



Svaroopaa[®] YOGA  MEDITATION

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Svaroopaa[®] Yoga: Experience Your Divine Self

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Editorial

A Lifetime of Indulgence

By Swami Nirmalananda

Teaching yoga has always been one of my favorite indulgences. I have taught thousands of yoga classes, as well as workshops, trainings and retreats. You might assume that I was working hard, but I never thought of it as work. In hindsight I recognize that I had to dedicate my time and energies to the task at hand, to communicate with others, to lead the process, to prioritize others' needs, to answer their questions and help them with their next step — all the things that most people do in their work, but I never thought of it as work. I always thought of it as an honor and a privilege.

I got that from my Guru. He began every discourse with bowing to us, honoring us. He spoke often about how rare it is that a human being has such high aspirations that she or he comes to yoga's practices, and how deeply He appreciated being able to serve us! I indulged myself in studying with Him as well as serving Him for many years, without ever realizing how deeply He was training me. Only after He left this earthly plane did I begin to see what He had given me. An ocean of gratitude is not enough to offer for His great gift.

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Swamiji

So I began teaching yoga classes and, after a few years, extended into teaching meditation. This was before meditation was popular, so there were few teachers in the San Diego area, none of whom were also yoga teachers. This furthered my understanding of what my Baba had given me, because the physical training a yoga teacher receives had come second for me; I was trained and certified as a meditation teacher long before I became a yoga teacher.

With my continued studies and the requisite approvals, I ultimately began training yoga teachers, so now we have thousands of Svaroopaa® yoga classes going on everywhere! I don't get to be the one who brings you an extra blanket when you are chilly any more, or slide a cushion under your head or an extra fold under your seat, but each teacher who does that for you has a special place in my heart. They serve you as I serve you.

Yet it is the meditation teachers that bring you the nectar. I have just completed training new meditation teachers. They wanted the tools to share the highest truths with seekers who will settle for nothing less. What an honor it is to teach them and to unleash them on the world! The earlier graduates, deeply dedicated yogis, a few have gone on and become sutra teachers, with several completing their training last January. I have invited them to begin writing about the teachings, beginning with Aanandi (Annie) Ross in this issue. Now I am compelled to add the experience of gratitude to my own students to my continuing self-indulgent behavior, indulging myself in a lifetime of yoga. I hope to infect you all!

The Power of Practice over Time

By Marlene Gast



Marlene Gast

Dawn is a gifted amateur photographer and knitter; professionally she specializes in education for children diagnosed with autism. Several years ago, along with her husband

and daughter, Dawn moved to Boise ID. At the time, she was experiencing severe neck and shoulder pain that prevented her from knitting. Her pain level was so high that Dawn says, "I used to get up every morning and put ice on my shoulder and a heat pack on my neck." On the recommendation of her new friend, Tina, Dawn began to attend my *Svaroopa*® yoga classes.

The year before, Tina had herself found deep healing from *Svaroopa*® yoga and *Embodiment*® Yoga Therapy. Jointly, these classes and sessions turned out to be the key to the spinal opening that melted Tina's lower spinal tension, eight years of SI joint pain, and frozen shoulder syndrome. Tina felt she should could no longer "trust" her body. At 50, she felt 85. For the first year practicing *Svaroopa*® yoga, she felt she reversed aging by one year each month. Now Tina says, "I feel as good as when I was in my twenties and thirties, and I trust my body again."

Over the past two years, Dawn's progress in healing her own neck and shoulder pain has been slow yet steady, with gradual, consistent, incremental change. Before moving to Idaho, she had taken classes in another style of yoga. From that previous yoga experience, she was used to using effort to move into pose alignments, so it took her a month or so to learn to soften into pose angles as well as to recognize and enjoy opening inward. In about two months, Dawn noticed some improvement in her neck and shoulder pain, and she began her home practice of the Magic Four daily.

But it was clear that Dawn needed more opening for greater healing. When I suggested and described *Embodiment*® Yoga Therapy Overlap Healing sessions, she was glad to try them. Since she was already experiencing noticeable improvement from her weekly class and home practice, she liked that this hands-on bodywork is based on the same spinal release principles as the poses she was

learning and practicing. At the time, she was still in the process of interviewing for work in her field, and she had time in her day for the required back-to-back sessions, and the frequency of continuing sessions.

Once Dawn completed her *Embodiment*® series, her painful neck and shoulders were greatly improved, and she was inspired to continue weekly classes as well as her own personal practice — the Magic Four every day. After two years in *Svaroopa*® yoga classes, she has graduated to Betsy Ayers' continuing level classes. Dawn is now in the process of stabilizing deceptively flexible hips as she learns new techniques in Lunge, which Betsy learned through the Teacher Track at last October's Conference: Alignment with Grace.

Last fall, Dawn's love of *Svaroopa*® yoga expanded to *Svaroopa*® Vidya Meditation. She and her husband took Karuna (Carolyn) Beaver's meditation course. Dawn no longer needs to ice her shoulders and apply heat to her neck in the morning — or at any other time. Recently after her class with Betsy, Dawn wrote "I can knit again!" on our studio student quotes board.

Last week Tina wrote on our board, "I am so delighted with the increase in the range of motion in my neck after I started doing daily home practice." Tina's melting of frozen shoulders had come from Overlap Healing *Embodiment*® sessions with me, but this new opening has come from continued classes with Betsy, as well as Tina's own daily practice. Together Dawn and Tina have experienced progressive, consistent healing through *Svaroopa*® Sciences. Both having graduated to Betsy's continuing yoga class, they are now officially yoga buddies as well. It appears that the power of reciprocal adaptation, in more ways than one, has been a factor all along the way.



