

Integral Yoga Teachers Association Newsletter



Volume XIX, No. 2, May 2011



Know Your Roots

By Sri Swami Satchidananda

The purpose of religion is to trace your roots, to show you where you came from. The “re” stands for “return.” Literally, it means “again” or “back.” There is no need to go somewhere for this experience. It is not a journey into outer space; it is a journey through the inner space. All the answers are within you. Just realize and experience that Truth, which is already there.

Unfortunately, when you try to discuss your true nature or God or Cosmic Consciousness, you find it difficult—anything that you try to say about it becomes nonsense. Only when you are in total silence is there sense. All of philosophy can be summed up by the word “knowing.” You don’t have to do anything, just know.

That’s why it is called “knowledge”—Self-realization means to know that you are essentially that Spirit or Consciousness or God. Even though the truth is that we are all essentially God, most of us don’t really experience that. That is the problem. If we all experienced it, then there would be no need for religious places, places of prayer, places of worship, Yoga centers. All these things are there to help you realize your own nature.

Now let’s come down to talk on a more practical level. At the ultimate level we are all one, it’s true. But it’s too much for the mind to comprehend. Why? Maybe you are not yet ready. I say this because there are two “I’s.” In our daily life we say, “I know I’m happy,” or “I know that I am going to be in trouble because of this.” Don’t we talk this way? “I know what I am going to do.” There seems to be two personalities

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The Goal of Integral Yoga

The goal of Integral Yoga, and the birthright of every individual is to realize the spiritual unity behind all the diversities in the entire creation and to live harmoniously as members of one universal family.

This goal is achieved by maintaining our natural condition of a body of optimum health and strength, senses under total control, a mind well-disciplined, clear and calm, an intellect as sharp as a razor, a will as strong and pliable as steel, a heart full of unconditional love and compassion, an ego as pure as a crystal, and a life filled with Supreme Peace and Joy.

Attain this through asanas, pranayama, chanting of Holy Names, self-discipline, selfless action, mantra japa, meditation, study and reflection.

Om Shanti, Shanti, Shanti.
Ever yours in Yoga,



Integral Yoga® Teachers Association

Founder: Sri Swami Satchidananda

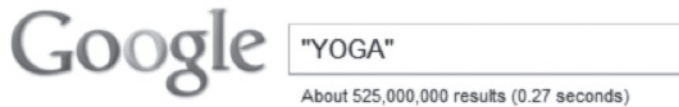
The Integral Yoga Teachers Association is a membership association open to all Integral Yoga teachers. Its mission is to provide mutual support and spiritual fellowship, to share information, to provide inspiration, and to conduct ongoing training and guidance.

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Letter From The Editor

I was Googling on the internet the other day (March 30, 2011) for “Yoga” and found this:



That’s right, about 525 million webpages! Blogs numbered about 12,800,000 results and books numbered about 868,000 pages.

I’m starting to think that Yoga is having an impact around the world. Then I entered some other world-religions (though strictly speaking the technology and practices of Yoga can be applied in a non-religious setting according to Sri Gurudev) and came up with substantially less webpages for each one.

So what conclusions can we make from this data? Well, I’ll leave that to you, but it really opened my eyes to the size of the Yoga community.

Since I began editing the *IYTA Newsletter* I’ve been curious as to the effect of Yogic teachings, especially in the United States. Some key words are becoming a part of the mainstream media like, *karma, dharma, Om, swami, shanti* and so on. Of course these words do have a more technical meaning that is usually meant in everyday conversation, which may be lost at times.

The dietary and physical practices are being adapted to special populations and spread by people like Dr. Dean Ornish and publications like *Yoga Journal*. The arts of Yoga in graphics, music and dance are carrying its vibration and sensitivity.



Because as Sri Gurudev said from time to time, “Yoga is life;” it is spreading through its almost limitless applications. The way we cook, eat and even sleep can be helped by it. I believe that the Google results are indicative of the “waves” that are spreading out from Yoga.

With Integral Yoga we have a clear distinction, large place to occupy in the Universe of Yoga. Our focus is a deep and meditative approach to the practices of Hatha Yoga, Karma Yoga and chanting. We sense that there really isn’t any hurry to get somewhere better in our practices. All practice done in the spirit of awareness and mindfulness shows us we are already there—at the place where, paraphrasing Patanjali, “And now let’s talk about Yoga.”

Please feel free to respond to this newsletter. We are always glad to hear from you.

Om Shanti,
Bharata

Know Your Roots

(Continued from page 1)

inside, two "I's." Self and self. Who are those two "I's" then? You may say that one is the pure, big "I"—the original "I," the image of that big "I" called God, the big "I am." Did not God say, "I am that I am"? When Moses asked, "Who are you," what was the answer? "I am that I am."

We all seem to call ourselves "I am," is it not so? When I ask you, "Who are you?," you will answer, "I am. . ." and your name or your profession or some qualifying words. First you say "I am," and then some identification follows. "I am Jim." "I am Joan." "I am an executive." "I am a doctor." "I am a farmer." "I am a yogi." Every time you want to identify yourself you begin with this "I am." The thing we all have in common is "I am." Those two words represent the big "I," the pure "I." The second part - the name or the profession or the other words—represent the limited "i." You could call it the reflected or egoistic "i."

The Hindus call these *suddhatma* and *jeevatma*. *Atma* is Self. *Suddhatma* is the Pure Self. *Jeevatma* is the individual self, the limited self. It is at the level of the *jeevatma* that we make differentiations: "I am white, you are black." "I am fat, you are thin." "I am Catholic, you are Jewish." All these differences come at the level of the individual self. But at the higher level—whether black or white, short or tall, young or old, dead or alive—it is all meaningless.

Who Realizes?

What does Self-Realization mean, then? Self realizing itself. Until it realizes itself it has forgotten. If a Self can forget itself, what kind of Self is that? It cannot be that pure, absolute Self. A pure Self is God. Can God forget itself? No. So in the term Self-Realization, the "Self" cannot mean God (the pure Self). Little "i" is not the pure Self wanting to realize itself because that Pure Self never forgets itself. It rests always in the knowledge: "I am the Pure Self."

Okay. Then what is the self that wants to realize? The little self, or the little "i." Can the little "i" realize itself and then come and say, "I have realized myself?" No. Because the minute the little self realizes, the ignorance or the darkness is gone, the light has come in. Then the little self is no longer little self; it realizes that it was always big, pure Self. We could simplify that whole problem a little by merely saying it is all in the mind. You may call it ego, but ego also is part of the mind. There are only three things that you identify with as yourself; the true Self, the reflected self (the mind), and then the body that houses both. You can put it that way.

Body, mind, spirit. These are the three things. Intelligence and emotions, are all nothing but mental stuff on different levels. Are crude oil, tar, diesel fuel, and gasoline essentially

different? No. They are all one and the same stuff, more or less refined or expanded. In the same way, ice, water, and steam are all essentially the same. Imagine that your spirit is the steam, though that's a crude analogy. Your mind is liquid, that's why it runs around. It fluctuates a lot. The body is a solid, the ice. They all came from the same water. You could say they are different densities of the same stuff. Watery spirit becomes mind. Then more solidified, it becomes the body.

A Cage is a Cage

The pure "I," the absolute "I" is the spirit. The lower "i" or the *jeevatma* is the mind. Now as we said earlier the pure "I" doesn't need Self-realization because it is always realized. It never forgets. It is the mind that wants to realize itself.

Now how does the mind function? The mind identifies with various positions. It is your mind that says, "I was a baby. Then I went through some changes. Now I am a woman." What actually changed? The body. So the mind accepts these changes and identifies itself with the change and says, "I am an adult. I am healthy. I am sick." The mind should realize its true Self. It should know "I am not all these external things. I am simply using those labels and calling myself by these names." What we call "i-identification" is when the "i" attaches itself to those things, thinks it is that label.

It is to disassociate yourself from these false identifications that you seek liberation, salvation, *moksha*. The minute you disassociate yourself from them, you feel wonderful; "Ahhh. I am That." Without associating myself with anything all I have to say is, "I am that I am." "I am—that's all!"

Patanjali gives a beautiful example: Think of an absolutely pure crystal. It doesn't have any color of its own. However, if you put a chrysanthemum next to the crystal, the crystal will look yellowish. Bring a blue flower, the crystal will look blue. Did the crystal become blue? Can you scrape this blue out of the crystal? No. It is because of the association with the blue flower that the crystal appears to be blue. Don't forget that — it *appears* to be blue. The minute you separate that flower from the crystal, it's a pure crystal again.

In the same way, your mind is essentially crystal clear. It has no label of its own. But when it associates itself with the body, then it calls itself a man or a woman and so on. If it associates with the weight of the body you say, "I am heavy, I have to watch my weight." It is to disassociate yourself from these false identifications that you seek liberation, salvation, *moksha*. The minute you disassociate yourself from them, you feel wonderful; "Ahhh. I am That." Without associating myself with anything all I have to say is, "I am that I am." "I am—that's all!"

This is spiritual practice, to disassociate yourself. You don't need to throw out those labels and things. Keep them around you, but don't identify yourself with them. Use

them, but don't think you have become them. Because you happen to be sitting in an Oldsmobile, do you say, "I am an Oldsmobile?" If you get a new car, do you say, "Now I am a Chevy?" There is no difference between this and calling yourself "an athlete," "a man," "a woman." You are simply using that form. Until you have liberated yourself from this false identification, you will be bound — no matter how much you talk about this liberation movement or that liberation movement. Without that realization, you are caged, almost like a parrot. Take the parrot from an iron cage, and put it in a gold cage. Do you think the parrot will be happy? Tell your parrot, "You see, now you are in a gold cage, aren't you happy?" It will say, "My dear friend, a cage is a cage. Whether it's iron or gold, I am still in a cage."

