



kaadlaa!

Svaroopa® Yoga: Experience Your Divine Self

Volume 1 No 3

March 28, 2013

Editorials By Swami Nirmalananda Saraswati

Master Yoga Foundation **Yoga's Promise**

I still own my first yoga book, which I bought before I ever went to a yoga class. I worked my way through 22 days of the 28-day plan laid out by Richard Hittelman, whose television lessons I remember from my pre-teen days. In the book, he included meditation in every class. He made it clear that the purpose of yoga was fulfilled in the interior realms — it all sounded very mysterious and unattainable.

Today's teachers and yoga magazines present yoga's goal as health, strength, flexibility, beauty, slenderness, youthfulness and (rarely spoken about) sexual desirability. Oblique references are made to the peacefulness or calm that yoga provides or the great value of systematic relaxation, but the overall goal is

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Svaroopa® Vidya Ashram **It's Personal**

My first exposure to yoga was TV, magazine articles and books. Now people begin with videos or online classes. I call it "flatline" yoga. There's no prana in it; it's not alive. Looking back, I can see that I was trying to learn without exposing myself to relationship. I always lived with my guard up; I didn't want to let any strangers in. My delusion was that I thought the teachings were important, when what is important is the person giving them.

This is true regardless of the subject. If you wanted to do something on your computer, so you had someone read the instructions to you, but the reader didn't understand the instructions — would you understand them? No. Only embodied knowledge matters. This

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Tadaa!

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Master Yoga Foundation

much more physical, like exercise. Exercise promises that if you lift 50 pounds of weights, you'll get different results than if you lift 10 pounds. It's all physical, logical and predictable.

Yoga is different in India. Last month, I had the opportunity to share the tradition of yoga in its ancient splendor with the yogis on retreat with me. In India, yoga is about the spiritual giants who propel you into God-consciousness, about the living Masters who got there by following in the footsteps of their teacher, about the God-intoxicated beings who can blast you there with a look.

Where's the meeting ground between East & West? It all comes together in Svaroopaa® yoga. When you do the poses, you do get health, strength, flexibility and all the rest that is usually promised — but you also get God. You discover your own Divine Self. Core opening is a scientific and reliable way of opening into your own core of Beingness. The sutras promise this result. It's physical and more than physical. It's both logical and mystical. And it's totally predictable.

Svaroopaa® Vidya Ashram

is why yoga says you must have a teacher. Yoga is very personal.

With TV yoga, videos and online classes, you go through the moves like you drive your morning commute — you're not really there. Having a real person in the front of the room, speaking to you personally, looking you in the eye, coming over and helping you with your blankets or your body — it makes it personal. When it's personal, you become present. You're used to using other people in order to become present. The ancient yogis understood this human tendency, so they created a way of using your focus on others to propel you into consciousness — that's the Guru.

Yoga says you must have a Guru. Yoga is based in "people power." Why? Because other people matter. When you are open to your teacher, you get more out of the teaching. When you step into relationship with the Guru, you are in relationship with someone who lives in the knowing of the Self, thus you cannot avoid your own Self any longer. Their state uplifts you. It's called the easy path.

Easy Immersion, Effective Immersion

By Adell Kochubka

I like to say that I live in the epicenter of Svaroopa® Sciences! As a resident of West Chester PA, I am fortunate to live within a half-hour drive of the Ashram in Downingtown and Master Yoga in Exton; plus, I regularly take classes at DiBella Yoga in Paoli. Polly DiBella has been my primary local teacher for six years, though I began Svaroopa® yoga with Clair Oaks in Swarthmore four years before that. While I did take "Foundations of Svaroopa® Yoga," I so enjoy the teaching of everyone else that I have remained a student. And to my delight and my doctor's amazement, the fibromyalgia that first motivated me to try Svaroopa® yoga is now completely gone.

Even so, in January I was eager to take the Half Day Workshop "Your Healing Power" with Vidyadevi when the announcement reached me through email. On January 25, it was the first of monthly three-hour workshops offered by Exton-based Teacher Trainers Vidyadevi and Karobi throughout 2013. These Half-Day Workshops are scheduled the day before Teacher Training programs so that teachers-in-training can take advantage of a wonderful way to transition from travel into training. For us local yogis, it is indeed easy to weave these immersions into life.

"Your Healing Power" featured the theme of the breath, and I did want to explore Ujjayi Pranayama more deeply. This workshop offered a great way to jump into these new depths. For me, the fact that Vidyadevi was teaching it was icing on the cake with a cherry on top, since I remembered the delicious experience of taking "Meditation Made Easy" with her two years ago.

I was not disappointed. "Your Healing Power" was nourishing, fulfilling and just a total treat. The workshop began with two rounds of Ujjayi Pranayama, and then Vidyadevi led us in yoga asanas for spinal release. At the end of the day, we did just a little bit of Ujjayi Pranayama, just to see the differences. I went way deep...

We always talk about being refreshed in Shavasana and Ujjayi Pranayama. For years I have heard my teachers say you may feel that you sleep but you don't sleep. I never truly experienced that until "Your Healing Power." I was just floating. I was present — but so deep into myself while being present — it was pretty remarkable.

All in all, the workshop exceeded my hopes of really understanding the healing power of breath. Rather than understanding with my mind, I *felt* deeply who I am — truly — just from breathing, just by using the breath. I went deeply into a place that I know is true; it was a remarkable experience and one that I didn't expect. It was miraculous.