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The Value of "No"

By Sarah Hunter



Peter Gallagher

During our 2011 Conference: 21st Century Yogi, in Philadelphia, Peter attended the three-hour meditation with Swamiji. She caught up with him afterwards and asked if he would do seva as a Board member of Master Yoga or the Ashram. At the time, Peter declined. He has 30 years of experience managing his own tax and accounting practice in Vermont and believed he didn't have time to work on the Board and run his business. Swami continued to stay in contact with Peter via email asking him again to be on the MYF

Board, and he continued to put her off saying he was too busy.

Early in 2013, Peter attended a Shaktipat weekend. At the end of each day, participants are asked to do an act of seva, usually helping to clean up. Peter's duty was to vacuum. As he was vacuuming in front of Swami's door, Dean Cillee, then an MYF Board member himself, asked Peter if he could do more seva. Peter misunderstood and thought there was more housekeeping to be done.

Instead, Peter was again being asked to be an MYF Board member. So he explained that the beginning of the year is his busiest but he would consider joining in May. Peter was hesitant also because he is not a teacher but rather a student, having attended workshops and practicing his yoga for many years. He was unfamiliar with Master Yoga as well as the reason he was being considered as an appropriate Board member.

It turns out Swami had a plan for Peter. Master Yoga and the Ashram were beginning to go through the Reawakening, and it was apparent that Peter's financial skills were required. The Board now has four members with strong financial backgrounds.

For Peter the biggest challenge of this seva was finding the time and balance in his life. There are regular phone conferences, and then there is the work that is assigned during the calls, pretty rigorous even if you don't have a job. Peter, though, decided to make the commitment and find the time. "I joined the Master Yoga Foundation Board because I was thankful for the gifts I had been given," he says.

Initially, he believed the work could just fit in whenever he had a moment or two. That has turned out not to be the case. He had to make the MYF work his first priority. During the consolidation of MYF with the Ashram, there has been much to be done, and it has taken time and thoughtful attention to accomplish it.

The surprise of being on the Board is how it has affected Peter's business. He spends more time performing his own work, as he is aware of the consequences of taking short cuts. Instead of relying on his memory or "it's close enough," he takes the time to check regulations and fact-check. In contrast, his capacity has increased by doing away with repetitive and unnecessary steps. The benefit to his wellbeing is that his stress level is down by being in his Self. He describes it as, "There's less chop in the water."

Over the winter, Peter traveled to Australia as a representative of the Board to visit the Svaroopis there. The Australian GeoCenter is very active and closely knit. There are 20 members who meet 3 to 4 times each year. Peter's Board visit coincided with their annual meeting and Christmas party. During the meeting, time was spent on planning for the coming two years. They decided as a group what the direction would be without voting but simply agreeing. These are yogis dedicated to Svaroopaa® yoga.

Peter was there to represent Swami Nirmalananda and to discuss the changes coming during the consolidation. He says he felt great responsibility in communicating Swamiji's message. What he received was seeing the benefit of living in this community. Grace was present without effort. He found the extraordinary in the ordinary. There was no effort during his eight days visit.

Peter has discovered since then that the memories have grown within him. They continue to wash through his thoughts, and he says that he wishes he could live this way forever.

Seva is the yoga of service — karma yoga. To quote Rob Gold from a blog last fall, "When you are stuck on yourself, go be of service to someone else." Rob was giving his version of teachings on karma yoga from the *Bhagavad Gita*, when Krishna is encouraging Arjuna to go forth into battle.

Seva has taken Peter from vacuuming during a retreat to serving as a Board member and on to Australia. It has expanded his time and his heart all because he answered "yes" to Swami.

Seva Drive

Enrich your Self and the Svaroopaa® community by digging deeper into your yoga practice and offering the selfless service of seva! Each seva is carefully assigned by Swami Nirmalananda to nurture your Self-discovery and offer you more yoga. If you'd like to join our sevite team, please contact our Seva Coordinator, Devapriya, at seva@svaroopavidya.org.

My First Encounter with Swami Nirmalananda

By John Frank



John Frank

It had been over 30 years since I chanted the Guru Gita at the feet of my Guru, Swami Muktananda. Returning to the chant, I was so filled with excitement at chanting in a group again that I felt I would burst.

Last fall, I learned that a female monk, who had also been a student of Muktananda, lived just fifteen miles from my home. Her name was Swami Nirmalananda. I had plotted the journey from my home to Downtown Yoga & Meditation Center using an internet map program, but I was so unnerved that I got lost on the way, and ended up driving around in circles.

Standing outside the hall, I realized I was so late that I had missed the entire chant I'd come to sing! Since it was also completely silent, I surmised that everyone present was meditating. Hoping not to disturb them, I gathered up my nerve and carefully opened the door. I stood in the doorway, looking into the room. To my surprise, it looked just like the many meditation halls I had frequented in Baba's ashrams. But suddenly I saw something that shocked me. I saw a person I didn't know sitting in the Guru's chair. For me, the Guru's chair is a very special seat. It symbolizes the spiritual power of the Guru's state of consciousness, and in Baba's case — this was Self-realization, the highest human attainment. In Baba's ashrams, no one but Baba was permitted to sit in the Guru's chair.