Until and unless you totally liberate yourself from all these things, you will be bound. You don't need to go and hide from everything to attain this freedom. Just know: "I am not bound by all these things. They can never affect me. They are around me, I am simply using them. Anytime I don't want it, I can just drop it, take something else and use it. They are

for my use. They are not there to bind me, to color me. I am always crystal clear, pure. That's why even when the body dies I don't die, I am essentially immortal. I am the soul."

That remembrance should be there always. Then you can use everything around you well. The minute you forget that you are the master using something, the trouble starts. For instance, the minute you forget that you are the person who is writing, using the pen to write, and allow the pen itself to write, you will have a problem. Then it may write whatever it wants and you cannot write what you want. Instead of your handling the pen, the pen handles you. Then you will become a pen handle. Instead, you control the pen. Make it work well for you. Make it a good instrument for your work by keeping it in its proper place with the proper perspective.

That is what we call mastery. You should be the master at all times and of all situations. It may be a happy situation, unhappy situation, pleasurable, painful. Be in control of it. The more you know who you really are, the more that control will come.

The Crest-Jewel of Wisdom

By Sri Shankaracharya

BEGINNINGLESS is unwisdom, and all its works are too; but when wisdom is arisen, what belongs to unwisdom, although beginningless.

Like a dream on waking, perishes, root and all; though beginningless, it is not endless; it is as something that was not before, *and now is*, this is manifest.

It is thus seen that, though without a beginning, *unwisdom* comes to an end, just as something, which before was not, *comes into being*. Built up in the Self by its being bound by disguise of intellect.

This is existence as the *separate* life, for there is no other than the Self, distinguished by its own nature, but the binding of the Self by the intellect is false, coming from unknowledge.

This binding is untied by perfect knowledge, not otherwise; the discerning of the oneness of the Eternal and the Self is held by the scripture to be perfect knowledge.

And this is accomplished by perfectly discerning between Self and not-self; thereafter discernment is to be gained between individual and universal Self.

Water may be endlessly muddy, but when the mud is gone, the water is clear. As it shines, so shines the Self also, when faults are gone away, it shines forth clear.

And when unreality ceases to exist in the individual self, it is clear that it returns towards the universal; hence there is to

be a rejection of the self-assertion and other characteristics of the individual self.

Hence this higher Self is not what is called the intellectual veil, because that is changeful, helpless of itself, circumscribed, objective, liable to err; the non-eternal cannot be regarded as eternal.

The bliss-formed veil is a form containing the reflection of bliss—although it is tainted with darkness; it has the quality of pleasure, the attainment of well wished-for aims; it shines forth in the enjoyment of good works by a righteous man, of its own nature bliss-formed; gaining an excellent form, he enjoys bliss without effort.

The principal sphere of the bliss-formed veil is in dreamless sleep; in dreaming and waking it is in part manifest when blissful objects are beheld.

Nor is this bliss-formed veil the higher Self, for it wears a disguise, it is a form of objective nature; it is an effect caused by good acts, accumulated in this changeful form.

When the five veils are taken away, according to inference and scripture, what remains after they are taken away is the Witness, in a form born of awakening.

This is the Self, self-shining, distinguished from the five veils; this is the Witness in the three modes of *perceiving*, without change, without stain. The wise should know it as Being and Bliss, as his own Self.

Science and Religion

By Sri Swami Sivananda

Some scientists and so-called educated persons believe that science can explain everything, can solve the riddle of the universe and all problems of life. They also think that the scientific method is the only method of finding out the truth, and that scientific training and discipline alone can build very efficiently the character of man. They ignore ethical discipline, morality and religion altogether.

One scientist came to me and said, "The *Upanishads* and the *Brahma Sutras* have not been written scientifically. I am trying to give a scientific approach to this vital subject."

I laughed at his remark and answered, "My dear scientist-friend, the *Upanishads* are revelations. *Brahma-Vidya* is transcendental knowledge. The *Atman* also is transcendental. You cannot take your test-tubes and spirit lamps near the *Atman*. The conclusions of the scientists cannot approach this region. Their observations are one-sided as they concern the waking state only. Their experiences are only relative experiences."

The scientist kept quiet, lowered his head in shame and walked away silently.

Three blind people touched three different parts of an elephant. One touched the leg and said, "The elephant is like a pillar."

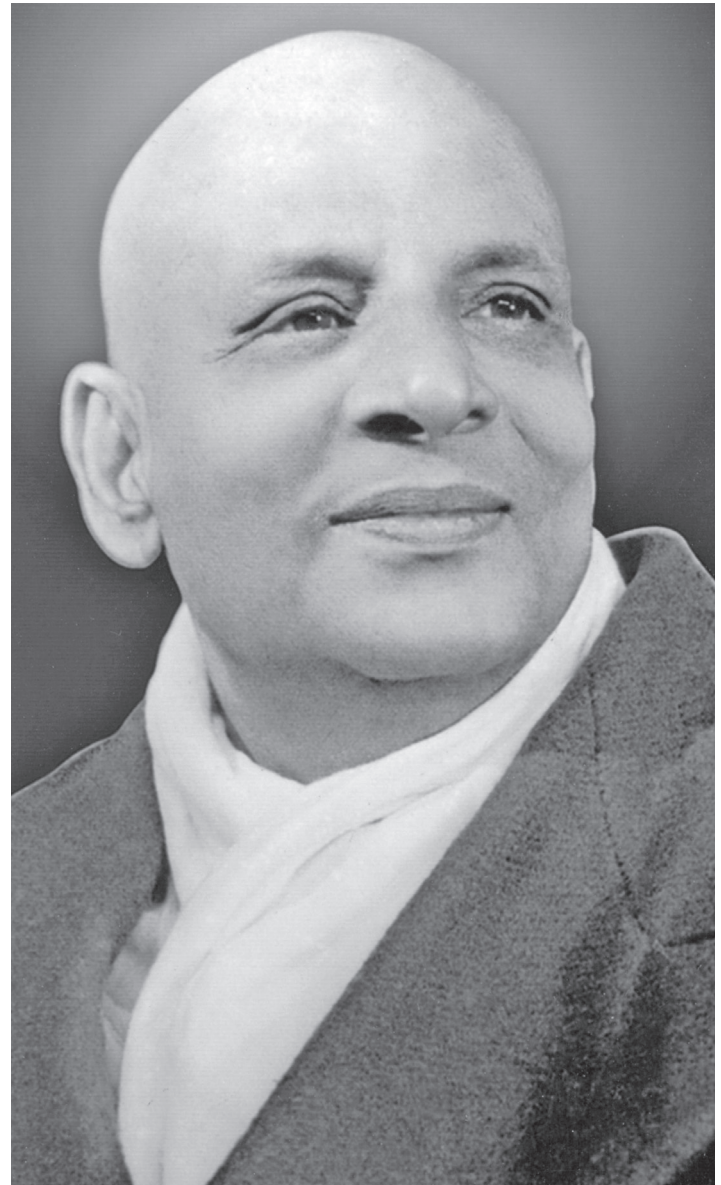
The second touched the ear and said, "The elephant is like a fan."

The third touched the belly and said, "The elephant is like a pot."

So also, a scientist explores the physical plane and speaks of atoms, energy and physical laws. He is also like a blind man. He has knowledge of one dimension alone. He has ignored the dream and deep sleep states. He has no all-comprehensive knowledge.

Science has analyzed man. Man is supposed to be a creature composed of various physical and chemical substances. Yet no scientist has so far been able to assemble these constituent chemical elements of a man's body into one homogeneous creature which lives, talks and acts like a man. And no scientist is able to comprehend the mystery of creation and the Creator and the meaning of life.

Scientists are very busy in studying the external world. They have entirely forgotten to study the internal world. Science gives you knowledge only of phenomenal appearances and not of the Reality behind them. Science has not been able to solve the important questions: what is the ultimate stuff of the world? Who am I? What is the ultimate truth?



Science tells us that the ultimate goal of everything is unknown and unknowable. But *Vedanta* teaches that the ultimate goal is the attainment of *Brahman* or the Infinite, and that It can be realized through hearing of the scriptures and through reflection and meditation.

The scientific and the religious approaches to Truth are really complementary and not contradictory. Religion and science are twin brothers. They should harmoniously and mutually help to search for Truth. The mind and intellect are finite instruments. They cannot realize the infinite Reality but are the means to Its realization. When the intellect has passed through the various stages of reasoning and when it has been completely purified, then revelation dawns. True religion begins where the intellect ends.

Excerpted from *Kingly Science, Kingly Secret*

Bhagavad Gita Study

Commentary by Swami Asokananda

II/38 Maintaining a steady mind through pleasure and pain, gain and loss, victory and defeat, engage in this battle, indifferent to the outcome. Thus you will incur no sin.

Sri Krishna has been encouraging *Arjuna* to not run from this battle. He has the same message for us: If, like *Arjuna*, our heart is in the right place, the cause is good, and we are the right person to fulfill the task (it is our *swadharma*), then we should go for it, despite the challenges and obstacles that will come our way. *Krishna* isn't promising us smooth sailing, but in this verse, *Krishna* gives *Arjuna* guidance for holding the boat steady. Here in Chapter 2, *Krishna* gives His first lesson in *karma Yoga*, explaining the *how* when we approach any undertaking.