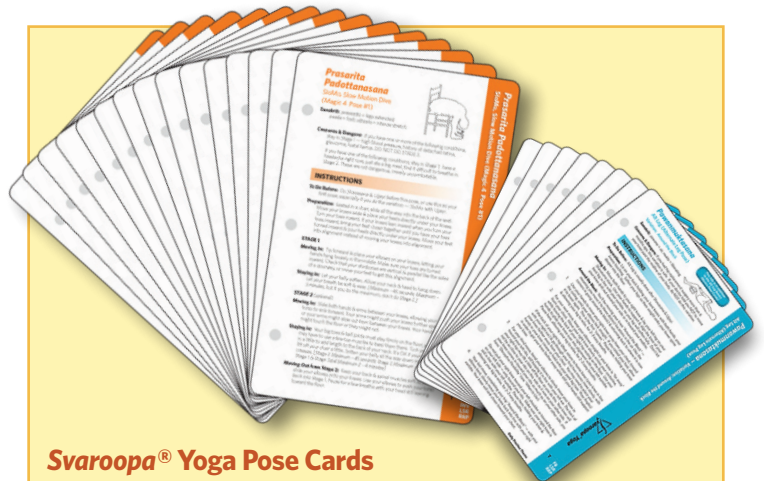
Neither did I expect a wonderful deepening of my practice following this workshop. Yet this is what I have received. My meditation the next morning was sublime, with that feeling of ease, snuggling back down into that place that opened for me during the workshop. Now, each day, that experience happens again and again. Before there was a looser connection — sometimes yes, sometimes no. But now there continues to be a deeper connection than what I had experienced before.

How is that integrating into my life? How can I explain it...I feel a kind of functioning on an even keel. Life is a smoother sail through the little dings and knocks that happen over the course of a daily routine. They are no big deal. Things that might have caused me a little bit of angst before are not affecting me. "Oh well," I say, and I just move on. As I write this piece, I'm scheduled tomorrow to go away from home for 10 days, and my furnace is broken! But I realize it could have been worse. It could have happened while I was away, or when the temperature was 4 degrees. It's just a matter of arranging for repairs. This incident leads me to recognize that ripple effect of finding a deepening into my Center. I see that it is

carrying me in my life more so than ever before. Before, I would have been upset and angry. Now, I just feel blessed that it happened when it did and it wasn't any worse. And I get on with it.

Half-Day Workshops are scheduled the day before Teacher Training programs so that teachers-in-training can take advantage of a wonderful way to transition from travel into training. For local yogis, it's easy to weave these immersions into life.

During the workshop I felt the abundant Grace that was present in the Exton studio. Grace was radiating from my fellow students (a roomful of yogis getting ready to take "Experiential Anatomy") and in the flow of the teachings from Vidyadevi, who brings such softness, such loving-kindness, gentleness and humor. I really felt that God was there, to put it bluntly, because of the abundance of love and peace that I experienced, which can only come from the Source. And THAT was indeed, truly remarkable!



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The Promise Fulfilled — All Year Long

by Ekamati (Diane) Tsurutani

I made a commitment to being in relationship with Rama Berch, now Swamiji, as my teacher, beginning with “The Power of the Breath” in 2007, and followed by other MYF phone courses over the years. My heart was filled to bursting when Swamiji offered the first full year study program through the Ashram in 2010, “The Shiva Course”. While I expected that the content of the course would be deeply experiential, as everything I had come to know through Svaroop® yoga, the format of the full year program brought with it a promise of being so much more. I have participated in these programs every year since then.

Like other courses that Swamiji has offered through MYF and SVA, the full year programs include conference calls. But the calls are just one component of what is really a multi-media presentation. Each month, Swamiji writes an article presenting teachings, including stories, rich metaphors and amazing illustrations. These articles not only give me deep and profound concepts for the mind to mull and ponder over, but actually propel me inward while I read! This use of my mind takes me beyond limitation to the vastness of Consciousness, so my mind begins to be a servant to the teachings. The stories and illustrations keep this state continuously alive, and give me a way to find my way back — like breadcrumbs — to this inner knowing.

Ten to fourteen days later, Swamiji’s recorded discourse becomes available on the Ashram website. And in it, Swamiji takes the teachings from the article, and provides even more richness and depth. Her voice (the words as well as the pauses) enlivens the chants, the readings, and the stories. While I am listening, a palpable yearning and ache of devotion begin to arise in me. These discourses make me think of the Puranas, and the profound effect and long heritage that the oral tradition has on how the teachings are shared amongst yogis. Swamiji makes these recordings available all month until her next article becomes available. Sometimes there is even “bonus” material which may be in the form of chants that she has recorded just for the course. How can I not be propelled even deeper while listening to them over and over?

Being able to read the article and to hear the discourse multiple times through these different doorways, my experiences begin to layer in. With each repetition of the teachings, I integrate them at deeper and deeper levels. This deep inner knowing takes root over the month and begins to

blossom inside. I am in a very real inner relationship with the teachings that Swamiji is revealing to me.

But in the discussions on the conference call at the end of the month, I am in a true relationship with my Teacher. This is where I am able to show what I know as well as what I am ready to hear and experience. Oftentimes I am quiet but smiling, as another student has asked the question that is on the tip of my tongue or describes an experience I know so well. We are traveling this path together. What Swamiji does in these discussions is very much like what is described in the *Bhagavadgita*. Lord Krishna listens to Arjuna, understands what he knows, and meets him where he is at so he can then guide him further along the path towards skill in action. These discussions are thus very much custom made for the specific students who attend and engage with Swamiji. She asks us what we are hearing, listens to our questions and is able to gauge our understanding. Then with such swift and amazing clarity, along with loving intent, she guides us still further on the path to our own inner knowing.

By now, the monthly rhythm and pattern for the year is established. I am in contact in some way with Swamiji every 10 days or so. The yoga is layering into my life by the regularity of this contact, immersion into the teachings, and the grace of the Guru - guruk.rpa. The promise of these year-long courses is a grace-filled one.

