World Peace
Swami Sivananda

Bhakti Yoga – The Surest Way to God
Swami Swaroopananda

Your Living Spine
Swami Sivadasananda

Overcoming obstacles on the spiritual path
Swami Durgananda

Yogic Symbols and Deities
Swami Bhagavatananda

Visionary
Swami Vishnudevananda in the Bahamas
Kamala Devi

Practical Ayurveda
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Overcoming Pain
Swami Sivasankariananda

Cover photo: Special Puja ceremony for 75th Birth Year Celebration of Swami Durgananda
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EDITOR’S LETTER

International Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres

Swami Sivananda (1887 – 1963)
The spiritual strength behind the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres, Swami Sivananda’s teachings are a synthesis of all the formal doctrines of yoga. Author of more than 300 books on yoga, Swami Sivananda was a medical doctor before renouncing worldly life for the spiritual path. He founded the Divine Life Society and the Yoga-Vedanta Forest Academy, Rishikesh, Himalayas. His main message was: Serve, Love, Give, Purify, Meditate, Realise. In 1957 he sent one of his foremost disciples, Swami Vishnudevananda to the West to spread the ideals of yoga. Swami Sivananda entered Mahasamadhi on July 14th 1963.

Swami Vishnudevananda (1927 – 1993)
Born in South India in 1927, Swami Vishnudevananda entered the ashram of Swami Sivananda at the age of 18. A world famous authority on Hatha and Raja Yoga, Swami Vishnudevananda founded the International Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres in 1957 and was author of The Complete Illustrated Book of Yoga, Meditation and Mantras, Karma and Disease and a commentary on the Hatha Yoga Pradipika. Swami Vishnudevananda entered Mahasamadhi on November 9th, 1993.

The Executive Board
The Executive Board of the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres is comprised of senior disciples of Swami Vishnudevananda, personally chosen and trained by him to direct the organisation after his departure. Each of them has had many years’ experience in teaching all aspects of yoga. They are renowned for their devotion to Swami Vishnudevananda and Swami Sivananda and for their profound knowledge and inspirational teaching and guidance, wisdom imparted to many thousands of students throughout the world. We welcome Kanti Devi, Acharya for the South American Centres and Prahlad, Acharya for the Indian and Canadian Centres, as new members on the executive board.

Editorial
The executive board of the International Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres recently held their bi-annual meeting at our headquarters in Val Morin, Quebec, and decided to rephrase their mission statement as follows: “Practicing and teaching the ancient yogic knowledge for health, peace, Unity in Diversity and Self-realization.” In these times of increasingly rapid changes and consequent insecurity, it is more important than ever to reassert with full conviction the depth of the ancient yogic teachings, which aim to advance the evolution of mankind through the inner realisation of the oneness of all. Yoga is both an end and a means. It comprises many paths, all leading to one truth, one consciousness.

This issue of YogaLife puts the emphasis on the path of bhakti (devotion) as a way to free oneself from the lower emotions of pride, greed, anger, hatred and jealousy. Bhakti yoga helps us to cultivate an attitude of humility and surrender, which greatly helps reduce the identification with body and personality.

This year we celebrate the 75th birth year of Swami Durgananda. A wonderful ceremony was held at our Ashram in Neyyar Dam, Kerala, paying homage to her 45 years of complete dedication to serving the peace mission of Swami Vishnudevananda.

The Sivananda Ashram Yoga Retreat in Nassau, Bahamas, also recently celebrated its 50th anniversary. This was where Swami Vishnudevananda had a vision of a gigantic fire engulfing the entire planet. It was this vision which led to the creation of the TRUE WORLD ORDER, a peace organisation dedicated to the aim of bringing about outer peace by training individuals in the yogic techniques for finding inner peace. This seems more urgent than ever. Let us humbly and courageously try and walk in his footsteps.

Om Shanti,
The Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre
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“The ‘peace’ that prevails today is the peace of fear and the peace of preparation. Ignoring the sincere advice of men of wisdom, the great nations of the world are intent upon demonstrating their destructive strength. That way lies war, not peace”. – Swami Sivananda
In this Preface to his book *World Peace*, Swami Sivananda addresses some of the most pressing and intractable issues of this and the previous century: Why is there war? What is peace? What are the conditions necessary to bring about lasting peace?

This year marks the 60th Anniversary of Swami Sivananda’s 71st Birthday Message, also known as the *Message of Peace*, which was delivered on 8 September, 1958. Here we reproduce that Message in full, together with Swami Sivananda’s sixteen-point action plan: Peace — A summary.

All the problems facing mankind today hinge around Peace. Given the secret of securing peace, man will be able to build up a sane civilisation, prosperous society, happy home, and intelligent individual. Groping blindfolded in the dark, man lays hold only on a series of destructive media – the atomic bomb – the most ‘effective’ ways of using them, and the hateful ideologies of political self-aggrandisement, economic monopoly, national glory and individual power.

The ‘peace’ that prevails today is the peace of fear and the peace of preparation. Ignoring the sincere advice of men of wisdom, the great nations of the world are intent upon demonstrating their destructive strength. That way lies war, not peace. Peoples belonging to different religions, different nations, and different classes or castes, stir up jealousy, ill-will and hatred towards others, in the fair name of religion, patriotism, and various other ‘isms’. Forgetting for the moment that what divisions exist in the structure of society today are there for the convenience of Man and for the promotion of commonwealth.

This disharmony arises in the heart of man, infects the household first and gradually spreads to the society, and then the nation and the world at large. No amount of readjustment of the social structure and revolution of the political set-up will bring permanent peace. Even where these are necessary they should spring from the heart of man, for the sake of humanity.

Peace is the nature of the innermost Self of man: *Shanto Ayam Atma*. He who even strives to realise this Self, who has begun to direct his attention towards this Self, enjoys this peace that prevails in the Self. Even as the nuclear explosion spreads destructions for miles around, this superphenomenal experience of the Peace of the Self generates the powerful current of Peace that dispels the darkness of ignorance and disharmony from the heart of everyone who attunes oneself to the Yogi of such experience. Even a few yogins of inner spiritual experience of Self-realisation can transform the whole world and bring peace, plenty and prosperity. For, millions devoted to them will share the spiritual treasures acquired by them. They will begin to feel that the One Self dwells in all. One Life lives in all, and One Cosmic Will expresses itself through countless beings. They will begin to see that all distinctions are man-made and that all boundaries are imaginary. They will begin to think in terms of humanity, to practise the universal religion of cosmic love. This is the road to peace.


“One Self dwells in all. One Life lives in all, and One Cosmic Will expresses itself through countless beings.”

--Swami Sivananda
Swami Sivananda on Peace – a summary

1. Many are working today for the promotion of world peace without having peace in themselves. Their loud propaganda, big talk and lectures cause more confusion, conflict and discord.

2. A proper understanding of the essential unity of religions is the most effective and powerful factor in bringing about peace in this world. It will remove all superficial differences and conflicts which create restlessness, discord and quarrels.

3. If everyone turns to the Supreme peace within, there will be peace everywhere. A glorious new era of peace, amity, love and prosperity can be ushered in only if the youth of the day is educated in the methods of self-culture. Educate the moral conscience of the public. This will bring lasting world-peace.

4. You can elevate others only if you have elevated yourself. This world can be saved only by those who have already saved themselves. A prisoner cannot liberate other prisoners. One realized sage can do more for the promotion of peace than a thousand missionaries preaching and disputing, day in and day out.

5. There will be no war, if all people practice truthfulness, universal love, purity, mercy, contentment, self-sacrifice, self-restraint and tolerance. Ahimsa (non-violence) is the key to peace.

6. Peace is the happy, natural state of man. It is his birth right. War is his disgrace.

7. Peace is a state of quiet. It is freedom from disturbance, anxiety, agitation, riot or violence. It is harmony, silence, calm, repose, rest. Specifically, it is the absence or cessation of war.

8. All over the world, great conferences are held for bringing about universal peace, universal brotherhood, and universal religion. It is the vanity of man that goads him to reform society without first reforming himself. Vanity rules the world. When two vain people meet, there is friction and quarrel. In the case of social reform, self-styled enlightened men started interfering with the customs and manners of people, in an effort to civilize them. The people lost their old moorings, and the reformers could not offer new, sound ones. Masses of people drifted away into chaos. How can blind men lead other blind men?

9. No piece of paper called a treaty can establish peace in this world. The way of peace is very simple and straight: it is the way of Love and Truth.

10. Money cannot give you peace. You can purchase many things, but you cannot purchase peace. You can buy soft beds, but you cannot buy sleep. You can buy good food, but you cannot buy good appetite. You can buy good tonics, but you cannot buy good health. You can buy good books, but you cannot buy wisdom.

11. Perfect peace cannot be promoted by anybody who does not have perfect peace in himself. No political ‘ism’ can ever solve the problem and bring about real peace. Each new ‘ism’ creates only more problems and more quarrels.

12. Love alone can bring peace to the world. Therefore, love all. Only if everyone practices the religion of love, can there be peace in the world.

13. Ethics should be put into practice by all. This alone will contribute to peace, universal love, unity, proper understanding, world harmony and brotherhood of mankind.

14. Everlasting Peace can be found only within your own Atman or Self, or God.

15. World-peace is possible when all the people of the world wake up to the facts governing universal life and when there is a heart-to-heart feeling of goodness, love and oneness among the inhabitants of the world.

16. Peace, to be lasting and constructive, must be achieved through God. There can be no peace without the Lord or God. God is Peace. Root yourself in Peace or God. Now you are fit to radiate peace.
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VISIONARY – SWAMI VISHNUDEVANANDA IN THE BAHAMAS

Visionary
Swami Vishnudevananda in the Bahamas
By Kamala Devi

This year marks the 50th Anniversary of the Inauguration of the Sivananda Ashram Yoga Retreat on Paradise Island in the Bahamas on February 4, 1968.
Swami Vishnudevananda's association with the Bahamas is profound. It is not an exaggeration to say that Swami Vishnudevananda's association with the Bahamas accelerated the spread of yoga throughout the world and played a significant role in spreading the message of peace to millions far beyond the yoga community.

The Bahamas was the setting for three key events in Swami Vishnudevananda's life: his vision of a harmonious community which had existed in ancient times and so had the potential to exist again; a vision of a catastrophic future which would unfold if humanity did not sincerely pursue its alternative; and a meeting with some of the most charismatic and influential voices of the twentieth century.

Swami Vishnudevananda visited the Bahamas very early after his arrival in the West. His first recorded visit was arranged in 1960 by the Rev Dr Prince Hepburn, less than three years after Swamiji first landed in San Francisco in December, 1957. This 1960 visit was pivotal, for it was here, walking along a beach at sunset, that Swami Vishnudevananda first envisioned a Yoga Retreat where people could learn the ancient science of yoga, health and mysticism.

In 1962 Swamiji’'s great benefactor, Wayne V. Myers spent two weeks with Swami Sivananda in Rishikesh. In January 1963 Wayne Myers, renowned Bahamian ballet master and yoga teacher Hubert Farrington, and his assistant George Shannon of the Nassau Yoga Vedanta Society, brought Swamiji to the Bahamas for a sell-out series of programmes. These week-long programmes became annual events.

‘That Indian really was something …’

It was during one of these programmes that Swamiji first met the Beatles. It was the fourth day of the Yoga Week programme and the first full day of shooting on Paradise Island for the Beatles’ film Help! — Thursday, February 25, 1965. Hearing that they were filming at Cabbage Beach, Swamiji went down to meet them and gave each an inscribed copy of the Complete Illustrated Book of Yoga. It was George Harrison’s 22nd Birthday. He later spoke about the significance of this event:

‘Look at this book. An Indian gave us each a copy of it when we were in the Bahamas. It’s signed and dated 25 February. My birthday. I’ve only recently opened it since I became interested in India. It’s fantastic. That Indian really was something. You can tell by his name. It’s really a title, showing you how learned he is. I now know it was part of a pattern. It was all planned that I should read it now. It all follows a path, just like our path. John, Paul, and George converged, then a little later Ringo. We were part of that action, which led to the next reaction. We’re all just little cogs in an action that everyone is part of.’

In the British Film Institute notes to Help! it is said that it was this meeting and this book which sparked George Harrison’s interest in Eastern spiritualism.

As significant as it was, this Paradise Island meeting proved to be the first of several meetings with the Beatles. In June 1969 Swamiji took part in John Lennon and Yoko Ono’s Bed-in for Peace in Montreal, and in August 1971 he attended George Harrison’s Concert for Bangladesh at Madison Square Garden. George Harrison was also instrumental in helping Swamiji find the first London Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre in Portobello Road in 1969.

Swamiji with Wayne Myers, who brought Swamiji to the Bahamas for a sell-out series of programmes in January 1963.

Swamiji with Ravi Shankar and George Harrison before the Concert for Bangladesh, Madison Square Garden, New York in 1971.
Significant, too, was the 1967 Yoga Week programme. Opened by the Premier, the Hon. P.I. Pindling, and attended by senior members of the medical establishment, the seminar focused specifically on Yoga and Mental Health. This proved to be of great personal benefit to the daughter of local resident Mrs Natalie Boswell who had been introduced to Swamiji by the saintly Rev Dr Prince Hepburn – ‘the heart of the Bahamas’. Mrs Boswell owned a 4-acre estate on Paradise Island and, impressed by the work that Swamiji was doing and encouraged by Rev Hepburn, Mrs Boswell shortly afterwards leased the Ashram site to him for 99 years. The lease was signed on November 1, 1967 and the Sivananda Ashram Yoga Retreat was officially opened on 4 February 1968.

At the Inauguration there was an address by Swamiji; a performance of classical Indian dance by Malathi Ramji (the famed dancer from the film Nine Hours to Rama); a Hatha Yoga demonstration; and a sumptuous Indian buffet. The opening was attended by 350 guests, some of whom had flown in from the United States. At that time the Retreat could accommodate only 35 – 45 people in the main house and seven small cottages scattered around the grounds.

The vision
It was in the quiet hours following the inauguration, however, that Swamiji experienced a vision so profound that it set the future direction of his life. Even though at the time he had no knowledge of the writings of Plato, Pliny, Lord Bacon or Edgar Cayce about a lost ancient civilization in the Atlantic, Swamiji had become increasingly aware of a mysterious force there. Then, while sitting quietly for meditation at the ancient rock which now forms the altar of the Ashram Temple, Swamiji had a vision in which he saw people running in terror from a giant ball of fire. They were attempting to escape but could not, being prevented from escape by barriers on all sides. Horrified by this vision Swamiji founded T.W.O. (True World Order), an organisation which aims to promote world peace and understanding.

T.W.O. has a dual approach: to train future leaders and responsible citizens through the Sivananda Yoga Teachers’ Training Courses, and to raise people’s awareness and supply practical and philosophical techniques for finding peace through dedicated Peace Missions and associated peace initiatives.

One of these early peace initiatives was the International Yoga Teachers’ Congress at the Retreat from March 29 to April 4 1975. This congress was the first event of its kind in the world which brought together senior spiritual and political leaders under the banner of ‘Unity in Diversity’. It was attended by renowned civil rights leader Rev Ralph Abernathy who had been elected the President of the Southern Christian Leadership
The International Yoga Teachers Congress at the Retreat in 1975 was the first event of its kind in the world which brought together senior spiritual and political leaders under the banner of ‘Unity in Diversity’.

Conference following the assassination of Dr Martin Luther King on April 4 1968; then US Presidential candidate Senator Eugene McCarthy; the Indian Ambassador to the U.S. Mr T.N. Kaul; Swami Chidananda; Swami Satchidananda; Sant Keshavadas; Yogi Bhajan; Rabbi Gelberman; and many renowned writers and musicians, including Richard Bach; Paul Horn; Stephen Fiske; Shambu Das; and Peter Max, who had painted Swamiji’s Peace Plane and designed his Planet Earth Passport for the Peace Missions.

In fact, Swamiji and Kanti Devi (a close student of Swamiji’s at that time and now an executive board member of the organisation) had flown on a Peace Mission from Miami to Cuba on 19 March, just ten days before the start of the Congress. Armed only with the Planet Earth Passport and some carnations, they defied orders to turn back, and were surrounded by 25 – 30 armed guards when they landed in Havana. Under arrest, Swamiji and Kanti Devi handed out yoga literature and gave an asana demonstration.

‘We’ve come in peace and love’, they explained.

Now in the Bahamas for the Easter Congress, they joined some 500 people from over ten nations under the banner of yoga. The Rev Abernathy said, ‘We can have unity without uniformity. At this Congress, for example, we have all races and types of people, but there is also a oneness and unity here that I crave for in the world at large. From this island in the Bahamas we tell the world that we are one and that we shall overcome’.

Swamiji said, ‘We have gathered here several hundred people who are on the path to higher knowledge. By ordinary standards you would have nothing in common. Amongst you are blacks, Protestants, Jews, South Americans, Eurasians, Catholics, whites and Hindus. You are teachers, social workers, technicians, labourers, administrators, secretaries, merchants, doctors and craftsmen. This Congress is convened under the motto “Unity in Diversity”. Are we not all here at this moment a living example of that unity? Assembled here at the Yoga Retreat on Paradise Island is the real United Nations.’

The 1975 International Yoga Teachers’ Congress set the standard for the special programmes at the Retreat. For fifty years saints, teachers, practitioners, community leaders, writers and musicians have shared their deepest wisdom there. Chief amongst them was the Rev Dr Prince Hepburn...
VISIONARY – SWAMI VISHNUDEVANANDA IN THE BAHAMAS

who dedicated his life from a very young age to charitable work and who was instrumental in first bringing Swamiji to the Bahamas in 1960. Rev Hepburn provided annual summer camps to underprivileged children and every week represented them in court. For nearly seventy years he gave the children very powerful tools that changed their lives. Many of those children later became influential figures.

For forty years Rev Hepburn attended every TTC Inauguration and Graduation to greet, bless and inspire, and every Easter he, his choir and his congregation came for the sunrise service at the Ashram. This was reciprocated at Rev Hepburn’s Church by the Swamis and Ashram staff at Christmas. He was as committed to the Ashram as he was to his beloved Eleuthera children’s camp.

In his Introductory Foreword to Swamiji’s booklet Unity in Diversity: The Vision and Reality of the True World Order Dr Marcus Bach says, ‘Great movements in the history of the world have often been inspired by dreams and visions. Always behind these movements was the impact of dedicated personalities.’

Kamala Devi runs an affiliated Sivananda Yoga Centre in Katoomba, NSW, Australia. She is a long time disciple of Swamiji Vishnudevananda and has helped a lot with the organisation of the archives of Swamiji’s work. email: kamalaDevi@bigpond.com

50th Anniversary Celebrations

At the 50th Anniversary celebrations of the Ashram in January there were two Bahamian leaders – one political leader and one religious leader – who exemplify the unfolding of Swamiji’s vision of unity and world brotherhood: The Hon. Jeffrey L. Lloyd, The Bahamas Minister of Education, a yoga practitioner who has been coming to the Ashram for thirty years, announced that he was introducing the practice of yoga into all schools throughout the Bahamas; and Bishop Trevor Williamson, who first came to the Easter sunrise service with Rev Hepburn in 1975 when he was just seven years old, brought his Trinity Church Baptist choir and congregation to share and celebrate the Anniversary with pure joy.

Above: The Hon. Travis Robinson, Parliamentary Secretary of Tourism; The Hon. Jeffrey L. Lloyd, Minister of Education; Swami Swarengananda; Srinivasan; and Kanti Devi at the 50th Anniversary Symposium Official Opening on 7 January, 2018.

Right: The Sivananda Ashram Yoga Retreat.
VISIONARY – SWAMI VISHNUDEVANANDA IN THE BAHAMAS

50th Anniversary Celebrations


Pratisththa Homa as preparation for the temple reinstallation.

Srinivasan and Kanti Devi at the 50th Anniversary symposium official opening on 7 January, 2018.

Archive picture of Swamiji teaching on the beach, c1980’s.

The Sivananda Ashram Yoga Retreat. The beachside asana platform overlooking the ocean.

Kali puja held on 12 January as part of the 50th Anniversary Celebration.

Pratisththa Homa as preparation for the temple reinstallation.


Srinivasan and Kanti Devi at the 50th Anniversary symposium official opening on 7 January, 2018.

Archive picture of Swamiji teaching on the beach, c1980’s.

The Sivananda Ashram Yoga Retreat. The beachside asana platform overlooking the ocean.

Kali puja held on 12 January as part of the 50th Anniversary Celebration.


Archive picture of Swamiji teaching during a Teachers’ Training course, c1980’s.
Introduction: The Nature of Bhakti

Bhakti is devotion to God. Its nature is intense love towards God, the Beloved or towards the Guru. It is of the nature of Divine attachment. It is a type of attachment that does not bind but liberates, because it is attachment to God, and God is within us. God is not an external object to which we get attached. Rather, He is our own Self, our Innermost Reality. Bhakti is real, it is powerful, and it is of the nature of Bliss. Yet, it is also of the nature of pain, as one of its modes is experiencing the pangs of separation from the beloved. This is a sweet, divine pain that is considered the highest form of Bhakti. Bhakti Yoga is a very potent system of yoga. Its centerpiece is extraordinary intense love that is directed towards God and is experienced by the practitioner.

