



kaadlaa!

Svaroopa® Yoga: Experience Your Divine Self

Volume 1 No 2

February 25, 2013

Editorials By Swami Nirmalananda Saraswati

Master Yoga Foundation

The Bunny Hop

What you do every day has more impact on your life than your infrequent activities. This means your daily yoga practice is unskippable if you want the benefits that yoga promises: health, vitality, ease of mind, openness of heart and the bliss of your own Divinity. Amazing promises — all of which are true.

Svaroopa® yoga teachers empower your daily yoga practice, even offering special classes to empower you to take care of yourself. In our thematic approach, month #2 in the yearly cycle is titled "Daily Practice." This harkens from the ancient *Yoga Sutras* by the sage Patanjali who urges *abhyasa*, meaning consistency, diligence, perseverance and devotion to your practices. This is the tortoise approach. It pays off.

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Svaroopa® Vidya Ashram

Self Effort & Grace

If you had to do it all by yourself, you'd never get it done. This is true of enlightenment, but it is also true of everything else in your life. Everything you've ever learned and everything you do involves other people. You've always had help. You might not be good at accepting help from others, and you might not be good at acknowledging the help you've gotten, but it's always been there. Yogis know this is true.

At first I thought that the ancient yogis lived in solitary caves in the Himalayas. Only after 20 years of living and practicing in a yoga community did I realize that the ancient texts document that yogis always lived and practiced in community. Those who seek the highest love to spend time with others sharing

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Tadaa!

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Editorials *continued from page 1*

Master Yoga Foundation

Yet I have to confess that I do love the bunny hop! I know the tortoise won the race, but the hare made some great leaps forward. When you dive into a weekend workshop or a longer program, something amazing happens. It is because you are doing more yoga — instead of 30 minutes a day, you're doing 6 or 8 or 10 hours a day. It is also because you share the experience with other yogi-bunnies hopping rapidly forward. The relationships you enjoy in a retreat are suffused with a special quality that is both a newness and an intimacy at the same time. The flow of Grace becomes so tangible you cannot question it any more.

And then you go home. You become the tortoise again. But you have hopped light-years forward, so your starting point is in a whole new place. Here you can read about others' experiences of the forward leap in their sharings. The combination of the bunny hop with the tortoise makes for a fast path, supported by a deep steadiness that comes from your own practice.

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This Stuff Works — and Works and Works...

By Rob Gold

One of the ways "this stuff works" is the process of *Svaroopa*® yoga students becoming *Svaroopa*® yoga teachers, touching us deeply yet each with a unique experience. Sean Beaver of Boise, Idaho is one such Svaroopi.

Recent life changes brought Sean to the Boise area and at the encouragement of his mom, Carolyn Beaver, to some *Svaroopa*® yoga classes. Sean had been to class before but admits to not following up with regular classes or a home practice. However, with a bad knee, regular back pain and additional free time in his life, now was as good a time as any to pursue a more regular *Svaroopa*® yoga practice. With some strong encouragement from Mom of course...

Part of that encouragement was an airline ticket and enrollment in a recent Foundations course. With just 4 days' notice he hopped on a plane to Pennsylvania for what he thought would "make her happy and be a nice vacation." Not realizing that training was from 7 - 9 every day, Sean admits it wasn't what he was expecting, but he "really loved Foundations" and recalls an unexpected and moving conversation with Swamiji as a key part of the experience. "It helped me a lot in dealing with an unpleasant emotional journey of late," Sean says, and his knee feels better too. Since his return to Boise he's been teaching a weekly class and subs for other local teachers, has attended YTT Level 1 as well as taking on seva positions managing the e-Group and offering his legal expertise to the reorganization of Master Yoga. "If you'd told me 8 months ago that I would be doing all this now I'd have laughed."

Recently Sean had the opportunity to share *Svaroopa*® yoga with family who came to visit, with surprising (to them) results. One of these relatives is Sean's cousin Jordan, an active duty United States Marine Sergeant with three tours under his belt and recurring sciatic issues stemming from an "irreparably damaged area in his back." The doctor's recommendation to alleviate Jordan's symptoms is surgery. The procedure and healing time would prevent Jordan from completing his current training program, which includes a daily 10-mile run, so Jordan has taken advantage of alternative healing modalities like acupuncture and massage now offered by the military to treat soldiers. "In the past it was mostly meds," Jordan told Sean. With nothing to lose, Jordan and his wife attended a 90-minute class with

Sean and then joined him for a home practice the next day. "The classes were pretty basic," says Sean, "with the Magic Four and Four on the Floor. I didn't want it to be too complex for them."

Jordan shared with Sean that the practice "really opened up his back and he couldn't believe it was so flexible." Sean says that was really crazy to Jordan because he hasn't felt that way in a long time. He also "had a hard time describing these new sensations but shared feeling calm and energized with a sense of clarity." Finally, Jordan said that it was the best thing he's done for his back. Following the two practices, Jordan's wife, who is a Hot Yoga and Flow practitioner, was also pleasantly surprised by the results. Having "only done exercise yoga" before and finding *Svaroopa*® yoga to be the "polar opposite," she said she couldn't believe how much tension was gone from her hamstrings and how much calmer she felt after just two passes up the spine. Sean knows pain and "what a pain it is to live with pain and just how well *Svaroopa*® yoga manages it." After their visit, Sean followed up by sending a list of *Svaroopa*® yoga teachers to his cousin to help him find a teacher in his area. Sean says, "One of the reasons I love teaching is to help and share with others what I have learned and it helps me when I recognize what they've gotten during the practice."

