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Svaroopa® Yoga: Experience Your Divine Self

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Editorial

Outside & Inside

By Swami Nirmalananda

When the outside and inside match, you relax. You settle into yourself. When you are smiling on the outside, but fuming or even silently crying on the inside, the split is painful. Some people spend their whole life in that split, working at a job that doesn't fit them, living somewhere they don't want to be or even spending time being someone they don't want to be. Yoga makes you whole. This is the amazing power of yoga: its power to heal the split. It happens even when you think you're merely doing some stretching and breathing.

The reason it is hard to live a lie is because your nature is Truth (with a capital-T). When you pretend to be something that you are not, or when you hide who you really are, it is painful because you are denying the Truth of who and what you are. Now I have to offer a few words of caution! Don't misunderstand yoga's teachings and turn your life and relationships upside-down so that you can proclaim your rebellion as well as broadcast your opinions of everyone and everything. Yoga warns that you must not hurt other people in the process of finding Truth, and that your opinions are actually not as important as you think. Truth is not found in your reactions or your desires because Truth is not found in your mind. It is

continued on page 2

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[Click on the article name to go to page](#)

EDITORIAL**Outside & Inside**

By Swami Nirmalananda 1

TEACHINGS**Slow Yoga**

By Swami Nirmalananda 3

STUDENT STORIES**Finding Namah**

By Priya Kenney 4

WHY I GIVE**Why I Am a Monthly Donor**

By Maitreyi (Margie) Wilsman 5

UPDATES**The Power of Basics**

By Karuna (Carolyn) Beaver 6

WHY I TEACH**Bindu (Maureen) Shortt:
Teacher of the Un-Yoga**

By Sarah Hunter 7

ASHRAM EATS**Ali's Veggie Burger** 7**BECOMING MY SELF****Guru Gita "Baby Steps"**

By Rama (Ruth) Brooke 8

THERAPEUTICS**Living Pain Free**

By Karuna (Carolyn) Beaver 9

COMMUNITY**Svaroopa® Yoga in Europe**

By Medhira (Trine) Larsen 10

TEACHINGS**A Deeper You**

By Devi McKenty 11

CALENDAR**Upcoming Programs** 12

Editorial

continued from page 1



Swamiji

deeper. Truth is your own svaroopa, your own Divine Self.

You don't have to change the outside in order to make it match the inside of your being. While you always have the freedom to change where and how you

live, yoga says that your environment is not the problem. As yoga makes you whole, the radiance of your own Divinity shines from its inner source into your life. You begin to treat the others around you differently, because you see them differently. Where you live and what you do looks different to you because you are different — you are more You. This inner process is completely reliable, as you do more yoga.

Slow Yoga

By Swami Nirmalananda

I offered a presentation about Svaroopa® yoga in Australia recently, explaining that America had exported “fast food” worldwide. The Aussies nodded, familiar with the decades old phenomenon. Then I explained that there’s a new movement underway in the USA — “slow food.” Food that takes time to cook, like a rich stew or spaghetti sauce, and then is served slowly, enjoyed in the company of other people, even with several courses being served and time between the courses.

In the same way, yoga got speeded up in America, even though it has over 1800 years of documented history as a slow process. Svaroopa® yoga remains true to its classical roots, a slow yoga, one that allows you to pay attention to the details of your movement and its effects on your body.

Before I found yoga, I worked out in a gym under the direction of a personal trainer. She was also a competitive weight lifter, so I learned a little about that world. While I wasn’t interested in building the showy muscles that she sported, I benefitted from her careful training. She “spotted” me, making sure that every one of my movements with a weight was slow and properly aligned, so that I would maximize the effects on the muscles involved. In the same way, your Svaroopa® yoga teacher watches your alignments carefully, moving you through the process slowly and consciously, so you get maximum benefits.

When you build the pose stage by stage, you do maximize the benefits, but you also cultivate an expanding awareness. Ultimately yoga is the science of consciousness, and we practice the poses in a way that makes you more conscious: more able to feel what’s going on in your body and even more aware of the one who is living in your body — you!

Yet the most important reason that you need slow yoga is because of your speedy mind. The frenetic pace of life is stressful; worse, it is deadening. You need to slow down if you’re going to breathe, if you are going to smile, if you are going to digest your food and if you are going to enjoy your life. I always remember that the modern sage Lili Tomlin explained, “The winner of the rat race is still a rat.”