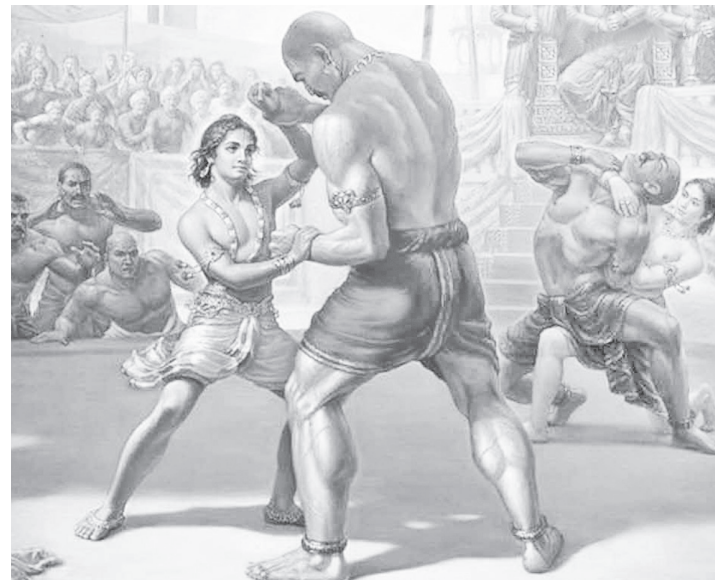
Often when we act, some part of our mind is worrying about the outcome. The irony is that the worry divides and weakens the mind, making a successful result less likely. With equanimity of mind, if we gather all our faculties and focus them on the action, without the mind jumping ahead to concern for the end result, we tap into powerful resources that will lead to the best possible result. And even if things don't work out exactly as we had wished, it is better than the ego achieving "success" by hook or by crook, which will leave us with a bitter taste in our mouth and an uneasy conscience.

Anxiety is the litmus test to let us know how much ego is involved in what we are doing. If we start to feel anxious about gain or loss, victory or defeat, etc., we know that the ego is not ready to let go, trust life, or let us leave the outcome to a higher will. It is foolish to hope for a coin to always drop on one side. Our life will always be a mixture of what we want and what we don't want. We're usually doing well if it comes out 50/50. It is a sure-fire, direct route to unhappiness to think that everything should unfold the way we want. If we cringe from facing what we don't like, our mind will be continually on edge.

But *Krishna's* point is that, even with these inevitable ups and downs, it is possible to still remain at peace 100% of the time. As we keep recalling the teaching of this verse and make our sincere, though seemingly inadequate, efforts to live by it, the mind will steadily gain balance, clarity, and strength.

We know that this is not going to happen overnight, or possibly even in this lifetime, but there is no doubt that over time we will find ourselves remaining more and more in our natural state of wellbeing.

The more we are able to act from this inherent sense of wellbeing, the more that action itself becomes its own reward. And this is the way to "incur no sin." I see that most Western translations of the *Gita* avoid translating the word "*papam*" as "*sin*." It is just too filled with baggage from our Judeo-Christian heritage. In *Sanatana Dharma* (now known as "*Hinduism*"), "*sin*" simply means that the soul is moving in the wrong direction. Rather than thinning out the *samskaras* that shroud our inner light, our actions deepen our conditioning.



Sri Krishna & Balarama killing the evil King Kamsa's wrestlers

Rather than finishing off the *karma* we came to complete in this lifetime, we pile on new *karma*.

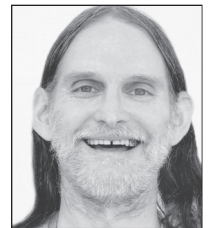
In this verse *Krishna* is teaching us how to transform karma-generating action into *karma*-purging action through fulfilling our *swadharma* with the right attitude. Many of us, like *Arjuna*, when faced with difficulty, decide it is time to abandon duty and focus on our "spiritual development." To our dismay, we usually discover that these challenges are able to find us again somehow and somewhere.

Here is what two great Ones have to say:

Swami Sivananda: "If anyone does any action with the above mental attitude or balanced state of mind he will not reap the fruits of his action. Such an action will lead to the purification of his heart and freedom from birth and death."

Swami Satchidananda: "*Arjuna*, the cause is just. You are simply acting as an agent. So whatever the outcome may be, it's not going to affect you."

Swami Asokananda, a monk since 1973, is one of Integral Yoga®'s foremost teachers, known for his warmth, intelligence and good humor. His teaching comes out of his own practice and experience, having absorbed the wisdom of his Guru, Sri Swami Satchidananda, since the age of nineteen. While he enjoys sharing the practical wisdom of the yogic philosophy (especially the Bhagavad Gita), he also loves his practice of Hatha Yoga and is one of our primary instructors for Intermediate and Advanced Hatha Yoga Teacher Training. In the past, he has served as the President of Satchidananda Ashram-Yogaville® and Integral Yoga® International, and he is now the President of the New York Integral Yoga Institute.



Join Swami Asokanandaji for the "Living Gita Intensive: Re-examining Our Lives Through the Lens of the *Bhagavad Gita*" workshop at Yogaville, October 5-9, 2011

Jesus, Door to Yoga

By Bhaktan Eberle

Usually I hear *Isvara pranidhana*, dedication to God, presented as one of the paths, an option that one might choose according to his or her temperament. My reading of the *Yoga Sutras* and my personal experience indicate that *Isvara pranidhana*, along with the other *yamas* and *niyamas*, is more a prerequisite than an option.

Let me not mince words: Whoever owns the hand that is there when you're going down for the last time is the one your life belongs to. *Isvara* means personal God. *Isvara* has many faces – *Siva*, *Quan Yin*, *Krishna*. When you get to know *Krishna* well enough you know *Isvara*, which means that you also know *Siva* and *Quan Yin* from the inside. To me, his name is Jesus. So even though I appreciate and love *Krishna* and know who he is, for me there is really no one but Jesus. *Krishna* has no problem with this.

One of the last things Jesus prayed before his passion was, "I have given them [the disciples] the glory you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought into complete unity to let the world know you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me." This is one of the all-time great descriptions of Yoga, union.

As long as I carry the slightest grudge or resentment against even one person, as long as I look to another human being as the source of my happiness or suffering, I'm refusing the answer to Jesus' prayer. The door to unity—to Yoga, God-realization—stays closed.

If I drop all that stuff—if I have decided to forgive that old hurt as many times as it comes up, if I stop demanding that other people help me fulfill my desires and instead, just let them be—the door to the knowledge of God opens as if by magic. Jesus is one of the all-time champions of forgiveness.

After three years of healing and setting thousands free in body and mind, Jesus was tried, tortured and executed with the utmost brutality. His crime: making the religious people look bad. Jesus forgave it all.

Probably none of us can boast of a life as good as Jesus'. And, probably none of us can claim to have been treated with greater injustice. If he forgave, we can forgive. Why should we forgive? Because we are trying to be good people and good people are supposed to forgive? No, because we are tired of rowing the boat of our Yoga practice while tied to the dock. Because we want to be free. What is binding us is our opinions of ourselves and others. What loosens the knots is forgiveness. As *yogis* we all believe God is in us. I seem to hear Jesus saying, "It's time to let him out. It's time to be like me, like my Father – big enough to get above likes and dislikes and love everyone no matter what they do."

Now I wouldn't be a good Christian if I didn't tell what Jesus has done for me. Book I, verse 2 of the *Yoga Sutras* says,

Yogas chitta vritti nirodha.

Yoga is the restraint of the mindstuff from taking forms.

I used to work very hard trying to manage my thoughts, like stuffing down the jack-in-the-box; as soon as I stopped stuffing—SPROING!—the thoughts were all over the place again. I gave six years or so of my life to this kind of hard, frustrating work—and another three or four years after that trying to come to grips with the obvious fact that with this approach, defeat was inevitable. Then I heard the message, "The work is finished in Christ Jesus. Accept him and you accept the kingdom of heaven." By this point I was desperate enough to try anything, so I accepted Jesus as my Lord.

Having turned my life over to him I figured I had better get to know something about him, so I began studying the Bible for hours every day and listening to tapes from the best Christian teachers I could find. After some time I began to notice that if I contemplated Jesus, especially his death, my mind would go on overload and stop working. Voila! *Chitta vritti nirodha*. I didn't have to control my mind; all I had to do was think deeply about Jesus and it would shut itself off. (It should be needless to say that contemplating *Siva* has the same effect on a *Siva* devotee as Jesus has on me.)

Challenges that face the devotee along the way include learning to feel okay with being rejected by the world, dealing with life-threatening bliss (hint: ask for more), and living in the light with a silent mind.

Living in the light is not as easy as it may sound: the light exposes all our faults, sometimes long before they get fixed. Face to face with your faults in the presence of God, the silence can be deafening, but Jesus really helped me: In his presence I learned that because Jesus died for my sins (my faults), not his own, if I am in him (consciously abiding in his presence) I also died with him (in him).

When he rose to life, I rose to a new life in him, in his presence. In Jesus there are no faults, no sins, so I can live in the light of the presence of God with no sense of guilt or shame. (If this sounds too easy, you haven't tried to put it into practice.) Another benefit: in the early years of my *sadhana* a lingering sense of guilt told me that I was unworthy to feel so good, so I would practice on and off. I was in a double-bind: I felt I had to practice Yoga to feel good, but also felt I had to quit when I started feeling good.