After 7-8 months of this — reading, listening, discussing, layering, and integrating all of this into life — there is a weekend retreat. I was being prepared (collectively, with the other students) to move to a new level of understanding and experience. I am poised and ready to receive even deeper teachings. The pump has been primed! At the retreat, there are always teachings that take me so much further than even the last phone discussion, with experiences and understanding that are so profound and miraculous. I have been led to this moment where the teachings touch my heart so intensely that they can never be forgotten. For me, it is always a pure experience of something that I’ve always known, but which has been brought out into the brilliant light. And my response is recognition, delight, profound gratitude for the revelation, and surrender to the knowing and to my teacher, my Guru.

Quinoa Tabbouleh

1 cup quinoa, rinsed
 ½ teaspoons sea salt (plus extra, to taste)
 2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
 1 garlic clove, minced
 ½ cup extra virgin olive oil
 Fresh black pepper (to taste)
 1 large hothouse cucumber, seeded
 1 pint grape tomatoes, halved
 ⅔ cup flat-leaf parsley, chopped
 ⅓ cup mint, chopped
 2 scallions, thinly sliced

Instructions:

Bring quinoa, salt and 1¼ cups water to a boil over high heat. Reduce heat and cover. Simmer until quinoa is tender, about 10 minutes. (Alternately, you can prepare the quinoa in a rice cooker.) Remove from heat and let stand for 5 minutes. Fluff with a fork. Transfer to a large mixing bowl & let cool.

While quinoa is cooking, whisk lemon juice and garlic in a small bowl. Gradually whisk in olive oil. Season dressing to taste with salt and pepper.

Drizzle half the dressing over quinoa and toss to coat. Add cucumber, tomatoes, herbs and scallions and toss. Season to taste with salt & pepper (if needed). Toss with remainder of dressing.

योगा पुस्तक

By Jennifer Saville, Ashram Chef

PROFILE

Karobi Sachs CSYT, RYT 500, E-RYT 500

By Karuna (Carolyn) Beaver

It's hard to imagine Karobi Sachs as anything but a masterful Teacher Trainer. Karobi brings a compassionate and accepting presence to the classroom. She enjoys demonstrating how *Svaroopa*® yoga benefits and supports people from a vast range of ages, abilities and body types. But, of course, she began as a student herself.



Karobi Sachs

Photo courtesy of Master Yoga

As so many other *Svaroopis*, she had that "aha!" moment that led her to dive into the practice and inspired her to teach others. Having begun exploring yoga in the late 1970s, Karobi became a *Svaroopa*® yoga teacher in 2000 and joined our Teacher Trainer team in 2002. She left her nursing job to devote herself full time to Master Yoga in 2004.

Svaroopa® yoga was not Karobi's first introduction to yoga, but it is where she fully landed. Karobi began "dabbling" in yoga while living in Santa Fe NM. A few years later, traveling in England, she took an Iyengar yoga class, but was discouraged by a teacher comment about her body's capabilities — "I got really insulted because they told me my body was not right for yoga."

Back in the United States Karobi joined a gym, particularly because it offered yoga. She resonated with one of the teachers there, where she learned that yoga poses could be modified and work for everyone. "At a certain point, I started enjoying yoga. I asked my teacher what I could do to learn more, and it seemed the only way I could learn more was to become a teacher."

In response to this information, Karobi enrolled in a month-long "boot camp" teacher training in Shivananda Yoga. Living in Boston, she began teaching at a mixed-style studio. At an open house introducing her and some other new teachers, another teacher told her about "this incredible yoga" style she'd found — *Svaroopa*® yoga. Karobi says, "I remember her telling me, 'you can do Bridge pose without tightening your spine'. I had no idea what that meant!"

Two teachers from this studio were headed off to La Jolla to attend Master Yoga's Teacher Training, but it was three years before Karobi took the plunge. In 1999, she attended a

weekend workshop with Swami Nirmalananda (then Rama Berch) at Kripalu. "I walked into a room in mid-summer without air conditioning with 85 people sitting on these fluffy plaid blankets," recalls Karobi. She had some reservations about all that but, within the day, she knew "something different was going on."

"My first 'aha!' moment was when Betsy Bommer gave me an Alternate Leg Kneecap Press, and I could feel my thighbone sliding into my hip socket. Ooh! I left knowing this is so much more than I ever got in any other yoga class. I went home and did a home practice every day," says Karobi, adding, "There was no turning back, no questioning. I never wanted to do another style of yoga again. I knew there was something more. I was not alone in my experience that something radically different was happening. I now hear that from so many other people when I ask, 'Why are you here?'"

Four months later, Karobi began Teacher Training in La Jolla. "From there I just wanted to be as involved as I could in Master Yoga and everything that had to do with *Svaroopa*® yoga." A nurse by training, Karobi had been working full time in a clinic for homeless women. "By 2004, I was working less and teaching more. I started interning to become a Teacher Trainer, and within two years the clinic in which I was working closed. I took that as a sign to dedicate my work full time to Master Yoga." That prompted Karobi's move to Rehoboth Beach DE, where she was able to dedicate herself to becoming a Teacher Trainer full time.

Since then, says Karobi, "There have been so many 'aha!' moments in teaching that it can be hard to remember." Still, a recent experience while teaching Level 3 brought these moments together. "I walked out of the classroom one day and realized that I love teaching. I realized that there is an incredible magic created every time I teach. It was so clear to me that being in the classroom, sharing this yoga with other people, and my ability to do that, is a gift. I was a nurse — which is about giving. Part of teaching is about giving. What a gift it is to share *Svaroopa*® yoga! The Grace of this yoga comes through, the minute I step into the classroom. Teaching totally takes me into a space that I've been searching for all my life. I always wanted to be doing something that was meaningful to me and meaningful to others. And now I do. The end! What more is there to say?"