The next thing I knew, Swami Nirmalananda's eyes opened; meditation was over. With a big smile, she motioned for me to come into the hall. I stopped in front of Muktananda's photo and fell to the floor in full pranam. She responded by telling those present that I, like her, was a disciple of Baba's. Then, as I arose, I saw Swami Nirmalananda's side tables containing pictures of Baba and Nityananda. Weren't these trays a demonstration of her reverence of Baba and the lineage of spiritual masters he had come from? I also sensed her complete ease in the knowledge of what we shared in common: direct contact with Muktananda and an abiding love of him. Her ease completely dissolved the fear I'd felt as I entered the room. I knew she'd never ask me anything that might betray my loyalty to Baba. I'd never be asked if I was willing to accept her, Swami Nirmalananda, as my Guru. The matter would totally be mine to bring up.

Now calm, I sat down to meditate while others left for a chai break. The air was soft and fresh, and I felt like I was sitting in a warm bath of velvety blue, soothing oils. My mind immediately stopped and I felt a deep tranquility envelop me. I landed in a deep, quiet place of meditation.

After meditation I reflected upon this "direct transportation" into the meditative state. I was reminded of experiences so many years past when, in Baba's presence, there was no need of mantra repetition or concentration techniques to clear the way to the meditative space within. The Master's energy alone did it for me. I realized again, thirty years later, that I was in the presence of the same powerful spiritual energy.

The satsang portion of the program began, and Swami Nirmalananda introduced several people who had finished that past week's harmonium course. She invited us all to chant to music played by the new harmonium players. Having played the cello earlier in my life, I'm capable

of discerning good from poor musicianship and was really impressed with how much the musicians learned in just a week. The brief chanting was joyous!

Then, Swami Nirmalananda gave a talk. She addressed this question: What happens if — instead of searching outside of ourselves for fulfillment — we turn our attention inward? I didn't hear one word of what I've come to call Yoga techno-babble, Sanskrit words used to describe inner energy patterns, etc. Swami Nirmalananda, in a gentle and joyful tone, frequently accompanied by laughter, described — as best as is possible with words — some of what it is like for her when she looks inside. The words were a clear and humble recognition of what she was discovering. I hadn't heard someone talk so simply and yet profoundly, since I had attended programs led by Baba or one of the Swamis he had trained. I began to cry sweet tears of joy.

After her talk, Swami Nirmalananda beamed at me, and, perhaps sensing some of what may have happened for me that morning, she said, "Welcome Home." Deeply moved, I sat a little longer, enjoying the catharsis crying provided.

If there was just one thing I learned from my beloved Baba, it was this: My truth is not stored in my mind, but is to be found in my heart. In the vast power of His presence, my mind stopped and my heart opened. When I'd return to my senses, each time I'd experience the same insight — my mind is incapable of rendering the true meaning of anything about me. And I knew that my mind misunderstands the most important and formative experiences of my life. Washed clear again of impugned meaning, I knew I was free to reexamine and interpret my life in a completely different way.

I've pondered this over and over, ever since. Baba told me the truth in just a few words at the end of each of his satsangs. Truth can only be revealed by the Self residing within one's heart, the One who is the witness of All That Is. And I met person after person who had met Muktananda and had this understanding reawakened in them. Many became devotees of their own Self. And they revered the teacher who led them to realize this profound truth about themselves. I stand in highest gratitude and reverence to Baba for kindling in me a passion for discovery of my Self and devotion to the sublime practices of Yoga. Likewise, my gratitude is due to *anyone* who helps me to develop further Self understanding.

I'd had a brief first encounter with Swami Nirmalananda. Yet I'd experienced an overwhelming energy flowing through her and into my heart. It was as if my Baba were still alive, was standing behind her, and pouring out to me — right through her — his infinite, unconditional love for me. The only word that seems to fit as a description for this mysterious energy is Grace. And Grace is a gift beyond all dimension.

After many years in the desert, and against impossible odds — I had found, once again, a spiritual preceptor. And my heart knows what my mind cannot; she is One capable of guiding me in my journey towards true contentment and wisdom — the recognition of my very essence, my very own Self.

Om svaroopā svasvabhāvā namo namah!

Who Do You Call?

By Karuna (Carolyn) Beaver and Marlene Gast

Since Master Yoga moved under the *Svaroop*[®] Vidya Ashram (SVA) umbrella, we have become a start-up enterprise, with 20,000 potential clients of our *Svaroop*[®] Sciences services. Start-up companies are always fast-paced, and their staff members work long hours. But for a while, at least, start-ups usually don't have an overwhelming number of customers. For SVA now, handling the added services that Master Yoga used to provide through a separate organization, there is a lot going on. Staff members have changed for both organizations, as you have read about in "Comings & Goings," in our blogs and e-letters. Email addresses have changed. Phone numbers have changed. And all of these changes have taken place as SVA has continued to support Ashram events, retreats, phone courses and more, along with all of the teacher training programs once handled separately by Master Yoga. I repeat: There has been a lot going on!

With so much change, you may have missed important information about whom to call for assistance in receiving the Master Yoga or SVA services that you have come to cherish and rely on. So we are offering you a brief recap of a few essential staff members and sevites, with their contact information.

"Live Contact" Phone

Do you have a pressing question or concern? Phone us at 610.644.7555, Monday-Friday from 9:00 am-5:00 pm. If you enjoy having a mental picture of the place you're calling, this phone is physically located at Downingtown Yoga & Meditation Center.

This service has been operational for four months. It has proven so effective that we have brought in a new intern for this staff position. (Stay tuned for the introduction to our new intern in an upcoming "Comings & Goings.")