In Jesus my worthiness or unworthiness is irrelevant. He is worthy; that's enough. With the issue of my unworthiness

Living in the light is not as easy as it may sound: the light exposes all our faults, sometimes long before they get fixed.

dead, I simply ignore the invalidators within and without, practice regularly and feel very, very good. In my late fifties I feel incomparably better than I did in my youth. In him I can go deep within without fear and just watch life get better and better forever.

So, if you've tried to practice Yoga as hard as you can and gotten nowhere, or if you can only manage an on-and-off practice, face it: trying harder isn't working and it isn't going to work. Maybe you tried to get into the so-called higher classes without the prerequisites. Do you need a personal God? Do you need someone to take disease, doubt, carelessness, laziness and the other obstacles out of your life?

Consider Jesus. Gaze into his sacrifice without wavering. Get Krishna off the altar and into your heart once and for all. Hear

his flute calling you... Join the devotees that follow Siva around. Get serious about *Yoga Sutras*, Book 1: sutras 23-30. Your life and Yoga practice will bear fruit in his presence. The success that eluded you will fall into your lap.



Bhaktan Eberle is a mystic Christian who lives in the presence of God; pranayama is his main Yoga practice. A disciple of Swami Satchidananda since 1972 and Yoga teacher for 35 years, he has a thorough knowledge of the Bible, the Tao Te Ching, the I Ching, principal Upanishads and Yoga Sutras. Bhaktan is also the husband

of Prema for 30 years, father of five, extreme skier, blues harp player, and master builder.

Don't Give Up...Just Surrender!

By Lakshmi Sutter

Persistence can be interpreted as a sign of strength, even of character. We all root for the little engine that could. After all, a great attitude and a willingness to "keep on keeping on" when things get tough are admirable traits. On the mat, this could look like the dedicated student working diligently toward an *asana* that they have challenged themselves to master (even working at it daily, without break and with a full vision of mastering that pose). We encourage this approach and often find it inspiring. That persistence might also look like someone pushing beyond their current capacity and inviting injury. As a Yoga teacher, you may have a few students in the latter category (or be one yourself!), and it may be worth asking whether this approach is serving the highest good.

It would be no surprise to learn that the student practicing in this manner was a go-getter in their day-to-day life. You might predict a "Type A" personality. The Ayurvedic-inclined among you have undoubtedly pegged a practitioner with a *pitta dosha*. We all know enough of these folks to know that suggesting they change their approach to that "unachievable" *asana* might easily fall on deaf ears. It's most difficult for individuals who might be called "high achievers" to approach anything in a way other than tackling it head-on.

Obviously we must use some muscle action to maintain an *asana*, but many of us hold tension in areas that aren't necessary to sustain the *asana*. Yoga had been described as "effortless effort."

How, then, can this practitioner best be served? There are likely as many answers as there are yogins who make use of this strategy, and probably a few more. As someone who has approached her practice in this way at different times during her Yoga journey, here are a few insights from my experience that may be of use to you or your students.

Early on in my journey, when my understanding of the full depth of Yoga was rather limited, my practice was more like what one of my teachers, David Vamadeva Frawley, would term "Yoga gymnastics." The *asanas* were the primary emphasis in my experience, and I derived great joy from trying to wrap myself into various shapes and maintain some semblance of composure through constant breath.

When a teacher told me to "surrender", the only thing I could surrender to was gravity (and often did—kerplunk!)

My goal was less about finding inner peace than it was about being strong and flexible enough in my body to reach new and exciting poses. (I was young and still agile in those days!) I had embraced a (near) regular practice—something

of a challenge for many yogins along the path. I was, however, quite attached to the result (i.e. achieving some version of a pose) and missing the essential element of non-attachment. Much of my practice took place in a class setting, and I was used to being at the top of my class in other subjects (remember this is a Type A personality we're talking about). I wasn't confident enough in my own growth, so I felt compelled to be as "good" as I possibly could be in these settings—as so many practitioners do. Students who did well were pointed out in class, and while a part of me didn't want the attention, another part craved

the positive reinforcement. I needed to hear from my teacher that I was progressing... achieving... mastering. This gave me the motivation I needed to stick with the practice. I hadn't quite put together that the equanimity that was slowly infiltrating its way into my being had anything to do with my time on the mat.

In the beginning, my external teacher(s) played an important role in my recognition of myself as a *yogin*. Had my teacher(s) at that time discouraged my playfulness in rediscovering my body and its capacity, I might not have stayed on the mat long enough to have experienced glimpses of the peace that Yoga is. Had my teacher(s) been less playful and more interested in any particular “*asana* achievement,” I probably would have caused quite a lot of harm to my body or even given up if I couldn’t quite make it. A less interested teacher probably would have lost my attention (meaning I would have lost my practice). In short, I needed a teacher who could walk a very fine line between recognizing my enthusiasm, encouraging me without pushing and offering me nuggets of yogic wisdom as I was ready to receive them.

Somewhere along the line, I was able to stop muscling my way through the *asanas*. Many teachers gave cues to relax or release or let go during their classes. At some point, I heard this instruction and was able to embody it. Obviously we must use some muscle action to maintain an *asana*, but many of us hold tension in areas that aren’t necessary to sustain the *asana*. Yoga had been described as “effortless effort” so I began exploring in my own body how I could be effortless while still maintaining the minimal effort required to hold the pose. I could get to a point in the pose, and then try a little less. I would consciously release muscles to test how engaged they needed to be in order to safely and comfortably hold the pose. After the obvious muscle groups (which vary by pose, of course), I explored those in the face, especially the tendency to furrow the brow or clench the jaw. It was important to be encouraged to relax in each class; one never knows when the instruction actually sinks in. To this day, particularly in periods of greatest stress, the reminders to let go often help me to find tiny patterns of holding in my facial muscles. Relaxing the face alone can be a lifelong practice!

When I came to understand the fullness of Yoga (or at least the portion of it I believe I understand!), I recognized that there is more to Yoga than *asana*, although it remained a crucial component of my personal practice. It was only at this point that I could understand what surrender in my *asana* practice could be. Here, I lost the attachment to master any particular pose, though many *asanas* still filled my practice. I no longer felt the need to strive for any image of *asana* that my mind had imposed on my body. With cues from the teacher (internal or external at this point), I allowed the breath to propel my movement into the various shapes to the limits of my body in that moment. Of course, with that movement often energy releases can occur that facilitate greater freedom. That release, however, wasn’t possible without surrendering. Or, as the master teacher Erich Schiffmann might say: “Relax!”

It’s not unusual for people to relinquish some of the more challenging poses during the winter season or as the years

pass. Seasonal and life cycle variations are as old as the science of Yoga itself. Emerging as we are from the winter season, it might help to be reminded: Be careful not to confuse surrender with *tamas*! There’s nothing wrong with practicing the same core Integral Yoga poses daily; there’s also nothing inherently wrong with evolving one’s practice to include other *asanas*. The trick, as with all things Yoga, is to find a balance that keeps one’s practice fresh and authentic. But surrender isn’t the same as laziness; it’s a conscious activity of letting go in order to deepen one’s practice. Swami Satchidananda teaches us to “Take it easy but not lazy.” As teachers, it requires an open dialogue with the student to find out where

they are in their journey so that you can supply the appropriate encouragement. Find out where they are and ask yourself what guidance would serve them the best.

Not surprisingly, surrender isn’t unique to the mat. Our explorations on the mat with something as tangible as the body allow us to watch what else we hold onto beyond unnecessary muscles. For example, when I was in my twenties, I held onto certain ideas much more tightly than I do today. I made uncommon choices, and I craved acceptance by surrounding myself with others who also made unusual decisions.

While I was conscious enough not to act out cruelly toward those who disagreed, I silently judged their decisions as inferior to my own. This created a barrier to truly engaging with them, and it prevented any chance to finding the relationship’s equivalent of *asana* mastery. Through a dedicated Yoga practice and the guidance of many wise ones, I find that I am much more open to ideas these days. I don’t judge them—aloud or silently—and this allows a deeper communication and understanding to take place. And this all started because I wanted to master some complicated shape in my body!

If we take the time to know and connect to our students, we are then able to provide feedback appropriate to where they are in their journey. For new teachers, it can seem terrifying to wonder what exactly needs to be said to whom. But, relax. If we maintain our practice (which develops our intuition) and let something bigger than ourselves guide us, remarkable things can happen.

The trick, as with all things Yoga, is to find a balance that keeps one’s practice fresh and authentic. But surrender isn’t the same as laziness; it’s a conscious activity of letting go in order to deepen one’s practice.



Lakshmi Sutter is a lifelong student of both Yoga and ecology and is currently pursuing her doctorate in marine science. She directly served the Integral Yoga Academy and IYTA for five years and continues to serve as a member on IY Hatha Yoga committees as well as a champion for Integral Therapeutic Yoga certification. Lakshmi sincerely welcomes your feedback and suggestions for future contributions at LakshmiSutter@gmail.com.

Join Lakshmi with Rich Panico M.D. and Rev. Manjula Spears for the “**Foundations of Therapeutic Yoga**” workshop at Yogaville, November 17-20, 2011.

Svadhyaaya: The Reflecting Mirror

By Gary Kraftsow

Excerpted from *Yoga for Transformation*, Penguin Compass

***Svadhaya*at Ista Devata Sampra Yogah Return to Oneself, dis-cover the Divine**

The second element of *Kriya Yoga* is *svadhyaaya*. It is a beautiful word. Its verbal root “i” (which becomes *aya*), means to go or to move. *Adhi* is a pre-fix meaning “toward.” *Adhyaya* is a verbal derivative meaning “to move toward.” And *sva* is a reflexive pronoun meaning “self” or “one’s own.” Literally and etymologically then, *svadhyaaya* means “to move toward one’s self” “to return to oneself,” “to come back (by some means) to who we are.”