Contemplation Collaboration

By Swami Nirmalananda

I have invited two co-authors to work with me on the 2013 Contemplation Articles: **Vidyadevi Stillman** and **Rukmini Abbruzzi**. Both of these talented teachers have been working closely with me for many years, as well as diving deep into their practices and sutra studies. We have already begun the process by designing the whole year's theme "**Alignment with Grace**," which culminates in *Svaroopa*® yoga's October conference. Each month, we co-authors meet to discuss the upcoming article in detail and then send our writings back and forth to develop them more fully. It's going to be a sweet process with you as the beneficiary.

Chickpea & Rice Soup with A Little Kale

¾ cup cashews, soaked in water for 2 hours or overnight
 2 Tbsp olive oil
 1 medium yellow onion, thinly sliced
 3 cloves garlic, minced
 1 tsp dried rosemary
 ¾ tsp dried thyme
 1 teaspoon salt
 Fresh black pepper
 ¾ cup rice, rinsed (see note about rice)
 3 ribs celery, thinly sliced
 1 cup carrots, diced chunky
 5 cups vegetable broth
 1 24 oz can chickpeas, drained and rinsed (about 3 cups)
 4 cups chopped kale
 Thinly sliced green onion, for garnish

Instructions:

Drain the cashews and place them in a food processor with one cup of fresh water. Blend until completely smooth, scraping the sides of the food processor with a spatula occasionally to make sure you get everything.

Preheat a stock pot over medium heat. Saute onion in olive oil with a pinch of salt for about 5 minutes, until translucent. Add garlic, rosemary, thyme, salt and pepper and saute a minute more.

Add rice, celery and carrots and then pour in the broth. Cover and bring to a boil. Once boiling, bring down to a simmer, add the chickpeas, and let cook for about 15 more minutes, until rice is cooked and carrots are tender.

Add the cashew cream and kale, and simmer until kale is wilted, 3 to 5 more minutes. You may need to add water to thin the soup if it seems too thick. Taste for salt and seasonings and let sit for 10 minutes or so to allow the flavors to marry. Serve topped with green onions.

(It thickens as it cools, so if you have leftovers, just thin with a little water when you reheat.)

योगा पुलमेड

By Jennifer Saville, Ashram Chef

Do More Japa!

By Connie Mohn

In 2013!

"2013 is the Year of Japa!" With these words, Swamiji has publicly announced her teaching focus for this year.

Following her initial announcement, Swamiji explained, "A memory is a thought you have not allowed to escape." [Yoga Sutra 1.11] Your everyday thoughts are really mantras. By repeating these mundane mantras you repeatedly reinstall your limited sense of self. You use words to construct your sense of self. These mundane thoughts can't escape because you are identified with them and with the small self they reinforce. There is such power in names and words.

Divine words are just as powerful. Through mantra repetition (japa) you call your own name, you call forth Self. By choosing to place your attention on the mantra always, you deconstruct your limited identity, and intentionally substitute it with your divine identity, with Self. So don't let the mantra escape. Baba promised "Mantra will give you new blood," a new Self. An incredible promise!

Vidyadevi recently dared a group of yogis to do 20 minutes of mantra japa without dropping into meditation. I tried it, and failed. Japa clearly gives you meditation. Meditation gives you your own Self.

Through mantra repetition (japa) you call your own name, you call forth Self.

Swamiji, our Sadguru, has given us a great gift, the same precious gift her Guru gave to her, an enlivened and empowered mantra. She has told us, "The gift of the Guru is enlightenment in a small package. To open it you repeat it many times — many many times." Open your gift.



Swamiji has declared 2013 the Year of Japa (mantra repetition)

Repeating mantra is very powerful. It invokes and increases your awareness of grace. Japa, Swamiji says, will give you everything. It is a means of always keeping you close to your Self.

Swamiji had these japa malas custom-made for you in Ganeshpuri, India, from rudraksha beads with silver caps in 108-, 54- and 27-bead sizes. The way to engage yourself in mantra repetition most powerfully is to say it out loud and move a mala through your fingers because it engages multiple senses.

[Click here to order](#)

Making a Difference

By Swami Nirmalananda



The purpose of a yaj-na (Vedic fire ceremony) is to bring blessings to the world, a profound way of making a difference. There are yogis in India that do this complicated and powerful ceremony every day, while we are fortunate to attend even one in our lifetime! I have been mesmerized by the flames and the ancient chants in many of these ancient ceremonies, as my Guru held them for us frequently. I could feel my karmas being burned away.

The ash from such a fire holds the essence of all the offerings poured into it and the mantras chanted over it. I am bringing the ash home to share. And I have a special box to put it in for you. In addition to the ash, I have brought handmade marble boxes from Agra, the home of the Taj Mahal. The artisans are descendants of the men who built the Taj Mahal, practicing their skills in the same ways, taught by the generations who preceded them.

As part of our annual fundraising drive, new Monthly Donors will receive a handmade marble box from Agra with ash from our recent Ganeshpuri fire ceremony! If you have already been supporting the Ashram by a monthly donation, you will receive one of these beautiful boxes if you increase your donation by any amount.



What do you do with sacred ash?
Put a dot on your forehead before you meditate.
The light of consciousness will blaze up within you.

PROFILE

Vidyadevi Stillman

By Marlene Gast

Teacher Trainer Vidyadevi Stillman has been studying directly with Swami Nirmalananda and teaching for 19 years. This direct support from Nirmalananda, says Vidyadevi, imbues her teaching with vast experience. "There's something different about getting your teachings directly from Nirmalananda — course after course, year after year — and being in the fire!"