Svaroop[®] Yoga Program Information

Our Enrollment Advisors for Teacher Training and yoga programs are Hridayaa (Kim) Abplanalp and Sarvataa Christie. Hridayaa is a long-time *Svaroop* who has been a Leading Teacher in the Master Yoga community for more than 15 years. Hridayaa was also the first SVA Enrollment Sevite, serving the Ashram in its founding year and beyond. Sarvataa has been assisting Swamiji personally as well as serving in communications and other hot spots for several years.

Do you have a question about course prerequisites? Or about how to set up a payment plan? Or how to take advantage of the 2014 course discounts? Call Sarvataa (sar-va-TAA) or Hridayaa (her-da-YAA) at 610.806.2119. You may also email them at programs@masteryoga.org.

SATYA Members

Our enrollment system expert is Akima Redding, and fittingly her staff title is Enrollment System & Traffic Coordinator. She processes your SATYA memberships, payment plans and monthly donations. Look to Akima for providing clarity when it comes to the workings of our computer systems.

Akima and other technological wizards, including MYF Board member Prakash Falbaum, have been updating the [Teacher Directory](#). The backlog of updates have been completed, so please check your listing. If further changes are needed for your listing, feel free to let Akima know. Her email is satya@svaroopayoga.org.

Our Teacher Directory is soon to be replaced by a new Two-Tiered Teacher Directory, which is now being programmed. When fully operational, the Two-Tiered Teacher Directory will link directly to our certifications database so your teacher certification updates will be automatic. Teachers in current standing will have favored placement at the top of each page.

Products and Supplies

SVA Administrative Assistant Amanda Jordan wears many hats, including that of Shop Coordinator. You may certainly order products and supplies online through the [Ashram Shop](#). However, if you need to speak directly to someone about a product or order, email Amanda at Amanda@svaroopavidya.org. She handles products on-site as well as on-line orders, shipping and refunds.

In addition, along with her administrative work, Amanda also arranges airport shuttles to and from The Desmond, setup and breakdown of our retreats and trainings, as well as the schedules and handouts for all our programs. Amanda says, "I love working for the Ashram because it is a loving, supportive environment that sees me as a person rather than a commodity. I have met so many wonderful people here!"

MYX Program Information

If you want to host a weekend immersion or Foundations course locally, Jennifer Bloome is your contact. Jennifer is the Communications and Special Events coordinator, and handles the arrangements for all out-of-town programs, as well as assisting with the emails you receive, such as "Spotlight on Your Yoga" and "Inside Yoga." Her email address is Jennifer@svaroopavidya.org.

Ashram Seva

Devapriyaa (Denise) Hill coordinates the seva (volunteer) program for the Ashram. If you are interested in doing seva or have a question about the seva you perform, you can reach her at seva@svaroopavidya.org. She begins with asking for you to complete our skills survey, so we can match your skills and interests with the many tasks that keep us going.

In conclusion...

Your understanding and patience is so very much appreciated as the two organizations, now one, continue the transitional process. Please do let any of these staff members and sevites know how they can best serve you!

Led by Grace

By Karuna (Carolyn) Beaver



Niranjan (Nathan) Matanich

Many *Svaroopaa*® Yoga and Meditation Teachers enter the practice through the door of asana. Niranjan (Nathan) Matanich entered through the door of meditation and found that it opened up a vast experience he was eventually led to share with others, leading Satsangs as a *Svaroopaa*® Meditation Group Leader in St. Paul MN.

"It's interesting how things work in life," he says. "I was having some difficulties, and suddenly I got this idea that I would meditate. I asked a friend who was involved in studying Kashmiri Shaivism (the yogic philosophy upon which the *Svaroopaa*® Sciences are founded), and he told me about an at-home study course." Through his friend, Niranjan was also told the tradition's mantra, Om Namah Shivaya, and instructed in its pronunciation and rhythm. Through the course, Niranjan discovered Siddha Yoga and Gurumayi, another disciple of Swami Muktananda, Swami Nirmalananda's Guru. "It started a life changing process for me," Niranjan says. "I think now that the Guru was leading me where I needed to be led."

Niranjan was led to Siddha Yoga Satsangs. At a chant of the Guru Gita, he met Bhakta (Leslie) Johnson, who hosted the weekly program. Bhakta taught a *Svaroopaa*® yoga class after the program, and invited Niranjan to stay to address his lower back pain. He began attending asana classes with Bhakta, eventually decided to take Foundations in 2007, and went on to complete the 500-hour *Svaroopaa*® Yoga Teacher Training program.

"The reason I did the asana training is because, while I liked the poses, I really liked the Consciousness talks and wanted to be closer to the teachings. I was impressed that working with the body in the way we do opens you up to the teachings," Niranjan says.

Niranjan always knew he wanted to do Meditation Teacher Training (MTT) but wasn't sure when. "When Swamiji became a Swami, I decided it was time to take the course." He signed up for the May 2011 MTT, and was excited to learn that the syllabus had changed and

that Swamiji was to empower the teachers to share her Guru's mantra, Om Namah Shivaya.

"Support is important when you start to meditate. You're not going to necessarily talk about your meditation experiences with coworkers or friends. Something more happens when you talk about it with other meditators."

"It was interesting that whether my eyes were open or closed, I felt that I was at the same depth all the time," he says. "Receiving the teachings was a mind-blowing experience. It's probably the most powerful training I've ever done. My mind cleared out so much crap, and I had a lot of physical opening too."

"I knew I wanted to take the Meditation Group Leader (MGL) training as soon as I found out it was available," says Niranjan. With just five months before the MGL training,

Niranjan had to complete the pre-requisites in a short time, but was committed to do so because he wanted to offer ongoing support to the newly trained meditators in his St. Paul meditation courses. "Support is important when you start to meditate. You're not going to necessarily talk about your meditation experiences with coworkers or friends. Something more happens when you talk about it with other meditators."

