

Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre Singapore

May 2010 Newsletter

Article: Some Light on Yoga Practice

Guru's Teaching: What is Concentration

Eat Wholesome: Walnut Coleslaw

From Centre: Centre close on Saturday, 1 May'10 for Labor Day

New Beginner Course start on Sunday June 6th, 2010

Sunday 10am Beginner class Become Open class start May 2nd

New Book: YOGA Your Home Practice Companion,

Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre

Some Light on Yoga Practice (part 1) - article

Why are we so far away from the Absolute, is also a question. The Supreme Being or Absolute, is transcendent to our level. This transcendence, which we call Brahman or the Absolute, is manifest through space and time by way of externalization and in the process of externalization, the selfhood of experience is gradually lost. the greater the externalization, diversification, expression, manifestation outwardly towards objects in space and time, the greater is the loss of selfhood. The more we are conscious of an external object, the greater is the loss of self-consciousness. As we noted earlier, in all attachments to objects of sense there is a transference of self to the object, so that we lose ourselves first in order that we may love the object. So self-loss takes place on account of a complete transference of character of selfhood to the object outside. The more we move outwardly, the less is the selfhood of experience, and the greater is the loss of the selfhood, the greater also in the loss in the quality of happiness. So it is the Self that is the course of Bliss, not any object or any kind of external movement toward an object.

But the more we gravitate towards externality, the more is the extend and the measure of loss of selfhood in us. Thus, we have descended too far.

According to Vedanta terminology, there is a gradual descent from Brahman to Isvara, from Isvara to Hiranyagarbha, from Hiranyagarbha to Virat, and from Virat there is a further triplication taking place. On one side is the objective world. on the other side is the individuals and in the centre we have got the controlling divinities called Devatas, so that we, the subjects, look upon the object outside through space and time as it is bifurcated from us, with no connection at all between one and the other.

Not only that, something worse has taken place. From the causal condition we have come to the intellectual, from the intellectual to the mental, from the mental to the vital, and from the vital we have come to the physical level. These are the five koshas / sheath. We can imagine how far we have descended. So there is no wonder that we are unhappy, and the so-called happiness of sense contact is not divine happiness - though, by means of psychological analysis, we are able to conclude that event that little fraction of so-called happiness of sense contact is due to presence of the Absolute, by way of reflection and distortion. This is the reason why we are unhappy. This is also the nature of happiness, and this also gives a clue as to how we can reach the Absolute. This method is called *Yoga*.

The practice of yoga is the art of contacting the Absolute. There is no such thing as contacting the Absolute in a literal sense. We know we contact an object, but the Absolute is not an object at all. It is the Self, it is the internal being of everything. How can we contact it? How can we contact our own consciousness? But this is what is meant by yoga. Yoga means union-union of the individual with the Absolute. But what is this union? How can we unite ourselves with our own inner being? This is the difficulty. We cannot even imagine what it is. But this union is a metaphorical in the sense that in yoga there is the union of our consciousness in the present context with the Supreme essence that we are. In this practice of yoga, we gradually lessen the degree and the intensity of externality of consciousness and move inward gradually. it is self-control, ultimately which is called yoga - self-restraint which includes the restraint of the operation of the sense organs, the restraint of the mind, the restraint of the intellect and the restraint of the impulse to externalize consciousness in any manner whatsoever. The urge of the consciousness to manifest itself in external form is contrary to yoga.

In the Kathopanishad there is a hint given to us as how we can practice yoga. There are one or two verses in the Kathopanishad which give the sum and substance of the practice of yoga, which is also the same yoga explained in greater detail in the system of Patanjali. The Kathopanishad says in these verses that the subtle essences of objects are superior to the sensory powers; they are higher in their degree and in quality. Higher than the mind is the intellect; higher than the intellect is the cosmic intellect called Mahat, also called Hiranyagarbha. Higher than that is the peaceful undifferentiated causal state called Avyakta. Higher than that is supreme Absolute, Purusha. The same Upanishad mentions the system of practice in another verse. The senses have to be rooted in the mind. The mind has to be fixed in the Cosmic Intellect, and the Cosmic Intellect has to be united with the Peaceful Being. Sometimes this Peaceful Being, Shanta Atman is identified with the Isvara of the Vedanta. This is how we have to control the mind.

The restraint of the mind and the senses is not an easy affair because, first of all, it is difficult even to understand how this can be done at all. We practice the traditional routines of stopping the breath, not thinking of objects, sometimes not thinking anything at all, and then keeping quiet in a blank state of mind, under the impression that we are practicing yoga. these are all like sweeping the ground, but that is not the entire function in a house, though they are important enough from their own points of view. The mind is not such a simple thing as to come under our control in a few days. For this purpose, intense philosophical analysis is necessary together with other accessories such as living in an atmosphere which is conducive to this practice, and study of scriptures and books which will fill the mind with ideas that are elevating in their nature and of the nature of the practicing of yoga. *Living in the service of a Guru is a great help in this direction*. Finally, a very correct grasp of the meaning of self-control is necessary. Since the Absolute is everywhere and all pervading and its realization in our own experience is the aim of this practice, withdrawal of the mind from objects implies some subtle technique which is commensurate with, or not in contradistinction with, the presence of the omnipresent Absolute.

