



April 2011 Contemplation Theme

Satya: Truthfulness

by Swami Nirmalananda Saraswati

The Truth

The Truth is that you are divine consciousness. Even though you don't know it all the time, your essence is pure, expansive, holy, whole and perfect. Your unhappiness comes from being cut off from the divinity hidden within you, which is called svaroopā or Self. Anything that takes you farther away from your Self increases your pain. Anything that takes you into your Self gives you bliss. Yoga is dedicated to this principle and promises that you will know your own Self, if you simply do enough yoga.

The practice of truthfulness is one of the ways to integrate yoga's principles into your life. Satya is the second of the yamas, yoga's precepts for living in the world. Satya dictates that you speak only truth. Anytime you speak a falsehood, no matter how trivial, it takes you away from the Truth of your own Beingness. While society condones the little white lie and social niceties, yoga says they've got to be tossed out with the garbage. Yet you must remember that the first yama is ahimsa, non-harming. How do you speak truth without harming others? You must.

Several years ago a yogi told she was practicing satya, but the other people around her didn't want to hear her personal truth. I asked her what her "personal truth" was. She described her unhappiness and its causes, which were the other people with whom she wanted to share her personal truth. We talked for a while so that I could explain the difference between her personal truth and The Truth. She had difficulty understanding the difference until I explained that The Truth never changes, but your personal truth changes over time. It might even change daily or several times a day. All that stuff that runs through your mind — you don't have to tell it to anyone. It isn't Truth, not according to yoga's standard.

Existence

The Sanskrit word for this practice is satya, which comes from the root word sat. *Sat* means existence. It is a name of your own Self, the foundational level of your own existence, which pervades all of existence. The first Sanskrit lesson I took began with sat, with the swami asking our small group a question:

The floor we're sitting on exists. The walls exist. The garden outside the walls exists. The stars exist. The space between the stars exists. What do all of these things have in common with one another?

The three of us sat in a stunned silence, completely stumped. He waited before he answered, "They all exist. That existence is called *sat*." My life changed on that day. I knew something, deep within me, that I had never known before. I knew that I came here to know that. I've never looked back.

You may recognize satya as the name of the professional association for *Svaroopa*® yoga teachers: SATYA, from the letters in the full name, *Svaroopa*® yoga Teachers And Yogis Association. We know it's not a perfect acronym, but took the opportunity that was there – to remind everyone that this association is dedicated to (a) the knowing of The Truth within and (b) providing support to the teachers and yogis on the path. Graduates of our Foundations of *Svaroopa*® Yoga Course are eligible for membership.

Repercussions — Inside & Outside

Every time you speak an untruth, you install an internal block which keeps you from seeing your own divine radiance. In addition, the light of your being shines more dimly for others, hiding your essence from them. But that's the reason for telling a lie, isn't it? To hide yourself. Consider what you are hiding when you tell a lie. If you are hiding the fact that you did something you shouldn't have, then you must return to the practice of ahimsa and stop doing things you're ashamed of.

But even if you have done something that you don't want to admit, you are better off having it known and dealing with the repercussions than skulking around trying to hide it. The law of karma insures that you will face the repercussions at some point in time. They only get worse when they are postponed.

The principle of satya applies to other areas beyond the words you speak. In order to align yourself with Truth, you must stop filling your mind with untruth. Stop reading fiction. Don't watch shows that are based on fiction. When you fill your mind with fiction, you're filling your mind with the fantasies created by

someone else's mind. You have enough trouble with your own mind! You don't need to deal with the things their mind can conjure up as well!

You must stop adding to the mountain of internal blockages, so you must stop adding untruths into your mind. You can watch documentaries; you can read biographies; you can even watch reality television shows! Or of course you could do more yoga.

Patanjali gives a measuring stick to evaluate how well you are doing with satya:

Satya-pratishthaayaam kriyaa-phalaashrayatvam. — Yoga Sutras 2.36

All words and actions bear full fruit when the yogi is firmly established in truthfulness.

This means that everything you say comes true and everything you do works out as you intended. Your efforts all pay off. Instead of having to work at something for a long time, you attain instant results. If this is not a freeze-frame of your life, then you are telling too many lies.

How You Deal with Others

I have seen many books on yoga philosophy explain that satya means you must stop lying to yourself. Unfortunately, none of the authors had Sanskrit names. The tradition of yoga is clear — satya means you stop lying to others. Technically it's impossible to stop lying to yourself. This is because lying to yourself is delusion, and you'll be suffering from delusion until you're enlightened. Thus, you must stop lying to others.

What if telling the truth to someone would be *himsa*, harming? Life is complicated and relationships are even more complicated! So the answer is a little complicated as well:

1. Ask yourself about the words you want to say, are they true? Beyond personal truth, will these words take you and your friend toward The Truth? Maybe you don't have to say anything at all.
2. Remember what your mother taught you: if you can't say something nice, don't say anything at all. She was quite a yogi, whether she knew it or not. So, maybe you don't have to say anything at all. You could even become a good listener.
3. Satya doesn't require that you tell the whole truth, only that the words you use are truthful. You must not use words to mislead other people, because that is still a form of deception, but you can tell a partial truth. An easy example is when someone asks, "How do you like my new hair color?" Instead of saying that it looks terrible, you can say something like, "Wow! I never thought of you as a redhead. Congratulations!"

Yet there are times when you must intervene. You must tell the truth to someone you care about and it is for their highest benefit, but they won't like it. There are now professional interventions, where an organized family or group gathers for the purpose of getting a beloved to face their addiction or problem in a responsible and effective manner. The situation you are facing might not be so serious, but you could benefit from studying how the professionals handle it. They handle it with love.

Ahimsa, non-harming, is the first principle. All others come from it. If you perfect *ahimsa*, you will find yourself becoming truthful. Your truthfulness will lead to an ease and openness in your relationships with others, but that is not yoga's purpose. Yoga's purpose is that your practices give you an ease and openness with yourself.

The Truth

When you practice satya, you are aligning yourself with The Truth inside yourself. To speak an untruth would be painful to yourself, because you could feel it cutting yourself off from your Self. To speak only truth is a way of uncovering the light of your own being, so that you may experience it more fully. Of course, it will shine into the world. Do more yoga.

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Website: www.svaroopayoga.org ♦ Email: info@masteryoga.org

1-619-718 -YOGA (619-718-9642) ♦ toll-free 1-866-*luvvyoga* (1-866-588-9642)