Vidyadevi Stillman

Photo courtesy of Master Yoga

Vidyadevi began *Svaroopā*® yoga to deal with a shoulder injury in the late 1980's. As a research scientist, she had moved to San Diego to work for a biotech company and found a place geared to athletics. Colleagues spent most of their free time hiking in the mountains, running along the shore and racing outrigger canoes in the ocean. "Working, playing and tightening," says Vidyadevi, "That was my life until one day our outrigger canoe, which weighs 400 pounds already, took on water and rowing that was too much! The shoulder injury from that incident gave me a lot of pain for nine years. The muscle relaxants and physical therapy didn't work; Rolfing helped some. My days consisted of pain, work stress, lying on the couch after work and the daily maximum dosage of Advil. Then my roommate started classes at Master Yoga in La Jolla.

"I knew of yoga from Richard Hittleman's *Yoga: 28 Day Exercise Plan*, which I'd read as a life-guard in the Adirondacks during college. I thought of yoga as a form of exercise. I signed up for the five-week course called "Bounce Back." Nirmalananda taught poses for those of us in pain, and gave us a notebook with pose handouts. I could move and not hurt. For months, while watching TV at night for two hours or so, I did those poses.

"Then I thought 'there's something more', and took classes regularly. After one and a half years, my neck pain went away. I was in my early 30's, and that's all I had wanted. But then I thought, 'No one at this age should be in that much pain.' So I went through YTT because I wanted to help other people get out of pain. During the Teacher Training, the philosophy that imbues *Svaroopā*® yoga became very interesting to me — with experiences of the power of meditation, including the movement of Kundalini. Then I couldn't deny the power of the practice.

"Although very different from my traditional Western religious upbringing, the pieces came into place. The philosophy talks rang true for me, and Kundalini helped completely clear my neck problems and gave me deeper experiences of my own Self. And I recognized that yoga was a science. Because of my scientific background, I look at things with that structure in mind. When I first heard yoga called a science, I thought 'Wow! That's quite a statement — you guys are only doing poses! At work I'm working with living cells and recombining genes!' But in the study of a yoga text, I saw that yoga is a science. A yoga text I was looking through named and described some 100 different types of Shakti (energy). That's an element of science — distinguishing differences precisely and naming them.

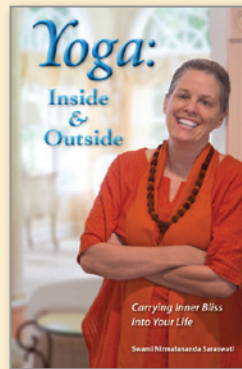
"My first teaching gig was to teach *Svaroopā*® yoga in a gym-like setting of a condominium complex. Then I began to teach classes at Master Yoga, and Nirmalananda asked me if I wanted to be a Teacher Trainer. I had been wanting to change careers — but to physical therapy. Nirmalananda told me that if I trained as a physical therapist, she would have to completely retrain me! Then one day, I did Halasana (Plow Pose) in my daily practice and saw everything from a different perspective, and I accepted the invitation to teach YTT. Leaving my job in science, I never looked back. Leaving my job in science, a job that I loved, I was not sure where the money would come from to fully support me. And, my yoga therapy client base grew, doubling yearly. From week to week, however, in addition to teaching my calendar would just fill in with yoga therapy clients. The Grace that flows through this lineage supported me inside and outside.

"Now as a Teacher Trainer I find that I am helping teachers-in-training move through with Master Yoga through our current Reawakening expansion and reorganization.

In a recent training, a teacher expressed some fear to me about the future of Master Yoga. My response was, 'You have to let Master Yoga change like anything else in your world changes — it's a living breathing entity. The real fear is if the situation were to stay the same. Something that stays the same is not stable but stagnant. If you had not changed, you'd still be living at home with your parents. You wouldn't want that, would you?'"

Pointing out to us in the wider community how natural it is for Master Yoga to be moving through this current transition, Vidyadevi continues, "Master Yoga needs to grow and serve in different ways now as the needs of the community evolve. I have no fear. Not a molecule. I am here as long as you want a teacher to teach you. If you want me to serve you, I am here. Do you want the support of this yoga organization? It's up to the community and each individual that makes up the community. This is a time to support what you want! It's like your favorite candy store. If you want it to be there for you, you need to continue to shop there. Getting more of what you love — More Yoga."

Learn to live your yoga with 18 years of Swamiji's teachings



This collection of Swami Nirmalananda's monthly teachings shows you how to carry your yoga into your life. The basis is bliss, the inner bliss you experience when you do yoga. Once you have experienced your own innermost Self, life looks and feels different to you. Each article weaves the inside and outside together, with profound teachings and practical pointers, with Sanskrit sutras, as well as down-to-earth methodologies for making your life a yogic life.

You are Consciousness. Swamiji makes this clear in her first collection teachings on the primary principles of yoga philosophy. Look within to find fulfillment and the meaning of your life. Beyond asana, this is yoga as an attitude and a way of being, in the midst of your life.

