sequence because they want to confuse the students .. so that the only way they can practice properly is to go to a class. Swami Vishnu, in coming up with the Sivananda style, must be thinking what's the easiest way to encourage students to practice on their own, if they can't go for class, because it's so easy to follow. But the physical part aside, what I'm most grateful for, is where Sivananda yoga has led me to discover. Perhaps about 3 months after I attended my first Sivananda class, I made my way to the Sivananda ashram in the Himalayas. And that was really where things started to fall in place for me. Yoga became not just a class that I go for once or twice a week. It became a way of life. Someone once said, even when you're brushing your teeth, it's yoga. I experienced that .. you could say, it starts with mindfulness. One image that keeps coming to my mind, as I try to explain how my life has changed, is that of a scene, seen through a camera. Before, the scene is unfocused... a blur... and after it's adjusted, everything becomes crystal clear. I became more interested in making everything I do, yoga. Even at work, which is hard, and at home as well. Everything becomes more focused. Inevitably, as all who are on the path will know, asanas will lead to one thing.. meditation, or the desire to meditate. which begins with the practice of concentration. In fact, hatha yoga is really a way to prepare your body to keep still. It takes a fit body to sit upright for a period of time without too much strain. it takes a healthy body, to keep up with a daily practice.

I would still say, my journey is just beginning. Meditation I believe, will open more doors to the essence of life. Each day that we practice, every minute that we put in, will lead us closer to that final destination, even if some days, it won't feel like it's leading us anywhere. The desire to meditate grows stronger by the day, and for that, I'm very grateful for Guru Swami Sivananda and Swami Vishnu, for the guidance and for creating the space, the opportunity, for people like me, to start our journeys.

-Shir Khim-



## In Focus!

Ann Tay & Andy Chan joined Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre Singapore recently. Both of them run a place called Omni Horizon, a vehicle advocating the integration of spirituality into everyday's living. They interviewed Sumukhee and Janaki in February. It is featured in their homepage:

<http://www.omnihorizon.com.sg/Omni%20Share.htm>  
The Flexible Truth about Yoga

### Class Schedule

Time	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
8.45 - 9.45 am							Kids
10.00 - 11.15 am						9.30 - 10.30am Satsang	Beginner
11.30 - 12.45 pm						10.45am-12.00pm Open	Open
12.30 - 1.45 pm						12.15pm-1.30pm Beginner	
6.30 - 7.45 pm	Open	Open	Open	Intermedi-ate	Beginner		
8.00 - 9.15 pm	Intermedi-ate	Beginner	Intermedi-ate	Beginner	Open		

**Description:**

Satsang = 20 mins silent meditation, followed by Bhajan and Arati.

Beginner = work on coordination between breathing and basic postures; gaining flexibility.

Intermediate = start learning headstand and postures on strength training.

Open = intermediate to advanced students practice together (not suitable for beginner).

**Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre Singapore**

**69M Spottiswoode Park Road**

**Singapore 088658**

**Website: [www.sivananda.com.sg](http://www.sivananda.com.sg)**

**Email: [info@sivananda.com.sg](mailto:info@sivananda.com.sg)**

**To unsubscribe: [unsubscribe@sivananda.com.sg](mailto:unsubscribe@sivananda.com.sg)**

**Phone: 90679100**

**98386704**