The faster paced yoga styles acknowledge this dilemma and approach it differently. Just like runners on treadmills, they speed your body up to try to match the pace of your mind. When you get the outer-inner match, your mind stops. What a relief! Of course, Svaroopis already know that when your mind stops, you experience the bliss of your own Beingness, as promised in the *Yoga Sutras*.

Only in the last 20 or 30 years has yoga become speedy. For the 1,770 years since the earliest Sanskrit text on yoga, it was always a slow and conscious process. Why? To give you the ability to choose what your mind is doing. To improve the quality of your mind and therefore the quality of your life. To open the deeper dimensions of your own being. To slow you down, so you don’t get frustrated when the traffic signal is red; instead, you enjoy 30 seconds of stillness and maybe even repeat mantra or do a few Ujjayi breaths.

Mahatma Gandhi said, “There is more to life than simply increasing its speed.” I will add that there is more to yoga than increasing its speed. There is more to you than you will ever find if you race through life. We practice slow yoga.

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Finding Namah

By Priya Kenney



Priya Kenney

Namah means to bow. You are bowing every time you think or say "OM Namah Shivaya." The mantra means: I honor, I bow to my own Divine Essence, to my Self.

My longing for the experience of namah started slowly, unrecognizably, many years ago. Maybe it was a children's book showing formal bowing through the caricature of a butler, or it might have been my childhood play at curtsying to imaginary royalty. There was no question that I longed to lower myself in deference to someone or something.

I first experienced the sweetness of bowing to another in the mid-80's while on a backroads art tour in Japan. Far from the cities, the tiny villages were filled with the sweet humility of simple living and bowing. That moment of deep recognition between people was delicious, but I didn't understand why. I looked for the opportunity to bow whenever possible, even if it was just slightly dipping my head. It resonated with something deep inside, the kernel of longing for namah.

Swami Nirmalananda begins every satsang with a series of verbal pranams — bowing to herself, to Shiva, to the Divine within all of us, to her Baba and beyond. The specifics vary but always point to the One Self. Her honoring of the Divine sets a powerful stage for her teachings.

*Na guroradhika.m tattva.m
na guroradhika.m tapa.h,
Tattva.m jñaanaatpara.m naasti
tasmai sriigurave nama.h. — Sri Guru Gita verse 74*

There is no truth higher than Him,
no austerity greater than
serving Him, no higher knowledge
than my bowing to the Guru.¹

Shri Guru Gita offers a rich exploration of namah, beginning with Lord "Siva's very poignant bowing to the Guru! That in itself is enough to contemplate for a lifetime. Plus there are at least 40 verses telling us to bow to the Guru, along with many more references to honoring, worshipping and taking refuge in the Guru. Two sections have a series of verses about bowing, beginning at Verse 31 and again at Verse 66. Bowing is clearly an integral part of knowing the Self.

Once I found Svaroopa® yoga, the Yoga Mudra at the end of every class drew me closer to namah. I loved that sweet pose at the end of class and now, several years later, my practice of bowing has deepened. My first bows to the Guru felt awkward and scary. It seemed crazy to kneel on the floor and bow to another human. Was I even worthy anyway? And was I doing it right? When I got myself out of the way and truly surrendered to the bow, I found namah.

Namah has become an integral part of my daily practice, on and off the floor. Bowing and honoring doesn't require a particular geography of the body. You can be fully upright, and yet be bowing to your Self within. My life is now filled with namah:

I bow to the person of the Guru, to the Grace bestowing power of the Guru, and to the Guru within.

I bow with honor and respect to that force of Consciousness that is undeniably greater than the greatest. I bow to the Guru, to God, to Shiva and beyond.

I bow to the knowledge of the Guru, to the teachings that describe the indescribable, that reassure, guide and make sense of our experiences.

I bow in humility, recognizing the smallness of my small self, with its limitations, in its rightful place of deference to the Guru, to the Self.

I bow and take refuge in the Grace of the Guru, to be purified and uplifted by the stream of Grace.

I bow a pleading sort of bow, for mercy, that the compassion of the Guru might decrease and ease my suffering.