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On Seeking & Finding a Teacher

By Ekamati Tsurutani

Theresa Morrison attended the November 2012 SVA Shaktipat Retreat, having had the experience of attending prior *Svaroop®* Meditation programs. A couple of years earlier she took Meditation Made Easy with Vidyadevi and experienced Kundalini and intense kriyas but “didn’t have the vocabulary to describe” what was happening. In March 2012, she was not a student of a particular spiritual teacher, but “wanted something more, and was open to the next step.” She felt she was on “a path of searching and seeking.” Her mother, Jyoti (Judith) Kenney, “had a strong connection with Swamiji.” Mom invited her to go on the Shaktipat Retreat together. Once there, Theresa had “amazing experiences,” and “something opened in her.” She described her experience beautifully in this SVA blog post published in March 28, 2012:

My Shaktipat experience was profound. After years of daily meditation, the Shaktipat Retreat dramatically shifted the depth and focus of my experience. I’ve been told that each religion points to the same place; we only have to find the one that speaks a language we can understand in order to gain access to that which we seek... I feel newly rooted in a path whose direction I could not have anticipated, but for which I am very grateful.

Returning for Shaktipat in November, she sought to “realign her practice.” And she came with a question, “whether she [Swamiji] is my teacher?” For Theresa, who had this yearning for a teacher, “the stakes were high.” She did a lot of work to prepare and to be open, but had a lot of “abstract doubts and reservations.” And there were a lot of questions. “Am I going to trust her?” “What is her relationship with money?” “Will I be ok with that?” “What is her reaction/relationship to her students?” Theresa wondered if her experience at the March Shaktipat Retreat was a “one-time thing?” She needed to check it out — it was “like a test.”

Once the weekend began, the opening mantras, the Guru Gita chants, and the chants reserved for this special weekend began to fill her. “There was a great release and surrender,” and great love. She “let go of doubt and judging” and surrendered to the beautiful experience of chanting. Theresa said that “each of the three times I received Shaktipat over the weekend was different.” The main difference between her experience in

March and November was she “was ready for [Swamiji] to be my teacher. It was not more or less powerful, but there was a readiness to be open.”

In a support call with Swamiji following the retreat, Theresa mentioned her questions and doubts, and how she was “relieved to feel I could let them go.” Swamiji let her know that it was known as Guru-testing, which usually comes after Guru-shopping.

Theresa described the retreat as having “so much warmth.” Swamiji made herself available to everyone. Program Assistant, Anasuya (Nansi) Colley made everyone feel that they were informed and supported. Assistant Teacher, Rukmini Abbruzzi gave talks that were “so beautiful and clear.” And the atmosphere was “so inclusive” that no one felt “insecure or left out or left behind.” Theresa could “see Swamiji’s intentions” of creating a “well-crafted” environment that was “supportive for the transmission of Shakti; all so you could receive it openly.”

Now she feels “so lucky to have a living teacher who is so accessible.” She says, “It is a real privilege.” She knows that “everything I do is in the service of getting closer to God.” And she is grateful that she can begin to discuss and receive guidance about further studies and trainings from Svaroopis such as Rukmini, who truly understand the nature and depth of what propels her.

Theresa was able to share all of this with her husband, Theo, who attended the retreat as well. When she returned from her first Shaktipat weekend in March, she said that there had been a real, palpable shift in her. Theo, a long-time daily meditator, observed the change and said, “I WANT this!” Theirs is a busy life in NYC where Theresa is a graduate student and Theo is a photographer. This past year also included the planning and occasion of their wedding in August. But their schedules allowed them to return together to PA for this retreat in November. Since then it is not unusual to hear Swamiji’s Sri Guru Gita playing in the background in their home or for them to finish their day with a round of japa.

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MYF Main Campus Transforms

By Judy Goodkin

Having just completed YTT Level 4, I have been reflecting on the reconfiguration of Master Yoga's Main Campus in Exton PA, and I recalled what Swamiji had said at the Ashram's birthday celebration. She asked us, "Where do you abide?" Swamiji explained that an Ashram is not a building or an address; the Ashram is a way of life, it is where you live within yourself. So I asked myself, where does Master Yoga abide? The physical address, the building, the arrangement of space within — these elements create the container, which can change without affecting the heart of Master Yoga or where it abides within us. The whole process of Level 4 was miraculous with our Teacher Trainers bringing us to the inner depths of understanding of *Svaroopa*® yoga in our own bodies and minds — and in a way that we can now offer it to the world through teaching in our local communities. The teachings we received and the openings we had were far more significant than our physical surroundings.

Yet I am also delighted to report that the new smaller footprint of the Main Campus continues to provide the most wonderful of external spaces for *Svaroopa*® yoga! Over our nine days, we were thoroughly supported by the reconfigured space as well as the Meal Plan

The new smaller footprint of the Main Campus continues to provide the most wonderful of external spaces for *Svaroopa*® yoga! Not only is the classroom comfortable, it was ample for all the guests who took our Completion Ceremony class.

from Ashram chefs. Not only was the classroom comfortable for us 19 teachers-in-training, it was ample for all the guests who took our Completion Ceremony class.

As always, you enter the building from the back parking lot and head up the stairs to the second floor. Walking through the central hall you still pass our two bathrooms on your right, and the Shop on the left. We still hang our coats on wall hooks at the end of the hall and store shoes and other personal items on shelves. Along the hallway, you will see five

doors closed — the kitchen, Kelly's former office, and the Teacher Trainer offices on the left. The Teacher Trainer offices have been consolidated into one small light-filled room that you can see through the French door at the east end of the classroom. A lounge has been arranged on the classroom side of that door, with amenities including our familiar Ikea tables and chairs, refrigerator, microwave, and toaster oven as well as plenty of shelving. The lounge is lovely, welcoming, and comfortable. Bookcases effectively separate it from the classroom area.

