



Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre Singapore

September 2010 Newsletter

Article: The Essence of Bhakti-the Inner Glow of Yoga
Guru's teaching: Sivananda Upanishad 8th September 1945
Workshops: Stress Relief & Yoga, Saturday 18th September, 2.30pm
From centre: -Beginner Course, Monday & Friday 8.00pm, start 13th Sept
-Restorative Yoga Course, Monday & Wednesday 10.00am, start 13 Sept
-September 10th Friday, Hari Raya Puasa - yoga centre closed
-Yoga Retreat: Lembang - Indonesia, 23-27 December 2010

The Essence of Bhakti - the Inner Glow of Yoga - article

Usually Bhakti Yoga is understood as the path of self-surrender with practices like pujas and chanting of mantras. But the highest Bhakti consists in helping others and we can only do this when our heart is open. We can work towards this goal by practicing various yogic techniques to help overcome self-centeredness.

If somebody is having a problem, instead of saying, "Oh yes, I shall come and help you", just be there with the person. Instead of asking, "Do you need this?" we can simply give them what they need. This is a more transparent way of helping, which we call Karma Yoga (selfless service). Real Karma Yoga is the highest Bhakti Yoga. This is the message that the Masters have passed on to us, through their own actions.

If we seriously want to learn Yoga, the first thing to do is to give your time. This is the most precious thing we have. Everybody loves to come for Asanas and Pranayama. They want Yoga to give them plenty of strength and success in life. Yoga is approached with very great expectations, because it is being sold and marketed this way. Yet this is not the real, pure Yoga. The essence of Yoga is Bhakti, a secret of Yoga which is simmering deep inside of every being, like a fire that has diminished to a glow. That glow gives off an amazing heat. When the wood is burning high one should not close the stove completely, for it might explode. One should rather wait until the wood is burnt and only the glow remains. Then the stove can be shut and the real heat is felt.

It is the same thing with human beings. During Tamas or inertia nothing is burning yet, everything is fast asleep. Once the wood has caught fire, giving off plenty of heat and action we call this Rajas. "I do this, I do that, this I like, this I don't like...", this is called Raga-Dvesha, likes and dislikes, and it is like a huge fire which burns until it finally dies down. Only then will it give the real heat; that heat from the glow is Sattva (purity).

In our own hearts, Yoga transforms the fire, allowing the inner fire of cosmic love to glow. It is during the practice of Bhakti Yoga that you experience cosmic love and have no problem sharing it with others.

Only while we are still in the fire do we feel resistant to sharing. In that state we want everything for ourselves, whereas the true inner warmth radiates far and wide; we cannot hold on to it. Letting go of our own time is the first thing we have to learn.

Gandhi was a great Yogi and he taught this lesson to all those who came to live at his Ashram: the first thing they were asked to do was to clean the latrines. In our Sivananda Ashram and Centres, we chop vegetables, wash dishes, vacuum, do reception and go shopping....later on we teach yoga classes or do a puja. At the highest level, there is no difference anymore. They behold the same Self in a person peeling potatoes or doing puja in the temple. It is a long path and it has to be walked all the way. We cannot jump ahead because we think we came here just to meditate. This way we destroy the Bhakti at the root, before it even starts to develop. If you really want to understand Bhakti, you will not learn it from books. You have to practice it, not just accumulate knowledge. "An ounce of practice is better than tons of theory," these are the words of Swami Sivananda.

Take up a selfless activity, in a Centre, in a hospital, in an old age home, taking care of children, etc. You will surely find a way to take care of somebody. Give your time, but don't expect thanks, don't expect money, don't expect anything. The only thanks is that glow in your own heart. Do not let it die. This happens to so many people. All of a sudden they have a big fire: Yoga. They take the Teachers' Training Course, then Sadhana Intensive, they teach....and then? The glow diminishes. To keep the glow alive inside of you remember that this comes only through selfless actions done without expecting anything in return.