Bhakti is primarily generated by purification of the heart and the mind through the practice of Karma yoga or selfless service to our fellow beings. This purification leads to meditation, and through meditation our mind becomes steady and one-pointed. Once the mind is pure, steady and one-pointed, we can meditate on Iswara, the Lord. Through this meditation we come to a point where we experience the Reality of Iswara. When we experience the reality of Iswara, Bhakti emerges.

In the practice of Bhakti Yoga, the aspirant becomes the lover and Iswara becomes the beloved. Eventually, through this process of love, the lover and the beloved become one. Bhakti is this process of union through love. Grace is a main principle in the path of Bhakti yoga because everything that we receive in this path comes from Grace. One of the best ways to attain this Grace is satsanga, or association with saints. Bhakti Yoga is a path of service — service of saints, service of the Guru and service of our fellow beings. Through this service, blessings and Grace are invoked and the result is Divine Love. Bhakti Yoga is a very beautiful yoga; it purifies the mind of its impurities and gives birth to the yoga of knowledge or Jnana yoga, which removes ignorance and leads to Moksha or spiritual liberation.
Who is God?

Bhakti is Supreme, one-pointed devotion directed towards Iswara, or God. According to the yogic scriptures, Iswara is the One that includes within Himself the All. In the Eleventh Chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, Lord Krishna shows to Arjuna His Cosmic Form. Within this Cosmic Form Arjuna sees everything – all universes, all creations, all beings, all kingdoms of nature – past, present, and future – all included in that one Being.

Iswara is the Absolute Reality in a process of manifestation. Within Him are the cosmic processes of creation, preservation and the dissolution of creation. In His essence, Iswara is Brahman – pure consciousness, all-pervading, transcendent, infinite life, existence, love and bliss. One can meditate on Iswara as the totality of everything that exists. But those who are unable to do this, meditate on Him in one of His aspects as Divine Father, Divine Mother, Divine Child, etc. When we meditate on Iswara and repeat His name the result of this meditation is Bhakti or Divine Love.

Love is the great attractor; it is that thing which attracts us to search and to find our Essential Nature.

What is Love?

Love is a Divine attribute; it is of the nature of immortality, it is of the nature of Ananda or absolute Divine Bliss, it is ecstatic by nature, it is the Divine essence that permeates pure awareness or pure consciousness. Love is the Ground of all Being, the Ground of Existence, it is that thing which keeps everything together, it is the force that is responsible for creation, preservation and dissolution of creation.

Love is identical to the Atman or Self, as it is identical to Iswara or God. It is inexpressible, but it can be experienced. Love is the power that destroys duality, because it is a force through which the two become one. Love is the great attractor; it is that thing which attracts us to search and to find our Essential Nature. Love is irresistible; when we hear its call, we cannot resist it and we are attracted to the source of this call of love until we merge in it so the two become one – the lover and the beloved unite.

Love is contagious; when a person is in a state of divine love or divine ecstasy, those who are in his or her presence enter a similar state because of their association with that Bhakta or lover of God. Love spreads very fast, it is all-powerful, it can overcome everything; it can overcome darkness and all negative traits. It is the key for meditation; without it we cannot truly meditate. We breathe it, we eat it, we are made of it, it sustains us, it unites us, it shows us the truth of Unity in Diversity, we merge in it and in the end, it destroys us in the highest sense.

Love and Non-Attachment

Vairagya or non-attachment is an important principle in the path of yoga. Does this mean that we should be indifferent and non-loving? To the contrary. When we are attached to objects or people, there can be no real love. Vairagya means ‘acting without selfish desires.’ When we truly love, ultimately, we want nothing for ourselves, only for the other. When we reach that selfless state, we become free. Vairagya means freedom from desires which are based on egoistic motivation. It means acting out of love, desiring nothing for ourselves, not even appreciation. The joy is just in serving and loving the other.

In the Narada Bhakti Sutra Narada Muni says: “Bhakti is its own fruit”. When you have Love, you have the highest reward. What else can you want? When we experience Love, all our desires are immediately fulfilled, we have everything. To be non-attached does not mean to be indifferent. Precisely because we are not attached, all our will is dedicated to giving, loving, embracing humanity, and sacrificing our entire life for others. If we want nothing for ourselves, we are rich. The easiest way to find love is to stop thinking about ourselves and to focus on the needs of others, as Mother Theresa said: “Service is love in action.”

It is a mistake to equate love with attachment. The nature of love is bliss; the nature of attachment is suffering and pain. The things to which we are attached by nature change and pass away. We also change and pass away. If I am attached to chocolate, with time, my teeth may go bad and even my capacity to taste, smell and see the chocolate may diminish. Or I may get diabetes and the chocolate will become a source of pain and destruction for me. Similarly, if I am attached to a person, this will also bring suffering because both myself and the person to whom I am attached constantly change and eventually will pass away in one way or another.

Once the heart and the mind are purified, love will manifest. It is not a matter of belief. It is a matter of direct experience.

Before you go to sleep tonight, make a list of all your attachments, then meditate on this list and ask yourself, "how many more attachments would I like to have?" One attachment is one shackles; two attachments are two shackles; a thousand attachments are a thousand shackles. Do we really want to be slaves to our attachments? We can be attached to alcohol, to people, to food or to money. These are all kinds of addictions, and addictions bring pain and suffering. Love is the exact opposite. By its very nature it is full of bliss, joy and freedom. Love frees us from bondage and therefore yogis believe in love and practice Bhakti Yoga – the yoga of love.

Some people find it difficult to love, but if they practice, love will come. Once the heart and the mind are purified, love will manifest. It is not a matter of belief. It is a matter of direct experience.

Cultivating a Relationship with God

People relate to God in many ways. Some relate to the
BHAKTI YOGA: THE SUREST WAY TO GOD

Divine in an abstract way, without name and form while others relate to the Divine in a personal form. There are people who do not believe in God, but they believe in the Atman or Self. Some are skeptics or atheists, but even they believe in something. They believe in truth, in that which cannot be denied. If God is truth, then the skeptics and even the atheists believe in God. When the Dalai Lama was asked if he believed in God, he replied: “some people say that God is love. If God is love, then I believe in God”.

There are many other ways to relate to God. We can relate to God as Divine Father, Divine Mother, Divine Child, etc. The way in which we relate to the Divine is called our Ishta Devata or chosen deity. How do we cultivate our relationships with God or the Ishta Devata? It is just like in any other relationship. When two people are in a relationship and they wish to cultivate it, the first thing they need to do is to spend time with each other. Similarly, when you have a relationship with God you need to spend time with God. How do we spend time with God? We do this through meditation or through devotional practices. We can pray to God, talk with God, meditate on God, quarrel with God, etc. The most important thing is to spend time together with our beloved.

When you really love someone, you cannot stop thinking about your beloved. When you cannot stop thinking about God, this is called meditation. According to Swami Sivananda, meditation that stops when you raise up from your seat is not real meditation. Real meditation goes on when you sit, walk, lie down, eat and so on, because when you have a real loving relationship with the Divine, whatever you do, you cannot stop thinking about your beloved.

When you speak to little children about falling in love they do not understand, but if you speak to them about playing with toys, they do understand. Similarly, to beginners on the path we have to say: ‘wake up in the morning, go to the satsang hall, meditate for half an hour, chant, do yoga asanas, etc.’ This is like playing with toys. Beginners need these reminders because they are not mature enough to understand the meaning of love. But when we mature, we fall in love with God. Then we need no reminders because all we want to do is to meditate and to be in the presence of our beloved; we have an intimate relationship with God and we know what it is, nobody needs to tell us.

How to Love Unconditionally
Bhakti is unconditional love. People ask how can we love unconditionally? The answer is, we first need to love conditionally. We begin with selfish egoistic human love and gradually this love extinguishes our ego and matures into unconditional love.

Thus, Karma Yoga is the best method to attain unconditional love. Loving our fellow beings leads to love of God because God is all. In the 11th chapter of the Bhagavad Gita, Arjuna sees All in the One. The One includes everyone – not only the good and the beautiful but also the terrible and the most despicable. Thus, Bhakti, which is love of God, is directed towards the All; it embraces all. As the heart purifies through selfless service, the heart grows and grows until it can contain the Lord, until it can contain the All.

Bhakti is unconditional love. People ask how can we love unconditionally? The answer is, we first need to love conditionally. We begin with selfish egoistic human love and gradually this love extinguishes our ego and matures into unconditional love.

To love unconditionally means not to put conditions on our love. To say, ‘I will love you only if you love me’ does not make sense. It is like saying ‘I will breathe only if you breathe’. We do not put conditions on our breathing, we simply breathe. But Love is more essential than breathing. Love is the foundation of our existence. When we understand this, we love unconditionally.

Bhakti Yoga Sadhana
There are nine modes in the ladder of Bhakti Yoga. These are nine practices that are mentioned in the Puranas and prescribe the sadhana of Bhakti Yoga from the simple to the more difficult practiced. Those nine modes are Sravanam (hearing of God’s Lilas and stories), Kirtanam (singing of His glories), Smaranam (remembrance of His Name and presence), Padasevanam (service of His feet), Archanam (worship of God), Vandanam (prostration to the Lord), Dasyam (cultivating the Bhava of a servant with God), Sakhyam (cultivation of the friend-Bhava) and Atmanivedanam (complete surrender of the self).

The first mode, Sravanam, is listening to stories about God. Hearing stories about the beloved invokes love in the heart. If you hear stories about Swami Vishnudevananda, eventually you develop devotion towards Swami Vishnudevananda. If you hear stories about Lord Krishna, devotion towards Lord Krishna is invoked. Sravanam is the practice of hearing stories that are told by bhaktas, by devotees of God. The transmission of Bhakti is direct. It happens from the heart of the Bhakta to the heart of the student. Sravanam is to sit at the feet of bhaktas, saints, and devotees of God and listen to their stories of the Lord. This invokes Bhakti within the heart.

The second mode of Bhakti Yoga is Kirtanam – singing the divine names and glories. Kirtan is a very powerful devotional practice. Everyone loves music and chanting, it is universal, and it penetrates places where the intellect cannot reach. It penetrates the deepest layers of the subconscious mind and takes the aspirant to the Innermost Reality or the Self. Therefore, since time immemorial Kirtan has been
one of the most important spiritual practices.

The third mode of Bhakti Yoga is Smaranam, constant remembrance of God. One of the best ways to practice Smaranam is Japa – repetition of the mantra or God’s name. By practicing japa, the mind of the practitioner becomes one with the mantra, which according to the yogic scriptures, is nothing but God Himself. God and His name are one and the same. A mantra is a powerful divine energy in a sound structure. It causes the mind to unite with God, with the Ultimate Reality that resides within our heart. One can attain Self-realization through the practice of japa alone.

According to Swami Sivananda, while doing japa, the practitioner should also practice dhyana or meditation on the meaning of the mantra, which is the Lord Himself. For example, if you meditate on the mantra of Lord Krishna, you should also meditate on His form and divine qualities. Japa should be practiced with devotion, but it is also a method to cultivate devotion. When you love a person and you think about their name, this brings to mind the memory of that person and that memory awakens love. Similarly, repeating God’s name leads to the remembrance of God and that remembrance awakens Bhakti or love of God, which in turn leads to unity with God.

Swami Sivananda practicing Japa with mala beads

In his book Bliss Divine, Swami Sivananda writes: “live in love, breathe in love, sing in love… die in love”. What does it mean to “die in love”? It means that in the end, you are totally consumed by that love and nothing is left from you, only the beloved exists. Love is compared to fire. When you throw something into the fire, it is consumed by the fire and nothing remains but the fire. Similarly, when you practice the yoga of love, at the end nothing remains but love, nothing remains but bliss.

Even if the repetition of the mantra is mechanical in the beginning, it will eventually generate devotion. By repeating the mantra, you release this divine power and once it is released, it manifests devotion. Then there is Bhava, a loving relationship between the one that repeats the Divine Name and the one that carries the Divine name. Japa is a very powerful method because God and His name are one. When you repeat His name, even if you are not aware of it, you are instantaneously in His presence.

Constant repetition of the mantra leads to darshan – a direct vision of the Divine. You will experience the Divine within your heart. You will also experience Him outside of you. Then your life will be changed for the better, forever. ‘As you think so you become’ – if you think about God and repeat His name, you become one with God. Chanting the Divine Name is said to be the easiest way to realize God in this Kali Yuga or iron age. Repeating the Divine Name leads to the highest levels of meditation.

The other modes in the ladder of Bhakti Yoga are Padasevanam (service at the Lord’s feet), Archanam (Worship of God), Vandanam (Prostration to the Lord), Dasyam (feeling of being a servant of God), Sakhyam (feeling friendship towards the Lord). At the top of that ladder is Atmanivedanam – total self-surrender to God.

Along with these nine modes of Bhakti, there are also five Bhavas or devotional attitudes. Those are Santa Bhava, the peaceful attitude; Dasya Bhava, relating to God as a loving servant to a loving master; Sakhyam Bhava, regarding God as your friend, Vatsalya Bhava, regarding God to be your child, and Madhurya Bhava, relating to God as the beloved.

Atmanivedanam: Self-Surrender to God

The highest practice in the ladder of Bhakti Yoga is Atmanivedanam or self-surrender to God. The yogi surrenders completely the self or ego in the ocean of love, which is God. It is compared to a drop of water that touches the ocean and becomes one with the ocean. This is a state of union, of non-duality. The path of love starts with duality and ends with non-duality. When the devotee becomes one with the beloved then he or she are in a state of non-duality within a state of love. The meaning of surrender is to recognise that we are not separate, that nothing exists in isolation, that everything is connected to everything else within a ground of Pure Consciousness. The Universal Pure Consciousness, which I am, is the Reality upon which the universe of names and forms is superimposed. To that Universal Consciousness, to whom we call God or the Self, I surrender.

God and the Self are one and the same. Swami Sivananda says that God is closer to you than your jugular vein, because He is your own existence. I exist because God is existence, I am conscious because God is consciousness; I am because God is the Self. But God is not limited to me. It is all pervading; it permeates all existence, and all existence is superimposed upon God or the Self. To that God I surrender. Surrender
means renouncing the idea that I am a separate, isolated, disconnected being.

As we meditate like this, eventually Self-surrender comes from within. But the practical way to attain Self-surrender is to practice the four paths of yoga. We need to start with Karma Yoga to purify the heart and the mind. Then we need to practice Bhakti Yoga, which teaches us how to attain Self-surrender, devotion to God and a direct experiential awareness of God. Then we need to learn the system of Raja Yoga, which teaches us the path of meditation and Samadhi and prepares us for the yoga of wisdom. Eventually we need to enter the domain of Jnana Yoga, the yoga of knowledge or wisdom. Yoga is a gradual path that removes impurities from our heart and mind. Once those impurities are removed, we become capable of love, devotion, self-surrender, meditation, reception of knowledge, Self-Realization and ultimately, moksha or spiritual liberation. It is a very systematic, gradual, and time-tested path. Its beauty is that by implementing the teaching, eventually we experience the teaching. Then our doubts are removed, and we develop faith. And faith is a conduit or an avenue towards devotion and ultimately towards Self-surrender.

The importance of Satsanga
In the Ramayana Lord Rama explains that the most important thing for developing bhakti is Satsanga – being in the company of saints and bhaktas. If you are in the company of fire, you are going to catch fire. Similarly, if you are in the company of bhaktas you are going to experience bhakti. Satsanga means association with Truth or association with those who experience Truth. Saints are in love with the Divine, they are God-intoxicated. They experience the Divine within and without and they see Him in other people, they see their beloved everywhere. Their love is contagious; when you spend time with them, they transmit it to you and you can experience it yourself. If you spend time with people who are immersed in Samadhi, eventually you yourself are going to be immersed in Samadhi.

The nine modes of Bhakti need to be practiced in satsanga – in the presence of Bhaktas or saints. When you are in their company, they will tell you stories about the beloved, not from books but from their direct experience. You will observe their behavior, you will notice how they treat other people, you will feel the Divine Love that radiates from them. It will not take long before you yourself will be convinced of the Reality of God who dwells within your heart.

Om Tat Sat
Sivananda Ashram Yoga Farm
14651 Ballantree Lane, Grass Valley, California 95949
yogafarm.org

2018 COURSES
June 10–20  Detox and Juice Fast with Manu
June 17–27  Childrens Yoga Camp
June 30–July 4  Vedic Astrology Conference
July 8–18  350-Hour Vedic Counseling Course, Module 1
July 9–15  Permaculture Design Certification, Part 1
Aug. 19–26  Food as Medicine with Bharata
Aug. 31–Sept. 5  350-Hour Vedic Counseling Course, Module 2
Sept. 7–10  Accessible Yoga with Jivana Heyman
Sept. 17–19  Restorative Yoga with Sundari
Sept. 23–28  Ayurvedic Detox and Rejuvenation
Oct. 1–10  Meditation and Self Study with Swami Jnaneswari
Oct. 7–12  Mudra: Sacred Secret with Indu Arora
Oct. 13–Nov. 10  Teacher Training Course
Oct. 26–Nov. 10  800-Hour Sivananda Yoga Health Educator Training, Module 1

Founded by Swami Vishnudevananda, Est. 1957

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
www.sivanandayogavietnam.org
www.sivanandayogachina.org
www.yogafarm.org/taiwan
www.sivananda.jp (Japan)
How do we become aware of what really hinders us?
What are the biggest obstacles in life?

Audience: “Fear.”
That is true. Swami Vishnudevananda showed us how to overcome fear through his body language. He did not hesitate to stand up for what was right.

Just before Swamiji’s peace mission when he flew an ultralight plane over the Berlin wall from West to East, he held a press conference in Covent Garden in London. A reporter asked him: “Do you expect to survive this trip yourself?” To which Swamiji replied: “The whole world is in danger, so we all have to face it anyway. If I survive that’s fine — if I don’t survive, I’m just going a little earlier!”

What an answer! Would you have thought about an answer like this? When I heard it I thought “how detached and how fearless this is.” If one puts the ego aside, it’s possible to conquer fear bit by bit. When you take the four weeks Yoga Teachers’ Training Course, you may think “I’ll be a teacher in four weeks.” But you will have to live through it. During the course you will have to teach your first class. Do you know how many people are afraid of this? They can’t sleep the night before. Why?

Audience: “We make a fool of ourselves.”
Who is that fool? Who said it? It’s the ego, no? When I came to Swamiji 45 years ago, I was very timid. I would have never been able to sit here and talk to you like this. I thought “what are people are going to think, if I make a mistake? They have such high expectations.” The evening before my initiation as a swami (sannyas initiation) I went to Swamiji and said “Swamiji, if I take sannyas I’m afraid that I will not have enough knowledge.” He said “Do you want to become a scholar?” I understood, this had nothing to do with sannyas. He caught my ego immediately. I thought: “Well it would be good, if by his grace I get some knowledge into this brain.”

But that is definitely not the meaning of renunciation. The world likes to put it this way: if you are a swami you know everything, you can do everything, you are perfect. But if you are all that, you don’t have to take a vow of renunciation anymore, isn’t it? Think about this.

One has to start analysing — what is ego? The ego is the identification with the limitations of our own thinking, of body and mind, of time and space. Is the ego really ruling my life? Of course the answer is “yes”. Therefore effort is necessary to overcome it. But before we can put effort into our life, what do we need?

Audience: “Intention.”
Intention means a goal, no? We need to have a goal. Many people start with an intention, but then it becomes boring, because intellectually it is always the same. There is nothing new in yoga. The four yoga paths and the various scriptures, they all tell you that everything is Atman, that you are that Self and when you meditate on that Self, you will realize the Self. There is nothing more to it. Once you have intellectually gone through that process, what comes next? Many people follow this goal for two or three years and then look for something new.

How can we stay inspired? Inspiration cannot come from outside. Jesus gave inspiration. Did the world change? And so did Buddha. And Swami Sivananda and Swami Vishnudevananda gave inspiration. Thousands of yogis came. Did the world change for the better?

So who can change? Who has to put the self-effort? Each individual. We always think we have to go somewhere to get the inspiration. During the initial learning period, it is understandable, but later on, where does the inspiration come from? Only from self-effort. Swamiji always told us: “Never give up. Never give up.” And the only thing he said you have to do is to “stay.” He meant in the organisation or with yoga. Yoga is a bumpy path because the world does not only consist of just good days. The bad days are the ones which bring you forward the most.

After the initial phase of education and training you learn how to draw from this strength. There are so many possibilities, so many things you can do. You do not need to be in the front of everything, you can also be in the back. You don’t have to
be the leader. You can also be the servant or you can be a friend, or you can be a devotional person and only see love in everything. There are so many possibilities to counteract avidya, the ignorance of the ego which drives you into the ditch. Once this has been realised, the effort becomes easier.