Tapas and *svadhyaaya* exist in mutual relationship, *tapas* being the means whereby we purify and refine our systems, *svadhyaaya* being the means of self-reflection through which we come to an increasingly deeper level of self-awareness and self-understanding. By cleaning the vessel, *tapas* makes us fit for *svadhyaaya*. By examining the vessel, *svadhyaaya* helps us to understand exactly where we should concentrate our practices of purification. And thus, in this relationship between purification and self-examination, we have a natural method for discovering who, in essence, we are.

When we use *svadhyaaya* effectively, our actions become much more than a way to achieve something external; they become a mirror in which we can learn to see ourselves more deeply in terms of our true motivations.

When we use *svadhyaaya* effectively, our actions become much more than a way to achieve something external; they become a mirror in which we can learn to see ourselves more deeply in terms of our true motivations. And, assuming a willingness to look at the behaviors, motivations, and strategies that we habitually use to maintain our own self-image, we can even use *svadhyaaya* to pierce through the veil that it creates and into the nature of our own essential being.

Classically and in a technical sense, *adhyayana* refers to the chanting of texts and *mantras* that pertain to freedom (*moksha*) and that were learned exactly from a teacher, and *svadhyaaya* refers specifically to chanting texts and *mantras* that were part of one’s lineage and that were passed down by one’s ancestors.

In a more general sense, however, *svadhyaaya* suggests that any sacred or inspirational text that offers insight into the human condition can serve as a mirror, reflecting back to us our true nature. Classical texts of this sort might include the *Yoga Sutras*, the *Bhagavad Gita*, the *Bible*, the *Talmud*, the *Tao Te Ching* and the writings of the saints of any tradition. But the source might also be any spiritual or inspiring text that we use, not simply abstractly or academically, but as a means to deeper self-understanding.

In fact, carrying the same logic a step further, *svadhyaaya* can refer to any inspirational activity from the simple act of chanting, using a mantra, or singing a hymn to receiving teachings from the *guru* or going to hear a sermon. Thus, even the rituals of the major religions can act as a type of *svadhyaaya* process.

For example: The ritual of confession in the Roman Catholic faith is an example of a different kind of *svadhyaaya* process. In confession, we reflect on our past actions and expose ourselves to ourselves before God. In this ritual, the priest serves primarily as a medium through which the confession is transmitted and the prescribed penance and absolution are received. In both the Jewish and Islamic faiths, to take a different example, repentance and forgiveness-seeking are integral parts of the process of purification and illumination. In yet another form of *svadhyaaya*, the Tibetan Buddhist contemplates the “great thoughts that turn the mind to (ultimate) *dharma*,” thus turning the mind away from the worldly toward the spiritual life. Thus, in this context of *svadhyaaya*, spiritually inspiring teachings are tools to help us understand ourselves, and, through that understanding, to change our attitudes and behavior.

This teaching is not meant only for those dedicated to matters of the spirit. It has great practical meaning for all of us who recognize that there is room for improvement in our lives. In this context, *svadhyaaya* represents an ongoing process through which we can assess where we are in relation to many things at any given moment. It is like attuning our inner navigator and finding meaningful answers to questions such as: “Am I at the right place at the right moment? Where am I now and also where am I going? What is my direction and what are my aspirations? What are my responsibilities? What are my priorities?”

We often find ourselves on cruise control, acting habitually and being so swept up in the momentum of our daily lives that we don’t take time to check where we are or where we are headed. And, since our lives are in motion, where we are today is probably different from where we will be tomorrow.

The *mantras* and textual studies offered by the classical tradition function as references from which we can measure where we are. If we come back to the image of the inner navigator, then the *mantras* and texts can be seen as the polestar, which shows us true north.

One of the greatest opportunities we have to see ourselves is in the mirror of relationship. Therefore, another means of

svadhyaya is the ability to look in the mirror of how people are responding to us and let that be an opportunity to understand something about the way we habitually operate. For example, it is difficult to hide aspects of our personality from our mates, our parents, or our children. Even with intimate friends, our pretenses are not likely to endure for long. And while we are quite able to play the games of avoidance and self-deception in our own company, in the mirror of our relationships it is not so easy to hide . . . that is, if we will look, avoid deflecting messages that we could benefit by hearing, and avoid playing victim or becoming self-righteous, of course.

In other words, *svadhyaya* suggests that we can use all of our activities—solitary and relational—as mirrors in which to discover something important about ourselves and to use what we discover as valuable information in the process of arriving at a deeper self-understanding.

Finally, the ultimate purpose of *svadhyaya* is to function as a mirror to remind us of our higher potential—in other words, as a way into the interior where our “true selves” reside. To this end, the classical means of *svadhyaya* include using a *mantra*, reading a text, or sitting with a spiritual master (*guru*).

In fact, the ancients used the word *darsana*—which means something like a mirror—to describe the teaching contained in a particular group of sacred texts; and they used the same word to describe what happens when we sit with a spiritual master. Because, in both cases, we can see our neuroses, our small-mindedness, and our pettiness mirrored completely. At the same time, we can also see beyond our current state to something like the divine potential. And that too is who we are.

Ultimately *svadhyaya* is a means to reach that higher potential, a way to the interior where our “true selves” reside. Although the classical means of *svadhyaya* were *mantras*, texts, and masters, we can use our wives, husbands, lovers, friends, Yoga students, or Yoga teachers. Everybody. Everything. In fact, all of our activities can be an opportunity to see more deeply who we are and how we operate; and on that basis we can begin to refine ourselves and thus become clearer and more appropriate in our behavior. This is very important.

We cannot truly consider *tapas* (purification) apart from *svadhyaya*; and, therefore, an intelligent practice of *tapas* must of necessity include *svadhyaya*. For example, if we do an intensive *asana* (posture) without being adequately self-reflective, we may end up destabilizing our hips, creating vulnerability in our lower back, and ruining our knees. If, however, we consider the *asana* practice itself as a mirror, we are certainly more apt to avoid injury and may even come away with a better understanding of ourselves as well.

One of the greatest opportunities we have to see ourselves is in the mirror of relationship. Therefore, another means of *svadhyaya* is the ability to look in the mirror of how people are responding to us and let that be an opportunity to understand something about the way we habitually operate.

For many of us, who are drawn to styles of *asana* practice that reinforce existing tendencies, this is a tricky point. For example, if we are the high-paced, hyperactive type, we might be drawn toward a very active practice—one that makes us sweat and that generates lots of heat—whereas what we may really need is a more soothing and calming practice. Or, if we are the slow-moving, sluggish type, we might be drawn to a very gentle and relaxing practice, whereas what we may really need is a more active and stimulating one. In either case, the result would be *tapas* without *svadhyaya*. And in both cases the result would most likely be a reinforcement of existing patterns or, even worse, a possible injury or illness.

When we practice, it is important to look carefully, both at who we are and what is actually happening to us in our practice. In our *tapas* there must be *svadhyaya* so that we have a constant feedback mechanism through which we accurately

feel what is happening in our systems, and as a result of which we learn increasingly more about ourselves.

In short: *Tapas* accompanied by *svadhyaya* ensures that *tapas* is a transformational activity and not simply a mindless application of technology, or, worse yet, an abusive activity.

According to the ancients, *svadhyaya* develops *tapas*; *tapas* develops *svadhyaya*; and together they help us awaken to the spiritual dimension of life. Thus, as we go deeper and deeper into the process of self-investigation and self-discovery we also go deeper and deeper into ourself until eventually; we discover or un-cover the Divine. One great teacher has described this process with the image of a drop of water dissolving into the ocean. At first we wonder whether we are the drop. But eventually we discover that we are not and have never been the drop, but only the water itself.



For over 30 years, **Gary Kraftsow** has been a pioneer in the transmission of Yoga for health, healing and personal transformation. Gary also is the author of *Yoga for Wellness and Yoga for Transformation* and produced two DVDs: *Viniyoga Therapy for Low Back, Sacrum, and Hips* and *Viniyoga Therapy for Upper Back, Neck and Shoulders*. He served on an NIH study on *Yoga for back pain* and a Harvard Medical School study for *generalized anxiety*. Gary composed protocol for the National Institutes of Health Studies: “*Evaluating Yoga for Chronic Low Back Pain*” and “*Yoga Therapy for Generalized Anxiety*.”

Join Gary for the “**Yoga for Anxiety and Depression**” workshop at Yogaville, September 29 – October 2, 2011.

Steady Mind through Sadhana

By Swami Ramananda

Many people I've spoken with have experienced moments of striking clarity or deep peace while doing spiritual practices, communing with nature, or during periods of creativity such as painting or playing music. Despite sincere spiritual aspirations, these experiences tend to be few and far between, and they usually take place while in solitude or on a retreat. The idea of feeling centered while at work or while working things out in a relationship seems a remote possibility at best. Even the best intentions and highest philosophies may go out the window in the face of a crisis or confrontation—allowing layers of tension to build up and be carried into the next interaction. Then, when our buttons get pushed, we may “lose it” despite our best efforts to control ourselves.

The best way to develop any muscle is to build it up by repeated use. Developing a steady mind and an inner ease—strong enough to last in the midst of activity—also takes practice. A keen effort to steady the mind through Hatha Yoga, meditation, chanting or prayer can have a tremendous impact on our lives; especially if done regularly and over a long period of time. Even relatively brief sessions, such as 15 minutes twice a day, begin a process of transformation; undoing the conditioned ways of thinking and reacting that we tend to fall into by habit.