Swami Vishnu-devanandaji gave many lectures, but he was actually always giving the same lecture. Sometimes I thought, 'He is always saying the same thing: Serve, Love, Give, Purify...., just like Swami Sivananda, But what does this really mean? You serve, you give, and at the same time you actually love to give. That is difficult, isn't it? If you keep doing it, this is called Abhyasa or practice. it purifies you. You can practice it in your own family, with your children, your husband or wife, or in your community. This way life becomes service only. Whatever our situation, our lives become miserable after some time due to our own selfishness. We want things to be different, the people with whom we live, our children, our boss, the city, the traffic, the food, our own body, our own face. We begin to find faults.

Once we really accept life, we start serving. If we can accept the other person the way he or she is, that is the highest service, and for this you do not have to go anywhere. No need to go to any institutions, no need to expect anything from anybody, no need to organize anything. You just get up in the morning and they are there before you: your children, the elderly, your partner in life and your colleagues. Often you spend more time with your colleagues than with your own family. You see them from morning until evening, whereas you spend time only in the evening and on weekends with your family.

Life is made for purification; it aims at understanding that everybody is part of the universe. If you realize this not only in your mind, but if you really feel it within you, then you become a Bhakta. How you come to that point is not important. You can get there as Christian, a Jew, a Muslim, a Hindu or as a Yogi. I purposely set Yoga a little bit aside from the main religions because you can be a Yogi in any religion.

That love which is expressed through Bhakti is called Prem (divine love). It is this glow and warmth. When the body lets go a little bit, our own will and ego let go. We experience this in meditation and during final relaxation after the asanas as well as just before falling asleep. It is part of us. It is everybody's birthright to feel this. During sleep we let go of our will. This is why we love to sleep. However, we do not experience this consciously, because our consciousness is not fully connected. When we wake up and somebody asks us, "Did you sleep well?," we cannot convey the experience. Whereas during meditation, we experience consciously. We experience peace, shanti, letting go of the will, not having to play any role.

Once we let go, we can be with many people without getting disturbed, because we are just ourselves. That is also Bhakti, because then we give of ourselves, not some projection. Most people are afraid to be themselves in front of others; they are full of ideas of what they want to be or what they do not want to be.

A wonderful exercise that swami Vishnu-devanandaji gave is teaching a yoga class. The only way to be a good yoga teacher is to be able to be yourself. You have to use your own voice. When Swamiji was teaching one could not tell whether he was teaching or just talking to somebody. It was the same. It is at that moment that something is transmitted; a spark is ignited and Bhakti is experienced. All our practices aim at this experience.

Asanas and Pranayama are also beneficial, particularly during the first years of Sadhana (spiritual practice). The energies have to settle down and purify, become clear and smooth. The next step is Japa and meditation, sattwa (purity) and intuition. In sattwa we find Truth and Bhakti. To keep this sattwa you cannot remain forever with the same practice. Swami Vishnu-devanandaji started all the Centres with Asanas and Pranayama, but you cannot remain on the same level forever. The next step is to develop intuition and to experience Bhakti. Then you will be able to face anything in life.

Once a man attacked and tried to kill Swami Sivananda. Instead of retaliating, Swami Sivananda brought him garlands, flowers and fruits the next day. When we hear this we might think, "Well for Swami Sivananda it is different, he was a saint" In the true understanding of Bhakti everything makes sense. It is only the intellect that constantly tries to twist things the way it likes them. Everything makes sense. Each of us has a different karma, and we have to live through this prarabdha karma; that karma which has been allotted to us for this life and which we are bound to experience.

Each person we meet, we have met before in a past life. We must thus endeavor to live our dharma - our duty in life - with love and patience. We cannot go on twisting things, avoiding things, lying to others and to ourselves and creating chaos. Therefore one should find a Guru and follow a system. Some order will slowly come into our life, and with it Bhakti. We cannot learn Bhakti; we have to work for it for many years. The story of Jesus and his disciples tells us the same thing. The disciples followed Jesus, and Jesus finally gave them illumination. Jesus showed us that the body is not the most important thing. What did Jesus do? He served the sick and the weak.