"But there is more to say. It's how grateful I am. It's the Grace that comes through this yoga. I have to remember it's not me. I'm a conduit and I know that it's flowing through, especially when I walk out of the classroom and feel the way I feel. It's how I want to be and to feel in my life: It's not me in the tiny ego sense of myself; it's greater than that! When I teach, I know I'm being effective, but I never want to lose sight of the reality that it is the Grace that runs through the practices of *Svaroopa*® yoga, that creates this, and that makes this yoga, this job, this life so full and complete."

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The More I Do, the Better It Gets

By Devapriyaa (Denise) Hills

The more seva I do, the more I am able to pour my Self into my seva, my relationships and my life.

I started seva practice a couple of years ago when I felt a strong desire to be of service to Swamiji and the SVA community. I inquired after a seva position and then waited patiently to hear what it would be. When the email came inviting me to join the sound editing team I thought: "Mmmmm, sound editing." It seemed interesting but not something I had any experience with. After some training I started my first seva.

It turned out to be a perfect match for me. I got to listen to Swamiji's teachings in depth while editing the audio recordings. These teachings worked their way through my resistances. It was such an unexpected joy that I looked forward to each editing session. The process felt quite blissful. At first I had no idea why this seva was given to me, but as Swami's words worked on me, I knew the answer.

My next seva experience was gardening. I have loved gardening in my own yard for many years, but it is very different to be gardening at the Ashram. To have my hands in the Ashram soil, working with it, and planting in it was wonderful. Chatting and sharing with others while we gardened together was so sweet. There are not a lot of times when I can share Swamiji's teachings with others while I work. How delicious.

The practice of Seva Coordinator is my newest opportunity. It has been so interesting getting to know people with their multiplicity of personalities and talents. Each person is so sweet to work with. It fills my heart with joy to meet so many people doing seva and giving selflessly.

I look forward to being able to serve you as Seva Coordinator. There are continually new and exciting seva opportunities. We are currently looking for sevites to fill the following sevas: sound editing team, special events team, web editing team, and blog team. If you are interested in these or are interested in a different seva, please contact me at seva@svaroopavidya.org or fill out the [SVA Skills Survey](#).

Sevites Report

Antarajna Mandel: "The day I was offered the seva position of calling Prasad, who runs the Ganeshpuri Music School, is a day I will never forget. I receive blessings every time I speak with Prasad. I spend the rest of my day in bliss."

Pat Morrison: "I have been struck by the sound editors responding to requests to edit an audio file, 'Oh, yes, I would love to edit that file.' Many times one will comment that the recording was exactly what they needed to hear at that particular time. The level of love and commitment to this seva is humbling."

Sheynapurna Peace: "Seva, a concept I once did not understand, has made huge changes in my life. Working with Swami Nirmalananda for several years, I have recognized the joy in giving without any thought of getting. The gift of seva has changed how I think and act in my regular job in the medical field. My pleasure in my work has increased as I've learned to give myself and the fruits of my work to God. But most important to me isn't that I receive pleasure or receive anything at all from my seva. It is the act of giving without thought to outcome that is the greatest gift."

Tanmayee Reynolds: "You see, it's not just about your being willing or able to give. It goes much deeper than that. Over time, you discover that being given the opportunity to serve that is the true gift — because within it a multitude of blessings arise that allow you to more fully know your own Self."

New SVA Website!

By Tanmayee (Theresa) Reynolds

The Ashram Website Gets a Makeover

Our "virtual ashram" on the web has been undergoing a massive remodeling over the past year or so, with the new and improved version now complete. The all-sevite SVA Web Team has been hard at work performing this page-by-page migration, encountering numerous challenges along the way that have made it an experience not soon forgotten by those actively involved in its rebirth. Thank you to Glen Christensen, Premadasi Jones, Sarvataa Christie, Purna Schmidt, Pooja Andersen, Shyam Alling and Wendy Hickey for making this transformation happen!

What may seem to the casual internet surfer like an easy copy and paste endeavor is really more like a home renovation project. For anyone that has ever undertaken such a feat, you know how it works. One task turns into three that now require your attention, like taking down a wall that then leads to an unexpected electrical re-wiring or re-plumbing necessity you didn't count on, and so on. It can be much the same with website rebuilding.

Two website hosting providers, hundreds — if not a thousand — work hours and seven sevites later, we are happily unveiling the site to you! As we herald in the Spring season, this fresh new website for the Svaroopaa® Vidya Ashram will appear on your computer as a seamless transition. It magically appeared at svaroopavidya.org on the internet on the day the switchover was made.

What's new? The most exciting improvement we are pleased to share is that our iPad/iPhone/MacBook users can easily access all of Swamiji's audio files from their mobile, desktop or laptop devices. PC and Android smartphone users will find a new, streamlined audio player that significantly reduces file download wait times. An easier-to-navigate menu, cleaner page layouts, less information duplication, and a central electronic Library where you can find previous e-Letter articles, all of Swamiji's Contemplation Articles, Satsang and special event audios and links to her videos, all in one place, are also new features.

Seva Deepens and Expands Your Yoga

By Joanna McNeal, Master Yoga Seva Coordinator

More than a decade ago, when I began taking *Svaroopa*® yoga classes in La Jolla CA, I offered weekly seva — entering data into the Master Yoga computer. The task helped regular staff with a mundane job they didn't have time to do.



Joanna McNeal

Photo courtesy of Master Yoga

But times have changed! Current opportunities for seva are challenging. They tap into the professional and expert capabilities of our very accomplished community of *Svaroopa*® yoga teachers and students. Seva has become more professional and business-like as the current needs of Master Yoga require more specific skill sets. The skills used in the professional services through which you now earn a living or did earn your living in the past — such as marketing, information technology and legal expertise — are becoming a key part of the Master Yoga community and the running of Master Yoga as an organization.