During such a meditative practice, we refocus the mind again and again, patiently directing it, training it to remain steadily engaged. As the body relaxes and the mind calms down, we begin to taste the simple joy of being present in the moment. We can start to develop the same ability to focus at work. We will become more aware of the mind's restless tendency to flit back and forth between thoughts, remaining half preoccupied with worries rather than the task at hand. We can learn to recognize this tendency as the habit of wanting or scheming to secure our happiness as an endless anxiety that things may not go right. When I am struggling so hard to solve the day's problems, it can be a tremendous relief to realize that it is precisely this tense effort that keeps me from being at ease—from being present with clarity to understand that which needs my attention (not my tension). I discover over and over, that one of the best ways for me to be effective is to keep my own peace no matter what happens around me.

One of the teachings from Raja Yoga that especially supports this effort is the idea of responding with friendliness to friendly behavior, and with compassion to sorrowful behavior, with delight to virtuous behavior, and with detachment to harmful behavior (*Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*:33). It has probably happened to all of us that after someone has acted unreasonably angry or obnoxious towards us, we find out later how much pain they were in. We may not be able to help them. I know I have

benefited so much from not taking such behavior personally and waiting for a calmer moment, if possible, to interact with them. We can never expect to control the moods of others, but we can value our own balance, knowing it is the only way we can hope to respond constructively.

The way we practice Hatha Yoga can be a great analogy for how this can work. In all our efforts, there should be an element of relaxation that allows us to stretch further. I have often seen in my service the importance of distinguishing between healthy pain, that comes from stretching carefully, and that strain that comes from forcing too much, causing me to get sick or to hurt someone else.

During stressful situations, we can re-center ourselves by consciously focusing our minds on the focal point we have used regularly in our meditative practice. By inwardly repeating a mantra or prayer, or by calming and watching the breath, we draw on the powerful association our practice has cultivated, which helps us slow down. Returning to the present, we call forth our connection to the spiritual consciousness inside that remains undisturbed. If we can remain even a little

connected to that consciousness, where we can experience our natural completeness, our self-esteem is not so dependent on being right, and we are more capable of accepting criticism or standing our ground in the face of adversity. It is a true sign of inner strength to be able to express ourselves with conviction and be open-minded to the suggestions of others, but not sidetracked by their personalities.

It can also be helpful to understand that the challenging circumstances we face may be exactly what's needed to draw forth new strengths from us, to teach us where our weak spots are, and to bring attention to what in us needs healing. Fortunately most of us seem to have ample opportunities to experiment and learn from this universe-ity.

The best way to develop any muscle is to build it up by repeated use. Developing a steady mind and an inner ease—strong enough to last in the midst of activity—also takes practice.



Swami Ramananda is Executive Director of the San Francisco Integral Yoga® Institute and has been teaching Yoga for more than twenty-five years. He conducts Teacher Training Programs for Beginning, Intermediate and Advanced Hatha Yoga and Stress Management. He has taught many stress management workshops and courses and has managed two natural food markets. Swami Ramananda teaches and lectures internationally and at Yoga Journal and Omega Institute national conferences.

Join Swami Ramanandaji for the unique and innovative program, “**Adapting Yoga for Any Setting: Stress Management Teacher Training**” together with Swami Vidyanda and Jaymie Meyer, July 22–31, 2011

Stress and the Transplanted Swami

By Swami Vidyanda

In 2009 I decided to leave the Ashram, which I love so dearly, because I felt called to teach more. A couple of months later came the financial downturn. Bad timing? Could a sixty-something Swami make it in the “real world?” I asked the question in meditation, and the only answer I got was “Go ahead...it’s My will.” So here I am.

When I arrived in Saint Petersburg, Florida, I quickly discovered there was an abundance of wonderful Hatha Yoga teachers. How was I going to wade into the waters and find the students I was supposed to serve? The answer so far has come through Stress Management.

Through Haris Lender, I inherited a Hatha Class at the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI), a great place that teaches seniors age 50+. I also proposed a meditation class and a stress management class. I wondered if they’d say, “These people are retired. What stress?” But change is a major trigger of stress, and seniors experience plenty of change ... declining health, death of loved ones, moving, and the loss of retirement savings due to the downturn in the market. The list goes on. To my surprise, OLLI was most interested in Stress Management. They hired me to teach for 12 weeks—3 sessions of 4 weeks each. Students can sign up for any or all of the sessions.

I have fun teaching the class. The class is structured as we suggest in Stress Management T.T. (S.M.T.T.). We release stress with chair stretches, chair relaxation (often with imagery), simple *pranayama*, and guided meditation. That’s about half an hour, and I vary it week to week. Then we discuss some topic to help with the mental/emotional part of stress. I use the hand-outs from S.M.T.T. My handout today was an article I wrote called, *Four Anti-Stress ‘Pills’*. The article is an example of *re-framing* the deepest Yoga philosophy in everyday language, minus the Sanskrit. It includes some reference to faith, with plenty of room for people of any faith or no faith.

The discussion is lively, and lots of real issues come up. Today someone spoke of their hearing loss, and fears of going completely deaf. After an honest, funny, frank exploration of the ideas in the handout, we got down to the freedom of letting go. They have great collective wisdom. The group has bonded with each other and become a support team. My part is fairly easy. I do some prep, show up, and they pull out the deepest teachings from me and each other.

After the first series, some of them also signed up for my Hatha Yoga and meditation classes. They understood the benefits from seeing how much they got from the simplified chair practices.

I’ve had a number of other invitations to teach Yoga-based Stress Management: this week I’ll teach medical and



support staff at Children’s Hospital. Last summer I taught for the nursing staff at UVA hospital in the Cardiac Care Unit. I’ve taught at Cancer Retreats for Smith Farm Center, and for Hospice Staff.

People are hungry for the deeper aspects of Yoga and the teachings. And it helps to be able to offer it in neutral language where sometimes you can’t even say the word “Yoga.” For example I used it all day, every day, in my work as a hospital chaplain last summer at UVA hospital. The patients were from every faith, but the principles are universal.

Check out what some of our other teachers are doing at www.marshapappas.com and www.resilienceforlife.com. I encourage you to get creative, and share the deeper teachings with people in your Hatha Yoga classes. It’s what makes you unique as an Integral Yoga Teacher. And in an abundance of Yoga Teachers, Yoga as Stress Management can help you find service in wonderful places.



Swami Vidyanda has enjoyed many different roles in her life, including radio news reporter, translator for Swami Satchidananda and video producer. She has been teaching Integral Yoga since 1972. She is a versatile teacher, specializing in workshops on Stress Management as well as Yoga and the Emotions. Swami Vidyanda has taught in the US, Canada, Europe, India and Australia. She currently lives and teaches Integral Yoga in Florida.

Join Swami Vidyandaji for the unique and innovative program, “**Adapting Yoga for Any Setting: Stress Management Teacher Training**” together with Swami Ramananda and Jaymie Meyer, July 22–31, 2011.

Laughter and Play

By Dr. Amrita McLanahan

Excerpted from *Surgery and Its Alternatives: How to Make the Right Choices for Your Health*

“Life must be lived as play.”

—Plato

Laughter is like a kind of Yoga breathing exercise, and just as powerful. While you may find taking time for the discipline of Yoga practice sometimes dauntingly difficult within the context of a hurried life, you can most certainly find time to laugh, and count it as part of your daily Yoga practice.

A good laugh affects your whole body. Scientific appreciation and application of the healing power of laughter is officially termed “gelotology,” from the Greek gelos, meaning “humor.” It was spearheaded by the journalist Norman Cousins, who used the regular application of laughter therapy to help himself recover from ankylosing spondylitis, a debilitating bone disease. Laughter as therapy was further promulgated by Patch Adams and Robin Williams.

We first laugh as early as 29 days old, often as we pass gas, perhaps an important clue to a whole lineage of jokes. By the time we are 16 weeks old, we are laughing once an hour, and by age 4, as often as every 4 minutes! Laughter may represent one way we convert tension to relaxation, making it an adaptive stress response.

One study found that children laugh, on average, 400 times per day, adults as little as 15 times. As Dr. Joan Coggin, Professor of Medicine at Loma Linda University School of Medicine, the laughter researcher who conducted this investigation, put it, “That means somewhere along the way we lose 385 laughs a day. This has got to stop.”

Your body’s physiology profoundly changes whenever you laugh. Electrical and chemical alterations develop quickly: the speed of a blow-out guffaw of laughter from your mouth can reach seventy miles per hour! The many physical and psychological benefits include lower blood pressure, pulse rates, and muscle tension—though these are all initially increased, they are followed by a fall below baseline. Norman Cousins found that ten minutes of belly laughing—he chose videos of the television show *Candid Camera* and Woody Allen movies—could leave him pain-free for two hours. His blood sedimentation rate, reflecting inflammation, was lowered, and this effect held over time.

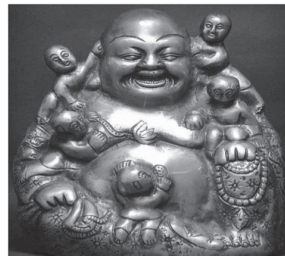
Cortisol levels decrease and pituitary release of endorphins, the body’s euphoric natural painkillers, are increased; adrenaline, initially increased, is then lower than before. All these changes physiologically reflect a diminished sense of stress. Interleukins, an important component of optimum immune system functioning, are increased.