I bow a 911 bow, a fervent call for help from the Guru. Nirmalananda!

I bow in surrender to the Guru and place my small self at Her feet.

I bow as a ritual. When my heart is not there, I lower my body to place it at her feet. In that act, something changes in me.

I bow in recognition, the knowing that Self (that is the Guru) is also me.

I bow in deep gratitude and devotion for the Guru who serves as teacher, guide and mentor. For the lineage, for all that is given, to the wonderful yoga kula, the Ashram, my spiritual family, my yoga brothers and sisters.

I bow to the Guru. I bow to my own Self, which is the Self of all. I bow to That, which pervades everything in every moment. OM Namah Shivaya!

¹Rendered by Swami Nirmalananda



Why I Am a Monthly Donor

By Maitreyi (Margie) Wilsman

"It's just the thing to do," says Lalita (Liane) Bracciale. "You have to support the things that mean the most to you — the Ashram, Swamiji and the teachings. It's easier to do on a monthly basis. You don't have to worry about it or think about it. It's just withdrawn automatically each month."



Maitreyi (Margie) Wilsman

Lalita cannot remember when she switched from donating separately for designated items or events and unhesitatingly became a Monthly Donor. She knows that the switch has felt like the correct thing to do.

A different story is told by Padmakshi (Andrea) Wasserman. She says: "I was giving first to the Ashram because it was getting started, it needed financial assistance to put the programs in place and the building required some renovation. Also, I was giving funds towards additional things that Swamiji identified as needs in the beginning. While giving to the Ashram, I started giving separately to Master Yoga. I wanted to be sure both organizations were going to thrive. So for a while I was giving monthly to both."

When the Ashram and Master Yoga organizations consolidated, Padmakshi kept the same level of donations. She says: "I am able to do it. Both organizations have given me so much. For me it's a small way

to give back and I feel comfortable with giving."

Randi Ravitts Woodworth, another Monthly Donor, says: "I started supporting the Ashram when a member helped me through a difficult spiritual time. I wanted to feel a part of the group that had helped me, and I wanted to help ensure that it would be there for others who need it now and in the future. The monthly donation is a way to give my steady support in a way that will not get lost among the preoccupations of daily life."

Has the idea of becoming a Monthly Donor reached your awareness? Take time to contemplate it and meditate on it, in order to make a wise decision. You still have time to donate to "Blossoming Forth," our annual fall campaign. If you donate before the end of the year, you even may get a tax break.

We all know that "support equals release." This is true in most areas of life, including spiritual education, which like any major education institution has costs associated with programs, faculty, buildings and ongoing operations. The Ashram needs a steady stream of support for operations of all kinds, and you can be sure that your Monthly Donation will keep that stream flowing strong.

I must say that spiritual education is the most important aspect of my life. Swamiji is like the president of an elite ivy league college. However, unlike other college administrators, Swamiji leads as an Enlightened Being and leads through Grace. She serves as the head teacher and as a role model. She serves as a guide as well as a mentor; so many nurturing adjectives describe her.

I encourage you to become a Monthly Donor. As Lalita says above: "It's just the thing to do." As Padmakshi says: "It's a small way to give back." As Randi says: "It's a way to give steady support in a way that will not get lost among the preoccupations of daily life. And I say that paying for your spiritual education includes becoming a Monthly Donor.

Blossoming Forth

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Thank you for your financial support as well as your
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The Power of Basics

By Karuna (Carolyn) Beaver



Kathy Sheridan has been teaching Svaroopa® yoga in Bethesda, MD as a 200-hour teacher for almost eight years. She has taken many continuing education courses in this time period, but this summer Kathy returned to the very beginnings of Teacher Training when she retook Foundations. Her decision to go back to the basics has imparted important improvements to her own practice as well as to assisting her students with theirs.

Karuna (Carolyn) Beaver

She describes her first Foundations experience as revealing. She took the course because she had been taking Svaroopa® yoga classes off and on for several years, and had friends who would join her occasionally. Her friends convinced her to take Foundations so she could teach them. "I hadn't planned on becoming a yoga teacher," she says.