Right after MGL training, Niranjan started offering weekly satsangs, and has been offering them every week since. It helps him remember his own experience as a beginning meditator, especially after he had come into contact with the teachings of Gurumayi, when he first received Shaktipat.

"I watch the same life changing experiences happen when people receive the mantra and take a mantra card. Even though I've seen this happen for many years, it still amazes me every time," Niranjan says. He wants to remind those who attend that "Satsang is what it is because people are there sharing in the Guru's Grace. Their being there is what makes it a community of seekers. I'm constantly reminded of how powerful the teachings and the mantra are. In the satsang environment, it's tangible," he says.

"In satsang, the energy is so there, and it's so much deeper than if you were meditating by yourself at home. Leading satsang pushes me into a deeper place, so when I do practice at home, my experiences are deeper too."

Niranjan says that leading satsang has been "a learning experience...I get to hear other people's experiences, and to build sense of community and camaraderie that people are not going to get anywhere else. It's great to be able to offer such a sacred thing as satsang. It's a blessing for me to be able to offer it. It's Grace."

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The Gift of "More": Yoga Immersions

By Yogeshwari (Lissa) Fountain



Yogeshwari Fountain

Svaroopaa® Vidya Ashram provides a unique and accessible two-tiered approach: courses that focus on learning to teach, and courses that focus on learning to live in Consciousness. If you are a teacher, you take a course for CEU's, with half or more of the course spent in preparing you to work with other people's bodies and minds. In the process, you gain deeper knowledge and do lots of yoga, but the point is your professional competency. It's different in a retreat with Swamiji, or even a yoga weekend workshop, as the course is dedicated to deep-

ening your personal experience of your own Self as Consciousness, as well as cultivating a new way of living with your mind and in your body. You know this, because when you return home, you share the light of your own divinity with those you care about most.

I've been a *Svaroopaa*® yoga teacher for 17 years now, and have received an in-depth training that is not found anywhere else. Not only is our approach to the body/mind both experiential and original ("it all starts at the tailbone," etc.), it is a path infused with Grace.

Yes, you have to "work at" refining your skills, but it's the current of Grace that is flowing through you, supporting you, that makes it all happen. This is because *Svaroopaa*® Yoga and Meditation is grounded in a lineage, and developed by a true living master, Swami Nirmalananda. It is a comprehensive approach to the body, mind and more. And it's the "more" that both teachers and students want. It's what keeps us coming back: the bliss of the Self.

I experience this every time I teach a weekend workshop. As the presenter, I feel honored to be able to offer the teachings, and witness the amazing transformations that can take place in just 48 hours! There are no CEU's offered, simply the joy and gift of immersion into yoga. Each group (usually a mix of one-third local teachers, two-thirds students) has come to the weekend workshop for an experience that is not only deeper than a regular class, but that will also enhance their home practice. They are looking for the "more," that sacred resting place that is both inside and outside, all at the same time.

Here are some of their words. From the teachers, "I haven't taken this much time for myself in a long time... It helps to bring me deeper into the experience of my Self. Instead of teaching, I get to drop in... It's deep and will connect you to your inner source of knowing, in a completely effortless flow."

And from the students, "I love the cumulative effect of practicing over many hours... Each time I immerse myself in a weekend, it recharges me to deepen my practice and knowledge of *svaroopaa*."

This is why retreats and immersions are so essential. Swamiji used to say that *Svaroopaa*® yoga teachers' students and clients "don't pay us for what we do, they pay us for what we know." While this is true, today I understand it differently: It is for Who we know ourselves to be that keeps our students coming back. They are drawn to the flow of Grace moving through us. And when you feel depleted, a retreat provides nurture and re-fueling. It could be a Shaktipat weekend or one of the new six-day Yoga & Meditation Retreats that include chanting and meditation

AND deeper poses, ([link to our Events Calendar](#) to find full descriptions and scheduled dates). Being in Swamiji's presence vaults you into your own divinity.

You might be able to do a teacher's CEU course and a personal retreat in the same year, or you may have to choose just one. What would serve you better, another training, or an immersion experience like Shaktipat? This much I do know: A personal retreat will give you everything and more — *svaroopaa*, the bliss of your own being. No yoga schools in America offer such a wide range of opportunities. We are so fortunate. Whatever you choose, it is a gift to be immersed in *Svaroopaa*® yoga, a gift of Grace.

"This course was amazing! The combination of deep openings, knowledge, and positive energy makes the experience a life-changing one."

- Kristy Barnes



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Foundations

of *Svaroopaa*® Yoga

Sinking In and Staying In

By Sarvataa Christie



Sarvataa Christie

I am so delighted to have been part of the group who took SVA's first training at the Desmond. "Teaching Half Day Workshops" is quite a luxurious course in its own right, offering seven half-day workshops to us participants over the five days of training. Being at the Desmond, with the surroundings and support that a retreat setting offers, made the program even more luxurious.

Plus, I learned how to plan and teach Half-Day Workshops to introduce my own students to the experience of going deeper!! I've already taught my first workshop and they loved it! In this training, we learned how to do additional adjustments in Level 2 poses, which I also use in my continuing classes. We also learned to deepen the students' experience in the Level 2 poses by using abs. And we learned how to "break" some of the lesson planning rules, when it creates the different type of effectiveness that Half-Day Workshops need. How very exciting!