As a sevite offering highly skilled service, you will bring even more than your professional skills. You will bring new perspectives along with your unique personal passion for the work you do or have done in the world as well as your love of *Svaroopa*® yoga and Master Yoga as the educational institution that spreads *Svaroopa*® yoga worldwide.

Volunteer coordinators in every not-for-profit organization see that many volunteers are retired professionals, seeking to fill their time with meaningful work, not merely stuffing envelopes. Retiring baby boomers want engaging projects and the chance to make a bigger difference. They are investing their time in projects that they believe in as well as enjoy. They seek projects that require real commitment as well as time. They are life-long learners as well, and know they will learn something through service that will enable them to continue to grow — and to give back to their community even more. Does this describe you?

For example, I wear two seva hats, both of them related to work I have done professionally. As the Seva Coordinator, I use skills honed in managing a library staff of volunteers as well as regular employees. But I am also the proof-reader for Master Yoga communications. It is a great gig, because I know way ahead of time what it is in the Advanced Teacher Training brochure! But more than that, I am using a skill for which I have professional training, which

itself began through volunteering. When I first learned how to proofread, I volunteered at the University of New Mexico Press. I was interested in getting into the publishing business. Similarly, we find that many Master Yoga sevites are interested in developing new skills, whether they are going to be in a new profession or not.

When I volunteered then, it was more oriented to me and what I could get out of it. But now that I have that skill, it is more enjoyable to be offering it to Master Yoga. Now it's all about the joy of contributing to keep the organization going and growing. The 20th Century Indian poet Rabindranath Tagore put it this way:

*I slept and dreamt that life was joy.
I awoke and saw that life was service.
I acted and behold, service was joy.*

The service I offer is a deep joy to me. Without this seva, the organization can't grow. We all want the organization to grow. We want more and more people to come to classes, and then we want them to be inspired to take Yoga Teacher Training. You want to share how you feel at the end of a really good class. You feel so good — why wouldn't you want to share it? Practicing *Svaroopa*® yoga poses gives you this feeling. Sevites tell me they feel the same bliss, enthusiasm — and more — from offering the service of their personal and professional skills beyond the yoga classroom!

It's the joy of working with integrity, applying your expertise, and supporting what you value most in the world. It's a bonus to give all of this to an organization that you believe in, giving freely without expectation of monetary compensation or recognition — that's seva. But you may be sure you will receive plenty of recognition for your contributions, because we are deeply grateful for the contributions of sevites!

In short, seva is one of the most profound practices of yoga; to offer your service is one of the sweetest and most powerful of yoga's practices. Master Yoga has been built on the loving service of so many, and continues to grow and thrive because of their continuing generosity. We are delighted to invite you to participate in the practice of seva — "selfless service." To whatever degree that you choose to be involved, it is our pleasure to meet you and match you in your enthusiasm and commitment. We sincerely hope this will prove to be an educational and enjoyable process for you.

Let us know of the skills and experience you are offering by completing the [MYF Skills Survey](#). Or email me at seva@masteryoga.org.

When you offer seva, we place you in a task that matches your skills and interests as well as your available time. For this purpose, we ask you to complete a Skills Survey so we can do the "match-making." Every seva opportunity and sevite placement is personally reviewed by Swami Nirmalananda, who oversees the seva programs for both our organizations, specifically for the purpose of insuring that the seva is for the benefit of the sevite. At the same time, your offering provides valuable support for our not-for-profit organizations. Thank you.

To offer seva for Master Yoga, contact Joanna at seva@masteryoga.org or fill out the [MYF Skills Survey](#)

To offer seva for *Svaroopa*® Vidya Ashram, contact Devapriya at seva@masteryoga.org or fill out the [SVA Skills Survey](#)

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In India: Asana — and More

By Karuna (Carolyn) Beaver

We know how delicious the poses of *Svaroopa*® yoga are in weekly classes and our home practices. What a treat! We know their effect in releasing tension in body and mind, opening us to glimpse the deeper dimensions of Self. But what about doing asana in the context of a yoga retreat — in India? Are the well known effects enhanced? Most definitely, according to Swami Nirmalananda and *Svaroopa*® yoga teacher Louise Davis of Fort Walton Beach FL.

The February 2013 Ganeshpuri retreat with Swamiji in India featured a one-hour asana class at the end of each day. Without another *Svaroopa*® teacher in her area, Louise doesn't have the luxury of taking classes at home, and relishes the classes in her regular teacher training programs. In the first couple of Ganeshpuri retreat classes, Louise found that she had "teacher mind."

At first, Louise says, she enjoyed teacher mind. "It was really nice because we did a lot of the poses I teach all the time. I enjoyed hearing other teachers' phrasing, but I also enjoyed hearing some of the phrasing I use." After two or three days, though, Louise found "it was easier to let go of being a teacher," and she found herself "just being open to what the teachers were going to teach." She realized that the asana practice was less about taking care of her body and more about supporting the other practices and activities of the retreat.

Swami Nirmalananda says that Louise's experience paralleled the design of the retreat. "With 'teacher mind,' the problem is that you never really relax," says Swamiji. "When you take asana classes in a retreat, you might be focused on the teaching for awhile, but the retreat isn't designed to develop professional skills. The retreat is designed to take you to much deeper inner levels of experience than are accessible through the body. After awhile, you are more interested in the inner experience than grabbing for a few words."

"What this means then," Swamiji continues, "is that the way asana is used in a retreat is different than in classes in your home town or in a teacher training. In the West, people have busy crazy lives, busy crazy minds. Their only taste of peace is their asana class once, maybe twice or even three times a week. That taste of peace is an entry door into something deeper. What a delicious little dip that is inside!" For most people, Swamiji says, that's enough.