Sometimes doubts arise in the mind, "From what am I withdrawing the mind? if Brahman is everywhere, if the Absolute is everything, whatever I think in the mind is Absolute only.

So what is it that I am withdrawing myself from? If I think of some object, it is a shape of the Absolute. It is form taken from Brahman. So am I withdrawing the mind from Brahman itself, while my intention is the realization of Brahman? What is self-control?" These doubts may come to the mind of even experienced Sadhakas or seekers.

It is true that the Absolute is everything. The Supreme Being is manifest as all these things. Even the wall that we see in front is the Absolute manifest. But and a terrible 'but' indeed, there is some great mistake in our notion about this wall. We have again to bring our memory the selfhood character of the Absolute. The Absolute, or Brahman is the Atman; it is not a vishaya or an object of sense. So when we look upon this wall as an object outside, it has ceased to be the Absolute, though it is true that ultimately, in its essence, it is that. The mistake is not in the substance of the object such as, or the astitva or existence of the object, but in the nama and rupa, the name and the form of the object, which is the effect of the externalization or the separation of the object from our consciousness. Name and form have to be distinguished from the existence or pure being of the object.

When we say there is an object outside, we make a confusion of characters. There is the object and exists as anything else also exists. This character of existence or being, is general. I exist, you exist, this exists that exists. But the name and the form, the shape and the contour etc are different. This shape of mine has risen on account of the space and time factors interfering with the being that I am. There is a ball of clay or mud, which is the substance. It takes the shape as a pot or vessel. A oblong, it can be square, it can be anything. The substance of every type of pot is the same, the clay. This is the way Brahman exists in everything. The clay exists in every form of the pot but the form of the pot cannot be identified with the substance. What we call the form is a peculiar indeterminate something which is not identical with clay and yet not different from clay. The shape of the pot is what we call the pot, not the clay itself. When I say there is a vessel or a pot, what I actually speak of is the shape which the substance has taken; it is not the substance itself that I am referring to, because that substance is elsewhere also, not only here. This particular shape is the space-time factor involved in that substance we call clay. So the entire problem is due to space-time. It is not due to the substance as such.

Thus, the interference of the so-called factors of space-time in the substance of the Absolute is the cause of the manifestation we call this vast universe. Therefore, self-control, control of the senses, mind control, yoga practice, whatever it is, is not a withdrawal of the mind from the substance of the object, which is the selfhood of things, but from the name and the form which are the external characters of the object. The selfhood of the object is the same as the selfhood of ours. That is not the problem. The problem is the externality of it. Who told us that it is out there? The space makes us feel so. There is something called space. We do not know what space is, what time is. These are only some words that we are using to describe a thing which is ultimately unintelligible.

Article taken from book:

The Essence of Aitareya & Taittiriya Upanishads by Swami Krishnananda,

Chapter VI "Some Light on Yoga Practice".

The 2nd part of this article will continue in June newsletter

What Is Concentration - guru's teaching

Many students ask, "What is meditation?" and "what is concentration?" Someone even asked, "Is there any secret technique by which I can get success fast?" There is no secret or mysterious technique. The techniques are the same that you are using in your daily life. When you cook, if you don't concentrate, what will happen? You burn your food. When you climb a mountain and there is a steep, rocky area, you concentrate otherwise you break your leg or even your neck. When you drive, you concentrate. At some stage most of the concentration becomes a mechanical process. Say, for instance, you are driving a car. In the early stages, of course, when you drive a car you learn everything intellectually. You must know where the brakes are, where the clutch is, where the gears are, and so on and so on, and then once you learn it you pass it onto your subconscious mind to carry on the same activities.

your consciousness mind to carry on the same activities. Most of the activities in your daily life you learn through concentration passing them on to the subconscious mind. So also in relaxation. You learn relaxation consciously. Once you learn the art of relaxation consciously it becomes a habit for you to relax, even while driving. But concentration and meditation are little bit more than merely learning a technique and then passing it on to the subconscious mind. Here you are not only learning to focus your mind on the task you have undertaken, but you are also trying to channel this force to lift you up to the higher planes.

Here is some water. Now it is harmless. I can drink it. It hasn't got much power. If I make this into steam, boil it and make it into steam, and that same steam is passed through a small channel, a tube, it can make a small steam engines move. So the same water, which is slow and sluggish, is dammed and the water is collected and slowly passed through a narrow channel, it can turn a huge turbine to create electricity. In every walk of life, when a substance is sluggish and widely spread on a wide area, it is not capable of producing enough strength and energy. But when you channel and focus this energy through a narrow passage, when it is concentrated, then it is powerful.