Simply doing more yoga is a very sweet experience, indeed. Now having the specific training to share the experience of "doing more yoga" is a gem. In a Half-Day Workshop, you spend more time on detailed poses — poses you always wish you had more time for in a regular class. In a Half-Day Workshop, you can do many more poses as well, concluded by a very sweet long Shavasana at the end. All of this has already enriched my continuing classes, for my students have brought with them what they learned in my first workshop! Now I plan to focus on a theme pose each month. At the end of each month, a half-day workshop featuring that theme pose will be the cherry on top.

Besides what I learned, I have been amazed by the effects of the retreat experience. During and after this training I experienced significantly less relapse than anticipated based on my prior experiences. Yes, my practice is of course deeper than with previous trainings, which I am sure played its part. However, I am certain that the retreat environment also played a huge part. Since I didn't tighten my mind to do things like drive, cook and shop, I was able to sink deeper into the openings, keep them longer and continue going deeper. I kept my mind expanded and open, and therefore my body was allotted more time to adjust to this new sense of openness.

In the morning, how lovely to step out of my room (which has the comfiest beds large enough for JP, as well awesome water pressure in the showers!), and walk down the hall to the classroom for extra meditation, Ujjayi or asana, then to a ready-to-eat breakfast! Then at lunch time you step out and down to the restaurant, where yummy soups, main dishes, desserts and teas await. Of course the program itself brought me deep. Yet the delicious and nutritious food, wonderful accommodations, and gracious staff all provided that additional external support, allowing those openings to the "more" to stick easily.

Before, when we had to commute to and from our training venues, we had to close down our deep openings so we could manage mundane tasks. Not closing down daily, I was able to immerse even more deeply into the changes yoga provides. We even got driven by the hotel shuttle to our Ashram luncheon, then on to DOWNTOWN Yoga and Meditation Center for shopping and soaking up the Shakti! How very sweet!

The most beautiful thing about my experience, however, is what happened when I returned home. It was then that I noticed how much change I really had gotten, after only five days, and without major relapse. You see, I had previously gauged my changes mostly by my relapse. This time, since I experienced extremely minimal relapse during the training, I wasn't totally aware of how much I had changed, although I did feel great changes as well as openness and benefit during the training! Still, I was able to keep the changes and function in a worldly way! I was able to reintegrate into life while keeping the changes I had received and to learn how to function within these changes, all while being aware of these changes on a profoundly deep level. What a sweet treat to sink in and stay in, even while expanding my knowledge and skills for teaching Svaroopā® yoga!

Deeper than my body, deeper than my mind, deeply into the "more" that yoga promises — that has been the ongoing outcome of "Teaching Half Day Workshops." During the whole immersion training, I had been adjusting to functioning from this deeper inner state. So I sank in deeper and I stayed deeper, and am continually diving deeper still. It may seem, from the outside, I am doing the same things, but there has been a permanent internal shift on the inside, in the "how I am doing" and the "why I am doing." On the outside that is spreading to the "what I am doing," too.

Mango Coconut Rice

- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1½ cups long grain rice (like basmati)
- 1 can (14 oz) unsweetened coconut milk
- ⅔ cup water
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 large, ripe mango, peeled & cubed (may use frozen, but thaw & drain on paper towels)

योगा पुलकीड

By Jennifer Saville, Ashram Chef

Instructions:

In a large saucepan, heat the oil. Add the rice and stir to coat with the oil. Add the coconut milk, water & salt. Bring to a boil. Stir in the mango. Cover, reduce heat to low and simmer about 20 minutes until liquid is absorbed. Remove rice from heat & fluff with a fork. Place a clean, dry dish towel over the pan, cover with the lid and let steam for 5 minutes before serving.

Virasana Seated Side Stretch

By Rama (Ruth) Brooke



Rama (Ruth) Brooke

I sit in Virasana (Hero Pose) fully supported: my knee props in front, thick blanket wedge behind, and folded blankets under my seat. The room softly shimmers in flickering candle flames, illuminating murtis and photographs of those before me who've traveled this path and serve as my guides. In this way, following Kurmasana (Tortoise Pose), my favorite tailbone pose, I've prepared for Virasana Seated Side Stretch.

My body slides into "stambha," the vertical alignment of the spine that has become so familiar after months or years of rocking back and forth to find it. I begin to feel the reliable tingling sensation of my lower spine opening, and the bliss that begins to blossom within. Kundalini powers the ida and pingala energies weaving upward along my spine, and my body sways gently with the balancing. The space between each vertebra expands, and my spine lengthens all the way up through my neck. I move now into the Seated Side Stretch part of the pose, opening both sides of my waist and ribcage. As I sit upright again, I am keenly aware of the physical bliss of releasing the upper vertebrae in my neck and the corresponding openings through my head. I grow taller as I sit.

Although I do vary the poses I do in my daily practice, I almost always do Virasana Seated Side Stretch to prepare for meditation. I find it to be a natural progression. In fact, I have to remind myself to untangle my legs and come out of the pose before slipping into meditation.

Virasana Seated Side Stretch has not always been my favorite pose. I remember well when I first learned it. I came home from class and began to practice the pose. It wasn't comfortable. Nothing was very comfortable in my body in those days, but there was something about the pose that moved me to do it. I probably wasn't sitting on enough blankets or didn't have my knees propped high enough, but still it felt good afterwards. Now I use nearly every prop available in my home practice space to do the pose, and it is worth every layer and fold in my blankets!