This is the teaching of Yoga. There is only a different accent in the beginning. We practice asanas and pranayama to gain strength and to purify. But if we get stuck with Asanas, there won't be any Bhakti. Without Bhakti, the energy to continue to serve will not be there. Frustration and sickness can be the result.

Bhakti is most important. Nobody can tell us what we should do. We have to look inside, make resolves and really follow them. These need to be in the proper order - first gear, second gear, third gear - we cannot start in fourth gear. So we should make small resolves and stick to them. That is self-discipline. We should develop our ethics and morals, then everything will work better and we will get a golden shine inside and outside. The simplest thing will look beautiful. The colors will have a different radiance. Everything will be beautiful.

May Master's blessing be upon you.
 Hari Om Tat Sat.

by Swami Durgananda, Yoga Acharya,

Sivananda Upanishad 8th September 1945 - guru's teaching

Blessed aspirants,

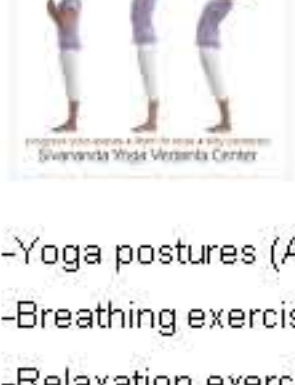
Lord Siva is the God of love. His grace is boundless. He is the beloved of Uma. He is Satyam, Sevam, Subham, Sundaran, Kantam. He is the supreme light that shine in your heart



Meditate on His forms, hear His lilas, repeat His mantras "Om Namah Sivaya". Study Siva Purana. Do his worship daily. Behold Him in all names and forms. He will bless you with His vision.

Swami Sivananda

New Beginner Course, Monday & Friday 8.00 - 9.30pm, start 13th Sept - from centre



A systematic introduction to the theory and practice of yoga for beginners or for anyone looking to renew their practice. This is twice-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 5 points of yoga
- Introduction to yoga philosophy

Course meeting dates, **September: 13, 17, 20, 24, 27. October: 1, 4, 8.**

Class duration: 90 minutes.

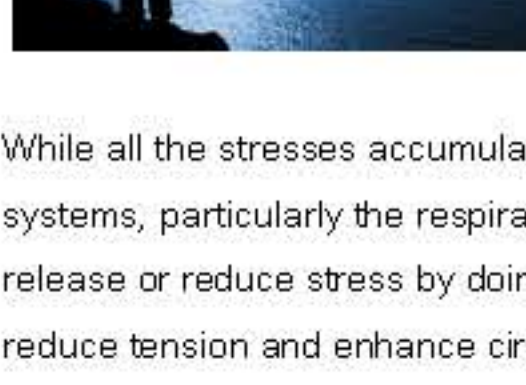
Fee: \$200 for 8 scheduled classes + 2 ongoing classes + YOGA Your Home Practice Companion Book.

Pre-registration and payment is required.

Email: info@sivananda.com.sg

Phone: 90679100

Stress Relief & Yoga, Saturday 18th Sept, 2.30pm - workshop



Early stress signals such as nervousness, irritability, neck pain, shoulder and back pain, and disrupted sleep.

One of the main cause of the stress is environment factor. From the bigger issue such as job pressure to the small issue such as hurry to catch public transportation.

While all the stresses accumulate can cause outbursts of anger or violent behavior. In short, stress affects our body's systems, particularly the respiratory, digestive, endocrine and cardiovascular systems. There are simple solutions to release or reduce stress by doing yoga exercises. Combination of postures/asanas and breathing exercise would reduce tension and enhance circulation, hormone system, and energy to boost the immune system in the body.

This workshop is an introduction to recognize different type of stress, understand if you are under stress and what kind of simple postures and breathing can help reduce stress. If we could not live in an ideal stress-free environment, then arm with powerful tools to fend off stress is very important.

Date: **Saturday 18th September 2010 at 2.30 - 3.30pm**

Fee: \$20 per person

Pre-registration and payment is required.

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