Then we understand that we need to get out of this ditch, to get out of this sluggishness, out of this ignorance, out of these likes and dislikes, friends and enemies, out of this separation which we put into our heads. With this understanding comes the effort to actually do it.

I was walking somewhere here in London a few days back. It was a cold and windy day. I saw a sleeping bag on the pavement close to the wall and I said to myself: “I wonder if there is somebody in it?” At that very moment it moved, there was somebody inside. It made me humble. For in that moment I could see the many facets of the ego. I felt thankful that I can digest food, I can talk and somehow move a bit. We should be humble and make efforts to tackle the ego. That is yoga.

Yoga is a very quiet science. We make it noisy because everybody wants to make money with yoga now. It used to be a very quiet science. In the mountains there was maybe one person, who maybe had one disciple or not even any disciple, and he would just plod on with his practice. He would have a simple life, cook a little rice and lentils and use his time in contemplation, finding out what life is really about.

We need to reflect on what yoga really means and how it should manifest in our thoughts, words and activities.

So we need to reflect on what yoga really means and how it should manifest in our thoughts, words and activities – these are words from Swami Sivananda. The effort consists of small steps. It should reflect in our thoughts, words and deeds. If there is a contradiction between our thoughts, words and activities, then it is not real, it is put on. Whatever you think eventually comes out, not only in words but also in actions.

How do you get up in the morning? How do you start the day? How do you fulfill your tasks? How do you deal with the people around you? How do you respect them? How do you speak to them? All these questions relate to the purity of your lifestyle. It doesn’t matter which tradition you follow, your lifestyle has to be pure. Yoga can show you how to live a pure lifestyle. It requires new ways of doing, new ways of thinking.

How we eat, how we sleep, how we work, how we spend our free time. How do we make this a pure activity with less ego? How do you fulfill your tasks? How do you deal with the people around you? How do you respect them? How do you speak to them? All these questions relate to the purity of your lifestyle. It doesn’t matter which tradition you follow, your lifestyle has to be pure. Yoga can show you how to live a pure lifestyle. It requires new ways of doing, new ways of thinking.

Whatever the circumstances are, do not be afraid to be yourself. If you are sincere and don’t make up or pretend anything, with time people will see who you are. Swamiji was the same whether he was giving a lecture or whether he was talking to you in private. There was no difference. He would never put on a show. He had learned that.

Swamiji knew that most of what we do in the Sivananda centres or ashrams are not things for which we had been trained. We cook, we do accounts, we do publicity, give lectures, teach, serve, clean the toilets. We often had to do the things we were not good at. Like cooking for hundreds of people. Imagine you can cook for your four-person family, and everybody says you are a great cook. All of a sudden the guru says: “Please go to the kitchen and cook for a hundred people,” how do you feel? You have fear. And yet you simply start, you put the pots and the vegetables out, and then somebody comes and says: “May I help you?” then another person comes and all of the sudden music is playing, everybody is cutting. Until something is burning and you start again. This is how it happens. You soon become more experienced and cooking for a hundred people is no problem.

But we don’t want to do that because the ego does not feel good when it fails. We worry that we don’t get the love from others if we are not the best. This is not true. We get more love from people if we accept situations in which we need help. Then people want to help us. If we are constantly self-sufficient nobody wants to help us. When somebody tries to cross a street and is helpless, your heart opens. You go to that person and say: “Can I help?” The person receives love from you, and you receive love from this person. But if somebody can walk normally, you don’t look at the person. If you make an effort to do something you have never been able to do, if you allow yourself to be helpless, the false separation of the ego will melt, and people will come and help.

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YOUR LIVING SPINE

Your Living Spine

Experience the universality of your spine at the core of your asana practice

By Swami Sivadasananda
YOUR LIVING SPINE

Photos taken at the Sivananda Teachers’ Training Course location in Rishikesh, Himalayas, India.
YOUR LIVING SPINE

Generally, we feel our back when there is a tense or a pulled muscle. Asanas not only help to relieve such a painful state, they gradually make you feel the harmonious working of the various back muscles.

Leg Stretches
Many tensions in the lower back can be relieved by the practice of three kinds of leg stretches:

Posterior leg stretch

Stretching the adductor muscles of the leg

Stretching the abductor muscles of the leg

When you lie in savasana (corpse pose) after each stretch you can feel relaxation not only in the leg muscles which you just stretched, but actually throughout the pelvis into the lower back muscles.
Arms, shoulder girdle and upper back

Shoulderstand, plough, fish and bow: these asanas mobilise the shoulder girdle which helps to relieve tension in the upper back and neck.

Shoulderstand

Plough

Fish

Bow
YOUR LIVING SPINE

Feeling your vertebrae

1. Try to keep your legs quite high when rolling down from the shoulderstand.
2. This strengthens the hands and arms and puts a good amount of pressure on the vertebrae as they touch the mat one by one.
3. Contract your abdominal muscles when you lower the legs, this will help you to keep your head and shoulder blades on the mat.

Balanced compression of the spine

Extensions or back bends bring the vertebrae closer to each other, creating pressure on the surrounding tissues. This can be very beneficial as it stimulates local blood circulation in the intervertebral discs and in the spinal ganglia. Spinal ganglia are clusters of nerve cell bodies in the spinal nerves next to the spine. These spinal ganglia are arranged in a chain on each side of the spine. Try to extend the compression to as many vertebrae as possible.

Avoid putting all the pressure on just one or two vertebrae. This type of exaggerated pressure easily occurs in those areas which are naturally curved backwards: the lower back and the neck.
Passive back bends

Passive back bends involve little effort; try to control the place and the degree of pressure on the vertebrae.

**Camel pose**

1. Support the upper back with your hands and try to bring the elbows and shoulder blades close together.
2. Then bend the neck and open the chest, without bending in the lower back.
3. Finally control the posture with the abdominal muscles and the leg muscles.

1a. Do not start the pose by strongly bending the lumbar area.
3a. Do not exaggerate the curve in the lower back.
YOUR LIVING SPINE

Active back bends

Active back bends strengthen the back muscles and allow an even distribution of the compression of the vertebrae.

**Cobra**

The half cobra strengthens the neck and upper back muscles; there is no risk of exaggerated compression of the lower back.

The basic cobra further strengthens the muscles of the neck and the upper back; there should be only slight pressure on the hands.

The full cobra increases the compression along all the vertebrae; by keeping the elbows close to the lower back, the shoulder blades can be kept close together; this avoids an exaggerated pressure in the lumbar area.

Child’s pose, a gentle counter stretch

First move backwards like a cat, stretching the arms, shoulders and the back.
Then release the forehead to the floor and place the arms and hands next to the body.
YOUR LIVING SPINE

Rotation along the axis

From the kneeling pose, rotate the whole spine to one side; feel the rotation along your vertebrae: there is very little twist in the lumbar spine, considerable twisting in the thoracic curve and even more in the cervical spine.

When the chest is just slightly collapsed it not only greatly reduces the rotation in the upper back and neck, it also creates an exaggerated compression in the neck.

From the extremities to the spine

The half spinal twist makes intense use of the extremities to allow optimal rotation along the whole spine.

Choose and adapt your spinal twist wisely. A main consideration is to make sure that the spine is well aligned.

Even slight forward collapsing of the chest or moving your chin upwards will greatly reduce the amount of twisting in the upper back and the neck.
Imagine any spinal position without using the extremities – impossible. When an asana is practiced for the first time, the main attention is on the extremities. Only later the control of the back muscles is developed. When the attitude in the class or even in your own practice is competitive, one may actually hardly feel the spine itself, as the concentration is directed completely on the extremities and on the back muscles.

If the approach in the asana is to balance posture, breathing and relaxation, it is easier to hold the posture for a longer time, the proprioception or body awareness is deepened, and it may be possible to actually focus on the position of each vertebra. As long as the attention in the asana is placed mostly on strength and flexibility of the extremities and the particular movements of the torso, the body identification remains very personal. Whether tall or small, thin or obese, young or old, male or female, – it is quite possible that these qualifications or pairs of opposites continue to dominate your physical experience and the mental picture that you have of yourself.

Try to bring the focus in the asanas to the spine and the skull. Think of your body as being essentially the spine and the skull. Your body experience will change. Tall or small, thin or obese, young or old, male or female – these qualifications do not relate much to the spine and the skull. Transcending body identification is a central theme in all yoga paths. It connects the yogi to a wider consciousness beyond the physical body. An important aspect of Hatha Yoga is to experience the universality of your spine at the core of your asana practice.

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Feeling your spine in the asanas

Most asanas focus on specific back muscles and specific movements of the vertebrae. Hands and arms, feet and legs are the indispensable servants.

Like the twist, side-bending asanas are asymmetrical, i.e. the posture has a different effect on the left and the right side of the back. Asymmetrical variations are especially beneficial to balance and relax the back muscles.

The triangle combines muscle strengthening and contraction in a unique way. When you enter the triangle the first sensation is the lateral stretch. A few breaths later you may start to feel a particular muscle resistance or contraction within this lateral stretch. This ensures that the torso remains parallel to the floor. It is called “eccentric contraction.”

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31 October – 15 November 2018
28 October – 12 November 2019
Advanced hatha yoga practice following the instructions of the Hatha Yoga Pradipika

Sivananda Kutir Uttarkashi, Himalayas
International Sivananda Advanced Yoga Teachers’ Training Course
2 – 31 March 2019

All courses in English with simultaneous translation into German, French and Spanish. Other European languages on request.

Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Retreat House
Founder: Swami Vishnudevananda. Est 1957
www.sivananda.eu • Contact: rudraprayag-himalayas@sivananda.net • www.sivananda.eu
Pain is the main reason people go to the doctor. About 20% of American adults suffer from moderate to severe chronic pain, as do 13% of North American teens and 10 to 30% of the adult population of Europe. Its effects are physical, psychological and spiritual. Acute pain is typically a pain with a specific, identifiable cause, and a pain like twisting your ankle that resolves relatively quickly. Pain becomes chronic when it lasts three to six months. It can stem from an acute injury or surgery, but doesn’t always. The most expensive pain conditions in America are headache, arthritis and back pain. Pain can affect daily activities such as work, relationships, and sleep. When chronic, it can lead to mood disorders, depression, even suicide. Recent research suggests that pain can affect the chemistry of the brain and the functioning of the nervous systems. Other people, including many doctors, may find it hard to believe the severity of persistent pain. (The choice of the word “persistent” is intentional, as “chronic” does not sound hopeful!)

Pain is Subjective
How can we really know how much pain someone is in? It is very difficult to describe or measure. “On a scale of 1 to 10, how bad is your pain?” How can we know whether one person’s 8 out of 10 is the same as another’s 8 out of 10? It is the same conundrum as trying to explain color to a blind person, or trying to describe the taste of jackfruit to someone who has never tasted it. We can try using adjectives like “aching,” “burning,” “sharp,” “shooting,” “radiating,” but these are also imprecise. Our capacity to communicate about pain is equal to the challenge of describing what love feels like, and how deeply impacting it is.

Protective Response
The human body comes equipped with many protective mechanisms — among them are sneezing, muscle spasms, the fight/flight response... and pain. Pain is a normal human experience, ensuring our survival. Its job is not only to alert us to danger, but make us stop what we’re doing, move

“I am not your enemy, I am your friend,
I am a messenger from God, I am an angel from heaven
To teach you wisdom, to instill in your heart,
Mercy and dispassion, to turn your mind towards God,
To destroy your intense clinging, to things earthly and mundane,
That are perishable and illusory; I am your guide and silent teacher,
I AM PAIN – the best thing in this world.”

- Excerpt from I am Pain, Thy Teacher by Swami Sivananda
away from the danger and sometimes even go lie down. Imagine the members of the Marsili family in Italy; because of a rare genetic mutation, they feel little or no pain. That might sound good at first, but consider the potentially dangerous consequences. You could burn yourself or break a bone without knowing it. You could then keep moving and make matters worse.

What is Pain?
Recent advances in pain science focus on the nervous system and the brain. The central nervous system consists of the brain and spinal cord. The peripheral nervous system consists mainly of nerves. When something potentially harmful happens, a message is sent to the brain via nerves and the spinal cord. Note that the impulse sent is not a pain message, but a danger message. (Neurons cannot tell the difference; they just relay a signal.)

Three things excite the neurons in your pain-danger system: mechanical forces on your tissues, chemical irritations and extremes of hot and cold. The greater the perceived threat, the more neurons jump into action, the more insistent the message. It is not until the information from the senses reaches the brain, though, that a decision is made about how dangerous it is and whether something needs to be done.

But the pain we feel is not an accurate indication of tissue damage or health. A major injury might not hurt much and a small paper cut can hurt a lot. You can be so engrossed in gardening that you don’t realise you’ve cut your finger. A soldier on the battlefield may be unaware of a serious injury. You may have injured the same body part several times and learned that it is not a big deal. If so, the brain will assign that injury less pain. The brain also deals with information presented on a priority basis. And that is a decision between it and you.

Nervous System: Experience, Not Facts
Nerves are made up of thousands of nerve cells, or neurons. They sense information and send messages via electrical impulse. If the message is loud enough and travels the length of the neuron, the neuron releases chemicals to excite the next neuron. The chain reaction reaches the spinal cord. If an immediate response is needed, a reflex can be initiated from there. Otherwise, signals may be amplified and sent along to the brain. The brain provide us with experiences, not facts. The signals lead to brain activity that creates pain. Action impulses from the brain can then influence any system of the body. Usually long before tissue heals, the brain itself reduces the danger signals and its own response, allowing pain to subside so “normal life” can resume.

Pain is Complex
There are 45 miles (72km) of nerves in the body, all collecting information about what is happening inside and outside the body. In the brain alone, there are 100 billion nerve cells. That’s 1,000 trillion connections passing information around the brain.

Pain Can Persist After Tissue Heals
There are cases where, after three to six months, the tissue may have healed, but the pain remains. Many systems have gone on red alert, usually including the emotional systems. Fear and worry feed right back into pain, revving it up. It is harder to pay attention. Less endorphins, and other feel-good chemicals, are being produced by the brain. It becomes harder to feel anything but pain in the body, harder to plan refined movements. Pain can lead the person experiencing it into a spiral – into a lonely, desperate, even life-threatening position.

The Nervous System Gets Wound Up
Persisting pain is related to two things: 1) changes in the physical body; and 2) neuroplastic changes in the nervous systems. Pain can get worse because the nervous systems decide to pay closer attention to the danger signals. Excited neurons send even more signals, exciting neighbouring neurons. The threshold of their sensors is lowered. With this much activity, the neurons function as if there is considerable danger and begin to produce inflammation to protect the body. The nervous system is wound up. The neural pathways related to pain expand. Similar changes of wind-up happen in the brain, and it can seem that positive feedback loops build allowing the changes to create a story of considerable danger, which then loops back to create more pain and more sense of danger. Research shows that understanding this process can help reduce pain.

“Suffering equals pain multiplied by resistance.” – Shinzen Young)

Pain Takes Over Other Functions
When pain is experienced, 200 to 400 parts of the brain can get excited. The pain alarm system becomes hypersensitive.
Normal functions of the brain in those areas are altered — some more active and some less. The pain can seem to spread as the signal expands into adjacent areas of the brain. Day-to-day activities such as thinking, planning and regulating emotions can be impacted. While pain might normally be processed in 5% of the nerve cells in a particular area of the thinking brain, in persistent pain, it can expand to 15 – 25% of the cells. The brain learns pain.

The Body Map/Subjective Memory
The brain relies on being able to feel the body. It “sees” the body differently than we see ourselves. Given the large number of nerve endings in the skin, the brain receives more detailed information about the skin than what’s inside it. The more information, the bigger that body part becomes in our internal “body map.” Pain distorts how the brain perceives the body (as do memories, anxiety, preconceived ideas, etc.). A person with hand pain, may literally experience the hand being larger than normal. We may experience joint stiffness or pain; in actuality, the problem is in the nervous systems, not only in the body. The brain is sending the wrong signals. More things trigger the pain, even the slightest stress.

You Can Change Pain
Is the red dot inside or outside the cube? If you can change how you see this cube, that means you can change how you perceive visual inputs to your brain. And if you can do that, do you think you can change how your brain perceives danger signals?

If we are too quick to run from pain, or medicate it, we miss what it is trying to tell us. If we allow the battle to be between the doctor and the disease and think the solution is outside ourselves, we never get a chance to find the inner resources to face the situation, or find our own solutions to the problem. When we work together with Nature, different outcomes are possible.

What is Neuroplasticity?
The good news is that the nervous system is adaptable and constantly changing. Nerve cells in the brain change connections and behaviour when new information is presented. One function of the brain can be transferred to an adjacent area of the brain if needed. If someone is blind, the areas of the brain that process visual information are free to process information from other senses. Thus there can be heightened awareness in other senses. If we don’t exercise a brain function, our potential in that area decreases. Equally, we get better at whatever we practice.

- Education in pain neuroscience can help put the ball in our court. The nerves will learn whatever we practice. Thanks to neuroplasticity, we have the power to influence how the nervous system functions. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to changing the nervous systems back. A combination of approaches works best. It is not necessarily easy or quick, but it is feasible. Each person’s collection of symptoms is different, based on their emotional state, response, memories, undigested past experiences, etc., yet all have the ability to influence pain.

- Neurons can be changed by almost anything – how we move, by input through our skin, how we stretch, what we think, what we see, our environment, what we believe, our emotions, etc. We have the ability to change each of these things, so we have considerable power to change how our neurons work.

- Sensors at the end of nerves are replaced every few days. We have some influence on the sensitivity of the new sensors. Given that there are trillions of sensors in your body, and thousands are replaced every second, every second your nervous system is in a state of more calmness, your body has the opportunity to replace the highly sensitive ones with the more normal (low sensitivity, high threshold) sensors.

“More time in a calmer state, more opportunity for positive change.” – Neil Pearson

- Brain chemistry changes when we practice finding ways to be happier. The fight/flight response causes the release of cortisol, which leads to more pain. Endorphins are produced when we are more content. Older adults with arthritis who are in good marriages experience less pain than those who are single or in unsupportive relationships. According to Neil Pearson, “One endorphin molecule may be able to block as many as 50 danger signals.” This makes endorphins even more powerful than morphine – but with pleasant side effects.

Teaching the Body a New Response to Pain
Unremitting pain wants our attention. Dwelling on it, or attempting to ignore it, can both rev up the nervous system. Research shows that it can be possible to reduce pain, by focusing on it without judgment or emotional response. Over time, we can teach the body a new response to pain, one that will cause less anxiety and less areas of the brain to fire. Reconceptualising pain is empowering.
In Norman Diodge’s book, *The Brain’s Way of Healing*, he gives an example of a doctor who had debilitating neck pain for 13 years. The pain had spread to his back and shoulders. He decided to try a neuroplastic experiment to change his brain. Neurons that fire together, wire together. As often as possible, when in pain, especially when the pain spiked, he visualised a calm brain. He said, “I had to be relentless – even more relentless than the pain signal itself.” It took three weeks to notice a change. By six weeks, the back and shoulder pain was gone. His diligence paid off. Within a year, he was completely pain-free – for good!

**Keep Moving**

Movement is an essential approach for successful pain care. The hypersensitive nervous systems are wary of movement, though. We move tentatively and an internal warning alarm comes on – even before there is any real danger – so we stop. To work towards regaining ease of movement, we must first be calm and attentive, then move up to and just beyond the edge of the pain. As the alarm goes off, ask, “Is it really dangerous? Will I regret it? Maybe this is just a normal situation.” By challenging the alarm, we turn it down. Muscles need to be taught that it’s okay to move and stretch. We must reconnect with body sensations, paying more attention to them than to the pain.

**How Yoga Helps**

Pain can be changed. And so can suffering associated with pain. Pain does not have to equal suffering. All is changing. Pain will change. In Yoga we learn to observe, accept what is and do our duty, putting aside personal preference. The experience is not about pain, it is what is behind the pain that brings insight into deeper truths. We go beyond our limited idea of self and expand.

Used as a therapeutic treatment, yoga helps relieve pain and muscular tension, fostering greater ease of movement and building self-reliance. Physical, mental and spiritual self-awareness and self-regulation improve. Feelings of anxiety, fear and isolation are reduced and a better quality of life can be found. It is accessible, less costly than medical intervention and has long-lasting effects – setting us on the journey to connect with the holistic Self, highest Self, the Perfect Self.

**The Five Points of Yoga are the Best Medicine:**

- **Proper Exercise** – Mild to moderate exercise can decrease physical pain. Monitor muscular tension. Take note of how the breath feels, how the mind feels, how the spirit feels. Stay calm. Do not ignore pain. Be sure you feel safe. The yoga sequence should be gentle and at a slow pace. Pause to take a slow, deep breath between rounds of sun salutations. When practicing the cobra (bhujangasana,) for instance, inhale up and exhale down a few times with no long-holding. Continue to monitor the body/mind/breath. Stop any time you cannot maintain the state of calm. Progress slowly.