But it's different on retreat, especially in a sacred place such as Ganeshpuri. "When you place asana in a retreat, the whole retreat is designed to help you have this deeper experience," explains Swamiji. "So the asana is no longer needed as a doorway to that experience. By the second day of the retreat, the doors and windows open wide, especially in a place like Ganeshpuri — maybe the roof even blasts off!"

After the first couple of days, says Louise, she realized that she was able to let go more in the asana classes, and that their purpose "was more to support the other practices. The classes helped me feel good in meditation and in the rest of the practices."

Swamiji says that Louise's insight is right on target. "We do some breathing, some chanting, some asana, some meditation, some ceremonies, and your ability to negotiate that outside-inside, inside-outside, that transition between the two, improves, until you realize that there is no difference. Inside is outside and outside is inside. There's only One Reality. And I call it Nityananda. And I call it You."



Meditation Dome At Fire Mountain Ashram, Nimboli INDIA

Ganeshpuri Events

By Priya Kenney

Daily Rhythm

Our feet landed on the earth in Ganeshpuri late Wednesday night, after a long bus ride from Mumbai. Our first full day in Ganeshpuri began at 4:00 am with an early morning Abhishek, the bathing ceremony, at the Nityananda Temple. We rode an open air vehicle into town in the dark, bumping along through the cool morning air.

Drums reverberated through us as the formless was coaxed into form for the day, to allow our adoration. Nityananda's nightclothes were removed, followed by the priests giving Him a loving bath of water, milk, curd, honey and sugar. As the milk cascaded down His face, He came to life, His eyes sparkling with vibrant intensity. He was scrubbed clean, towel dried, and draped in a beautiful shawl and garlands while Brahmin priests chanted mesmerizing mantras to the Honored Guru.



Shuchi Cilley, Dean Cilley & Swamiji pouring ghee in the yajña fire

Unbeknownst to us, this was one of the 12 days each year that the inner sanctum is opened to worshippers. Swamiji's delight underscored how fortunate we were. We gratefully filed into the sanctum with many villagers to bow at Nityananda's feet and touch His leg or hand. It was divine.

Back at Fire Mountain Ashram, we ate a delicious breakfast and entered the beautiful, open air meditation dome for the Guru Gita. First we chanted verses in English, then our tongues formed Sanskrit words we didn't even know we knew. After meditation, we had free time to shop, nap or visit Nityananda's home.

Swami Nirmalananda offered a rich satsang before dinner. Her illuminating presence carries the force of revelation and we began understanding what was happening on the inside. Day by day, Swamiji unraveled the significance of selected Guru Gita verses and talked about the horizontal (the world we move in) and vertical axis of being (our spines, Consciousness). She explained how the morning Abhishek installs the vertical in the horizontal. "Whatever you hold back will not get irradiated by Grace," she said.

Our sumptuous dinner was followed by a grounding asana class. This was the rhythm of our blissful days, with all of us basking in the profound Shakti of Ganeshpuri.

Maha Abhishek

On Monday, Master Yoga and the Ashram performed a Maha Abhishek (Great Ceremony) at the Nityananda Temple. We dressed in our finest for the occasion. Iqbal Memon, our group organizer, generously gifted each of the ladies with sarees. Tailors custom crafted the long slip and the short saree blouse we needed. Local ladies came in the early morning to dress us. The saree wrapping felt like a sacred event; we were being prepared for a special ceremony.

Swamiji was the main bather, pouring water and milk from a large conch shell. Shuchi and Dean Cilley served as the requisite married couple, Shiva and Shakti, and Ashram and Master Yoga Board members joined them to sit in the inner sanctum with the priests. It was very special, with Swamiji lovingly rubbing Nityananda's generous belly with a beatific smile. We learned later that the milk, curd, honey and sugar part of the bath is to be discontinued because of the effect they have on the golden metal. How fortunate to have been a part of those last milk baths!

More Special Events

Many of us attended the early morning Guru Gita at Gurudev Siddha Peeth on the weekend days. It is sung in call and response, women and men, and is a beautiful devotional experience. Afterwards, we lingered in the courtyard by Baba's bench, bowing at the feet of Swamiji's beloved Guru. Nearby, the murti of Nityananda with five serpents arching over His black form was electric.

On Tuesday, we had a visit from Niranjana Suvarna, the son of the man Nityananda allowed to photograph him. He told us the story of how his father first met Bhagavan and finally received permission to photograph him.

On Valentine's Day we were treated to a lovely classical Indian dance by a young village girl, Rutuja. The precise movements of her eyes, fingers and feet told a story. That evening our senses went wild at a dosa party. Dosas are crepes filled with a variety of savory delights. Swamiji's antidote to our sensual frenzy was a mandatory 24 hours of silence. The silence was incredibly wonderful and brought us back deeply into ourselves.

Friday afternoon, ten Brahmin priests visited, some of whom have been bathing Nityananda for 35 years! We thanked them for all they did for us and for supporting access to Nityananda.

Saturday was an all-day intense yaj-na, a fire ceremony. Swami asked that this ancient ritual be dedicated to Durga, the protector Goddess. Seven priests chanted in precise unison, overseeing Shuchi and Dean's starting of the fire without matches, and then pouring offerings of rice, honey, ghee, grasses and bundles of sticks into the fire. It was truly incredible.

The Ganeshpuri Music School students and teachers gave a sweet performance on Sunday of harmonium (keyboard instrument), tabla (drums) and then classical dance. Our last evening, Barbara McCarthy, the steady link to the local support team, presented Swamiji with the shawl worn by Nityananda's murti. This extraordinary gift touched Swamiji's heart deeply.

Ganeshpuri, you have done us way beyond what our minds could imagine. Our hearts are full of gratitude and devotion to Swami Nirmalananda and the lineage for opening us to this magnificent Grace.