I found I preferred the Meal Plan to bringing in personal groceries and cooking in our communal kitchen. Having delicious meals delivered by Ashram staff at lunch and dinner meant we were less rushed and less harried. We felt pampered, and we had more time after lunch and dinner to check email, walk across the street for coffee, or lie in Shavasana. Break time slowed down to a more gentle pace.

I felt that the balanced nutritional Ayurvedic meals supported me throughout the training. All of the meals were so delicious that I could not pick my favorite when filling out a survey about the meal plan. Our main meal, with dessert, was at lunch. The cuisines included Indian and Mexican and more. One memorable lunch dessert was a strawberry pie—fresh strawberries cradled in a chocolate lined piecrust— as well as a gluten-free version for special dietary needs. Supper was soup with a bread, such as a muffin. Special meals for vegans as well as for those in need of gluten-free nutrition were also available. In short, the food was wonderful and everyone loved it. Even those who hadn't ordered the meal plan said they would participate next time.

Since I live in a town just a few miles from Exton, my husband, Frank, and I were part of the seva team that helped with the actual move and setup of furnishings in the reconfigured space last December. The team also included Kelly Sharp and sevite Kalyani Zavolas



Wallis as well as *Svaroopa*® Vidya Ashram staff members JenMarie Macdonald, Linda Gambone and Amanda Jordan, while Karobi and Vidyadevi moved their office setups into their new space.

It has all happened with such clarity and speed! As they say, the proof is in the pudding — this new space worked beautifully for us New



Grads of *Svaroopa*® Yoga YTT. I have included here some photos of the lounge and dining area.

For more Main Campus photos and to learn more about this transformation, read Swami Nirmalananda's blog entry "[New Grads, New Staff and Room for More](#)".

Master Yoga Board Report

By Saguna Goss, MYF Board, Governance Chair

Organizations are living, breathing entities formed by evolving human beings. Thus, like any other form of life, organizations go through stages of growth with transitions between them. Master Yoga Foundation is no exception — we have clearly grown and transitioned into a new phase!

Serving on the Board since 2008 and through our recent financial crisis, I can feel a tangible shift and difference in the organization. Just as you go through life stages — graduating from school, getting a new job, changing cities — you are still who you always were. MYF now looks and feels different in a new stage in life, yet it is also what it has always been: it is the source of *Svaroopaa*® yoga education. We're coming up to Master Yoga's 21st birthday — traditionally the time of great life changes with more responsibility and more choice. So our Reawakening is actually a Coming of Age.

Our fundraising campaign was very successful, indicating the community's responsiveness. The Reawakening is going well, with a tremendous amount accomplished already. We've balanced the budget and are expanding our 2013 program calendar as well as creating new Initiatives — new programs that will "reawaken" our community and our relationship with them.

MYF looks and feels different in this new stage in life, yet it is also what it has always been: it is the source of *Svaroopaa*® yoga education.

Yes, the economic downturn of a global recession contributed to the crisis nature of the situation last October. People had smaller personal budgets and less certainty, so we held fewer programs. Before the financial crisis, we on the Board were doing the tough stuff — doing our tapas — yet we kept hitting the same barriers, unable to get through. We were always tracking the finances but looking under the wrong rocks, as it were, to try to find solutions. Now those barriers are dissolving.

The MYF Board has a new perspective, a different way of looking at things. Given the skill set of Treasurer Shuchi (Sue) Cilley — who served as an accountant for a nonprofit organization for her whole career — we can now look at the budget in a whole new way. We are engaged in planning for two years and five years, with confidence that the new initiatives and other changes have already settled us into a stable, sustainable course going forward.

To compare it to asana practice, you do your Alternate Leg pose, soften into the stuck spot, and continue to practice softening that layer. It melts away — then you hit something and you keep hitting it for months — or years — as you come up against that deeper layer of tension. Then you take YTT or an MYX Yogimmersion and you blast through it — and need to relearn how to walk on your newly aligned leg bones! Now Master Yoga has had that initial release of the barrier and we're in our new stage of growth, yet clear on the work to be done for the long-term growth and well being of Master Yoga.

Founder of *Svaroopaa*® yoga and Master Teacher Swami Nirmalananda and the rest of the Board have worked with unwavering dedication to



Saguna Goss

Photo courtesy of Master Yoga

reach this stage. In the near future we are focusing on Reawakening relationships among a range of groups: *Svaroopaa*® yoga teachers worldwide including Australia, Canada, and the US; their students, including those who take advantage of Foundations and MYX Yogimmersions; Teacher Trainers; and MYX program hosts.

The range of Master Yoga programs will continue to be designed to meet students and teachers where they are at, with the teachings they are seeking. For a score of years, Master Yoga has served as a great source of teachings for so many people. Even though we have had to navigate through rough waters and ride a storm wave, we are now anchoring in a safe harbor with an expansive horizon and a clear course to implementing our new initiatives:

- Expanded scholarship program, prioritizing teachers who teach the most classes and students
- Expanded MYX faculty and programs, adding new program titles and two new Weekend Workshop teachers
- Pose Clinics that give teachers a full day of questions and answers with Vidyadevi or Karobi
- New Mentoring Programs — Yoga Business 101, Embodiment At-Home Practicum, and all our ATT courses now provide at-home mentoring for you to integrate your yogic experience and new skills into your life.
- *Tadaa!* monthly online magazine, dedicated to all the *Svaroopaa*® Sciences, providing collaborative communications from both Master Yoga and *Svaroopaa*® Vidya Ashram
- New online Enrollment System to simplify your shopping as well as our in-house operations (soon...)
- New ATT DTS, which means there is no more ATT homework!
- New MYX Sponsorship program that makes it easier for GeoCenters and Hosts to hold local programs
- Full-year contemplation theme for 2013, with special poses for teachers to focus on in their classes
- New SATYA staff member, dedicated to creating marketing support for teachers
- Panel of marketing professionals providing regular phone courses and availability for private coaching for SATYA members (soon)
- New Yoga Business Mentoring program with Swami Nirmalananda and other teachers

We are engaged in planning for 2 years and 5 years, confident that new initiatives have settled us into a stable and sustainable course.