- **Proper Breathing** – Conscious breathing winds down the nervous system. An effective way to trigger parasympathetic response and release endorphins before moving is the following simple exercise. Just practicing this three to five times a day can help regulate the nervous system.

*Longer, Smoother, Softer Breathing Practice*

In any comfortable position, focus on your breathing. It doesn’t have to be any particular way, just watch it for a minute or so. Next, see if you can make it a little longer. Observe for another minute. Then, see if you can make it a little smoother. Observe. Finally, can you make it a little softer?

- **Proper Relaxation** – It is difficult not to focus on pain when it is severe. It is also challenging to relax. Practice a body scan in savasana (or sitting, if it’s more comfortable) to build body awareness. Starting with the feet and toes, pay attention to any subtle, non-pain sensations. Take your time and go through the entire body. This can prepare you to move calmly into an adapted yoga sequence with ease and confidence.

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In any chronic pain, the warning alarm comes on prematurely. We believe there is danger sooner, so we give in to the alarm. Mobility decreases.
OVERCOMING PAIN

• **Proper Diet** – The yogic (vegetarian) diet can help reduce pain and inflammation, and can even help reduce side effects of medications. Eat lots of vegetables, beans, fruits and a variety of whole grains. Include nourishing fats and high-quality protein.

  Use ginger and turmeric. Restrict dairy and grains. Reduce flour and sugar intake. Avoid nightshade vegetables — potatoes, tomatoes, peppers and eggplant and processed food.

• **Positive Thinking and Meditation** – Thought, like proper movement, is among the most effective ways to stimulate neurons in the brain circuits. The mind drives pain. The mind can also reverse it. Imagine an area of the brain devoted to pain is shrinking. Reframe stressful events as beneficial. “Pain” can be rephrased as “sensation.” Cultivate less fear responses. In working with the mind, we gain the ability to focus for longer periods. We can manage stress. Positive thinking produces endorphins. We build self-awareness, quiet the mind and senses.

  In a 2011 study using functional MRI results, four hours of meditation training was shown to significantly reduce pain intensity.

Highly effective self-care, Yoga requires the utmost patience and perseverance. By its steady practice, we can not only change pain, but empower people to live with joy and meaning. We seek to cultivate the same awareness in meditation practice, leading to the non-dual state where there is only peace; pain disappears.

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Ashram de Yoga Sivananda
Loire Valley, France
Yoga Vacations and Teachers’ Training in France 2018

Teachers’ Training Course:
29 June – 27 July, 2018 (in English & French)
29 July – 26 August, 2018 (in French)
20 November – 19 December, 2018 (in French)
5 January – 3 February, 2019 (in French)

Advanced Teachers’ Training Course:
29 June – 27 July, 2018
(in English with translation into French and Spanish)

Sadhana Intensive:
13 August – 28 August, 2018
(in English with translation into French, German and Spanish)

YOGA SUMMER FESTIVAL
2 – 12 August, 2018

Certificate Courses 2017
• Positive thinking – Living life with joy with Swami Kailasananda
• Posture, flexibility and anatomy – How Yoga works with Padma
• Ayurveda – The essential guide to healthy living and introduction to Ayurvedic cooking
• Science and expansion of consciousness with Philippe Bobola
• Yoga psychology – The ancient path of Raja Yoga to inner peace
• The foundation of Yoga with Prema
• The yogic way of cooking
• The meditation experience with Swami Bhagavatananda

Further Training Courses for Yoga Teachers

TTC Refresher Course:
(for Sivananda teachers only)
June 19 – June 25, 2018
• Accessible Yoga with Lakshmi Sutter
• How to teach Yoga to children
• How to teach Yoga to Seniors
• How to teach Meditation and Mantra Chanting
• Health is wealth – How to introduce Yoga students into the benefits of a yogic diet
• The Art of correcting Asanas
• Improve your Teaching Skills

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Email: orleans@sivananda.net • www.sivananda.org/orleans • www.sivananda.eu
75th Birth Year Celebration of Swami Durgananda

at the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Dhanwantari Ashram in Neyyar Dam, Kerala, India

February 2018

The Ashram prepared an exceptional platform for the celebrations.

The guests and swamis who came from Europe and other parts of the world were received with a very warm welcome and sincere hospitality.

The assembled devotees listen to a traditional Kerala “Pancha Vadyam” music group.
75TH BIRTH YEAR CELEBRATION OF SWAMI DURGANANDA

Satsang stage at the lake side platform

The satsangs were special moments of sharing the vibrant spirit of the Masters amongst all present.

The devotees in meditation by the lake side of the Ashram.
Prahlad, Yoga Acharya, Potti Swami and Bhatt Swami, four assisting priests of the Sree Pazhanchira Devi Temple in Trivandrum, Suresh, Ashram Manager, and Sri Harihara Chaitanya.

Potti Swami, Bhatt Swami and four assisting priests of the Sree Pazhanchira Devi Temple in Trivandrum prepared the puja and homa.
75TH BIRTH YEAR CELEBRATION OF SWAMI DURGANANDA

The “Rishi Homa” invoked the blessings of the Rishis or Sages of Yoga.

During the Puja, Potti Swami, Bhatt Swami and the assisting priests invoked the divine energy of many mantras into several kalashams (pots) filled with flowers.

At the conclusion Swami Durgananda was showered with these flowers, blessing her for the service to Swami Vishnu devananda’s worldwide spiritual mission.

Main Picture:
Potti Swami and Bhatt Swami are escorting Swami Durgananda into the Siva Hall
75TH BIRTH YEAR CELEBRATION OF SWAMI DURGANANDA

On behalf of the Ashram, Prahlad, Yoga Acharya, presented words of appreciation to Swami Durgananda: “Swami Vishnudevananda’s vision was to bring the East and the West together, and Swami Durgananda helped to bring that connection. We are honoured, we are thankful.”

“Potti Swami, for so many years you are protecting us with pujas, homas and prayers.”

Swami Durgananda with Prahlaad, Yoga Acharya, and Suresh, the manager of the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Dhanwantari Ashram.

Nataraj, Kalyani, Prahlad, Suresh and the staff at the Ashram prepared the events with much dedication and love.

Swami Durgananda with Sri Harhara Chaitanya, Bhagavatacharya, who recited the Srimad Bhagavatam for Swami Vishnudevananda in the 1980s, both in the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Dhanwantari Ashram as well as in the Cave “Sivananda Guha”, Gangotri, Himalayas.

Swami Durgananda with Nataraj and Kalyani, the directors of the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Dhanwantari Ashram.
Swami Durgananda expressed: “Potti Swami said in the beginning, the worship is not to you, it is to the Divine Mother. So it is like that. I feel it is not me, it is Swami Vishnudevanandaji who is present; he is here.”

Swami Durgananda with Mrs and Mr Kathuria, president of the Hindu Temple, Flushing, New York, S.K. Kamlesh, Ayurvedacharya from Lucknow, Dr Narayanswami, trustee of the Ashram and founder and CEO of Vikram Group of Hospitals in Madurai, Mrs Pramila Ravindrakumar, Chennai, Mrs Lalita Gourishankar, Palghat, senior disciple of Swami Vishnudevananda and trustee of the Ashram, Mr Ravindrakumar, Chennai, trustee of the Ashram, Mr Anantha Krishnan, advocate, Palghat, son of late Swami Sundarananda (Gouri Shankar) trustee of the Ashram, with his son Gouri Shankar.
75TH BIRTH YEAR CELEBRATION OF SWAMI DURGANANDA

Swami Sitaramananda, Yoga Acharya, with Swami Gayatriyananda, who serves the devotees at the Subramanya Ayyappa Temple at the Sivananda Ashram Yoga Camp in Val Morin, Quebec, Canada.

Swami Durgananda with Swami Kailasananda, Yoga Acharya
75TH BIRTH YEAR CELEBRATION OF SWAMI DURGANANDA

A Spiritual Highlight

A spiritual highlight of the celebrations were the seven days of Bhagavata Saptaha, the recitation of the yogic scripture *Srimad Bhagavatam*, with spiritual discourses and kirtan, by guest of honour Sri Venugopal Goswami, Bhagavatacharya from Vrindavan, UP, the playground of Lord Krishna.

The devotees are listening to the divine life music (vocal, harmonium, bansuri flute, tablas) which accompanied Sri Venugopal Goswami during the Bhagavata Saptaha.
Main Picture: This murti of Lord Krishna was worshipped during the Bhagavata Saptaha

The joyful expression of Ras Lila, the victory of Love Consciousness over the ego, in the form of dance.

Swami Sivadasananda, Yoga Acharya, introducing the Bhagavata Saptaha in memory of Swami Vishnudevananda’s deep reverence to this universal scripture of wisdom and devotion.
Tapaswini Ashram

The latest addition to the Sivananda family – the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Tapaswini Ashram near Gudur, Andhra Pradesh, South India opened its doors in late 2017.
a new ashram opens in india

The Ashram is situated close to pristine forest land with over 300 mango trees and almost as many eucalyptus within the Ashram itself. Tropical flowers abound and the pristine air and peaceful atmosphere is ideal for the practice of yoga and meditation. The beautiful and sizeable temple dedicated to Lord Siva in the form of Dakshinamurthi, with shrines to Ganesha, Subramanya and Raja Rajeshwari emanates a powerful spiritual energy throughout.

Sadhana Programmes and more. The dream of Swami Vishnu devananda to reawaken the knowledge of yoga in India is manifesting clearly. The ashram has already seen a steady stream of visitors, students and karma yogis eager to participate in its growth.

We welcome all spiritual seekers to come and enjoy nature, yoga and spirituality at the Tapaswini Ashram.

Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Tapaswini Ashram
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gudurregistrations@sivananda.org

YOGALife | Spring/Summer 2018  51
A Human Peace Mala in India 8 September 1987

By Kanti Devi

The years spent with Swami Vishnudevananda leave an indelible mark. His words and the moments spent with him come back to me time and time again. I would like to share here one of those special times with Swamiji.

His fervent love that he had towards his Master and his longing to bring peace to the whole of humanity drove him to organise a unique event in 1987.

September the 8th 1987 marked 100 years of Swami Sivananda’s birth and Swamiji had a wonderful idea! He had a vision of uniting the whole of India through a peace mala – a rosary where each bead will send out the vibration of the peace mantra “Om Namo Narayanaya.”
And thus, during his stay in the first TTC carried out in Uruguay, South America, in October of 1986, Swamiji conceived and organised each detail of this event.

The programme in India would begin with a pilgrimage to different holy cities and would end in Rishikesh. Over 80 people from the West came to be part in the event, and thousands more joined from all over India.

Moving around with a large group of Westerners, many of whom were not accustomed to India, was no easy task. Only Swamiji’s loving energy, and his firm determination to fulfill this mission, would make him contemplate such a challenging undertaking. Every day we would meet with Swamiji at the lobby of the hotel. Swamiji would always create an intimate and familiar environment. One would feel so good by his side that one would not want to go anywhere else. His presence, profound words and warm smile radiated peace and a tranquil joy. Also his teachings were very practical and would touch deeply on details that we would not have been able to grasp otherwise.
There were many challenges during the trip, and everyone had to constantly adapt, adjust and accommodate. But amidst all these difficulties and resulting fatigue and emotions, Swamiji remained attentive to everyone and everything, gave clear instructions and organised the next day, and carried everyone to the next place.

It was incredible to see how we overcame the mental laziness and the physical fatigue once we started to meditate and chant mantras. It was as if a stream of divine energy reached each one of us and touched us at the most intimate part of our being, so that we could get going joyfully.

The most important day of the Yatra arrived and Swamiji was radiant, taking care of every detail.

Other Yoga centres in India and Swami Sivananda’s devotees supported us in different cities and areas, but the central place of the event would be Haridwar, a holy city in North India on the banks of the Ganges. The plan was that everyone would gather there, joining hands, while repeating the mantra for an hour. Food would then be served to all sadhus and pilgrims. After that, we would return to Rishikesh.

We left Rishikesh on time so that we could reach Haridwar by noon (about 20 km distance). Swamiji was travelling in a van ahead of us and the rest of the group were on two buses. Other cars and buses joined the ‘caravan’. Besides praying before leaving, Swamiji asked us to repeat the mantra for peace “Om Namo Narayanaya” during the whole trip until we arrive to our destination.

It was wonderful to see the children from nearby villages, with their school uniforms, by the side of the road, holding hands and chanting the peace mantra.

Other Yoga centres in India and Swami Sivananda’s devotees supported us in different cities and areas, but the central place of the event would be Haridwar, a holy city in North India on the banks of the Ganges. The plan was that everyone would gather there, joining hands, while repeating the mantra for an hour. Food would then be served to all sadhus and pilgrims. After that, we would return to Rishikesh.

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Kanti Devi is a direct disciple of Swami Vishnudevananda. She is the Acharya of the Sivananda Centers in South America, and directs the Teachers’ Training courses taught in Argentina, Brazil and Colombia. Since December 2015 she is part of the executive board members of Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centers worldwide. She translated several books of Swami Sivananda. email: kantidevi@sivananda.org
Swamiji: A Pictorial Celebration of the Life of Swami Vishnudevananda

Here is an inspirational life in pictures of the great yoga pioneer, Swami Vishnudevananda, from his humble beginnings in a small village in south India to his recognition as a world-renowned teacher, a peace missionary and founder of the International Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre organisation. This wide-ranging collection of photographs is enriched with uplifting quotes and talks from the yoga master himself and offers a lasting testimonial to Swamiji’s life and achievements.

E-mail: hq@sivananda.org • Web: www.sivananda.org/camp
SWAMI VISHNUDEVANANDA’S JANMA-SAMADHI YATRA

Janma Samadhi Yatra
Birth-Samadhi Pilgrimage

A seven-week pilgrimage from Nemmara to Netala (India)


The pilgrimage is to honour the life and teachings of Swamiji, yoga pioneer and international peace activist. Swami Vishnudevananda’s unrivalled and courageous mission of bringing yoga to the West and of its revival in India is now recognised as a monumental achievement on a world-wide scale.

The Yatra is to begin from Nemmara (Swamiji’s birth place) in Kerala on 24 September 2018 and ends at Sivananda Kutir, Netala, Uttarkashi, Himalayas with the final Mahasamadhi Silver Jubilee Celebrations on 11 November 2018.

We will visit temples and holy places where Swamiji worshipped as well as villages, towns and cities where Swamiji lectured and taught the principles of yoga. Included on the pilgrimage will be visits to Sivananda Centres, Ashrams and affiliated centres, lasting legacies to our beloved Swamiji.

Come with us on this once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage.

www.facebook.com/janmasamadhiyatra
www.sivananda.org.in/janmasamadhiyatra
e-mail: yogashowstheway@sivananda.org
Youtube: https://youtu.be/dwnECcl-o_g
Yogic Symbols & Deities

Why are there 33 million Gods and Goddesses? The true meaning of yogic symbols and deities, part 1.

By Swami Bhagavatananda

Once, a yogi was meditating for a very long time, visualising the form of the Divine and longing for its Darshan (presence). Gradually, the meditation deepened, and the Divine decided to appear in front of the yogi to give blessings. But before revealing itself, the Divine took a long look in the mirror, very carefully checking every little detail of its appearance. When asked for the reason, the Divine explained: “I want to make sure to show myself in the identical form, this yogi has been meditating on me”.

Nataraja
he Atman, the inner Self of all beings and the entire universe is nothing but cosmic consciousness, without names or forms, without beginning or end. But how to connect to something without name or form or qualities? We can only love something if we are able to establish a relationship with it, if we can open our heart to it. Therefore, Yoga mythology knows the concept of Ishwara or Ishtadevata, the personal God.

There are 33 million Ishwaras or Gods and Goddesses to satisfy every possible shade of human temperament, but these many forms are nothing but colourful reflections of universal energies. They can be categorised into three main energies:

1. Creation
   Behind creation is the power of intelligence, the knowledge how to put things and together. It also includes the manifestation of mental concepts and ideas.
   Examples: Brahma; Saraswati and other forms of the Divine Mother.

2. Preservation
   This is the energy of balance, harmony, peace and stability.
   Examples: Vishnu and His various incarnations, the most important ones being Rama and Krishna.

3. Destruction
   Contrary to common belief, this is actually a supremely positive energy. It means removing something old that has no value anymore to make room for something new.
   Examples: Ganesha, Siva.

Ganesha

Even people without much knowledge of Yoga mythology are familiar with the distinctive form of Ganesha, depicted with an elephant head, a huge belly and large ears.

Ganesha is called Vigneshvara, the Lord of all obstacles, representing the energy of destruction in its most auspicious form. He clears all obstacles from our path, like an elephant making its way through the jungle, pushing aside with its powerful trunk everything which prevents it from moving forward. This is the force of willpower. Whatever obstacles cannot be conquered that way, we rely on Ganesha’s faithful servant Mooshika, the little mouse, who makes up for its lack of strength by its ability to squeeze even into the tiniest places, showing us that sometimes humility and patience instead of brutal force are required to reach our goal. The little mouse has yet another sublime meaning: It holds a sweetmeat in its paws, looking up longingly at Ganesha for permission to gobble it up. Mooshika is our lower, individual self, who wants to fully indulge in mundane pleasures, but is under the control of our higher Self, Ganesha, who generously allows it the occasional bite without granting it the whole treat! The same way we can live in the world without harm, if we let our higher Self guide us in enjoying material objects and sensual pleasures in moderation so that we don’t get caught up in them completely.

We invoke Ganesha before starting any activity, whether worldly or spiritual, because without the removal of obstacles we cannot succeed in anything.

Ganesha is Ganapati, Lord of the Ganas, who are the spirits of the elements in nature. This means Ganesha helps us to live in harmony with the forces of nature (the five elements earth, water, fire, air and ether) in the world around us and to balance out their subtle manifestations in our body and mind, thus enabling us to experience peace of mind. In its highest aspect Ganesha represents the destruction of our biggest obstacle to Self-Realization which is the identification with the ego that gives us the false sense of a limited, individual being.

How to attain Self-Realization?

First, we need to develop a liking for the spiritual path. With the axe of Viveka (discrimination) that he holds in one hand, Ganesha cuts our desire to live only for the gratification of the senses and with the noose in his other hand, he draws us to the divine life of Sadhana, spiritual practice. Then follows the practice of Sravana, which means listening carefully to...
spiritual teachings, symbolised by Ganesha’s large ears. Next, we apply Manana, contemplation on what we have heard. To do this we invoke the support of Ganesha as Ekadanta, the one who has a single tusk, symbolising single-mindedness, i.e. the power of concentration. Finally, Ganesha helps us to experience Niddidhyasana, deep meditation and direct experience, achieved by first using our pure, sharp intellect to reflect on our true nature and in the end by even going beyond the intellect to attain the knowledge of the Self. Therefore, Ganesha is also known as Buddhinath, the Lord of wisdom.

Once we are aware of our true nature, we transcend all limitations, seeing no beginning or end. This is represented by Ganesha as Lambodara, the one who has a round belly, like a globe.

Once the ego is conquered, we are beyond suffering and life is filled with sweetness – just like Ganesha who is always surrounded by plenty of sweetmeats and delicious fruits.

Om Sri Maha Ganapataye Namah!

Siva

As Lord of transformation, Siva is also considered the God of meditation, since through meditation we transform our awareness from seeing ourselves as limited, separate beings to experiencing our Oneness with cosmic consciousness.

Although responsible for the energy of destruction, Lord Siva is called “Sadasiva”, the One who is eternally auspicious and “Bhaktavatsala”, the One who is easily pleased with His devotees and fulfills their wishes. Why is that? Well, once we have set ourselves sincerely to the task of destroying the lower qualities of our mind like jealousy, fear and anger through persistent Sadhana (spiritual practice), all positive qualities have room to rush in, filling our mind with a natural lightness and joy. Siva is also “Nilakantha”, the One who has a blue throat, caused by the terrible poison Halahala that threatened to destroy the whole universe and was swallowed by Lord Siva out of deep compassion and retained in his throat to protect all beings – those around him as well as those living in his stomach. The poison of identification with the ego and the lower mind tries to destroy us inside out, but if we connect to the Divine and remember that we are the Atman, the immortal soul, we are protected from being burnt by the poison of worldliness.

As Yogeshvara (Lord of Yogis), Siva is sitting in the meditation pose high up in the Himalayas with eyes half closed, symbolising that He uplifted his consciousness to a higher level, without refusing or negating the world itself. He is in the world and beyond the world at the same time, just like we should live our life.

Siva is sitting on a tiger skin, showing complete victory over the tiger-demon of anger.

Just like a ferocious animal, anger can attack us all of a sudden and destroy our peace of mind mercilessly. Siva smears his body with ashes from the cremation ground. This refers to Sivas power of destruction, but it also implies Vairagya, the wisdom of detachment, the knowledge that all things will pass and nothing except the Atman is eternal.