At first Kathy felt overwhelmed, not only with the depth and the details of Foundations and of Svaroopa® yoga, but with the responsibility of teaching and the logistics of all the props required. "I remember being on a phone call with Swami Nirmalananda (then Rama). One of the things we discussed was whether people coming from Foundations could be teachers. I told her about how I wanted to do things just right, so I had my pose sheets there on the floor while I taught," recalls Kathy. "I remember Swamiji telling me, 'Leave the sheets at home, Kathy. You have it all in your body and you won't do your students any harm.'"

"I realized my fear about teaching wasn't about the blankets or the pose sheets," Kathy adds now. "It was about the fear of not doing it right." Not only did she overcome that fear, Kathy went on to remodel her home to accommodate a yoga studio and to develop a student base. "About two years later, it became clear that my students needed more, so I decided to take YTT Level 1. Because I hadn't kept up to date with my training, I had to take a Foundations Review. It was perfect because many of the Foundation poses are in Level 1, with additional adjustments and propping."

After finishing Levels 1 and 2, Kathy took other continuing education courses and continued to build her student base. She's had several students go on to take Foundations and Level 1. "I'm going to be 75 next year, and many of my students are 10 or more years younger. They are looking for a yoga practice to share that is meditative, quiet, and capable of addressing their various aches and pains."

So, with a full teaching schedule and students motivated to carry on the work, why retake Foundations? "Partly, it was because I wanted to check out the Desmond Hotel as a training site," says Kathy. She gives another reason, saying that "it's good to go back to the basics" and explains, "Some props and adjustments are different from when I first took the course, and there are areas where I have some drift. I discovered in Seated Side Stretch that I was sitting too far back on my blankets. I was coached to sit in the middle and it took a lot of strain off my knee. I've passed that along to my students and it's making a difference."

Kathy also felt new ease in her Ujjayi Pranayama practice. Because she wears hearing aids, she can hear her breath on the inside, but wasn't as sure about the external sound she was making. In the partner pairing

with Ujjayi, she was assured that her breath was just fine, and she says, "I had a sense of being able to relax."

"For me," explains Kathy, "the yoga is all about becoming familiar with the inside of your body. What you don't look for, you'll never see. Much of what I learned in this recent Foundations course wasn't so much about my own body, but rather observing my own drift. They were simple things like reviewing the precise propping for the legs or the sacrum in JP, checking a student's heel in Lunge or correctly positioning my own body to raise their heads in Shavasana." She adds, "These small tweaks feel very important. The devil is in the details, and it's important to get the little things right."

Foundations of Svaroopa® Yoga



"Even if you never teach a yoga class — this is an invaluable experience to deepen and enliven your own practice."

— Carolyn Beaver

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Bindu (Maureen) Shortt: Teacher of the Un-Yoga

By Sarah Hunter



Bindu (Maureen) Shortt

Bindu has taught many styles of yoga with the belief that all yoga has value. She has practiced wellness and healing for more than 20 years and combines yoga with Ayurveda, the time-honored science of health and longevity.

Even after years of yoga teaching and personal practice, Bindu's back became very painful. It reached a point where she prayed to God to show her the way to get past the misery. During her daily walk, she always stopped at a stone bridge

that had a rise on the wall, to lean over the wall and open up her back. This temporary relief was her first inadvertent step toward Svaroopa® yoga.

Bindu's sister repeatedly told Bindu about Svaroopa® yoga and the relief that she had gotten. Yet it wasn't until Bindu's sister showed her Slow Motion Dive that she became convinced. Sister knows best! Bindu

sought out a class taught by Swamiji at Kripalu Center. After years of other yoga styles, Bindu found what she called the "un-yoga."

Bindu is now a certified Svaroopa® yoga teacher, Svaroopa® Vidya meditation teacher and Vichara therapist. She has hosted Swamiji for many satsangs at The Solebury Club in Buckingham PA, where Bindu is the Yoga Director; the club owner is also a Svaroopa® devotee. Though many other styles of yoga are taught at the club, Bindu teaches only Svaroopa® yoga.

Her 200+ students usually come in with physical ailments — problems with their back, neck or knees. They have been referred by dentists, chiropractors, acupuncturists and massage therapists. After a few classes their pain starts to go away. Bindu says, "Once they get yoga, the yoga gets them." They find relief and their attitudes change too.