One of the sweet advantages of Virasana Seated Side Stretch is that it provides a reliable release in three areas of the spine: through your sacrum, waist and ribcage. This means that, to complete a full spinal sequence, you only need to do a reliable tailbone pose (e.g., Slow Motion Dive, Alternate Leg or Tortoise Pose) beforehand. This doesn't mean you do less yoga; rather, now you can add more poses such as a second spinal sequence (e.g., Magic Four) or other practices (e.g., chanting, japa, meditation).

However you decide to use Virasana Seated Side Stretch, you will likely find, as I have found, that preparation is the key. Perhaps you do just a tailbone pose first, or perhaps you do several poses, or perhaps you chant or do an arati or another devotional practice beforehand. Or perhaps you decide your body is not yet ready for this pose. Yoga provides so many avenues for the inward experience. This is just one, one of my favorites! Do more yoga.

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Reflections on the Teachings: Stillness and Fulfillment

By Aanandi (Annie) Ross



Aanandi (Annie) Ross

Reflecting on the contemplation articles for January and February 2014, I am struck by two of the sutras offered, one from each article, as well as their teachings as described by Swami Nirmalananda and Vidyadevi. Here is the sutra from the first article:

Sthira sukham aasanam — Patanjali's Yoga Sutras 2.46

The (yoga) pose is motionless and easy.

Our teachers point out that while this sutra is really about the seated poses that lay the foundation for meditation, it applies to every yoga pose, and that in every yoga pose you are looking for that point of sthira (absolute motionlessness) and sukha (complete ease). They go on to explain that when that happens, something more happens...it is that "something more" of yoga that happens. They refer to a researcher who pointed out that when tension is released from the body on a physical level then your mind completely switches off. And our teachers explain that that is the beginning of everything!

The second article offers a sutra about immersion in the heart:

Aasanastha.h sukha.m hrade nimajjati. — Shiva Sutras 3.16

The yogi established in a steady posture easily becomes immersed in the heart.

Swamiji explains that this does not mean to be immersed in your physical heart or your emotional heart, but to be immersed in the heart of beingness. This is what yoga does for you — immerses you in the heart of your own beingness, this essential part of every human being. This is the core essence that yoga calls "svarooa."

I am reminded of a recent experience with an acquaintance of mine. I learned that Bob, a retired clergyman, had sudden heart surgery for a triple bypass. Bob will be eighty on his next birthday, and he has never had any yoga experience. In the past year, he and I had talked of having a session together for the purpose of learning the practice of Ujjayi Pranayama, since he had told me that he was having some heart problems. Well, we never got to making a plan to do so, as he lives over a two hour's drive north of me. Recently, however, when I heard about his situation, I called Bob and offered to visit him at his home to teach him the breathing practice.

I arrived several weeks after his surgery. We got some blankets set up, pillows under his knees, and books under his feet. Bob settled into his first experience of Shavasana. He was hesitant at first because he was afraid that lying on his back would cause him to wheeze and lose his breath. But to his surprise he felt very comfortable. We proceeded on to the breathing practice, and he was surprised to find that it was more about doing very little than doing a lot. He later told me that he had thought it would be about taking a lot of deep, forceful, big and fast breaths. It wasn't long before Bob dropped in and became very restful, quiet and still. After a while when I asked him what he was aware of, he

said, " Well, it's so curious, but I could feel the breath in my toes...and there was something else, there was something else but I don't know what it was."

I think Bob was finding a taste of what these two sutras offer; he found the motionlessness and ease of the pose in Shavasana, and he found that "something more" that he couldn't describe in words. And he was aware in some way of his own beingness; of his breath being even in his toes.

Every moment holds the opportunity for stillness and fulfillment. And right now in the depths of late winter and cold, everything in nature is organically inviting you to draw inward, to rest in the stillness that generates the necessary rejuvenation of your being. Experience the profound healing effects on your physical, mental and spiritual body. Stillness and fulfillment, outside and inside. Now is always the time to be in the heart of it.

Guru & Self

Join Swami Nirmalananda for *Guru & Self*, a year-long multimedia programme that explores the mystery of the Guru through Sanskrit text teachings, classical teaching stories, personal experiences and more. Delve deeper into your practice and enrich the understanding of your Self through group discussion, audio recordings and monthly teaching articles.



Option #1 — monthly teaching articles, audio recordings by Swamiji, and phone conference calls

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[Friday](#) or [Saturday](#)

Prerequisites: Shaktipat Retreat or Shishya Membership

Eligible yogis may join Swamiji on a **FREE Intro call, March 15 from 4:30 to 6:00pm EST.**

Click on titles for info about Programs. DYMC is **Downingtown Yoga Meditation Center**.