Snakes are draped around Siva’s body, indicating an absolute fearlessness, that can only come out of the knowledge that there is no death because the Atman was never born and will never die. There is yet another beautiful symbolism in the snakes: no creature is too low or too impure to be accepted by the Divine. Far from only tolerating the presence of all kind of creepy-crawlies around him, Siva lovingly picks them up and puts them around his neck – an eternal testimony to the infinite love of God towards all beings.

Siva sports three eyes, representing the sun and the moon as source of all external light and the third eye in the middle of the forehead indicating the fire of knowledge that burns all ignorance and false identifications. It was with sparks from his third eye that Siva destroyed Kama, the God of lust. Kama embodies the sense of ego with all its limitations and desires. But any identification with “Me” and “Mine” vanishes immediately in the Fire of Wisdom.

Siva’s hair is adorned by the crescent moon, declaring Siva as the Lord and Master of time, since the waxing and waning moon symbolizes the passing of time.

The sacred waters of Goddess Ganga flow from his matted locks, illustrating our true inner nature as one eternal stream of pure consciousness.

Siva holds the Trishula, the trident, that stands for the three Gunas (Sattva, Rajas and Tamas = the qualities of harmony, excitement and inertia). Thus, we see that Siva can use the three Gunas but is not affected by them, the same as our inner Self is not tainted by any action or modification of nature. In Siva’s hands is the Damaru, the drum, used by Siva to
produce the sacred sound of AUM, the vibration that pervades and upholds the universe. Sometimes Siva is also shown holding a deer and an axe. With the axe, he destroys all our attachments and false identifications. The deer is caught by Siva in mid-jump – symbolizing our mind that is always ready to jump excitedly from one thought to the next but is firmly restrained and brought under control by the Higher Self, thus indicating the power of full and absolute concentration.

Siva is always accompanied by his faithful servant and devotee Nandi, the bull, representing the individual self in its pure, sattvic form, fully in tune with the Higher Self, Siva. Therefore, Siva is also called “Pasupati” the Lord of animals. At the entrance of most temples of Siva we find a statue of Nandi, whose gaze is firmly fixed on the image of Siva in the inner shrine. Nandi shows us how to lead a happy and fulfilled life where we perform all our actions as service to the Divine and never lose it out of sight, thus efficiently controlling our lower animal nature.

Besides his form as Yogeshvara, Lord of Yogis, Siva is also depicted in various forms indicating the union of Siva and Shakti, i.e. of absolute consciousness and its manifested power in the world.

**Siva Lingam**
The base represents Shakti, the cosmic energy or the Divine Mother. The pillar rising from it stands for Brahman, the Absolute. Thus, Siva and Shakti belong together, they are just like the different sides of the same coin. The column of the Lingam points upwards, symbolising the uplift from individual to cosmic consciousness.

**Ardha Narishvara**
(half male, half female)
One side is in the form of Durga, the Shakti-aspect with all attributes of Durga, like the lion, a red sari and decked in jewellery. The other side depicts Siva with the snakes and matted hair. Again, this image illustrates the union of Siva and Shakti.

**Siva Nataraja, the Lord of dance**
In the cosmic dance of Lord Siva, a world is created every time he lifts a foot and destroyed every time he sets it down. This is the constant, dynamic flow of energy or Shakti, nothing stays the same, everything changes. But Siva’s dance takes place within a perfect circle of flames. A circle has no beginning and no end, symbolising that, within all activities, the inner Self does not change but remains an unaffected witness. This is further emphasised by Siva dancing on the prostrate body of Apasmara, the demon of ignorance, who is trampled down and destroyed by the knowledge of Self-Realization.

Om Namah Sivaya!
To be continued...

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‘Holi’day!
The Festival of Colours

By Anisha

There can hardly have been a more colourful opening to a month than March 2018, when Holi fell on the very first day of the month. The festival of colours is celebrated in India and all along the latitude of the world wherever Indian tradition is cherished. Celebrations start on the eve of Holi, called ‘Holika Dahan’, followed by ‘Rangwali Holi’ the next day, and are worthy of special attention as they are braided closely by religious, scientific, spiritual and philosophical outlooks.
The event begins in the evening with a bonfire named after demoness Holika. People gather around to perform rituals and offer prayers with an intention to purify themselves, burning away their vices just as Holika was burnt. In contrast, the second part of the festival is a fun-frolic-fight combination when the colour riot begins! People transcend boundaries of age and status becoming mischievous enough to playfully smear and spray colours on each other, not sparing a single passerby as a mark of spreading victory, unity and love. This pray-play element of Holi symbolises the serious-funny sides of life making the festivity a wholesome experience.

Across the country folklores differ from each other, yet they all convey deep messages when seen through the eyes of yogic and vedantic philosophies.

Holi stories and their yogic inference

India, with Her multicultural persona, does not celebrate a festival with one unanimous story, reason, style and attitude. As a result, across the country folklores differ from each other, yet they all convey deep messages when seen through the eyes of yogic and vedantic philosophies.

Narasimha version

The Narasimha version of Holi commemorates the restoration of Dharma (righteousness) by Lord Narasimha, a man-lion avatar of Lord Narayana, whose purpose was to kill the demon King Hiranyakashibhu and save his devotee Prahlada, the King’s own son. Young Prahlada, an ardent devotee of Lord Narayana, was unyielding to the pressures of his father who enforced everyone to worship him chanting “Hiranyaya Namah”. Instead Prahlada incessantly adhered to “Om Namo Narayana” as a mark of his unconditional devotion. Unable to bear it, the King subjected Prahlada to several cruel punishments, all of which proved ineffective. Finally, Holika, Prahlada’s evil aunt, tricked him into sitting on a pyre with her. Holika was wearing a fire-immune cloak, while Prahlada was not. As the flames roared, the cloak flew from Holika and encased Prahlada who survived while Holika burned. Then as a proof of His omnipresence, Lord Narasimha made a dramatic appearance from a pillar of the King’s courtyard and killed Hiranyakashibu.

Inference: The ‘I-my’ issue of the mind is handled in this lore. The demon King Hiranyakashibhu metaphorically stands for ego (Ahamkara, ‘I’ ness) which always tries to hold itself in a supreme state (expecting to be worshipped). With the help of his sister Holika (mamakara, ‘my’ ness), he tries to destroy the independent nature of Prahlada (the soul) by forcing it to identify with the ego. But with one pointed devotion the soul disengages itself from the ‘I-my’ issue and always surrenders itself to the Source (Lord Narayana). The Holika bonfire symbolises victory achieved through Bhakti (devotion) of good over evil, of Prahlada over Hiranyakashibu, of soul over ego.

Krishna version

Radha is the dearest devotee of Lord Krishna (avatar of Vishnu), who won His heart not through penance or prayer, but by total surrender. She shows Madhurya bhava (beloved attitude) towards Her Lord. Krishna, known for his dark skin, despaired whether the fair-skinned Radha would like him because of his appearance. His mother, tired of the desperation, asks him to approach Radha and colour her face in any colour he wanted. Krishna does this which leads to Radha and Krishna becoming one as a couple. Ever since, the playful colouring of Radha’s face has been commemorated as Holi.

Inference: The story strikes a rare note on the bhakti scale. While it is usual for a devotee to hold on to God as would a baby monkey to its mother (Markata Nyaya), this story gives a 360 degree twist by leaving God himself in a yearning state wondering “Will my devotee love me for what I am?” While this highlights the simplicity of Lord Krishna it also stays in tune with the Vaishnavite cult’s belief that whenever Vishnu finds a devotee like Radha who is an epitome of total surrender, He finds Him in a state of advantage and would Himself hold on to the devotee as would a mother cat to its kitten (Marjara Nyaya). Krishna and Radha becoming a couple symbolises the union of individual self with the universal self.

Shaivite version

In South India Holi is celebrated as a mark of the return of Kama, the God of Love. The story goes this way: Lord Siva was in yoga and deep meditation. But Goddess Parvati wanted to bring Siva back into the world and get married to Him, though Siva does not pay any attention. But if Siva does not marry, he will father no children and the demon, Taraka, will not be killed. She seeks help from the god of love called Kama. The love god shoots arrows at Siva. This provokes Siva who opens his third eye and burns Kama to ashes, upsetting both Siva’s wife Rati (Kamadevi) and Parvati. Rati performs her own meditative asceticism for forty days, upon which Siva understands, forgives out of compassion and restores the god of love. This return of the god of love is celebrated as Holi.

Inference: Here Siva represents a ‘one pointed mind’ which shows detachment from worldly desire (kama) achieved through meditation. When his meditation is disturbed, his third eye opens (Aja chakra, the seat of discriminative intelligence) and kills desire. Yet from a karma yogic point of view such an untimely dispassion could come in the way of discharging one’s destined duties. Goddess Parvati (representing Prakriti, Nature) symbolises the force that draws the mind (Siva) towards a desire for a good cause rather than personal gain. The story highlights the importance of adhering to the four proper goals of human life, namely dharma (righteousness), artha (material), kama (desire) and then moksha (liberation). Having realised that kama precedes moksha, the mind (Siva) then steps out of seclusion, gives life to desire (Kama) by yielding to the forces of nature (marring Goddess Parvati) in order to fulfil the destined duty.
Holi and its spiritual implication

The pattern of Holi celebration may precisely be superimposed upon the spiritual pattern of life. Yoga explains how each chakra has a specific colour and corresponds to a certain level of understanding of life. The purpose of yoga is to transcend the colourful lower chakras and move the Kundalini energy up to the higher centres until it reaches the final plane, Sahasrara, a colourless/golden white zone. The creator is colourless but creativity is colourful. In advaitic terms, Brahman (Universal Consciousness) is colourless but Maya (illusion) is colourful. In the festival of Holi, the concept of Maya is dramatised through the play of colours: how it spreads and brings everyone under its charm. The later deliberate washing away of the stubborn colours with meticulous effort so as to return to one’s original appearance probably symbolises the want of every soul to disengage itself from the colourful illusory world so as to return to the Spirit after ages of spinning within the wheel of birth and death.

Science behind Holi – a rational view

Why is Holi celebrated on a particular day and in this fashion?

1. Welcoming a new season: As per the Indian calendar, the full moon day in the month of Phalgun, which marks the beginning of the spring season, a period between end of winter and advent of summer, is the day of Holi. In the Gregorian calendar, this falls between mid-February and mid-March.

2. Social: In Swami Sivananda’s own words “The social element during Holi is the uniting of the great and the small, of the rich and the poor. People stand in the streets and sprinkle coloured water on any man who passes by, be he a rich man or an officer. There is no restriction on this day. It is like the April Fool’s Day of the Europeans.”

3. Health concerns: The seasonal shift induces microbial growth in the atmosphere as well as in the body. When Holika is burnt, the temperature of the nearby area rises to around 50-60 degrees Celsius. When people go around the bonfire/pyre, the radiating heat is claimed to kill the heat susceptible microbes in the body and cleanse the systems.

4. Promotive: In some parts of the country, after Holika Dahan (burning of Holika) people put ash on their forehead to absorb moisture in order to prevent sinusitis and also mix Chandan (paste of sandal wood) with the young leaves and flowers of the mango tree and consume it. It is believed to promote good health.

5. Psychosomatic: It is also quite natural to experience Tamas (lethargy) during seasonal change. It is to counter this laziness that Holi celebrations are designed to be Rajasic. The singing of kirtans, musical instruments, sight of vibrant colours and the physical movement in playfully throwing colours at each other psychologically works in synergy to combat tamas.

6. Vitality and Rejuvenation: Colours play a vital role in the fitness of the human body. Deficiency of a particular colour could cause an ailment and can be cured when that colour element is supplemented either through diet or medicine. In ancient times, when people started playing Holi, the colours used by them were made from natural sources like turmeric, Neem, Palash (Tesi) etc. The colour powders made from these natural sources have a healing effect on the human body. They have the effect of strengthening the body.

Organic sources of colours used in ancient times:

- **Green** – Leaves of henna, bilva, guimohur tree, spinach,
- **Yellow** – Turmeric powder, bael fruit, marigold, sunflowers, daffodils.
- **Red** – Red sandal wood, red pomegranate, tesu tree flowers, dried hibiscus.
- **Saffron** – Flowers of tesu tree (palash), a mix of lime with turmeric powder.
- **Indigo** – Indigo, indian berries, species of grapes, blue hibiscus.
- **Purple** – Beetroot.
- **Brown** – Dried tea leaves.
- **Black** – Dried gooseberries (amla).

Colours or chemicals?

An unfortunate outcome of chemical science is the convenient rise of synthetic colours despite the health hazards and a brutal decline of herbal powders, attributed to cost. The synthetic colours available in the market comprise of toxic components such as lead oxide, diesel, chromium iodine and copper sulphate, all of which are suspicious agents and not friendly to the skin and health. Hopefully the increasing awareness around organic products will restore natural colours back to stores at an affordable price in the foreseeable future.

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Free Medical Camp
At Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Meenakshi Ashram
Madurai, Tamil Nadu, India.
December 3, 2017

Along the rural belt of India, Medical health care has always been a fundamental need, especially for the pediatric and geriatric groups who are frequently challenged with immunocompromised conditions. Recognising this as a prime essential, the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Meenakshi Ashram, in collaboration with Vikram Hospital, arranged periodic health support by organising weekly medical camps which have been in effect since 2015 for the benefit of villages around the Ashram.

The Sivananda Meenakshi Ashram, which hosted the 2017 Executive Board Members meeting, along with the Indian Trustees and Indian Directors Meeting between 3 – 5 December, took the opportunity on the concluding day to enable the board members (EBM) to participate in and witness the camp activities. Marking this special occasion, a large scale one day camp was organised by the planners for the rural neighborhood in the Sivananda Rural Health Centre from 10am to 5pm, managed by a multispecialty team of 10 doctors and 20 nurses. The camp also provided pharmaceutical and laboratory facility. Breakfast, lunch and beverages were served to the patients.

The presence of the EBM, Trustees, Directors of Indian Ashrams and Centres and local VIPs adorned the occasion. On arrival the EBM members, Trustees and Directors were taken on a tour of the camp premises. The event began with a formal meeting where the EBM were welcomed and individually honoured by Dr. Narayanasamy, Founder Chief of Vikram Hospital and our Trustee. In the special address, Swami Durgananda delivered an impressive speech comparing the Eastern and Western attitudes towards life and yoga by quoting the works of Swami Vishnudevananda in the West, following the guidance of Master Sivananda. Dr. Narayanasamy then extended his appreciation to Swami Durgananda for the kind donations towards this medical service and for Swamiji’s noble intentions of raising funds on her 75th Birthday for opening a hospital in the future. In his vote of thanks address, Prahlad praised the efforts of everyone involved and promised to continue this service to the best ability of the organisation, by the grace of Master Swami Sivananda and Swami Vishnudevananda. The meeting concluded with prayers and the national anthem.

A wide spectrum of medical conditions like dermatologic, ENT, ophthalmic, gynecologic, diabetic, hypertensive, pediatric, surgical and orthopedic were managed. A total of 380 patients were registered. The predominant cases were ophthalmic while diabetic and hypertensive cases ranked second. The camp ended at 5pm.

Would you like to contribute to this project?
The costs are as follows: Tours with the Sivananda medical van with one doctor and two nurses held daily: 65 € per day. Medical camp with doctors of the City Hospital Madurai held monthly: 2000 € each month. Each donor will be sent an individual receipt from the Sivananda Ashram, Madurai. We are in the process of establishing a Sivananda Donation Association. Once it is in place, donations can be made by bank transfer. Until then, your donations can be brought to any Sivananda Yoga Centre/Ashram, who will organise sending the donations to India. We thank you wholeheartedly for your generous help towards this project.
Experience the bliss of yoga in God’s own country.

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February 2019
March 2019

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4 – 18 December 2018
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April 2019

Ayurveda Wellness Course
11 – 25 November 2018
February 2019

Yoga Ayurveda Cultural Programme
December 2018

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1 August – 10 September 2018

South Indian Yatra
December 2018

Panchakarma
Every two weeks mid-May to mid-July 2018

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In a beautiful place surrounded by rainforest on the coast of Brazil.
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Yoga Vacation - January 10 to 21 (Spanish and Portuguese)

ARGENTINA

In Patagonia Argentina, a place recognized worldwide for its incomparable beauty.
TTC - March 3 to 29 (Spanish)
SADHANA INTENSIVE - March 3 to 17 (Spanish)
TTC Refresher - March 18 to 23
Yoga Vacation - March 4 to 17

COLOMBIA

In the Vana Durga Ashram, a place blessed by nature and full of energy.
TTC - July 1 to 27 (Spanish)
Yoga Vacation - July 1 to 27

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Swami Sivananda expresses the importance of Ayurveda in his book: *Practice of Ayurveda*:

"This tendency of an essentially intuitive mind, towards an integral development of life, towards a complete blossoming of the whole man even while living in a physical form in this material world; this impassioned affirmation of positive living, this acceptance of the body as the best instrument for the realization here on earth, resulted in the obtainment of the yet unmatched, deepest insights – the subtle determining vital powers and secrets in the human system that govern its radiant health and longevity and in the creation of a yet another Veda, the Ayurveda.

Ayurveda is a perfect science of life and consists of a body of most remarkable knowledge on the internal mechanism of human health and longevity, on medicinal herbs and therapeutic roots, on the efficacious treatment of human ills by eradicating from the human system the very sources of their causation."

The term Ayurveda comes from “Ayus” = life and veda = knowledge.

“Mind, self (consciousness) and body – these three make the tripod on which the living world stands.”

Caraka Samhita Sutrasthana Chapter 1 Verse 46

**Source of knowledge**

Ayurveda is a complete medical system with an extensive knowledge of anatomy, physiology and pharmacology. Originally passed on in oral tradition, the body of knowledge of Ayurveda has been recorded in these main classical scriptures, as well as several minor scriptures, all made accessible to us by commentaries of modern day scholars:

Charaka Samhita by Charaka
Sushruta Samhita by Sushruta
Ashtanga Samgraha and Ashtanga Hrdayam by Vagbhata

"Ayurveda is the knowledge of a happy and unhappy, and a good and bad life and that which contributes to these four aspects.” – Caraka Samhita Sutrasthana Chapter 1 Verse 41

**Ayurveda and Yoga**

Ayurveda and Yoga are sister sciences and this is how they are practiced in the Sivananda Yoga Centers. While both Ayurveda and Yoga share the 4 goals of life of classical Indian philosophy: dharma (right way of living), artha (prosperity), kama (fulfillment of desires) and moksha (liberation, self-realisation), Ayurveda focuses on health for achieving the 4 goals, whereas the ultimate aim of Yoga is moksha.

Throughout this book we introduce the main aspects of Ayurveda and how to practice them in your daily life.

**The three doshas**

Vata, pitta and kapha are energies that pervade the body and mind and are responsible for performing the functions of body and mind. They are made up of the five elements and play a central role in our body, our health and disease and we experience them by their effects on our anatomy and physiology.

Vata is the force of movement, dynamic activity and sensation in body and mind. This makes it the most
PRACTICAL AYURVEDA

Metabolism. Nowadays taking good care of agni may well of all internal processes of the body, in other words: your besides keeping the doshas in balance. Agni is at the heart a strong agni is one of the central principles of Ayurveda It is essential for all processes of transformation. Maintaining Agni means fire and refers to the digestive fire in the body. Ojas production expresses itself in fearfulness and fiery anger. too much. Loss of ojas due to stress, ill health and lack of health and also a well-functioning agni. Because it comes from the tissues, ojas s is dependent on their the tissues against the damaging influence of the doshas. It is a special substance that maintains and sustains life and also a well-functioning agni. An increase of ojas makes you blissful. Ojas can never be too much. Loss of ojas due to stress, ill health and lack of ojas production expresses itself in fearfulness and fiery anger. Agni Agni means fire and refers to the digestive fire in the body. It is essential for all processes of transformation. Maintaining a strong agni is one of the central principles of Ayurveda besides keeping the doshas in balance. Agni is at the heart of all internal processes of the body, in other words: your metabolism. Nowadays taking good care of agni may well be our most important task, because most aspects of our lifestyle weaken agni. Ayurveda teaches us the lost art of keeping agni strong and healthy and restoring the function of a compromised agni. A weak agni leads to formation of ama, which is undigested food and acts like a toxin, build-up of excess and weakened tissues (dhatus), resulting in lack of energy and blockage of our internal plumbing – particularly the digestive tract and the arteries. Weak tissues are susceptible to the damaging influence of agitated and increased doshas and can no longer provide the body with adequate ojas. Left untreated, this leads to disease and aging. Many yoga postures contribute to a strong and healthy agni. “The practice of head and shoulderstand restores the equilibrium of ojas and perfect health.” – Swami Sivananda. Immunity is called bala, strength, in Ayurveda and exists in three forms:

- The immunity from the amount of ojas we are born with. It is strongest between the ages 20 to 50.
- Immunity which is dependent on age and seasonal changes
- Immunity in the form of healthy ojas, agni, doshas and tissues which we can build up and maintain with proper diet, exercise and rejuvenating treatments.