From the simple act of walking across a bridge, Bindu found her way to Svaroopa® yoga and Svaroopa® Vidya meditation. She could not not-teach. The greatest gift is that, as a teacher, she has found her dharma, her purpose in life. She says, "Svaroopa® yoga is healing, illuminating and transformative."

Sweet Potato & Black Bean Veggie Burgers Serves 8

These sweet and spicy veggie burgers are both vegan and gluten free. For best results, prepare the burger mixture in advance and let it chill in the fridge for at least an hour. These veggie burgers are great on their own, on top of a salad or on buns with your favorite burger fixins! I love to serve them with guacamole or a chipotle cashew cream.

1½ pounds sweet potatoes
 ¼ cup millet
 1 cup old fashioned oats (use certified gluten-free oats if you are avoiding gluten)
 1 can (15 ounces) black beans, rinsed and drained (or 2 cups cooked black beans)
 ½ small red onion, diced
 2 teaspoons cumin powder
 1 teaspoon chili powder
 1 teaspoon smoked hot paprika
 ½ teaspoon salt
 Safflower or sunflower oil for cooking burgers (or coconut oil, if you don't mind the coconut taste; olive oil may burn)

Instructions:

1. **Roast the sweet potatoes:** Preheat the oven to 400° Fahrenheit. Place the sweet potatoes on a rimmed baking sheet. Roast until they yield to a gentle squeeze, 30 to 40 minutes or longer. Once the sweet potatoes are cool enough to handle, remove the skin (it should pull off easily) and chop the insides. Set aside to cool completely.
2. **Cook the millet:** In a small saucepan, bring 1 cup of water to boil. Stir in the millet, reduce heat to low and simmer, covered, until tender (about 25 minutes). Drain off any remaining liquid and set aside to cool.
3. **Grind the oats:** Use a food processor or blender to grind the oats until the flakes are broken up, but not as fine as flour.
4. **Mix the burgers:** In a large mixing bowl (or a kitchen mixer) combine the cooled sweet potatoes and millet, black beans, onion, cumin, chili powder, paprika, cayenne and salt. Use a potato masher, big mixing spoon or the paddle attachment of your mixer to mix really well. It's okay if the black beans get smashed in the process.
5. **Mix in the oats:** Sprinkle the ground oats over the mixture and mix well with a big spoon until the mixture holds together when you shape a portion into a patty. If possible, cover and refrigerate the mixture for best results (the patties will hold together better during cooking if they are chilled first).
6. **Shape the burgers:** Use a measuring cup to measure out ⅓ cup of the mixture. Gently shape it into a patty about 3½ inches in diameter. Use your hands to gently flatten the burgers and smooth out any jagged edges. Repeat the process for each patty; you should end up with 8.
7. **Pan fry the burgers:** Heat 1 tablespoon oil in a large cast iron or non-stick skillet over medium heat. When it's hot, place several burgers in the pan, leaving enough room to flip them. Cook each patty until browned and heated through, about 3 to 4 minutes per side. Add 1 tablespoon oil to the skillet for each pan of burgers you fry.
8. Enjoy!

yoga yumminess

By Ali Lopez

Guru Gita "Baby Steps"



Rama (Ruth) Brooke

"For every one step you take toward the Self, the Self takes one thousand steps toward you!" —Swami Nirmalananda

If your goal is Self-Realization, says Swami Nirmalananda, chanting the *Guru Gita* is one of your most important practices, second only to meditation and mantra. Chanting the *Gita* is like being in the room with the Guru. It is spending time with the Guru, no matter where you are.

I first chanted Sri *Guru Gita* during a weekend retreat with Swamiji. Overall, my

immersion was incredibly deep, the deepest I'd gone into the knowing of my own Self. Yet I did not attribute this experience to the early morning, hour-long tongue-twister. My memory of chanting is being unable to pronounce the Sanskrit, finding the melody laborious and redundant and needing to change my seated pose to be more comfortable. The meditation afterwards was wonderful and if you'd asked me later that morning how I liked the Sri *Guru Gita* chant, I'd probably have answered, "Fine!"

Near the close of the weekend, Swamiji told us about her intention to render the *Guru Gita* in English, along with her own commentary on each verse. She would be using Swami Muktananda's translation, along with two or three others as references. She was looking for a couple of sevites to help her transfer (scan/copy/paste) the translations into one document, so that she could easily compare and reference each verse without having to flip among the books. This seva seemed like something I could do, so I offered to take it on. Rukmini was to oversee this seva, which included two other sevites as well.