These initiatives provide more structured ways for all of us — Master Teacher, Teacher Trainers, local teachers, MYX hosts and local students, Board members, other sevites — to stay connected and to engage regularly through more integrated connections. These initiatives give us more ways to deepen our existing as well as emerging connections. They build Master Yoga's services and support you, while you support us — through your attendance in programs, through your donations and seva, and through your love and blessings.

So Many Firsts!

by **Connie Mohn**

I helped Downingtown Yoga Meditation Center move right after the first of the year. The first part of the move involved a hurried but determined move of the meditation hall necessities to the new site, so that Swami Sunday participants could chant, drink chai, meditate and hear Swamiji's Grace filled words in a warm meditation hall. The heater quit working in the old building! How fortunate we were all ready to move.

There were so many firsts! This was the first move for the center, the first Swami Sunday of the year and at this center, the first offering of chai, the first Guru Gita, the first satsang, the first opportunity to fill this hall with "sakti, the first mantra japa and the first meditation. There were yogis in attendance who were meeting Swamiji for the first time (what a treat!). And I can't resist adding that, most likely, it was the first time in all of history that a Yoga and Meditation Center moved into a former pinball arcade, let alone held a Swami Sunday, drank chai, etc. with the arcade sign still hanging outside the building. As Swamiji has said "Consciousness is silly!"

During satsang, Swamiji's teaching focus for 2013 was announced publicly for the first time. **"2013 is the Year of Japa! Do more japa!"** Following her announcement, Swamiji read from Baba's book, *Satsang with Baba*, the first volume, of course. Baba promised "Mantra will give you new blood," a new Self. Repeating mantra gives you the capacity to see yourself as Self. An incredible promise!

"Do more japa! Mantra will give you your Self."

Om nama.h "sivaaya!



The view during satsang (with Swamiji sitting there, of course!)



Downingtown Yoga Meditation Center's on-site shop features a sweet sitting area



Swamiji sits along the east wall of the meditation hall



The view of Downingtown Yoga Meditation Center from the front door

Shaktipat and the Flow of Grace

By Priya Kenney

Based on a conversation with Swami Nirmalananda

Light the Inner Flame

"Consciousness has manifested as the universe in order to be in relationship with itself in a multiplicity of forms," says Swamiji. "The relational aspect of Consciousness that is built into the universe means that you can't free yourself from limitation without help."

An unlit candle has the full potential to burn, but it can't start itself. The first candle initiates the flame in the second candle, giving the spark that allows the second candle to burn with its own light. Swamiji emphasizes, "When you receive Shaktipat, you're not running off the Guru's energy. This is the power of your own Consciousness arising in you." But, we can't get it started ourselves, and that is why we need to be initiated through the gift of Shaktipat.

The image of one candle lighting another on the Ashram's Shaktipat retreat page is very symbolic of what happens during Shaktipat. Swamiji recounted how a famous classical Indian musician wrote a joyful song for Baba at least 40 years ago entitled *Jyota se Jyota*. "It means, 'Light my flame with yours,'" says Swamiji. *Jyota* or *iyoti* means light and is both the verb 'to light' as well as the noun 'light itself.' Swamiji picked this visual image not only because it is a beautiful metaphor — it also carries the whole teaching of what happens during Shaktipat. My own experience of Shaktipat was that of a sublimely beautiful, brief and yet timeless knowing of the Self.

Kashmir Shaivism and Shaktipat

There are masters in every tradition and religion; they offer a variety of practices to bring people to the experience of Consciousness, but most don't give Shaktipat. They may do some kind of initiation, but Shaktipat is very rare. Swamiji said that even though there are thousands of lineages in India, she has only found two that give Shaktipat. Baba Muktananda's is one of them, a Kashmiri Shaivite tradition, which specializes in Shaktipat.

Most traditions don't even know about Shaktipat, yet occasionally one of their practitioners will have a spontaneous Kundalini awakening. Swamiji recounted a story that happened years before she became a Swami. She was teaching a weekend workshop at a Zen Buddhist Monastery in the beautiful mountains in Colorado. A young resident Buddhist nun asked Swamiji what it meant that the nun's body was moving back and forth and getting very hot while sitting in meditation with her Roshi (the Zen equivalent of a Guru). Swamiji enthusiastically explained that she was experiencing awakened Kundalini. Undoubtedly, the nun had received Shaktipat in a previous lifetime and only needed a little practice to rekindle what had already been initiated.

This is why we need a living Guru says Swamiji. "Kashmiri Shaivism says you need a Guru because the Guru knows: 1) how to initiate the process in you whether you've ever been lit up before in prior lifetimes or not, and 2) how to support you through the process when you start to sputter so that you can in fact be enlightened in this lifetime. Kashmir Shaivism distinguishes itself by saying your Guru had to start as an unenlightened being and had to have a Guru who moved them from unenlightenment to enlightenment. Therefore they know how to do that for you."