Health
Health is a positive state of happiness due to the normal condition of the doshas, agni, dhatus, malas, as well as a serene state of the body, mind and senses. For our busy and often unsettled modern life Ayurveda provides a solid foundation of health with its time-tested wisdom on healthy living.

The ayurvedic lifestyle is adapted to your phase of life, the season, your environment and takes into account your constitution. It includes your thoughts, your speech and your actions. In practice this means following a daily routine, being aware of seasonal changes and adjusting your lifestyle to your age.

The most important principles of Ayurveda for a healthy, balanced life are:

- Regularity in daily life – your daily habits have the most influence on your health.
- Tuning in to the laws and rhythms of nature.
- Moderation in everything you do.

Following a healthy lifestyle
How to change your life? Ayurveda has advice on virtually all aspects of life and knows that in order for change to stick, it has to be introduced slowly and gradually. Persevere; regularity and moderation are the key. Do not overdo new things. Habits need to grow slowly but surely. We have included a step by step guide for a healthy lifestyle in the book to help you with this important goal.

Adopting a healthy lifestyle
This means following the daily natural rhythm, rules of hygiene, getting enough and appropriate exercise, practicing yoga and meditation and repeating mantras to develop sattva, beneficial use of the senses, spending time in nature and with like-minded, positive people, helping others and avoiding extremes in everything you do.
Daily routine
The body and mind follow an internal clock — a cycle of 24 hours. Throughout different times of the day the doshas change in predominance and with them their influence on you. By adapting your daily routine to these phases you are keeping the doshas well balanced, ensuring their optimal function.

Regularity in your routine is essential. Getting up, eating and going to sleep at the same time each day provides the ideal framework for a healthy life and a day full of energy.

Strengthen your agni
- By only eating when you are hungry, always eating at the same time each day and adhering to a light and easily digestible diet. Avoid completely filling your stomach and practice regular fasting for just a day or even half a day. Only drink hot or warm water, avoid cold or ice-cold water completely.
- By avoiding stress as much as possible. In times of stress only take a light diet or do a fast.

"The secret of being healthy and happy at all times is to be a little hungry all the time."
– Swami Sivananda

Increase ojas
We are born with a certain amount of ojas but can also produce it. Avoiding stress, keeping a strong agni and regular exercise and proper diet are the key. Milk, almonds, almond milk and ghee are the best sources of ojas. Milk nourishes all seven tissues and will go where it is most needed. A weak agni or the presence of ama need to be corrected first, otherwise milk or ghee cannot be digested and will further weaken agni.

Diet
Nutrition is called “the great medicine” in Ayurveda. Food not only makes up the body but also the mind. A wholesome, well-balanced diet is the foundation of health, strength and happiness and the key for healing any disease. Moreover: your food should be appetising and to your liking and appeal to all your senses.

A well-balanced diet consists of:
- Two thirds nourishing foods: grains, fruit, vegetables that are rich in starch, milk and milk products – alternatively rice or almond milk, nuts, and fats.
- And one third purifying foods: pulses, vegetables and salad.

Changing your diet
Any change should be made gradually. Introduce healthy foods and reduce unwholesome foods slowly and step by step. With practice you will find the diet best suited to your taste and constitution.

The healing power of food
The healing power of food comes from these 8 principles:
1. Good quality food (organic and fresh).
2. Preparation (freshly cooked).
3. Food Combinations: Avoid combinations such as very cold and very hot things together, milk with fruit.
4. Not eating too much nor too little.
5. Regional foods are best and freshest.
6. The season, the time of day, your phase of life all tell you which foods are best for you.
7. The atmosphere, the state of your kitchen, and your attitude all play an important role.
8. You, the person who eats, is more important than what you eat. The healthiest food can become poison if you are in a hurry, stressed or unhappy; have a weak agni or are ill.

Sugar
It is classically made from cane sugar and comes in different forms. The two most commonly used forms today are jaggery and sharkara.

Jaggery is thickened and solidified cane sugar syrup and still contains many bioactive phytochemicals.

In ancient times sugar was far less available than today and was used as medicine rather than as an everyday food. According to Ayurveda it soothes vata and pitta and increases kapha, produces mucus, and can lead to asthma. With very moderate consumption sharkara only mildly increases kapha, acts as a diuretic, purifies the blood, soothes burning sensations, quenches thirst and is beneficial for the eyes.

"If you strive for bliss, your diet should be such that new disease cannot manifest and existing disease is alleviated.” – Caraka

Ayurveda and disease
Out of balance
Most commonly the road to ill health begins with a lapse in judgement, when our mind and self-control fail us. Even though we know better, we frequently choose to make unhealthy choices, most often in pursuit of sense-pleasures.

Swami Sivananda points out these pitfalls of daily life:
- Overloading the stomach upsets digestion and weakens agni.
- Sleeping during the day and being awake at night interferes with our natural rhythm and stresses the nervous system.
Suppressing natural urges like passing stool, urine and gas, the urge to yawn, sleep, or cry tears taxes the body and mind and aggravates vata.

Sexual excess distresses the nervous system. In Ayurveda unspecific feelings of unease or non-wellbeing are taken seriously – they are the vanguards of manifest disease. An irritated dosha for instance – if not pacified – will lead to dosha increase, the dosha leaving its seat and settling in the affected tissue. Only at this point do we usually do something about it and in ayurvedic terms this is already very late. Ideally a disease is caught and the process reversed before it manifests. It is therefore essential to follow a healthy lifestyle to keep the doshas in balance and to pay attention to signs of irritated doshas such as a headache or minor aches and pains.

**Ayurvedic Therapies**

The scope of Ayurveda goes far beyond wellness, its main focus is maintaining health, correcting imbalance and curing disease. There is a wide array of ayurvedic therapies that have one thing in common: they place responsibility with you, the patient. You are the caretaker of your body and mind and your own best doctor. The key to a cure is avoiding the cause of disease and non-wellbeing.

**Corrective and restorative therapies**

These treatments aim at pacifying the doshas, stimulating agni, digest ama, restoring health to the tissues and building ojas. However, if you stop here and keep the habits that led to your problem, it will recur.

The main aspects are:

- A special diet to reduce the increased dosha(s), stimulate agni and digest ama. Fasting or a nourishing diet is part of this where necessary.
- Medicinal herbs, plants and minerals.
- Body treatments, like oil massage or a steam bath.
- Panchakarma.

Panchakarma means “five actions”. It is the cleansing of the body and removal of elevated doshas. While irritated doshas can be pacified with body or herbal treatments, elevated doshas are best removed from the body with panchakarma. It is an elaborate therapy including oil massages, purgation, enemas, and more and it is not to be confused with a spa or wellness treatment.

Panchakarma has a deep cleansing effect, it restores energy, opens blockages, cleanses tissues, rejuvenates the whole system and restores the natural balance of the doshas. Its effects can be felt for a year or longer if the proper diet and lifestyle advice is followed.

These are the practical aspects of Ayurveda and an ayurvedic lifestyle discussed in the book which will guide you through living a more positive and healthy life step by step.

“The science of Ayurveda points to the soul through the upkeep of the physical body in perfect order. It is the science of sciences”

– Swami Sivananda

**NEW BOOK RELEASE:** PRACTICAL AYURVEDA

By the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre

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2018 Publication dates
UK: June, US: July, Germany: December

Chandrika is a medical doctor and a Sivananda Yoga Teacher. She teaches anatomy and physiology in the Sivananda Yoga Teachers’ Training Courses in Europe. She co-authored the new book Practical Ayurveda, (Dorling Kindersley).
Dear graduates, congratulations on what you have achieved, for the effort, courage and energy you have brought to accomplish the Teachers’ Training Course.

You listened, you put in the time and energy. From here on in, you can give yourself the credit that you can do it. This is how you learn not to buy what they are selling in the world – get rich, get smart, get this, get that. I have trained people who are billionaires and they were suicidal. You have learned the difference between a life with yoga and a life without yoga.

When I see you and all you have achieved, sitting over there in your yellow t-shirts, I remember how it is that I never took the TTC myself. There was always an excuse – I have to work so my children can get college degrees, I have to do this, I have to do that. I never took the TTC.

I didn’t take the TTC, but I had the great privilege to be taught one-on-one by Swamiji, which was wonderful. Forty years on, I am comfortable with what the years have given me.

There is so much more to know than what is seen by the naked eye. If you stay – don’t leave the party too soon! You have already accomplished a huge deal, and I would urge to you stay at these holy places so you can benefit from the spiritual vibration. Never ever, ever, whether its pranayama, asana, karma yoga – never quit too soon. Give yourself the chance to go deeper.

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Now I’ll tell you a small story.

Many years ago, in the 19th century, the United States attracted people from all over the world with its promise of work and the chance to create something from nothing. It was the land of milk and honey, and the streets were paved with gold.

There was one guy from a country, say Ireland, or maybe Russia, who very much wanted to go to the United States so that he could express his life more fully and see what it was like there. Only a certain amount of people from each country were allowed into America per a quota system, so first of all you had to fit into that quota. Then, tickets to America were very expensive.

This person saved up money for a year, worked everywhere he could, did everything he could, put away dollar by dollar, patiently waiting for that dream to come true. Eventually he had enough money to buy the ticket for the ship which might take ten, twenty, thirty, even forty days to reach America.

So, our traveller has his suitcase and boards the ship ready to embrace his new life in America. But things do not go to plan. A fellow passenger asks him, “Are you sick? Seasick perhaps? You don’t look so good.” The man replies, “No, it’s the crackers. When I bought my ticket for the ship, I went out and I bought a suitcase and filled it with crackers, and that is all I’ve been eating.” His fellow passenger was taken aback. “Why are you doing that?” he enquired. Our traveller admits, “It is because I only had enough money for the ticket. I do not have any left over to buy food.”

The fellow passenger replies, “Are you crazy? Look, every day three times a day they have the finest fruits, the best vegetables, and the most beautiful homemade breads – as much as you want. You can sit there and eat for hours. It’s a banquet three times a day! If you get hungry in the middle of the night you can knock on the kitchen door, they’ll give you anything you want. Why are you eating crackers for heaven’s sake?”

The traveller said, “Well it was the money, I was afraid…”

The fellow passenger interrupts, “It is included in the price! The ticket gives you passage to America for this long, long journey, and included in the price is the banquet! Step up to the banquet!”

My friends, what you have worked hard for, what you have achieved is wonderful. But there is more for you. Just as the banquet was there to nourish the traveller’s body, the environment and spirituality you find in the ashrams will support you on your journey. Karma yoga, staying at spiritual places, will deepen your understanding of the path of yoga. Step up to the banquet! Expose yourself.

God bless you all.

Ruby Blue (Swami Niladeviananda) from Washington DC, was a very dear and close longtime disciple of Swami Vishnudevananda. She left her body aged 89 in 2008. She inspired generations of seekers with her total faith in her teacher, Swami Vishnudevananda, and her extraordinary dedication in passing on his teachings.
POEMS BY SWAMI SIVANANDA

Thanksgiving
How kind and compassionate Thou art, my lord;  
You created a beautiful world for me,  
The Sun and Moon illumine the earth.  
You created cows to supply me good milk,  
You created delicious fruits and vegetables,  
You created holy Ganga for bathing,  
You created hill-stations and seas,  
Beautiful flowers, herbs and landscapes.  
You created this mysterious body,  
For my soul to live in;  
You created these five Indriyas¹,  
To get knowledge and experience;  
You created the Rishis² and Sages,  
To lead me to Your Supreme Abode;  
You created the Vedas and scriptures  
To guide me in the path of righteousness;  
How can I thank Thee, my Lord?  
Words are poor, language is imperfect;  
I bow to Thee with folded hands, O Lord:  
And pay my silent homage:  
Thus Sayeth Sivananda.

¹. Senses
². Seers

Cosmic Prayer and Kirtan
Come along all birds, my little sisters,  
Let us sing the glory of our lord.  
You must praise Him heartily,  
For He has given you liberty,  
To fly about in all places;  
You need not sow or reap,  
He gives you food easily:  
He has provided you tall trees  
To build your nests.  
Come along, my Mother Earth,  
Let us sing His praise.  
God has given you productive power,  
To produce fruits, flowers, grass.  
Come along my sisters  
Wind, water, moon and little stars,  
Mountain, rivers, trees and beasts,  
Let us give thanks to the lord.  
Come along, my brothers Sun and fire,  
Let us sing the glory of our Lord.  
He has given you great effulgence.  
Come along my sisters  
Wind, water, moon and little stars,  
Mountain, rivers, trees and beasts,  
Let us give thanks to the lord.  
Come along, my brothers Varuna¹,  
Yama² and Brhaspati³,  
Let us pay homage to the lord  
And sing His glory:  
Thus Sayeth Sivananda.

¹. God of the sky and the waters
². God of death
³. Sage who counsels the Gods
POEMS BY SWAMI SIVANANDA

Divine Flowers

Hey Prabho, bestower of Bliss,
My basket of flowers is empty now.
I shall offer Thee, O Lord!
Some rarest divine flowers.
I cultivated them with great difficulty;
These flowers cannot be had in any market,
Or in any garden in the three worlds:
I offer Thee the divine Champaka¹ of Santi²,
I offer Thee the divine rose of equal vision,
I offer Thee the divine Jasmine of Santosh³,
I offer Thee the divine Parijata⁴,
I offer Thee the divine Mandara⁵ of discrimination,
I offer Thee the rare flower of self-restraint:
These flowers will be more pleasing to Thee, O lord,
Please accept these flowers, my Lord:

Thus Sayeth Sivananda.

1. Tropical flowering tree with orange fragrant blooms
2. Peace
3. Contentment
4. Divine tree. Its flowers have medicinal value and bloom in the evening, at the first rise of daylight the flowers drop.
5. A mythological tree. It is believed that if you sit under this tree, all your cares and worries will go away.

My Auspicious Day

I celebrated this auspicious day,
With great éclat and pomp;
With illumination and joyful songs:
My wish has been fulfilled.
I have met my Beloved;
How shall I find words
For the beauty of my Beloved.
He is brilliant like millions of suns;
He has enthroned in my heart:
The lamp of love burns lustrously.
I bathed Him with the water of love;
I adorned Him with the flowers of Prem¹
I gave Him butter and sugar – candy.
I have drunk the cup of love,
Which is filled to the brim;
It is the cup of perfect joy:
My rapture wells forth.
The mercy of my Lord has come upon me;
How blessed am I?
Who have seen my Beloved?

Thus Sayeth Sivananda.

1. Divine love

Secret of Love

Subtle and profound is the path of love;
It is like the edge of a sharp razor:
But the true lover treads it easily.
His grace renders his path smooth;
There is no asking or bargaining there,
It is all sacrifice and self-surrender;
It is all the outpouring of heart’s love
At the lotus feet of the Lord.
Egoism is burnt in the fire of love;
Desires are destroyed in the flame of love
Two have become one now.
The lover plunges himself
In the Ocean of Divine Love;
He immerses himself
In the sea of Divine Joy;
He offers his all in Lord’s service.
His tan, man, dhan¹:
This is the secret of this Love:

Thus Sayeth Sivananda.

1. Physical, mental and material service
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SUMMER PICNIC RECIPES

Recipes for a delightful Summer Picnic

By Swami Bhagavatananda

Recipes:
1. Mediterranean Vegetable Quiche
2. Rocket-Carrot Salad with lemon dressing
3. Olive-Rosemary Bread
4. Avocado-Tomato Spread
5. Peach-Almond Muffins
6. Mango Lassi

Truly, is there a more relaxing way to have a meal out than a casual picnic with friends or family, somewhere in nature? With all the delicious treats spread out on a blanket, there is no need to bother about table manners, because there is no table! No dress code, either! The delight of eating with one’s fingers and stretching out in the shade of a tree for a post-meal digestive nap while listening to a lullaby from the birds in the branches above has “summer vacation” written all over it, even if you just meet up for your picnic after work in a park. All our picnic recipes are vegan and gluten-free or offer vegan and gluten-free alternatives.

Vegetable Quiche
This Mediterranean-style quiche is chock-full of vitamins and makes a perfect summer meal, whether served hot or at room temperature. Cover it with Cling Film and leave it in the cake tin to take it to your picnic.
Serves: 4

Ingredients
For the pastry:
200g whole-wheat flour or spelt flour (gluten free option: 100g buckwheat flour, 100g rice flour)
100g oil (olive or sunflower or rape-seed)
½ tsp salt

For the filling:
400g fennel bulbs, diced

Method:
1. To make the pastry: combine the flour, oil and salt with just enough cold water to form a crumbly pastry dough. Press the pastry into a lightly oiled tart case or round cake tin, pulling the dough up on the sides to form a 2cm high rim. Put it into the fridge for 20 minutes. Heat the oven to 200C/fan 180C/gas 6 and blind-bake the pastry for 10 minutes.
2. For the fillings: Heat the oil in a saucepan, add the chopped veggies, pepper and nutmeg, cover with a lid and cook on medium flame for 15 minutes until the veggies are tender. Remove from the stove and add the sage or rosemary.
3. Whisk the crumbled feta cheese, ricotta and milk into a thick sauce (vegans: whisk the silken tofu with salt until it turns sauce-like). Spread the veggies on the pastry, cover with the sauce and bake the quiche for about 25 minutes until golden brown. (200C/fan 180C/gas 6).
Drizzle with lemon juice, garnish with basil leaves and serve.
**SUMMER PICNIC RECIPES**

**Rocket-Carrot Salad With Lemon Dressing**

This salad stimulates our taste buds by balancing out the sweetness of the carrots with the purifying bitterness of the rocket. The lemon dressing gives it a tangy touch.

To keep the salad fresh and crisp, store the dressing in a small container and pour it over the salad only 10 minutes before the start of the meal.

Serves: 4

**Ingredients:**
- 4 carrots
- 1 bunch rocket
- 8 tbsp olive oil
- 4 tbsp lemon juice
- ½ tsp salt
- 1 pinch ground black pepper

**Method:**
1. Peel and roughly grate the carrots. Wash, drain and chop the rocket and mix with the carrots.
2. To prepare the dressing, whisk together the oil, lemon juice, salt and pepper and mix the dressing with the salad.

***

**Olive-Rosemary Bread**

Bursting with flavour due to the fresh herbs and olives, this bread is a delicious snack just by itself. It also goes well with any kind of salad or savoury bread spread, which makes it a perfect picnic treat. You can prepare it the evening before, using a bread maker or just your hands.

For 1 loaf

**Ingredients:**
- 400g wholegrain flour; wheat or spelt or kamut (gluten-free option: 200g buckwheat flour + 200 g rice flour)
- 4 tbsp olive oil
- 230ml water
- 15 pitted olives, halved (black or green)
- 4 tbsp finely minced fresh rosemary
- 1 tsp salt
- ½ tsp bread yeast
- 3 tsp baking powder
- 2 tsp raw cane sugar (or 2 tablespoons of syrup like maple, rice, agave or date syrup)
- 6 tbsp seeds (any kind, like pumpkin, sunflower, linseed or a mixture of various seeds)

**Method:**
1. Knead all ingredients into an elastic dough (keep 2 tablespoons of seeds), adding the olives in the end. Cover with a moist cloth and keep it at a warm place for one hour to allow the flour to rise.
2. Knead the dough again, fill it into a square cake tin and let is rise for another 30 minutes.
3. Sprinkle with the remaining seeds and bake on 225°C for about 40 minutes. Let it cool down a little and remove it from the cake tin.
4. Let the bread cool down completely, slice it and serve it with the avocado-tomato spread.

***

**Avocado-Tomato-Spread**

Its creamy, velvety texture makes avocado the perfect base for a bread spread. Rich in vitamins and mono-unsaturated fats, it also promotes health. Make sure you are using ripe, but not over-ripe avocados. The pulp should be pale-green and easy to mash with a fork.

Serves: 4

**Ingredients:**
- 1 large, ripe Avocado
- 2 sundried tomatoes in oil (or 1 medium fresh tomato), very finely diced
- 4 teaspoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon salt
- ½ tsp black pepper
- 4 tbsp fresh basil (torn)
- 2 tbsp lemon juice

**Method:**
1. Mash the avocado pulp with a fork, gently fold in the diced tomato, oil, salt, pepper, basil and lemon juice.
2. Garnish with a sliver of lemon and a few basil leaves.
Peach-Almond Muffins

A basket of these muffins, filled with the fragrance of summer-fruits, makes your picnic complete.
Instead of peaches, try this recipe also with any other kind of juicy summer fruits: apricots, nectarines, blueberries or raspberries.

For 12 muffins

Ingredients:
- 250g whole-wheat flour or spelt flour
- 200g agave syrup or rice syrup (or raw cane sugar mixed with a little water)
- 100g almonds, skinned and sliced
- 4 ripe peaches, skinned and diced
- 100g sunflower oil or any other kind of mild vegetable oil
- 2 tbsp chia seeds (optional), soaked in 6 tbsp of water (mix well)
- 2 tsp baking powder
- ¼ tsp salt
- 2 tsp ground vanilla or 4 tsp pure vanilla extract

Method:
1. Sift together the flour, salt and baking powder and powdered vanilla.
2. Beat together the oil and the syrup.
3. Add the chia mixture and then add the flour mixture and stir well.
4. Add the fruits and almonds.
5. Spoon the batter into oiled muffin forms.
6. Bake in a preheated 175°C (350 F-degree) oven for 30 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the centre comes out clean.