The project took me almost two years to complete. At first it went smoothly, and I liked reading the translations, transposing approximately one verse a day. But at times I lost the consistent discipline and weeks would go by, during which I did nothing on the project. I received gentle nudging from Rukmini, who would say, "Swamiji is wondering how the seva is going for you, and if you want to continue with this project, or switch to something else?" I knew that I needed to see this project through. I was not yet aware of any great benefit from working with the *Guru Gita*, but I knew I needed to do the seva.

My next experience of the *Guru Gita* with Swamiji was chanting her English version through verse 75, which was as far as she had gotten with her rendering. While the effect was not the same as chanting the Sanskrit, I found it easier and liked hearing the meaning of the verses. I began memorizing Swamiji's English rendering of the *Gita*, including the introductory verses, verses 1-5 and the last verse (#182). This daily *Guru Gita* practice sustained me for a long time. I could do it easily while driving the car or walking the dogs, although I often needed to chant it three times before I could focus my mind on the words and meaning. At the end of the third time through, my mind would quiet and my state would steady. Still, I wasn't aware of the importance of these baby steps and the work they were doing on me.

Swamiji says that the whole of the meaning of the chant is summarized in the first ten verses, and recommends them as an initial *Guru Gita* practice, whether chanting in Sanskrit or in English, from memory or by reading along. For an overview of this project, click [here](#).

Now, a few years later, and after attending the Shaktipat Retreat last August, I have expanded my *Gita* practice a little further (more baby

By Rama (Ruth) Brooke

steps). As we were preparing to depart for home, Rukmini advised us to nurture and sustain the new shakti we'd received through Shaktipat by increasing our meditation practices, including chanting the *Guru Gita* or some part of it, especially over the days immediately following the weekend. I had heard this recommendation perhaps three times before and this time I took it to heart. Or perhaps I was more aware of the shakti this time, and wanted to sustain it.

I decided to do something I hadn't done yet, which was to listen to Swamiji's pronunciation lessons. I listen to one verse a day and practice the pronunciation. I like rhythm; now I feel how the Sanskrit is very rhythmic, and utilizes breath and sound like percussion. Afterwards, I chant along with Swamiji's Sri *Guru Gita* CD, beginning with the introductory chants, then the text itself through the verse I've just learned to pronounce, and end with the last verse. My current *Guru Gita* practice now serves as a fabulous preparation for meditation. Click [here](#) for Swamiji's *Guru Gita* pronunciation lessons.

Swamiji equates chanting the *Gita* to "tongue asana." I can feel how pronouncing the Sanskrit opens tight areas inside my head, and afterwards I have more clarity, both physically and mentally. It has taken a few years for me to become aware of how the *Guru Gita* has been doing its work on me all along, even from my first encounter with it. In addition to the effect on my meditation practice, my mind and on my day, I have a new understanding that it is opening me to a deeper relationship with the Guru, which is also my Self. I also know that I have just barely scratched the surface of the *Gita* practice and the power of its effects. I look forward to continuing my journey with this unfathomable practice.

Others Report on Their *Guru Gita* Practice

*I interviewed other yogis who chant the entire *Guru Gita* regularly, and they describe other ways to engage in the practice:*

"Over time, the *Guru Gita* has become my personal muse. Certain verses stand out for me in times of need, and by memorizing the Sanskrit, I feel Its truth sealing into my cells and illuminating my mind. The verses I have committed to memory feel like they were written just for me. When I recite them, they become a prayer that lifts me up, and carries me to the Self, much as my mantra does." — Yogeshwari (Lissa) Fountain, Southboro MA

"I, too, am doing baby-steps with the *Gita*. I started by listening to it every day in the car and am still doing that. Hearing it every day helps my pronunciation. The other thing I'm doing is to chant the first 10 verses every day before I meditate. That has made a big difference in my entry into meditation." — Karuna (Carolyn) Beaver, Boise ID

"My favorite way of being submerged in Grace is the real time chanting of the *Shishya Guru Gita* over the phone lines with Swami Nirmalananda early on most Thursday mornings. I am in my Guru's presence in a very concrete way, even though I am physically far away. It's as though I am sitting at her feet. I easily fall into meditation at the end. Afterwards, I am energized and joyful as the rest of my day unfolds."