Upcoming Programs

March 2014		
11	Satsang 7:30 pm - 9:00 pm	Swamiji at DYMC
12	FREE Q&A Phone Satsang 3:00 pm - 4:30 pm (Eastern Time)	Swamiji in phone conference call
15	Guru & Self Intro Call 4:30 pm - 6:00 pm	Swamiji, Phone Course
18	I Am Shiva article #5	Swamiji
18	Satsang 7:30 pm - 9:00 pm	Swamiji at DYMC
19 - 23	ATT 201: Teaching Half Day Workshops	Karobi & Vidyadevi in Manly, Queensland, Australia
19 - 23	Foundations of Svaroop® Yoga	Bhakta (Leslie) Johnson, Devi McKenty at The Desmond
20	Sri Guru Gita 6:30 am - 7:45 am	Swamiji at DYMC
21	Shishya Phone Satsang 9:30 am - 10:30 am	Swamiji in phone conference call
21 - Nov. 1	Guru & Self Option 1, Friday Calls 10:30 am - 12:00 pm	Swamiji, Year Long Programme begins
21 - Nov. 1	Guru & Self Option 2, Friday Calls 10:30 am - 12:00 pm	Swamiji, Year Long Programme begins
22 - Nov. 1	Guru & Self Option 1, Saturday Calls 4:30 pm - 6:00 pm	Swamiji, Year Long Programme begins
22 - Nov. 1	Guru & Self Option 2, Saturday Calls 4:30 pm - 6:00 pm	Swamiji, Year Long Programme begins
22 - 23	Yoga & Meditation: The Bliss of a Quiet Mind	Yogeshwari (Lissa) Fountain in Warren MA
23	Swami Sunday 8:30 am - 12:15 pm	Swamiji at DYMC
24 or 25	Guru & Self article #1	Swamiji
25	Satsang 7:30 pm - 9:00 pm	Swamiji at DYMC
26	Meditation 101 (1 of 3 classes) 7:00 pm - 9:00 pm	Swamiji at DYMC
28	I Am Shiva audio #5	Swamiji
28 - 30	Shaktipat Retreat	Swamiji in Calgary AB Canada
April 2014		
4 - 13	YTT Level 2	Karobi, Vidyadevi & Swamiji at The Desmond
8	SATYA Marketing Call #2 4 PM pm - 5:30 pm	Andy O'Bryan, FREE Phone Course
14 - 18	Svaroop® Yoga & Meditation Retreat	Swamiji & Kamala Gross at The Desmond
19 - 20	Stay Open in Life	Vidyadevi in Portland OR
25 - 26	Gateway of Your Heart	Vidyadevi in Richmond VA
25 - 27	Foundations Review	Devi McKenty at The Desmond
28 - 30	Teaching Without Props	Vidyadevi, Karobi & Devi McKenty at The Desmond
30 - Sept. 7	Meditation Teacher Training Upgrade	Swamiji, Phone Course begins
May 2014		
1 - June 12	Discovering Your Own Self 10 am - 12 Noon	Vidyadevi, Phone Course begins
3 - 9	Teaching at Yoga Conferences	Swamiji, Vidyadevi & Karobi at The Desmond
16 - 25	YTT Level 4	Vidyadevi, Karobi & Swamiji at The Desmond
30 - June 1	Shaktipat Retreat	Swamiji at The Desmond

Plan your trainings for the coming year with this calendar.

MARCH 2014		
15	FREE Guru & Self	intro phone call
19 – 23	ATT 201: Teaching Half Day Workshops	Australia
19 – 23	Foundations of Svaroopa® Yoga	The Desmond Hotel
25	Guru & Self begins	Multi-Media
28 – 30	Shaktipat Retreat	Calgary AB, Canada
APRIL 2014		
4 – 13	YTT Level 2	The Desmond Hotel
14 – 19	Svaroopa® Yoga & Meditation Retreat	The Desmond Hotel
18 – 20	Stay Open in Life	Oregon
25 – 27	EYTS Foundations Review	The Desmond Hotel
25 – 27	Gateway of Your Heart	Virginia
27 – 30	EYTS Teaching Without Props	The Desmond Hotel
30	Meditation Teacher Upgrade begins	Multi-Media Course
MAY 2014		
1	Discovering Your Own Self begins	Phone Course
2 – 9	EYTS Teaching at Yoga Conferences	The Desmond Hotel
16 – 25	YTT Level 4	The Desmond Hotel
30 – June 1	Shaktipat Retreat	The Desmond Hotel
JUNE 2014		
2 – 9	ATT 411: Upper Spinal Release	The Desmond Hotel
11 – 13	EYTS Foundations Review	The Desmond Hotel
13 – 22	YTT Level 1	The Desmond Hotel
20 – 22	Shaktipat Retreat	Centerville MA
25 – Jul 2	ATT 531: Abdominals	The Desmond Hotel
JULY 2014		
7 – 9	EYTS Enliven & Advance: Level 1	The Desmond Hotel
11 – 13	I Am Shiva Retreat	The Desmond Hotel
11 – 13	Svaroopa® Yoga & Meditation	Idaho
14	Purposeful Living begins	Phone Course
16 – 20	Foundations of Svaroopa® Yoga	The Desmond Hotel

AUGUST 2014		
8 – 10	Experiential Anatomy	The Desmond Hotel
10 – 15	Embodiment® Yoga Therapy Training	The Desmond Hotel
15 – 17	Shaktipat Retreat	The Desmond Hotel
17 – 21	Svaroopa® Yoga & Meditation Retreat	The Desmond Hotel
22 – 26	Meditation Group Leader Training Retreat	The Desmond Hotel
SEPTEMBER 2014		
3 – 5	EYTS Foundations Review	The Desmond Hotel
5 – 14	YTT Level 1	The Desmond Hotel
15	Sutras: From Here to THAT	Phone Course
17 – 21	Foundations of Svaroopa® Yoga	The Desmond Hotel
19 – 27	Meditation Teacher Upgrade Retreat	The Desmond Hotel
28 – Oct 5	ATT 262: Yoga Therapy — Treating Pain	The Desmond Hotel
OCTOBER 2014		
10 – 19	Swamiji on tour Australia	
10 – 19	YTT Level 3	The Desmond Hotel
24 – 26	Guru & Self Weekend Retreat	The Desmond Hotel
NOVEMBER 2014		
2 – 9	ATT 402: Deeper Practice	The Desmond Hotel
14 – 16	Weekend Workshop	Warren MA
15 – 16	Slow Down!	Dekalb IL
DECEMBER 2014		
5 – 14	YTT Level 2	The Desmond Hotel



Atrium at the Desmond Hotel,
Malvern PA