Right brain activity increases, giving you a new perspective on nagging problems. A therapy group in California has participants “sing” their problems into a microphone: it makes you laugh just to think of it. When we sing, we generally use the right brain, which steps outside the time and space constraints of the logical left brain, and can leave us refreshed and more in the “present moment.” The mystical Sufis believed that laughter was a significant spiritual tool, since the quality of our attention changes, even as we begin to anticipate listening to a good joke.

Sometimes called “inner jogging,” laughter is a kind of “workout,” the easiest form of exercise, with its effects felt faster. Heart rate increases within twenty seconds and lasts for three to five minutes, while exercise may take three minutes to exhibit its heart rate effects. It does burn calories, so in addition to being part of your daily Yoga, it counts as part of your daily aerobic component as well. Oxygen in the blood is increased, carbon dioxide decreased. Rapid expulsion of the breath clears out the old, stale air in the lungs, making way for fresh, oxygenated air to enter. Jan Marshall stated, “I actually prefer to laugh rather than jog. You save money on shoes, and you smell better. You don’t have to be hosed down after you finish.”

Laughter leaves you more relaxed and by interrupting the panic cycle of pain and disease, can be especially helpful in the setting of surgical illness. As far back as the thirteenth century, the surgeon Henri de Mandeville used laughter to help his patients recover from their operations. Laughter is contagious, as witness the success of canned television laughter. The infamous stress response, the fight-or-flight syndrome, is opposed. Humor therapy programs have been shown to improve the quality of life. Many hospitals, including DeKalb General Hospital, Decatur, Georgia, have effectively utilized a humor room, which they call the “Lively Room,” since 1983; some hospitals have a “Humor Cart.” St. John’s Hospital in Los Angeles has a twenty-four-hour comedy television channel. Some dentists now make use of laughter to decrease the patients’ need for pain medication.

“The idea,” stated Norman Cousins, “is just to get away from all those reminders that you are sick and to create an environment in which a doctor can do his best. . . We have made the interesting observation that if you can liberate patients from the depression which almost always accompanies serious illness you get a corresponding increase in circulating interleukins.”



Playing is also a lost art. Remember when mother said to you, "Just go out and play." The rules of this game were that *anything* could be fun, not just celebrating the end goal, as we do in work, and then relaxing. Rather than wait to feel better and then play, we may do best to first play, and consequently feel better.

Sand tray therapy applies the playfulness of various figurines on a bed of sand to help access subconscious issues, and assist in healing. Hopefully all hospitals will one day provide such tools to kids and adults alike.



Integrative medical physician **Sandra McLanahan, M.D.**, has for many years been the nation's leading expert on the medical effects of Yoga. Executive Medical Director of the Integral Health Center in rural Buckingham, Virginia, she also served for 20 years as Director of Stress Management Training for the Preventive Medicine Research Institute, where she was a crucial part of the research team led by Dean Ornish, M.D. Her book: *Surgery and Its Alternatives: How to Make the Right Choices for Your Health*, is available at Amazon.com.

Going Deep In Our Study And Practice

By Amba Crane

Being introduced to *Patanjali's Yoga Sutras* is possibly one of the best gifts of teacher training. If we are willing to explore and try even a few of the principles outlined, we can transform the mundane into the sublime. Take, for example, the "four locks and keys" in *Sutra 1:33*, or *Abyhasa/Vairagyam* in *Sutra I:12*, or *Kriya Yoga, Sutra II:1* as well as the rest of the *yamas* and *niyamas*, beginning with *Sutra II:30*. Then study different interpretations and translations and pick apart those texts which resonate with you. Nischala Devi's, *The Secret Power of Yoga*, is brilliant in its affirmative and uplifting translation. It offers a heart-opening view of what is possible. It brings the mind into the heart—*Om Mani Padme Hum*—and reminds us that love and compassion are the tools to create unity consciousness in our community and throughout the world.

At graduation for Teacher Training, Gurudev tells us to "chew." In the month-long training, there's much to absorb and it's only when we've finished the training that we hopefully have the time to digest all the many facets of Yoga that we probably never even considered. I recently reviewed *Living Yoga, The Life and Teachings of Swami Satchidananda*. Right at the beginning, we are inspired to live easefully, peacefully and usefully. We are further encouraged to go deep in our study and practice, so that we are rooted in the teachings of this great science and then, without doing too much, we can be shining examples of Yoga. This is our *dharma*!

Back on September 9, 2009, a time where, throughout the world, there was a uniting of consciousness to envision a shift from (I)llness to (WE)llness. I thought about Gurudev's statement of "all the 'mine, mine, mines', blowing up in our faces!" Our ego is so dominant! (I)llness to (WE)llness—What a concept! It's a matter of transforming the small self into the higher Self. It's recognizing our essential Oneness! Also in September, President Obama called for peace and prosperity in his address to the United Nations. Many souls are working for good and harmony as is evidenced in the DVD *With One Voice*, a documentary featuring Swami Karunananda, which beautifully illustrates that, no matter which path you may follow, love and service are the highest ideals in any tradition. The DVD "2012" is another eye opener. December 21, 2012 is the end of the Mayan calendar, the end of the Iron Age and the end of the Kali Yuga.

Some believe that this will be the end of the world as we know it. Others anticipate the second coming of Christ. Still others imagine a time of heightened consciousness. Since our students come to us for different reasons, it is here we as yogis can make a profound impact. When we are grounded in the precepts of our lineage, we radiate a lightness of being that is contagious. It's the greatest gift we can offer. The thing is: don't be lazy. It's so easy to fall into complacency and laziness. (Remember the definition of practice!) We have to be steadfast in our quest to keep joy afloat in the heart and order in our lives.

A life in order is a blessing! (I'm reminded of a mother of one of the teacher trainees who was overjoyed that at least her daughter learned to get up at 5:30 a.m.!) Of course there are skeptics, even in teacher training. There are those who believe that you can't defy gravity. They have not "recognized" that as well as a terrestrial force, there is a celestial force, which is so much more powerful and liberating when you open to the infinite possibilities and determine to put the work in: the discipline, the study and the surrender.

When you make an intention, such as being steadfast on the path consciously, unseen hands appear to direct and guide. It never fails. This is where our unity is perfectly displayed. Its vibration and reflection is of the One.

So let us live in alignment with these incredible tools for happiness and freedom, knowing that the Kingdom of Heaven is indeed within. As the Tamil word for God, *Kadavul*, reveals: Go within. Let us always be grateful and, as Lord Buddha said: "Awake, reflect, watch. Live with care and attention. Live in joy and the light will grow in you."

Om Shanti



Ambha Crane has been studying and staffing at Yogaville with her husband, Mitra, for 11 summers. She practices mindfulness, loves the yogic scriptures and feels luminous!

Swamiji

*What he loved the most—
To play in the ocean
Be in the ocean with us*

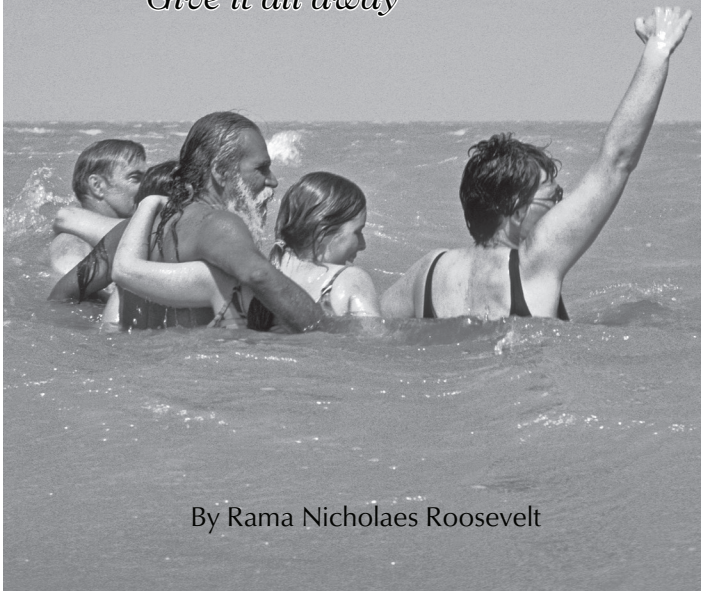
*He loved the 10,000 things
And made photographs,
Each an icon, even you
When he hugged you
Opened the gate*

*The moon too
He loved above*

*And the light,
How it collects behind
One's eyes*

*Om Hreem Namah . . .
How he loved
The sound,
That Thou Art
By any name*

*He loved to say
Know yourself
That is not a self,
Give it all away*



By Rama Nicholaes Roosevelt

Trudel Colling of Brussels

By Savitri de Meyer



Left to right: Trudel, Karuna (seated), Christina, Kamakshi, Hermione (seated) and Elfie.

(Kamakshi Holzschek, pictured above, was also a very active member of the Brussels centre, who served as president; she passed away in 2005.)

Hari OM.

We are sad to inform you that Trudel Colling of Brussels left her body on the 8th of March. For many years she was the devoted secretary of the Integral Yoga Centre in Belgium.

Trudel was also a dedicated wife and mother of three children; when the children left home, she became interested in Yoga, which she discovered through Karuna Ehlermann of the Brussels IYC when their husbands were both involved in the European Common Market.

Trudel joined Integral Yoga Belgium and became actively involved in the centre. In 1999 she came to Yogaville to celebrate Sri Gurudev's 50th Anniversary of *sannyas*. After getting her T.T. in Portugal, she taught Yoga and was very much loved by her students. For years she organised the meditation sessions for the group, always followed by a small reception, which she was still lovingly conducting up until the present.