Mango Lassi

This all-time favourite drink is a great picnic addition. According to ayurvedic principles, mango is the only fresh fruit that goes well with dairy products, so it isn’t recommended to replace it with any other kind of fruit.

Serves: 4

Ingredients:
- 2 small fresh mangos, soft and ripe
- 250g yoghurt (soy – or coconut yoghurt for vegans)
- ½ tsp cardamom powder
- 4 tsp rose water
- 8 saffron threads (optional), soaked in one teaspoon of warm water for a few minutes
- 500ml cold water
- 6 tbsp agave syrup, rice syrup or light raw cane sugar

Method:
1. Peel and dice the mangos and put the mango cubes into a blender.
2. Add yoghurt, water, the syrup or cane sugar, rose water, cardamom and the saffron threads, including the soaking water.
3. Blend all ingredients into a creamy shake and fill the Lassi into a thermos to keep it cool for your picnic.
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ATT: AUGUST 5–SEPTEMBER 2, 2018
Through the blessing of Swami Durgananda’s 75th Birth Year Celebration, I was able to visit the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Dhanwantari Ashram in Kerala. During the stay, I started a three week therapy for a long-lasting vocal chord problem at the Sivananda Institute of Health (SIH). The SIH is a highly-regarded ayurveda treatment centre set within the grounds of the Sivananda Ashram, and I was pleased to be able to try one of their therapies.

My first appointment was with Dr. Vishnu, one of the ayurvedic doctors who work at SIH. Dr. Vishnu has an open-minded and friendly way about him which immediately put me at ease, and I felt very comfortable talking to him. After learning more about my condition, he was willing to help and compiled a suitable therapy programme for me. His only condition was that the therapy needed to show signs of progress or benefit after a week in order to continue with the full programme.

I was interested to see what the effects of the programme would be, and was pleased that my general well-being increased during the first week, and my voice problem also showed signs of improving.

The therapy was an adapted form of a Pancha Karma treatment.

I was interested to see what the effects of the programme would be, and was pleased that my general well-being increased during the first week, and my voice problem also showed signs of improving.

The therapy was an adapted form of a Pancha Karma treatment, which is a cleansing programme consisting of three stages: preparation, elimination, and after-treatment time. One of the aims of the treatment is to help the body to balance the doshas and the pranas. In my case, the focus was on balancing vata dosha and the speech producing prana sitting in the throat (Udana Vayu).

The first part of the therapy was the preparation stage. I took prescribed ayurvedic medicines in the form of herbal pills, herbal elixirs, an oil paste which was applied to the crown of my head, and a daily drink of medicated oil.

The second part of the therapy was the elimination part. It started with a purgation. I drank a specific purgation oil in the morning, then was instructed to rest for the next two hours after which I was to start drinking a cup of water every ten minutes. During the two hours of rest, one of the SIH staff would bring me a large vessel filled with purified ayurvedic water.

All patients receive a visit from a doctor on their purgation day to ensure that all is going well. When Dr. Vishnu came to see me, he told me to start drinking the water as he left. Following instructions, I drank my first cup of water, after which I almost had only to look at the water for the cleansing reaction to take place. That kept me busy until the afternoon!

The next step was alternately receiving small oil enemas and large herbal mix enemas. To prepare for the small oil enemas, I was given a one hour oil massage on a large wooden treatment table. Warm oil was deeply worked into the tissue through the skin. I noticed that each therapist worked very thoroughly and, though each was slightly different, the basic procedure remained the same.

After the oil massage, I found my posture greatly improved each time: I felt at least three centimetres taller and more...
upright, with a sense of calm, joy and balance creating harmony within. The therapist would fill a big bucket with warm water and supply fresh soap and a clean towel so that I could take time to rinse off the excess oil which covered me from head to foot.

**After the oil massage, I found my posture greatly improved each time: I felt at least three centimetres taller and more upright, with a sense of calm, joy and balance creating harmony within.**

I was prepared for the large enemas by having specific parts of my body (e.g. lower back, abdomen, legs) tapped with hot herbal bunches in order to increase the blood circulation and help to facilitate the release of accumulated toxins. These large enemas had a similar effect to the purgation, but the cleansing process was faster and complete after about 2 hours. The ayurveda therapist would visit to check the process was working. Immediately after the cleanse, I had to go to the food veranda to eat a large bowl of rice soup.

With that continuous cleansing, my hunger and appetite had increased quite a bit! Mealtimes, served by one of the ayurveda staff, were a highlight of the day. At 10am and 5.30pm a pure, nutritious, easy to digest and varied meal was served. Different types of doshas, idlis, steamed vegetables, chutneys, salad and raw food could be enjoyed, or large bowls of plain rice soup or soupy kitcheri if that is what your treatment called for.

Even though the regular Ashram food was a delight every day, during the Ayurveda treatment period it felt appropriate to have simple food and to be surrounded by people with whom you could share your purification experiences of the day. Each patient had the opportunity to meet with their doctor once or twice a day, morning and evening after food. The reception area was always busy, but the SIH staff were consistently friendly and helpful. After a few days, I realised that there was no need to ask what to do, that it was best to silently arrive, sit down and wait: the ayurveda staff would come to you. They were all well instructed and would know exactly why you were there and what you would need. In a calm and focussed atmosphere, the SIH staff would care for you, always giving clear instructions.

My final treatments consisted of pouring hot medicated oil on my throat, after which I had my final talk with Dr. Vishnu. We reviewed the treatments I had received and compared my present state to my starting point, and some ayurvedic medicine was prescribed for the after-treatment time.

During the therapy, my mind and thoughts became very clear. My senses opened and I could see and perceive more. For the entire three weeks of treatment, I felt very protected and extremely well cared for. Lord Dhanwantari is the God of ayurveda, and I felt strongly that the doctors and their staff were His instruments. Being treated in the SIH was more than a strong detoxing, purifying and balancing experience: it was also a divine and spiritual experience and I hope that I can return soon to continue with some treatments. Health is wealth!

Thanks to the Ashram, and thanks to the Sivananda Institute of Health.

If anyone has questions about treatments, please contact Dr. Vishnu, Director of the Sivananda Institute of Health email: sihdoctor@sivananda.org

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The Sivananda Institute of Health

Sivananda Dhanwantari Ashram in Kerala, south India

The Sivananda Institute of Health at the Sivananda Dhanwantari Ashram in Kerala, south India offers ayurvedic treatments year round. Panchakarma, as well as therapies for spine and neck care, slimming, stress-relief, immune boosting and other individually-tailored treatments are available from the highly-qualified three resident ayurvedic doctors. We also offer an intensive two-week Ayurveda Wellness Course. Guests benefit from the Ashram schedule of yoga classes and meditation sessions, absorbing the spiritual and healing atmosphere that the Ashram brings.

www.sivananda.org.in/sih • sihdoctor@sivananda.org

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Swami Karunananda is a longtime disciple of Swami Vishnudevananda. She has studied physiotherapy and is currently serving on staff at the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre in Berlin. email: swka@sivananda.net
Sivananda Yoga in
2018

VIETNAM
June 18–28 Yoga Children’s Camp
Aug 15–26 Restorative Yoga & Ayurveda
Aug 31–Sept 3 Independence Day Yoga Retreat
Oct 12–27 Sivananda Yoga Health Educator Training, Module 2
Oct 13–27 Ayurveda Detoxification Retreat with Dr. Ramdas
Oct 28–Nov 24 Teachers Training Course
Dec 21–Jan 1 Holiday Yoga Retreat

CHINA
April 10–12 Yoga Retreat with Swami Sitaramananda & Swami Adiparashakti-ananda in Beijing
April 14–18 Yoga and Ayurveda special programs with Dr. Ramkumar, Swami Sitaramananda & Swami Adiparashakti-ananda in Chengdu
June 13–18 Yoga Retreat and Satsang with Swami Narayanandana in Guangdong
Sept 8–Oct 6 Teachers Training Course in Qianfo Mountains, Chengdu, China

JAPAN
April 3–8 Special Yoga Programs in Tokyo Center with Swami Sitaramananda & Swami Adiparashaktiananda including inauguration of the new Yoga Retreat House in Shojikö, Yamanashi
April 29–30 Juice Fasting Retreat in Tokyo Center
May 3–6 Yoga Retreat with Swami Narayanandana in Shojiku Retreat House, Yamanashi
July 16 Nataraj, Kalyani & Sandeep special one-day program in Tokyo Center

TAIWAN
Jun 8–10 Special Ayurveda and Yoga Programs with Dr. Ramkumar & Swami Narayanandana

FOR MORE INFORMATION:
www.sivanandyogavietnam.org
www.sivanandyogachina.org
www.yogafarm.org/taiwan
www.sivananda.jp (Japan)
One of our most valuable resources for the teachings of Sivananda Yoga continues to be the hundreds of inspiring lectures presented by Swami Vishnudevananda, recorded all over the world from 1969 to 1991. Swamiji was a dynamic teacher who communicated with warmth, depth, humour, passion and urgency. He delighted in word-play, story-telling and direct engagement with his audience and his lectures and satsangs were truly unforgettable. It was impossible to doze when Swami Vishnudevananda taught and his laugh was absolutely endearing and contagious.

So what was it like being with him during TTC or satsangs? What was it like to hear him give a public talk or join him in a campfire chat?

Many people feel they missed the opportunity to hear Swami Vishnu speak, but did you know that there are now over 700 audio files of Swamiji’s lectures and satsangs available online? There are talks on over 100 topics, covering every aspect of yoga philosophy, yoga practice and life itself, including Swamiji’s enduring love of peace.

New audio files are being constantly uploaded and you can listen to them at this link: http://audioarchive.sivananda.eu/

You can filter your search according to specific subjects, as well as according to consecutive translation into French, German, Spanish, Hebrew and Portuguese.

And while it is possible to listen online to the recordings, for several years a diligent group of karma yogis have been a part of the ongoing project of transcribing the material from the audio files with the ultimate goal of categorising and making it possible to publish the teachings for all to read.

So don’t miss this opportunity to engage with this remarkable teacher.

If you would like to assist in the project to make even more audio files available online, please email: sita@sivananda.net

If you are interested in being a part of the transcription team, please email: archives@sivananda.org

Whether listening to the archives tapes online or participating in the transcribing of them, there is perhaps no better time to connect with and share the wisdom of our beloved teacher, Swami Vishnudevananda.
NEW YORK
Sivananda
ASHRAM YOGA RANCH

Health is Wealth. Peace of Mind is Happiness. Yoga Shows the Way.
Swami Vishnudevananda

Enjoy year round yoga vacations in the beautiful Catskill Mountains

Teacher Training Course
June 3rd - July 1st, 2018
Aug 2nd - 30th, 2018

Advance Teacher Training Course
July 5th - August 2nd, 2018

Permaculture Design
August 12th - 26th, 2018

Sadhana Intensive
September 6th - 20th, 2018

sivanandayogaranch.org | yogaranch@sivananda.org | +1 845-436-6492
The Prison Project Update

By the grace of the Gurus, we at the Sivananda Yoga Ranch have been able to provide yoga books to prison inmates continuously since 1996. During 2017, our karma yogis put their time and energy into sending out 278 copies of the Complete Illustrated Book of Yoga (CIBY) by Swami Vishnudevananda, 49 copies of Meditation and Mantras by Swami Vishnudevananda, as well as other Swami Sivananda books such as Concentration and Meditation, Yoga Mind and Body, Hatha Yoga Pradipika, Yoga Companion Training Manual, Raja Yoga, Kundalini Yoga and the Kirtan book. All are very appreciated by the prisoners receiving them.

Since 1996, the flow of letters asking for a copies of the Complete Illustrated Book of Yoga has never stopped. The karma yogi in charge of the prison project opens the letters, finds the nature of the request, prepares the answers needed, and sends the book requested. Some books are inexpensive, some are more costly, and most all are paid for by the sale of cookies baked at the Sivananda Yoga Ranch and at the Sivananda New York Centre. Usually, we are able to send one CIBY to one prisoner within the U.S. for a sum of $14. Every week, the Sivananda Yoga Ranch receives a few letters requesting books on all kinds of yoga, especially the CIBY, and we do our best to meet all the requests with the funds from the "Prison Project" cookies we bake and donations made directly to the project.

This year, we received an additional donation from the Sivananda Centre in Madrid a donation: 10 copies of CIBY and 10 copies of Meditation and Mantras in Spanish, to meet the needs of prisoners who prefer to read books in Spanish rather than in English.

Yoga helps the prisoners. Some of the letters require special instruction on different subjects, and these requests are answered individually.

From the letters we received, it is clear that Yoga practice helps the prisoners to cope with daily life on many different levels, improving their physical and emotional health, cultivating peace of mind, and reducing the anxiety connected to the stresses of life for one confined to the living space of a cell.

Here some extract of the heart-warming letters we receive:

“I received 'The Complete Illustrated Book of Yoga' and it has provided us with so much additional knowledge with this complete science of self-discipline. I have took upon myself to introduce other to the willful decision to live a divine life in harmony with the inextricable laws of nature.”

“Thank you so much for this wonderful book “God and Godesses”. I could read about (God) them all day. I noticed that life is hard when I think that I am in “hell”, what I call prison. But by thinking about the past times of the Great Gods Ganesh, Vishnu, and Shiva, I feel that I am in heaven by thinking of them all day. I have so much peace of mind. It doesn’t matter where I am…..”

“I hope this letter finds you well and at peace. I wanted to Thank you for the book you sent 'Meditation & Mantras' by Swami Vishnudevananda. We actually have quite a large number of inmates here who practice yoga (not just Hatha), as well as an inmate lead group called “Serenity Yoga Society” that meets every other Saturday for Hatha Yoga.”

Donations
Donation cheques can be mailed to "Sivananda Yoga Ranch” P.O.Box 195, Woodbourne, New York 12788. You can also make a tax deductible donation by credit card, or you can call us on: 845-436-6492.
Swami Durgananda’s 75th Birthday Celebration at the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Dhanwantari Ashram in Kerala, India.

By Swami Gokulananda

The news that I was to go to India for two weeks was very welcome. It was the cold, dark, winter season in Europe when light is scarce, the temperatures plummet and flu epidemics abound. Some time at the Sivananda Ashram in Neyyar Dam, Kerala, promised a lot of sun, time for Sadhana and rest. There were to be two special celebrations during my stay as well: the celebration of Swami Durgananda’s 75th birthday and a Bhagavata Saptaha with Sri Venugopal Goswami.

Sivananda Ashram Neyyar Dam

The Sivananda Ashram is a paradise in the middle of the South Indian jungle. The setting alone is uplifting, not only the climate and food, but the entire rhythm of life, which is in tune with nature and reminds you of a simpler way of existing: clothes washed by hand, shower with a bucket, walk bare-foot and eat with your hands in silence, sitting on the floor. You are immersed in nature as you spend the whole day outside.

The daily schedule of the ashram gives structure and rhythm and lots of strength and clarity. There is no need to think about what you should be doing, you simply participate and experience the flow of life in the ashram. There is meditation and mantra chanting morning and evening, two asana classes, a lecture and two delicious meals each day. On arrival, we, like all students, tuned in to the rhythm of ashram life, took turns to teach each other asana classes and lectures. There was time for rest, for reading, sitting in the temple and doing japa, and visiting Swami Vishnudevananda’s Kutir by the lakeside. We enjoyed observing the lotus flower in the pool in front of our building: it opens and closes in front of your eyes in tune with light and shadow, sunrise and sunset.

Spirituality in the ashram is naturally, and authentically, expressed: there are many deity statues around the ashram and mantras seem to float in the air. Activities, such as the daily mantra chanting in the temple, pujas and homas (temple rituals and fire ceremonies) add to the spiritual atmosphere.
Every evening in the temple, a group of staff and students chant the Lalita Sahasranama and Bhagavad Gita together, followed by Arati and Prasad. It is simply beautiful, whether you participate or just hear it as you walk by, the energy is uplifting and positive and the mind resonates with the spiritual vibration.

**Bhagavata Saptaha**

The Bhagavatam is a classical yoga scripture which deals with questions such as: How to put Yoga Philosophy into practice? How to deal with difficulties, disappointments and loss in life? How to live a spiritual life while living in the world with a partner, children and business? How to become a happy person? Swami Vishnudevananda, especially towards the end of his life, loved to listen to recitations of the Bhagavatam and he would sit for hours, full of love, with tears of devotion running down his cheeks. After he left his body, the tradition was maintained and we were fortunate to have a Bhagavata Saptaha, a seven day discourse about the essential topics of life, during our visit to the ashram.

Bhakti Yoga Acharya, Sri Venugopal Goswami from Vrindavan in Northern India, reads the Bhagavatam in English. He translates the traditional teaching in an understandable 21st century language and puts it into context for our modern lives: “Life is a never ending sequence of joy and sorrow, gain and loss, meeting and separation, birth and death and there is no everlasting happiness in this relative plane. The way out is to tune into the flow of life and let love consciousness be the essence of life. We are loved whatever we do or do not do, wherever we are and whatever happens. We are not this perishable body and this flickering mind, we are the Self, which is existence, knowledge and bliss absolute.”

By listening to a spiritual discourse we can reconnect to this fundamental truth. The philosophy is interspersed with stories, many of them involving Krishna, the energy of love, which bring the teachings to life and make the messages easy to understand. Accompanied by live music, it is a soothing and soul stirring experience which goes directly to the heart, and the last day of the program saw Swamis, staff and students dancing in joy with the culmination of the teachings.

**Transformation**

Transformation and purification is something silent, hidden and private. For me, it is always the most precious and inspiring experience of staying at an ashram, being away from the usual daily routine, spending time with Acharyas, senior Swamis and Gurus. While the process of purification is mostly painful, the result is always joyful. Inspiration can come from a place, a person, a book, from nature, from spiritual practice, or from service. Sometimes it is a combination of all these things.

All knowledge is already within us and by practicing yoga we remove, layer by layer, the impurities which prevent the soul shining forth in all its glory. Sometimes it seems that the innate knowledge and bliss of the soul is so hidden that it is impossible to access, and furthermore we do not know how to go about accessing it. Sadhana and purification reconnects us with our true Self. We feel this later, when we are once again back in our everyday routines. It manifests in more clarity, joyfulness and inspiration. As Swami Sivananda put it: “As you proceed onwards along the spiritual path, joy, peace and bliss deepen and deepen.”

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Swami Gokulananda is Director of the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Center Berlin. email: swgk@sivananda.net
SIVANANDA ASHRAM KUTIR - UTTARKASHI - HIMALAYAS

Experience the bliss of Yoga in the Himalayas.

Teachers’ Training Course
17 June - 14 July 2018
22 July - 18 August 2018
9 September - 6 October 2018
April 2019
May 2019

Sadhana Intensive
14 - 28 October 2018

Sivananda Ashram Kutir
Founder: Swami Vishnudevananda, Est. 1957
Sivananda Kutir (near Sior Bridge) Uttarakhand, Himalayas, 249 193, India
+91.90.1278.9428 www.sivananda.org/uttarkashi
Join us in celebrating 60 years of The Sivananda Yoga Center in Montreal. The very first Center opened by Swami Vishnudevananda in 1959!

We will be celebrating throughout the year 2019 with senior and direct disciples of Swami Vishnudevananda.

FOR INFORMATION ON OUR PROGRAMS AND EVENTS
Follow us on facebook and instagram @sivanandayogamontreal or check our website www.sivananda.org/montreal
5178, boul. Saint-Laurent | +1 514.279.3545 | montreal@sivananda.org
ASHRAM AND CENTRE NEWS

NASSAU, BAHAMAS
Yoga Retreat

Celebrating 50 Years in the Bahamas
This year marks the 50th anniversary of the Sivananda Ashram Yoga retreat. In celebration, we organised three symposiums to honour Swami Vishnudevananda’s legacy. The main event took place in January. We were blessed by the presence of two members of the Bahamian Government – the Minister of Education and a representative of the Minister of Tourism who congratulated the ashram for 50 successful years in the Bahamas. Swami Swaroopananda, Srinivasan, Kanti Devi and other senior staff shared personal stories about their time with Swami Vishnudevananda. Musicians, artists and dancers offered beautiful and inspiring performances during this week-long uplifted celebration.

As part of the anniversary celebrations we installed the new Guru Parampara shrine in the main temple and rebuilt the main ashram shrine. The Bala Krishna temple and Vana Durga temple were also repainted and reincarnated by our Priests.

The installations took place throughout the week with a series of pujas, homas and other special rituals. We were blessed to have four priests leading the rituals, as well as creating exquisite and elaborate yantras for blessings and purifications.