Shaktipat and Protection

Vidyadevi shared a thought provoking story from last December. She took a sunrise river boat ride on the Ganga in Varanasi, an extraordinary time on the river. When boats are going downstream, they stay in the middle of the river and ride the current. Coming back, the boatman rows against the current, so he stays closer to shore where the current is not so strong. On this ride they happened to be even closer to the shore than usual, which put their boat close to boats that were tied perpendicular to the shore. The boatman was looking back to see where he was going and when he turned around, he saw Vidyadevi's head going straight into a boat that was tied up. He quickly said something to Vidyadevi. She turned her head to see what he was saying, and the wooden point of the other boat grazed her cheek so lightly that it didn't even leave a mark.

When Vidyadevi told Swamiji this story, Swamiji said, "Grace just protected you from a concussion, from being knocked into the river or from being killed." Swamiji elaborates on the flow of Grace. "Whether you recognize it or not, once you receive Shaktipat, you have placed yourself in the hands of the Grace bestowing agency of God and from here on out you're going to live a Grace-filled life."

This isn't only on the outside. Only the Guru can protect us from self-inflicted harm says Swamiji. "Once you receive Shaktipat, you're never going to be able to go back to treating yourself as badly as you have for so many life-times. You're never going to go back to harming yourself in such sophisticated and well practiced ways."

Shaktipat sets the fire of Kundalini to work. "She destroys everything internal that would hold you back while transforming your being, your mind, your body, your breath, your heart, your relationships, your life, everything," says Swamiji. "Kundalini is awakened in you in a Grace-filled way, done out of love and compassion. The power of Consciousness moving through you is also going to move outside of you, putting the right book in your hands or making sure that the right person crosses your path," says Swamiji. "This entire universe is supportive of that process."

"It doesn't mean bad things aren't going to happen," says Swamiji. "Of course your life is going to have some good things and it's going to have some bad things, but the bad things aren't as bad, even when they're bad. Shaktipat places you in a perpetual flow of Grace."



Svaroopa® Calendar

Click on program titles for information about **Master Yoga** Programs and **Svaroopa® Vidya Ashram** Programs.
DYMC refers to **Downingtown Yoga Meditation Center**.

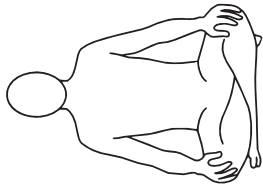
February 2013		
16 - 17	New Title! Finding Bliss in Movement Weekend Workshop	Vidyadevi in Exton PA
22 - 26	Foundations of Svaroopa® Yoga	Vidyadevi & Polly in Exton PA
28	New! EYTS Pose Clinic	Vidyadevi in Exton PA
March 2013		
1 - 3	EYTS Enliven & Advance: Level 1	Master Yoga in Exton PA
2	The Yoga of Yes	Yogeshwari in Warren MA
5	Free Satsang (Welcome Home Swamiji)	with Swamiji at DYMC
6 begins	Meditation Teacher Upgrade	Swamiji's Multi-Media course
6	New Dates! Karma, Reincarnation & You	Vidyadevi's Phone Course begins
7	Free Guru Gita	with Swamiji at DYMC
7	New! Yoga Business 101	Mentoring Program begins
8	Bondage & Freedom	Swamiji's Year-Long Course begins
8 - 12	Foundations of Svaroopa® Yoga	Tish & Margo in Cherry Hill NJ
8 - 14	Meditation Group Leader Training	Temenos, West Chester PA
9	Free Guru Gita	Temenos, West Chester PA
9 - 10	Yoga, Life & Breath	Yogeshwari in Rehoboth Beach DE
10	Shree Guru Gita from 6:30 - 7:45 am (EDT)	with Swamiji at DYMC
10	Free Shivaratri Satsang from 7:30 - 9:00 pm (EDT)	with Swamiji at DYMC
15 - 24	Level 2	Vidyadevi & Karobi in Exton PA
11	Shree Guru Gita from 6:30 - 7:45 am (EDT)	with Swamiji at DYMC
12	Shree Guru Gita from 6:30 - 7:45 am (EDT)	with Swamiji at DYMC
13	Shree Guru Gita from 6:30 - 7:45 am (EDT)	with Swamiji at DYMC
14	Shree Guru Gita from 6:30 - 7:45 am (EDT)	with Swamiji at DYMC
17	Swami Sunday from 8:30 am - 12:15 pm (EDT)	with Swamiji at DYMC
18 - April 1	Meditation 101 Course from 7:00 - 9:00 pm Mondays	Karobi at DYMC
19	Free Satsang from 7:30 - 9:00 pm (EDT)	with Swamiji at DYMC
19	Teaching Sutras 1: Leading a Discussion Group	Swamiji's Phone Course begins
21	Shree Guru Gita from 6:30 - 7:45 am (EDT)	with Swamiji at DYMC
21 - 25	Foundations of Svaroopa® Yoga	Bhakta & Devi in Boise ID
April 2013		
1	Neck & Shoulders: It All Begins at Your Tailbone Half-Day Workshop from 2:00 - 5:00 pm	Karobi in Exton
2	Free Satsang from 7:30 - 9:00 pm (EDT)	with Swamiji at DYMC
2 - 8	ATT 463: Yoga Therapy — Neck & Shoulders	Vidyadevi, Karobi & Swamiji in Exton PA
4	Shree Guru Gita from 6:30 - 7:45 am (EDT)	with Swamiji at DYMC
5 - 7	Embodiment® Weekend	Kris in Atlanta GA
6	Yogify Your Life	Swamiji's Phone Course begins
7	Swami Sunday from 8:30 am - 12:15 pm (EDT)	with Swamiji at DYMC
9	Free Satsang from 7:30 - 9:00 pm (EDT)	with Swamiji at DYMC
10	The Power of Support Half-Day Workshop from 5:30 - 8:30 pm	Vidyadevi in Exton PA
11	Shree Guru Gita from 6:30 - 7:45 am (EDT)	with Swamiji at DYMC
11 - 15	Introduction to Teaching Gentle Yogis	Vidyadevi & Kris in Exton PA
14	Swami Sunday from 8:30 am - 12:15 pm (EDT)	with Swamiji at DYMC
16	Free Satsang from 7:30 - 9:00 pm (EDT)	with Swamiji at DYMC
17 - 19	Foundations Review	Kris in Exton PA
18	Shree Guru Gita from 6:30 - 7:45 am (EDT)	with Swamiji at DYMC
19 - 28	Level 1	Karobi & Polly in Exton PA
20 - 21	Happy Body — Peaceful Mind	Yogeshwari in Lisle IL
20 - 21	Svaroopa® Yoga & Meditation	Addie in Calgary ALB
21	Swami Sunday from 8:30 am - 12:15 pm (EDT)	with Swamiji at DYMC