We shall all deeply miss her and will never forget our beloved Trudel. Please remember her in your prayers.

OM Shanti.

Savitri de Meyer, Integral Yoga Belgium

The IYTA Column

By Arvind White

Greetings of Peace from Yogaville to All!

Allow me to introduce myself: I am Arvind White, the new Membership/Continuing Education Coordinator and Registrar for the IYTA. I've been a part of Yogaville off and on for over nine years and served in many capacities. I started in the LYT program in early 2002, then went on to do the Fall T. T. that year. I served for over two years in various departments: inventory clerk for the kitchen, landscaping/maintenance and a part-time job with Integral Yoga Distribution. I moved to Danville, Virginia in 2004 and taught at the "Danville Yoga & Meditation Center" for over three years. During that interim, I learned "Body Talk Access" and Reiki, and I came back to Yogaville to staff the Krishna Das workshops. I returned in the late summer of 2007 to join support staff and then accepted the position of Kitchen Manager at the start of 2008. I served in that position until last October and was recruited by the IYTA late in the year. I've taken a variety of other teacher training programs: Gentle Yoga, Ayurvedic Yoga, Yoga for Cancer & Chronic Illnesses, and Yoga for Stress Management, as well as other workshops. Also, I took Restorative Yoga training with the East West Rehab Institute and have been teaching Restorative Yoga here in Yogaville the past three years and a half. In many ways, I am still learning this job even though I have the basic tasks "down pat."

The IYTA is off to a good start so far this year and we're always brainstorming ideas for improvements. One plan that was implemented was the two year membership for \$125 (a savings of \$15) and \$150 (savings of \$10) for teachers abroad. We're happy to see so many teachers take advantage of this discount. We recently had ten graduates from this year's Winter T.T. program and four graduates completing the Split T.T.

Various teacher workshops had strong attendance as well. These included "Diving Deeper into Meditation" with Swami Asokananda, the "Power of *Pranayama*" led by Swami Karunananda and "Laugh-a-Yoga® Certification" with Bharata Wingham. All had very positive and strong reviews.


We are also looking forward to upcoming workshops with some prestigious instructors such as Natasha Rizopoulos, Jnani Chapman, Steven Weiss, Beryl Bender Birch, and Swami Karunananda with Raja Yoga Immersion, just to name a few.

It's always a pleasure to serve our members

Om Sarvamangalam, Om Shanti

Arvind

Enjoy fresh air and a serene country setting.

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Spring / Summer 2011 Programs

Raja Yoga Immersion Experience
Swami Karunananda
May 16-22









Body-Over-Mind Fitness
Ed Harrold
June 3-5

Beyond Asana—The Classical Path of Raja Yoga
Beryl Bender Birch
June 10-12

Yoga Therapy to Enhance Emotional & Mental Clarity
Michael Lee, Founder of Phoenix Rising Yoga
June 17-19

Balancing Flow & Form
Barbara Benagh
July 8-10

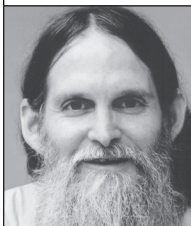
Mantra Yoga and Primal Sound
David Vamadeva Frawley and Shambhavi Chopra
June 22-26



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Integral Yoga Senior Speakers' Schedules

Please contact local representatives for times, costs, pre-enrollment requirements, schedule changes, etc.



Swami Asokananda

May 5–June 7 **Programs in Italy**

June 8–13 **Programs in Stockholm, Sweden**

June 14–20 **Programs in Moscow, Russia**

June 18–Aug. 9 **Intermediate Teacher Training in San Francisco**

June 26–July 15 **Intermediate Teacher Training in Yogaville**

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Jackie: jksoph@gmail.com

Igor: igor108om@yahoo.com

rev.jivana@integrallyogasf.org

www.integrallyogaprograms.org



Swami Karunananda

May 16–22 **Raja Yoga Immersion in Yogaville**

July 27–July 10 **Meditation Teacher Training in Yogaville**

Aug. 5–14 **Ten Day Silent Retreat in Yogaville**

Aug. 6 **Satsang in Yogaville**

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Swami Ramananda

May 3–June 28, 7–8:30 p.m. **Study Group on Raja Yoga in NYC**

June 2, 6:30–9 p.m. **Transforming Anger in NYC**

June 16, 6:30–9 p.m. **Cultivating Forgiveness in NYC**

July 9, 10:30 a.m.–1 p.m. **Hatha Yoga as a Spiritual Path in NYC**

July 22–31 **Stress Management T.T. in Yogaville**

Aug. 20 **Mahasamadhi Celebration**

Aug. 26 **Satsang in Belo Horizonte, Brasil**

Aug 27–28 **Workshops in Belo Horizonte, Brasil**

Aug 29 - Sept 4 **Portion of T.T. in Belo Horizonte, Brasil**

Sept. 5 - Sept. 6 **Workshops in Lavras, Brasil**

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Swami Vidyananda

Apr. 12–May 3 **Hatha Yoga for Every Body in Saint Petersburg, FL**

www.eckerd.edu/olli

(727) 864-7600

April 16, 11:30 a.m. **Laughing Yoga for the Whole Family in Tampa, FL**

http://rasalilafest.com

April 29 **Stress Management for Children in St Petersburg, FL**

http://kiddingaroundyoga.com

May 6 **Healing the Dis-Ease of Stress in Saint Petersburg, FL**

www.eckerd.edu/olli

(727) 864-7600

June 1–5 **European Integral Yoga Conference in Italy**

www.integrallyoga.it

July 22–31 **Stress Management Teacher Training in Yogaville** www.integrallyogaprograms.org

Aug. 19–20 **Raja Yoga and other programs in Indiana**

www.pranayogaschool.com



Satya Greenstone

May 5–8 **Reigniting the Yogic Fire:**

A Teacher Renewal Weekend

www.integrallyogaprograms.org

June 19–26 **Restorative Yoga Teacher Training Program**

www.integrallyogaprograms.org

July 17–14 **Basic Hatha Yoga Training Program**

www.integrallyogaprograms.org

Upcoming Programs at Yogaville

May

- 5-8 Re-igniting the Yogic Fire: A Teacher Renewal Weekend *with Satya Greenstone*
- 6-8 Align Your Flow *with Natasha Rizopoulos*
- 7-14 Yoga Vacation in Tuscany, Italy, *with Ram Wiener and Parvathi Paola Faini*
- 8-15 Yoga Therapy for People with Cancer & Chronic Illness Training, Part I (YCaT)
with Jnani Chapman, Lisa Schneider & Sandra Gilbert
- 13-15 Basic Meditation *with Swami Gurucharanananda (Mataji)*
- 16-22 Raja Yoga Immersion Experience *with Swami Karunananda*
- 19-22 Yoga Therapy for People with Cancer & Chronic Illness Training, Part III
- 20-22 Making Yoga Therapeutic by Applying Anatomy & Alignment Principles *with Steve Weiss (for Teachers)*
- 21 Free Kabbalah and the Yoga Teachings workshop *with Prahaldan Mandelkorn*
- 27-30 Heart as Wide as the World Chanting Retreat *with Krishna Das*

June

- 3-5 Body over Mind Fitness *with Ed Harrold*
- 3-12 Detoxification & Juice-Fasting Retreat *with Manu Dawson*
- 8-12 Yoga for Arthritis Certification Program *with Dr. Steffany Moonaz*
- 10-12 Beyond Asana—The Classical Path of Raja Yoga *with Beryl Bender Birch*
- 19-26 Children's Hatha Yoga T.T. *with Madhuri Flynn and Inga Ishwari Benson*
- 19-26 Camp Yogaville *with Harini Haris Lender*
- 17-19 Yoga Therapy to Enhance Emotional and Mental Clarity *with Michael Lee*
- 18 Free Introduction to Yoga workshop *with Prajapati Swaine*
- 19-26 Restorative Yoga T.T. *with Satya Greenstone*
- 22-26 Mantra Yoga and Primal Sound *with David Vamadeva Frawley and Shambhavi Chopra*
- 26-July 17 Intermediate Hatha Yoga T.T. *with Swami Asokananda & Mahadev Carlino*
- 27-July 10 Meditation T.T. *with Swami Karunananda*

July

- 1-3 Back Pain Release—Core Yoga for Healthy Back Care *with Christopher Baxter*
- 1-3 Launch Your Yoga Journey *with Cathy Woods*
- 2-Aug. 2 Fine Arts Society of Yogaville Annual Dance Camps
- 8-10 Yoga: Balancing Flow and Form *with Barbara Benagh*
- 8-10 Yogic Path to Manifestation *with Antonio Sausys*
- 15-18 **One in Spirit: Celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Light Of Truth Universal Shrine (LOTUS)**
- 16 Guru Purnima
- 18-Aug 14 Summer Basic Hatha Yoga T.T. *with Satya Greenstone*
- 22-24 Time for Each Other *with Revs. Bhagavan and Bhavani Metro*
- 22-24 Finance and the Structure of Reality *with Ed Vos*
- 22-31 Adapting Yoga for any Setting: Stress Management T.T.
with Swami Ramananda, Swami Vidyananda, & Jaymie Meyer
- 26-31 Thai Yoga Massage Intensive I *with Jyothi Watanabe*
- 29-31 Embracing Life, Reducing Stress—The Spiritual Journey of Mindfulness *with Susan Stone, Ph.D.*



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