The Guru Gita in Sanskrit & English

By Ekamati (Diane) Tsurutani

My day in Ganeshpuri began with a walk to Nityananda's Mahasamadhi shrine for abhishek (morning ceremony). I passed an ashram in the midst of a 3-day celebration of Ganesh's birthday, with Brahmin priests still asleep near the fire pit, guarding the life of the fire through the night. This early start fills my heart, sets the rhythm and intent for the rest of my day.

After abhishek, we go to Fire Mountain Ashram in nearby Nimboli for breakfast, by jeep, by tuk-tuk (motorcycle-rickshaw) or by walking. By 8:15 a.m. we are in our seats in the meditation dome, ready to chant the Guru Gita. Each day Swamiji gives us five new verses in English, her translation following the eight syllable poetic form of the Sanskrit version. We chant all the verses we have in English thus far, and then the Sanskrit Guru Gita in its entirety. As the number of English verses increase, an effect is taking hold. We are able to recognize a powerful deepening is occurring.



yogis chanting with Swamiji in the meditation dome

Regarding chanting both the English and the Sanskrit, Amala Cattafi said, "I love doing both. Sanskrit is about the vibrations that provide a deep opening," but it is hard, "like tongue gymnastics." She goes on, "Swamiji's English translation is taking care of the mind. It talks about the relationship with the Sadguru which takes the experience deeper." When chanting in Sanskrit, she says it "feels like it's coming from a place other than me. In the moment, I don't know what I'm saying except that it is about God. Then I want to know what it all means. Now chanting the English gives me an understanding of how I am pulling this into my life."

Devapriyaa Hills says that the English translation is a "wonderful added dimension." While the "Sanskrit is working on you and is a joy, English as our native language, is something the mind can grasp." She adds that she can "feel it working on the mind differently."

The "English is pleasurable. It moves quickly and smoothly," adds Pam Church. "I'm not struggling, trying to form the Sanskrit words... The ease of the translation makes it user-friendly." After thinking for a moment, she says, "It's unbelievable." Pam speaks of feeling gratitude towards Swamiji, and notes that Swamiji had this "stroke of genius when she decided to do this."

Jyoti Yacobi reiterates this observation, putting it another way. "It's mind blowing! There is an incredible illumination, a light shining the way. You understand the experience you are having! The mind is engaged in a new way, where it is focused and streamlined to Consciousness, as well as the experience." In a very real way Swamiji's English translation for the "Western mind is purifying the mind... The mind recognizes what you are experiencing."

Making the Guru Gita easily available to you, Swamiji has created a wealth of resources online and is still adding to it:

The first 75 verses in English — [click here](#)

Sanskrit pronunciation lessons for all the verses — [click here](#)

Swamiji's commentary currently has 14 verses available — [click here](#)

More will be posted as Swamiji completes them.

It is a blessing to receive these new translations while we are in India. Here in a country and culture where we could be lost in confusion, instead there is understanding. And acceptance. We begin to experience the real forces behind the abhishek or a Brahmin performing personal pujas (ceremonies). We also begin to understand and restructure the mind around the real depth and power of the Guru Gita. We are on the threshold of knowing why this mantra from the Skanda Purana is so central to our lineage. More importantly, we can allow Swamiji's powerful English translation to lead us to an understanding and experience of the Sadguru.



Pat Morrison, Kamala Gross, Flor Pena Pena

Honored Guru Gita

by Swami Nirmalananda Saraswati



Fill your mind and heart with Swamiji's voice, as she flows through the Sanskrit verses so smoothly that the words will echo in your mind. Maybe you'll hear them in your sleep and meditation — steeping you in the Grace the text promises.

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Svaroopa® Calendar

Click on program titles for information about **Master Yoga** Programs and **Svaroopa® Vidya Ashram** Programs.

DYMC refers to **Downingtown Yoga Meditation Center**.

March 2013		
21 - 25	Foundations of Svaroopa® Yoga	Bhakta & Devi in Boise ID
23	Free Newcomers Class from 1:30 - 2:30 pm (EDT)	at DYMC
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)	Swamiji at DYMC
3	New! ATT 463. DTS program (phone calls begin Apr 22)	Vidyadevi & Karobi
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)	Swamiji at DYMC
5 - 7	Embodiment® Weekend	Karobi in Atlanta GA
6	Yogify Your Life	Swamiji's Phone Course begins
7	Shree Guru Gita from 6:30 - 7:45 am (EDT)	Swamiji at DYMC
9	Free Satsang from 7:30 - 9:00 pm (EDT)	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)	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)	Swamiji at DYMC
16	Free Satsang from 7:30 - 9:00 pm (EDT)	Swamiji at DYMC
17 - 19	EYTS Foundations Review	Polly in Exton PA
18	Shree Guru Gita from 6:30 - 7:45 am (EDT)	Swamiji at DYMC
19 - 28	YTT Level 1	Karobi & Polly in Exton PA
20	Free Satsang from 4:00 - 5:30 pm (EDT)	Swamiji in New Hope PA
20 - 21	Happy Body — Peaceful Mind	Yogeshwari in Lisle IL
20 - 21	Svaroopa® Yoga & Svaroopa® Yoga & Meditation	Addie in Calgary ALB
21	Swami Sunday from 8:30 am - 12:15 pm (EDT)	Swamiji at DYMC
May 2013		
1	New! Bliss Workshop Half-Day Workshop from 2:00 - 5:00 pm	Karobi in Exton PA
1 - 5	Foundations of Svaroopa® Yoga	Tish & Devi in Cumberland RI Learn More
2 - 8	ATT 402: Deeper Practice	Vidyadevi, Karobi & Swamiji in Exton PA
3	New! ATT 402: DTS program (phone calls begins May 22)	
4 - 5	Yoga, Life & Breath	Addie in Boston MA
4-5	Your Heart's Fullest Capacity	Yogeshwari in St Paul MN
4-6	Shaktipat Retreat Weekend	Swamiji at Boise, ID
7	Free Satsang from 7:30 - 9:00 pm (EDT)	Swamiji at DYMC
9	Shree Guru Gita from 6:30 - 7:45 am (EDT)	Swamiji at DYMC
9	Phone Q&A Satsang from 2:30-4:00 pm (EDT)	Swamiji
12	Swami Sunday from 8:30 am - 12:15 pm (EDT)	Swamiji at DYMC
13	New! Heart Openers Half-Day Workshop from 2:00 - 5:00 pm	Karobi in Exton PA
14	Free Satsang from 7:30 - 9:00 pm (EDT)	Swamiji at DYMC
14 - 18	EYTS Standing Vinyasa & Variations	Karobi & Vidyadevi in Exton PA
16	Shree Guru Gita from 6:30 - 7:45 am	Swamiji at DYMC
19	Swami Sunday from 8:30 am - 12:15 pm	Swamiji at DYMC
21	Free Satsang from 7:30 - 9:00 pm (EDT)	Swamiji at DYMC
23	Shree Guru Gita from 6:30 - 7:45 am	Swamiji at DYMC
26	Swami Sunday from 8:30 am - 12:15 pm	Swamiji at DYMC
30	Shree Guru Gita from 6:30 - 7:45 am	Swamiji at DYMC
30	New! Yoga Business 101 (Phone Course begins)	Swamiji & Master Yoga's Marketing Consultants
31	EYTS Pose Clinic	Karobi in Exton PA
31 - June 2	Shaktipat Retreat Weekend	Swamiji at Temenos