Sukhasana

Easy Pose

Sanskrit: *sukha* = easy, sweet

Concerns & Dangers: None



INSTRUCTIONS

To Do Before: No specific poses are required before Sukhasana. However, you will get the most benefit if you do poses for your tailbone, sacrum, vertebrae through your waist area & rib cage.

Preparation: Stack up two or three folded blankets (or more) neatly so they are stable. Sit in the middle of the stack front-to-back. Bring your knees up, placing your feet flat on the floor.

Moving In: Cross one ankle in front of your other ankle, & move your feet a little bit wider apart so your ankles move past one another. Slide your feet in closer to your blanket as you lay your knees down wide. If your thighs are level from front-to-back, you are probably on the right number of blankets. If your thighs are sloped so that your knees are high, add a blanket or two under your seat, sitting up on a higher stack. Maximum: 6 Folded Blankets.

If your thighs are sloped so that your knees are low, sit on fewer blankets. Minimum: 1/2 Folded Blankets. Or you can use knee cushions to raise your knees high enough that the tops of your thighs are level front-to-back.

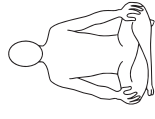
Once your thighs are level, add a wedge in behind you. Use a folded blanket & slide the rounded edge under your buttocks. Or you can sit up on top of the edge & then shimmy down, so your sitbones are on your folded blankets (not on your wedge).

If your knees now sink lower toward the floor, prop them with blankets until your thighs are level front-to-back again. If one knee is lower than your other knee, prop the higher knee where it is & use a prop to raise your lower knee up to match your higher knee.

Staying in the Pose: Allow your legs to soften completely as you relax into the pose. You may need to ease the sides of your neck slowly back so that the back of your head is in line with the back of your back. Your ears will align over your shoulders. This eases your neck tensions. [Minimum - 1 minute; Maximum - 3 hours]

Moving Out: Raise one or both knees & simply move your legs to come out of your pose.

To Do After: No specific poses are required after Sukhasana. It is often followed by Lunge, JP or Shavasana.



Sukhasana

Easy Pose

PROPS

Folded Blankets (required): Use as many folded blankets as needed to get the tops of your thighs level front-to-back. Make sure your stack is neat so it is stable with you sitting in the middle of the stack front-to-back. Minimum — 1/2 folded blankets; Maximum — 6 folded blankets. See *Pose Angles — Knees

Wedge (required): Use a folded blanket & slide the rounded edge under your buttocks. Or sit up on top of the edge & then shimmy down, so your sitbones are on your folded blankets (not on your wedge).

Knee Cushions (optional): These are nice even if you don't need them. Place rolled blankets under both knees, angled at 45° angles compared to your legs. This means that your blankets are not aligned parallel to your thighs. Make sure your blankets are under the bones of your knees, not under your thighs or your calves. Always prop both knees, even if only one knee seems to need it.

You need knee cushions if —

- Your knees hurt. First make sure your thighs are level front-to-back & put knee cushions under both knees. If your knees still hurt, you need to sit on higher blankets. Your knee cushions will also need to be made higher.
- Your knees are not level compared to each other (see *Pose Angles — Knees).
- Your knees are too low (see *Pose Angles — Knees).

POSE ANGLES

Knees: Your knees must be level in two ways —

Front-to-back: If your knees are too high, add another folded blanket under your seat. It's OK for your knees to be one thumbprint lower than level, but if your knees are lower than that, lower your blanket stack or use *Props — Knee Cushions.

Compared to each other: If one knee is higher than the other, sit on enough blankets so that the thigh of your highest knee is level front-to-back. Once your highest knee is level front-to-back, slide a knee cushion under that knee without raising it any higher. Then raise your other knee to a matching level & prop under it.

Feet: Your feet must be crossed past one another. If one foot is in front of the other, your knees are too wide apart. Place your hands on your knees & push your knees closer together. This moves your feet farther away from each other, so you can cross your feet effectively.

Reliable Spinal Release: None

Possible Spinal Release: All

Other Benefits: Soothing & calming; may relieve all your physical & mental tensions

Movement Type: Forward Bend (FB)

When to Use: An excellent meditation pose

Sukhasana

Easy Pose



FB