Other developments that have taken place at the ashram include converting one of our open-air garden platforms into an enclosed, air-conditioned and acoustically sound classroom – Sivananda Hall – which accommodates a yoga class of 40 and satsang or lecture for 90 people.

In addition, Dwarka, a beautiful new wooden building with 10 single rooms and two communal bathrooms came to life last summer, providing our permanent staff with a permanent home.

www.sivanandabahamas.org

BEIJING, CHINA
Affiliated Sivananda Yoga Centre

This is a group photo of a 3-day retreat for students in Beijing, China. On the right is the home of the new affiliated Yoga Centre of Vidya devi, a chinese ATTC graduate. The Centre is located at the 6th ring North district of Beijing, in a new gated community. It is situated in a two-storey town house in a clean and quiet neighbourhood away from the pollution of the city. Besides teaching and organising karma yoga to help set up the Centre, Swami Sitaramananda and Swami Adiparashaktiananda also performed the opening ceremony for purification of the Centre. May the Masters teachings bring more awareness, peace and health to this vast country. For info on classes and retreats in Beijing. Email: Vidya devi 13651158953@163.com or Sivan at china@sivananda.org. There will be TTC in China in september, near the SYVC Centre in S-W China, in Cheng du.

For enquiry: china@sivananda.org
www.sivanandayogachina.org

DELHI AND CHENNAI, INDIA
Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres

The Chennai and Delhi Dwarka Centres are supporting the Indian Government’s efforts to manage standards of Yoga teaching. They are now regularly hosting the QCI (Quality Control of India) examinations (Levels 1 & 2) which are a part of the Ministry of AYUSH scheme for voluntary certification of yoga teachers, in their large spacious halls. This acceptance as an examination centre is a recognition and mark of our standing in the yoga community both in India and internationally.

www.sivananda.org/dwarka • www.sivananda.org/chennai

BERLIN, GERMANY
Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre
New Murthi in the Reception Area

Since February there is a black Granite Krishna in the reception area of the Berlin Centre. He is well-coming students, teachers and staff, radiating His message of divine love, peace, solace and joy to all.

www.sivananda.org/berlin

ROME, ITALY
Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre
Sivananda Upanishad in Italian

The new translation of the book Sivananda Upanishad is now available at the Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre in Rome. For further details please email: rome@sivananda.org
www.sivananda-yoga-roma.it
DELHI, INDIA
Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Nataraja Centre

The Centre held its Silver Jubilee celebrations in September 2017 with Acharya, Prahlad as the chief guest. The programme began with a Ganapati Homa followed by special asana classes and workshops with Prahlada and other senior teachers. A multi-faceted cultural event including Indian classical music and a Kathak dance performances was the highlight of the evening. 2018 was ushered in with a vibrant satsang marking the birthday celebration of Swami Vishnudevananda. Christmas, Diwali, Mahasivaratri, Navaratri and Gita Jayanti were observed at the Centre in the traditional manner. The Centre was graced with the presence of Swami Janardhanananda who conducted a well-received three-day course based on Vedantic philosophy.

www.sivananda.org/delhi

TOKYO, JAPAN
Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre

A small Sivananda retreat house was opened on April 8, 2018. It is just a one hour journey from the Sivananda Yoga Centre in Tokyo and is set in a beautiful location near Mt. Fuji. It is open year-round and situated on the lakeside of Shojiko (Sadhana Lake) where it overlooks a deep forest called “Jukai”. For further information email: shojiko@sivananda.jp

www.sivananda.org

VIENNA, AUSTRIA
Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre

Staff at the Centre in Vienna are inspired to maintain a friendly and inviting atmosphere at the reception and in our Yoga-shop. The Centre was founded in 1972, and meanwhile became well-established as one of the most successful Yoga schools in downtown Vienna. We are offering 28 yoga classes per week in our big sunny yoga hall facing south.

www.sivananda.org/vienna

LONDON, UK
Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre

The London Centre continues to transform! The entrance to the asana halls entrance was extended further forward into the courtyard while the old food storage in the courtyard was broken open and included in the enlarged lobby. A beautiful welcoming, bright space has been created with an abundance of natural light streaming in from the glass covered roof. This renovation is yet another important step forward into making the centre’s logistics flow harmoniously. The new space allows everyone to take off and leave their shoes in a warm, indoor space. Staff and students feel privileged to practice yoga and meditation in such a beautiful centre where the increased energy, beauty and practicality all glorify and pay tribute to the teachings of Master and Swamiji.

www.sivanandalondon.org

MADURAI, INDIA
Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Meenakshi Ashram

The Meenakshi Ashram has been growing rapidly recently. The main construction project was the completion of our new Siva Hall, with space for over one hundred. Our Medical Camp project is expanding. More locals from nearby villages are receiving medical care and supplies in the Camp that is now held weekly. We were blessed to have the EBM meeting for the first time during the first week of December 2017. We also held the IDM and Trustees meeting. Like Neyyar Dam, we held the Bashya Paarayanam in December which brought us many blessings. And finally we have established paddy fields, and allocated more fields for vegetables, herbs and spices. Soon we hope to be almost self-sufficient in our food requirements.

www.sivananda.org/madurai

NETALA, HIMALAYAS
Sivananda Kutir

The Ashram is going on well. We had our annual bhandara to mark the Jalasamadhi of Swami Vishnudevananda which went off successfully with many scores of sadhus enjoying the feast and lots of practical gifts. Our Teachers’ Training Courses are also doing well bringing a wonderful energy to the Ashram. The Cave (Sivananda Guha): Plans to rebuild the Cave property have begun with a formal request made to the local District Authority for permissions and funding.

www.sivananda.org/netala
ASHRAM AND CENTRE NEWS

NEYYAR DAM, KERALA, INDIA  
Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Dhanwantari Ashram

Charitable Works
About 12% of the income at the Dhanvantari Ashram in Neyyar Dam income goes towards donations. The greater part is channelled to the Ashram’s monthly free ayurvedic medical camp. The camp receives between 700 and 900 patients a month attended by 8 – 12 doctors. We help particularly the long-serving paid members of staff of the Ashram with marriage expenses, education, medical and housing needs. Amongst outside recipients are the many temples, other ashrams and visiting sannyasis who provide spiritual support to the community. We also support the educational and general welfare needs of individuals and specific organisations within the locality as well as specific groups which help women or children.

Last year we supported a new Gurukula project in the state of Andhra Pradesh, providing a nutritious evening porridge to children at the end of their school day as they would otherwise barely eat again until school lunch time the next day. Last year 400 children a day were provided this meal for 6 months from donations from five of the SYVC branches. This year it is planned to continue this for 500 children for a full school year of 10 months.

www.sivananda.org/neyyardam

NEYYAR DAM, KERALA, INDIA  
Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Dhanwantari Ashram

We completed many building projects around the Ashram. We added an extra floor of four rooms to the Vaikuntham Building. We now have twelve beautiful air-conditioned rooms to cater for growing demand. We also rebuilt the Health Hut and renovated the dining room of the Sivananda Institute of Health, adding more space for increasing numbers.

Our programmes included hosting for the first time a Bashya Paarayanam arranged by the Adi Sankaara Brahmaydya Peeth at Uttarkashi. Thirty sannyasis and brahmacharis stayed at the ashram to conduct five days of chanting of the teachings of Adi Sankaracharya.

We also were blessed with a beautiful seven-day Bhagavatha Saptaha of chanting of the teachings of Adi Sankaracharya.

Last year we supported a new Gurukula project in the state of Andhra Pradesh, providing a nutritious evening porridge to children at the end of their school day as they would otherwise barely eat again until school lunch time the next day. Last year 400 children a day were provided this meal for 6 months from donations from five of the SYVC branches. This year it is planned to continue this for 500 children for a full school year of 10 months.

www.sivananda.org/neyyardam

NEW YORK, USA
Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Center

The Centre has been running smoothly with drop-in classes, courses, workshops and satsangs. We keep offering deaf and gentle yoga, pregnancy, beginner and advanced level classes. We have integrated the Mindbody registration system with our new website in order to encourage online registration for our students. We had contractors complete some work on the front entrance of the building, installing lights to illuminate the outside Center sign and the vestibule area. They also repaired gutters and downspouts. With the help of a few karma yogis, we painted the main satsang hall, staff rooms, main walls and doors throughout the building.

www.sivanandanyc.org

ORLEANS, FRANCE
Ashram de Yoga Sivananda

The Masters are blessing the Ashram with students, karma yogis and staff and so the Ashram is in constant growth. Since this time last year the Ashram procured 8 new bungalow tents for the camping area, built 4 new chalets in the forest, and the construction of Hanuman Kutir, a large building with two large asanas rooms and 2 floors of rooms, is well underway with the main structure complete and work proceeding on the exterior and interior finishing. In total there will be 61 new beds in the ashram, this spring for the chalets and huts but we will have to wait until Christmas for the Hanuman Kutir.

For our Teachers’ Trainings, the Ashram has also seen only growth with steadily increasing enrolment over the past 4 years. Offered this year for the first time will be a new course in April. This brings the annual TTC count at the Ashram up to six, we will now be half the time in TTC mode. It is always a joy for the staff to be able to share our Masters’ precious teachings with a new group of eager students!

Now thousands of tulips around the ashram are budding and blossoming and the vegetable garden is underway. Spring is bringing with it an air of positivity and change to this ashram of humble beginnings, which is entering its 15th year!

www.sivanandaoleans.org

TORONTO, CANADA
Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Center

The Toronto center has been doing a lot of community outreach this year. Educational partnership with the largest school board in Canada allowed us to spread teaching among a lot of elementary and high school students during their regular class hours and we focused mostly on priority needs schools. City of Toronto asked us to teach in their homeless shelters so with available staff we were able to teach at some of senior, family and youth shelters. We also developed partnership with youth mental health center and hospital, whose psychiatrists are doing research based on manualized program we developed for them. Our regular spring fundraiser this year helped support a gurukulam school in India.

www.sivanandaorleans.org
WOODBOURNE, NEW YORK, USA
Sivananda Ashram Yoga Ranch

The Yoga Ranch is currently working on 5–10 year development plan that includes both new construction and improvements in the existing buildings. Since 2017, the Ashram has already seen great benefit from the new solar array, and the Ananda building has a newly renovated women’s bathroom with an increased number of showers and greater hot-water capacity. In addition, the Ashram is moving in the direction of growing more of its own food, with much nurture and care given in the area of permaculture and gardening. With the increase in programmes and plans for increased facilities, the Ashram is investing more into social media. In 2018, we have many new presenters and courses, including a special 4-day classical Indian music and dance programme during the 4th of July holiday.

GRASS VALLEY, USA
Sivananda Ashram Yoga Farm

SYHET (Sivananda Yoga Health Educator Training)

The first Sivananda Yoga Health Educator Training course began at the Yoga Farm in California in October 2017. The first one in Dalat, Vietnam followed in January 2018. The first module consisted of 15 intensive, residential days – the beginning of a full 800-hour course, consisting of modules running over a two-year period. There are 15 students enrolled in the California course and 30 in Vietnam course. It is encouraging to see the response and the enthusiasm shown from our students from both continents. The aim of the course is to alleviate physical and mental suffering through Yoga education – using adapted asanas, relaxation, breathing techniques and learning more about Yoga and Ayurvedic practices. The student will become a powerful practitioner and teacher, empowering others to overcome their own existential weaknesses, which bring about suffering.

We are all inspired by this practical application of yoga as a science of health and healing, following the tradition of Swami Sivananda. A DVD highlighting the need for this type of course is available to order from yogafarmboutique@gmail.com. You can also view it on youtube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ULM2VAxmDC6&feature=youtu.be

Spread the word. Help others look to treat the cause and not the symptoms. The next course begins in October 2018 at the Yoga Farm in California and in January 2020 in a resort in Dalat, Vietnam.

For more information, view our website: www.SivanandaHealthEducator.org
Or email us at: YogaHealthEducatorTraining@sivananda.org
VietnamYogaHealthEducator@sivananda.org
www.sivanandayogafarm.org

DALAT, VIETNAM
Sivananda Yoga Vietnam Resort and Training Center

New Ayurveda programmes open at the Vietnam ashram with a group of therapists trained in India. On offer are a monthly Ayurveda week, annual detoxification programs with an Indian Ayurvedic doctor and teaching on Ayurveda in the Sivananda Yoga Health Educator Training course. Two dronis (treatment tables) have been made in Vietnam from local mango wood.

www.sivanandayogavietnam.org

VAL MORIN, CANADA
Sivananda Ashram Yoga Camp

The Camp has been hard at work this year with many projects being done. With the help of many karma yogis we were able to do a lot of renovations including:
- Re-doing the brick path around the Camp.
- Build a new garage next to the Krishna Temple for proper storage.
- Construction of 3 new massage rooms behind the Orange House.
- Installation of wood floors in the registration building.
- Renovating of the swimming pool deck.
- Renovations in the Annapurna Building; adding new windows.

The transformation is beautiful and we are grateful to all those who have lent a hand in the work. May Master and Swamiji keep guiding us in the coming year.

www.sivananda.org/camp
### AFFILIATED CENTRES

#### AUSTRALIA
- **Sivananda Yoga Centre**
  - The Streets, 45 North Avenue, Katoomba, NSW 2780, AUSTRALIA
  - Tel: +61 2 4784 2426
- **Yoga White Lotus – Sivananda Tradition**
  - 20 East River
  - Lonsdale Head, NSW, AUSTRALIA
  - Tel: +61 3 940 697, +61 403 838 750
  - info@whiteyogatu.com.au
  - www.whiteyogatu.com.au

#### BOLIVIA
- **Bolivia – Sivananda Yoga Vedanta As, Dr. Helio Paterno 2888, Jardin, Santa Fe Franco – SF 3C 1400-000, BOLIVIA**
  - Tel: +56 9 30 2888, +56 9 38 40 07
  - info@sivanandaas.com
  - www.sivanandaas.com

#### BRAZIL
- **Brahma – Centro Sivananda de Yoga Vedanta**
  - Av. Dr. Helio Paterno 2888, Jardin, Santa Fe Franco – SF 3C 1400-000, BOLIVIA
  - Tel: +56 9 30 2888, +56 9 38 40 07
  - info@sivanandaas.com
  - www.sivanandaas.com

#### CANADA
- **Affiliated Sivananda Yoga Centre Winnipeg**
  - 2988 Frances Rd., Winnipeg, ON, CANADA
  - Tel: +1 204 792-0284
  - sivanandawinnipeg@gmail.com
  - www.sivanandawinnipeg.wordpress.com

#### CHINA
- **Brahma – Sivananda Yoga**
  - 37 Anhui Road, Baoshan, Shanghai, CHINA
  - Tel: +86 21 660 28 85 71
  - michaeldekkylega@gmail.com

#### CHILE
- **Centro de Yoga Sivananda (Affiliated)**
  - 210 Ultra des, Las Condes, Santiago, CHILE
  - Tel: +56 2 430 10 55

#### COLOMBIA
- **Atma Yoga**
  - Centro Sivananda de Yoga Vedanta Filial
  - Transversal 37, No. 52-84
  - Musica de la Salud, 1010, Medellin, COLOMBIA
  - Tel: +57 311 1132, +57 321 812 5510
  - info@atmanyoga.co
  - www.atmanyoga.co

#### INDIA
- **Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre (affiliated)**
  - No. 16, Heera Cinema, Bangalore, INDIA
  - Tel: +91 86 816 1872
  - oberschoen@gmail.com

#### LEBANON
- **Beirut Sivananda Yoga Centre (Affiliated)**
  - Gareyeh, 523 Guerrouat Street, Third Floor
  - Beirut, LEBANON
  - Tel: +961 1 566701
  - info@sivanandabeirut.org

#### LITHUANIA
- **Jogos Centros PRANA**
  - Sivananda yogos Vedantos Centro filialus
  - Telephone: +370 (5) 688 4029
  - info@yogaposis.org
  - www.prana.lt

#### NEW ZEALAND
- **Sivananda Yoga Centre**
  - 14A Takapuna Street, Westmor, New Plymouth 4310 NEW ZEALAND
  - Tel: +64 6 752 8234
  - sivanandanyoga.co.nz

#### NETHERLANDS
- **Sivananda Yoga Farm, Grass Valley, California**
  - Tel: +1 954 368 6789
  - sivanandayoga@yogawarehouse.com

#### VIETNAM
- **Sivananda Yoga Centre**
  - 14A Takapuna Street, Westmor, New Plymouth 4310 NEW ZEALAND
  - Tel: +64 6 752 8234
  - sivanandanyoga.co.nz

#### USA
- **Be In Awe Yoga**
  - 2220 Riverfront Ct
  - Ann Arbor, Michigan 48103
  - U.S.A.
  - Tel: +1 734 213 9635
  - info@beinawe.com
  - www.beinawe.com

#### YOGALife | Spring/Summer 2018 97
Sivananda Yoga Kids and Teens Camps

DEVELOPING WORLD CITIZENS

These two camps are aimed at kids ages 8-15 and teens ages 15-17.

Combining activities of outdoor adventure, creativity, yoga and cooperation; kids will have the full experience of a camp while also developing the discipline of yoga. For teens, the camp inspires, empowers and establishes a deeper sense of self-respect and self-discipline so they can live a more balanced and fulfilled life.

Courses dates: Kids Camp: July 7-28; Teens Camp: August 4-18

For more information please email us at: kidscamp@sivananda.org

Sivananda Ashram Yoga Camp
673, 8e Avenue - Val Morin, Quebec, Canada
Tel: (1) 519-322-3226 or 1-800-263-9642 (Canada/USA)
www.sivananda.org/camp
SIVANANDA
TAPASWINI ASHRAM - GUDUR

Experience the Bliss of Yoga in Nature.

Yoga Vacation Programme
Every two weeks year round

Kids' & Teens' Camp
03 - 16 June 2018

Yoga Sadhana 21
11 - 31 December 2018

Be Good Do Good Programme
01 - 10 October 2018

Teachers' Training Course
6 January - 02 February 2019

Sivananda Ashram Tapaswin
Founder: Swami Vishnudevananda, Est. 1937

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+91.8624.255577 www.sivananda.org/gudur, gudur@sivananda.org
Mobile: +91.8985045125 +91.8985045251
Course registration E-mail: gudurregistrations@sivananda.org
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An intensive four week immersion in the yogic way of life:
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Recognised by Yoga Alliance.
In depth study of:
- Asanas  •  Pranayama
- Meditation  •  Mantras
- Vedanta  •  Bhagavad Gita
- Kriyas  •  Yogic Diet
- Anatomy & Physiology

DATES AND LOCATIONS 2018/2019

ALUENDA, SPAIN
August 4 – September 2, 2018

BARILOCHE, ARGENTINA
March 3 – March 29, 2019

BRACCiano, ITALY
August 4 – September 2, 2018

CHENGDU, CHINA
September 8 – October 6, 2018

DALAT, VIETNAM
July 14 – August 11, 2018
October 27 – November 24, 2018
February 16 – March 16, 2019

GAROPABA, BRAZIL
January 6 – February 2, 2019

GRASS VALLEY, CA, USA
May 12 – June 9, 2018
October 13 – November 10, 2018

LONDON, UK
June 2 – June 30, 2018
September 1 – September 29, 2018
February 16 – March 16, 2019

MADURAI, SOUTH INDIA
May 27 – June 23, 2018
October 14 – November 10, 2018

NASSAU, BAHAMAS
June 5 – July 2, 2018
July 5 – August 1, 2018
November 4 – December 1, 2018
December 4 – December 31, 2018
January 4 – January 31, 2019
February 3 – March 2, 2019
March 5 – April 1, 2019

NETALA, HIMALAYAS, INDIA
June 17 – July 14, 2018
July 22 – August 18, 2018
September 9 – October 6, 2018
April 7 – May 4, 2019
May 12 – June 8, 2019

NEYYAR DAM, SOUTH INDIA
November 11 – December 8, 2018
January 6 – February 2, 2019
February 10 – March 9, 2019

ORLEANS, FRANCE
June 29 – July 27, 2018
July 29 – August 26, 2018
November 20 – December 18, 2018
January 5 – February 3, 2019
April 5 – May 4, 2019
May 6 – June 4, 2019

QUEBEC, CANADA
July 1 – July 29, 2018
November 18 – December 16, 2018

RUDRAPRAYAG, HIMALAYAS, INDIA
October 24 – November 22, 2018
February 23 – March 24, 2019

THAILAND
September 30 – October 28, 2018

TYROL, AUSTRIA
July 28 – August 26, 2018
September 1 – September 30, 2018
December 15 – January 13, 2019
January 19 – February 17, 2019
May 25 – June 23, 2019

USTKA, POLAND
September 1 – September 30, 2018

NEAR VILNIUS, LITHUANIA
June 30 – July 29, 2018

WOODBOURNE, NY, USA
June 3 – July 1, 2018
August 2 – August 30, 2018

“Yoga is a system of integral education, not only of the mind, but also of the inner spirit.”
- Swami Sivananda

www.sivananda.org
www.sivananda.eu