This chanting practice is multi-dimensional experience, engaging my breath as I chant (or attempt to chant) the whole verse on one breath. Swamiji said it can replace Ujjayi Pranayama. My eyes drink in the Sanskrit words, my ears absorb the rhythmic sounds, my voice, throat and tongue produce the words (usually), my arms and hands hold my treasured chanting book at eye level. The chant is an all-engaging practice for my senses. I cannot chant and have my mind be elsewhere."

— Rudrani (Rosemary) Nogue, Calgary Alberta, Canada

continued on page 9

Living Pain Free

By Karuna (Carolyn) Beaver



Allana Frear

Allana started yoga classes in a gym setting four years ago, but found "the more I stretched, the more I contracted. I never got what I was seeking." When a friend encouraged her to try Svaroopa® yoga last winter, Allana began to understand what she was after.

It's Allana's nature to immerse herself fully in whatever she does. She is a pianist, an Aikido practitioner and a body worker. But until she immersed herself in the full spectrum of the Svaroopa® Sciences, including yoga therapy, she "never felt grounded."

Because of her other body-based training, she initially questioned how Svaroopa® yoga works. She wondered, "Am I losing my ability to be strong because my muscles aren't doing anything? I thought, is this yoga legit? It wasn't following the paradigm I was following."

Yet she noticed changes right away. As a body worker, she had exquisite awareness into the inner working of her muscles and joints, having found pain almost everywhere she turned. When she first started classes, pain in her elbow and in her sacrum drove her to distraction. She started receiving weekly *Embodyment*® yoga therapy sessions with her teacher, Matrika (Marlene) Gast, within her first month.

"It was an eye-opener. I felt relaxed. I felt my tailbone lengthening," she says. She started coming to several classes each week as well as doing therapy sessions. "I went at it like I do with everything in my life. I wasn't prepared for all the opening, especially all the emotional release. I spent a lot of time talking to Marlene, who assured me that everything would get better."

And it did. Allana's elbow and sacrum pain lessened; her emotional state began to smooth out. But a simple bend and reach one day sent her right back into pain. Matrika recognized her need for the Treating Pain protocols, especially the therapist's healing bhav (attitude), so she referred Allana to me for a series of treating pain sessions, since I had completed the ATT Treating Pain course some years before.

After several sessions, Allana established a home practice based on Treating Pain recommendations. Allana reports, "I stayed in Shavasana as much as I could, listening to Swami Nirmalananda's Experience Shavasana CD. I did Shavasana and Ujjayi and slowed things way down. One day, I had an experience of this incredible light show, an explosion of light and color. When I got up from Shavasana, my back pain was gone."

As she continued with yoga therapy sessions, her back pain continued to abate, until she participated in a weekend yoga workshop. "Some of the poses were too much for me, and my back tightened up again," Allana says. The workshop leader assured her that with enough practice and time, things would improve.

Allana therefore decided to do a nine-session *Embodyment*® Overlap Healing series. Her body responded quickly, and within the first two sessions Allana was ready to move on to a more advanced therapeutic protocol. However, continuing relapse sent her back to the basics as well as to Ujjayi Pranayama. She is now coming to class whenever she can plus receiving weekly *Embodyment*® Sessions.

Others Report on Their *Guru Gita* Practice

continued from page 8

"I have always been drawn to chanting *Shree Guru Gita*. I didn't know why and I didn't need to know. It just felt familiar, natural and liberating to chant it. What has taken *Guru Gita* chanting to a whole new level for me is Swamiji's pronunciation lessons. They have deepened my experience profoundly as it became, not merely chanting, but a deep internal practice and profound clearing. She explains how the sound of the syllables works; the secret mystical meaning behind it propelled me deeper into my Self. I can actually feel those very tangible changes inside my skull, as well as other openings she describes so beautifully."

Each time I chant, with my pronunciation getting better and more precise, I am recognizing new openings within and without. It is also very blissful when my tongue rolls easily on various syllables by the grace of Shakti/Guru. Of course there are also passages where I stumble, knowing that it is my resistances reflected through the process.