Swami Vishnudevananda

New Beginner Course start on Sunday June 6 - from centre

New Beginner Course start on Sunday June 6, 2010

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 through:

- Yoga postures (Asanas)
- Breathing exercises (Pranayama)
- Relaxation exercises
- Introduction to proper diet
- Introduction to positive thinking and meditation
- Introduction to yoga philosophy

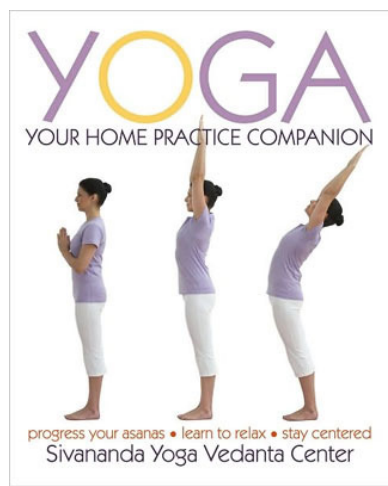
Course meeting dates: June 6, 13, 20, 27; July 5, 11, 18, 25.

Class duration: 90 minutes.

Fee: \$160 for 8-weekly course + 2 open-class passes.

Pre-registration and payment is required.

YOGA Your Home Practice Companion - from centre



Yoga Home Practice Companion is a whole-person, encyclopedic lifestyle guide to personal practice and yogic living from the teachers of the renowned Sivananda Yoga Vedanta School. For beginners and advanced yogis alike, it is both a convenient at a glance posture manual and a deep investigation of the rewards of a yogic lifestyle.

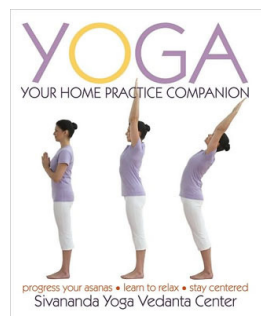
The physical benefits of yoga are detailed with textbook precision, including photographs overlaid with custom anatomical illustrations of bones and muscles. The section title "Proper Exercise" is packed with detailed step-by-step photos of the asanas and extensive notes on proper alignment. Beginner, intermediate and advanced sequences are presented in 20, 40 and 60-minute variations, making the sequences convenient and adaptable to any schedule and skill level. Some poses, such as headstand and forward bend, are accompanied by demonstrations of common misalignments.

"Proper Diet" explains the benefits of the lacto-vegetarian diet and how to transition to this foodstyle from a traditional Western eating pattern and includes 40 delicious meat and yeast-free recipes. "Proper Breathing" covers pranayama techniques and "Proper Relaxation" focuses on achieving physical, mental and spiritual serenity through poses and visualization. The chapter on positive thinking and meditation provides practical exercises to increase concentration and equanimity. There is even a month by month guide to aid positive thinking, assigning each month a quality and supporting affirmation to incorporate in meditation.

In *Yoga Home Practice Companion*, beginners will find all the information, support and encouragement they need to start integrating yoga more fully into their lives. Advanced yogis will find the detailed explanations garnered from the vast expertise of Sivananda's most advanced teachers a valuable reference. Every aspect of cultivating a balanced, positive mind, body and spirit through yoga is examined in the *Yoga Home Practice Companion*.

The book is available at Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre Singapore Boutique

Walnut Coleslaw - eat wholesome



Ingredients:

50 gr shelled walnuts, chopped

2 tbsp pine nuts
 1 tbsp sesame seeds
 1 tbsp sunflower seeds
 1/4 large red cabbage, finely shredded
 1 large carrot, peeled and grated
 50 gr sultanas
 4 tbsp plain natural yogurt
 Juice of half a lime
 3 tbsp walnut oil / olive oil
 2 tsp maple syrup
 1/4 tsp salt
 Freshly ground black pepper to taste
 3 tbsp fresh mint, coriander, or basil, chopped

How to do:

Put the walnuts, pine nuts, sesame and sunflower seeds in a sauté pan and dry fry them over a medium heat, shaking frequently, for about 1 minutes or until lightly toasted and fragrant.

Place the shredded cabbage, carrot, sultanas, toasted walnuts, pine nuts, sesame seeds, and sunflower seeds into a large bowl and mix well.

For dressing, mix the natural yogurt, lime juice, walnut oil, maple syrup, salt and pepper and whisk to combine.

Pour the dressing over the cabbage, add the herbs, and combine well.

Scatter with the whole mint, coriander, or basil leaves before serving.

**You can find this recipe in Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre's newly published book:
 Yoga Your Home Practice Companion.**

Class Schedule - from centre

Time	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
9.30 - 10.30 am						Satsang	
10.00 - 11.15 pm							Open
10.45- 12.00pm						Open	Course (Beginner) 11.30am- 1.00pm
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			

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 basic postures (and their variations), and relaxations. Students will practice and be assisted in their individual level of competency. Not suitable for beginner.

Course (Beginner):

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

Special Class:

Check at www.sivananda.com.sg for program details.

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Serve, Love, Give, Purify, Meditate & Realize