Ujjayi Pranayama

Yoga's Sounding Breath, Slow Yoga Breath

Sanskrit: *ujjayi* = toward victory, victorious

Concerns & Dangers: Do not do after or during poses. Straining or forcing is dangerous. If you have high blood pressure, be careful not to "hold" your breath, especially after your inhalation. *Substitute Pose:* If you have difficulty making the Ujjayi sound, follow the "Easy Breathing" instructions on Swami Nirmalananda's CD "Life's Breath."

INSTRUCTIONS

To Do Before: Settle into Shavasana or an easy seated pose for 30-60 seconds. Do not do other poses before your Ujjayi practice.

Preparation: Notice your natural breathing pattern — as your breath comes in, your breathing areas naturally expand; as your breath goes out, your breathing areas soften & sink back toward the floor.

MOVING IN

Element #1: Sound of Your Breath — Gently exaggerate the sound of your breath by narrowing your throat passageway. Use your inner throat muscles, not neck muscles. Listen to the sound of your breath as it moves in & out. Slow down your breath so the sound becomes quieter & more internal. Smooth it out so it becomes consistent & steady. Your in- & out-breaths won't be the same lengths, but they can make the same sound.

Element #2: Slower Breath — Slow down your breath a little more. Move the same quantity of breath a little slower while you continue listening to the sound, which is smooth, steady & slow. Your slow breath moves in a fine subtle stream, gently & quietly. It trickles through your breathing areas, perhaps saturating into areas that have been tight or shut down for a while.

Element #3: Longer Breath — Gently elongate your breath. When your inhale would have ended, gently elongate it to fill slowly into new breathing areas, without straining or forcing. When your exhale would have ended, gently elongate it, letting your breathing areas soften & sink back. Your easy long exhalation softens your belly & chest toward your back while your back sinks toward the floor.

Staying in the Pose: Continue with your breath's sound. Allow it to fill your ears. It's a fascinating sound!

Timings: Recommended Daily Practice: [20 minutes]

In a Svaroopa® yoga class: [Minimum – 5 minutes; Maximum – 8 minutes]

At home practice: [Minimum – 5 minutes; Maximum – 3 hours]

Moving Out: Continue with one or two more breaths. Then allow your throat muscles to soften & your breath to find its own easy pace & flow.

Ujjayi Pranayama

Yoga's Sounding Breath, Slow Yoga Breath

Resting/Observing: Watch your normal easy breath; notice where & how it is moving now.

To Do After: Continue your practice with any poses, or use Ujjayi as a stand-alone practice.

PROPS

Shavasana: Ujjayi is best done in Shavasana, if you are able to continue the breathing practice without "passing in." Use the recommended props for Shavasana in order to maximize the benefits you get from Ujjayi.

Comfortable seated pose: sit in Sukhasana or Vajrasana, or sit in a chair with your spine upright & relaxed.

Reliable Spinal Release: None

Possible Spinal Release: Your whole spine

Other Benefits: General benefits begin with the release of muscular tensions & the massage of all your internal organs. Improves your sleep. Profoundly healing: physically, emotionally & mentally. Will improve or eliminate asthma, allergies, high blood pressure & coronary troubles. Increases the flow of prana, which balances your immune system & resets your healing capacity. Purifies your physical systems, expels diseases & negativities, increases strength & vitality. Increases enthusiasm, gives a positive attitude.

Benefits of Element #1 (Sound of Your Breath): soothes your mind & nervous system, gives a profound sense of well-being. Relaxes, refreshes, centers, calms & focuses your mind & body.

Benefits of Element #2 (Slower Breath): allows time for your body to absorb oxygen into your cells. Steadies your wandering mind, improves your mood, slows down your internal speedometer.

Benefits of Element #3 (Longer Breath): opens up new breathing areas, making your normal breathing more open & effective, while clearing stale air from your lungs.

When to Do: 20 minutes per day provides all the benefits of aerobic exercise plus more; 20 minutes twice every day supports healing of physical, mental or emotional conditions. You may do 2 or 3 Ujjayi breaths at any time during regular activities, but do not do Ujjayi Pranayama all the time.

Ujjayi Pranayama

Yoga's Sounding Breath, Slow Yoga Breath