Chanting *Guru Gita* in Sanskrit takes me to a place beyond logic, beyond mind. It can take me even beyond the sound to a profound state of devotion, while piercing through my limitations. It is a fast track to consciousness, to the one Guru/God — reverberating me to my Self."

— Priyaa (Livia) Suver, Calgary Alberta, Canada

AMAYA SHOP



This thick, soft wool asana is perfect to sit on during meditation and chanting. These beautiful asanas were designed by Swamiji and custom-woven in a small village outside of Calcutta by Ramakrishna Mission teachers and villagers.

[Click here](#) to purchase for yourself or a friend.

Allana has discovered that the unfolding process of Svaroopa® yoga classes and therapies "provide both big 'aha' moments and releases and incremental changes." She's grateful for both. "My biggest 'aha' has been learning to relax. I'd been pushing hard for years. Now I realize when I'm tensing up, and I pay attention to what creates tension patterns," she says. "I've also released a lot of negativity. I have better boundaries. I am more assertive, and I ponder how to explain things using more effective words."

Allana says, "Now I can get into my body and stay there. Svaroopa® yoga has taught me how to settle into my body, how to stand, how to walk, how to be."

Svaroopa® Yoga in Europe

Medhira (Trine) Larsen



Medhira (Trine) Larsen

I teach four classes in my own studio In Aarhus, Denmark, each week. I am a Svaroopa® Yoga Basics Teacher and Svaroopa® Vidya Meditation Teacher, due to the trainings I've done in the USA. I began practising Svaroopa® yoga in 2000, and first took Foundations training in 2009. In 2012 I did another Foundations course, together with Level 1, and then completed Level 2 later that year. Last year I took *Embodyment®* Yoga Therapy training and a week-long Ashram retreat, a very deep and special experience. Last February, I took Meditation Teacher Training. Thus, my longing has changed over the years, from doing asanas to seeking the "more" that yoga promises.

Now I am offering the seva of writing for our Svaroopa® Sciences publications as another way to deepen my practice and my relationship to my Guru. In interviewing other European teachers, I

have found that they are also on paths toward the "more" to which our Svaroopa® Sciences so reliably lead us.

Nicoletta Biassoni in St. Andrews, Scotland, took Foundations in 1999, now teaches four classes per week and currently has committed students who are dedicated in their own practice. Her teaching venues include a privately owned spa, a public library and the University of St. Andrews. She hopes to start teaching seniors at two local high schools.

Tirild Oftedal in Stockholm, Sweden, took her first training in 2004, teaches four to six classes each week. She also offers Half-Day Workshops, all in a small but nice rented studio.

Charlotte Jensen from Aarhus, Denmark, went on her first training in 2012, where she took Foundations plus Level 1 and Level 2, along with me, later the same year. Charlotte teaches three classes per week.

Do you have your own Svaroopa® Yoga Community?

Nicoletta: "To some extent I do, as I have been teaching here for about 10 years. It does not feel like a tight community; it isn't an easy place to build community as the University creates a constant turnover of students. I am planning to build it more by creating opportunities to be together also outside of yoga classes/workshops."

Tirild: "My community is me and the students. I also feel that my community is in the US. I am trying to build up a network between teachers in Europe."

What does it give you, by being a Svaroopa® Yoga Teacher?

Nicoletta: "What I like best about teaching is seeing the transformative power of yoga on

my students, whether a new student or someone who has been practicing for a long time, and also being able to support each student through their journey. Teaching also keeps me in the flow of Grace in a very powerful way, and I have found that it's been important for me, especially at challenging times. Teaching teaches me so many things about my students, about human beings, about yoga and about myself. I am grateful to my students and my teachers for giving me this opportunity."

Tirild: "Teaching gives me joy, love, stress about making enough income, and meetings with friendly people (my students and fellow Svaroopis in the world). It gives me some kind of meaning to be able to help others. It also gives me tools to take care of my own tensions and stress."

I had a crisis about a year ago. I was wondering why I do teach? I sat down at my yoga mat and started to read the info on the Lower Spinal Release pose sheets. After a while reading the descriptions of the different adjustments, variations and so on, I was clear about why I teach: I simply love this yoga!"

Charlotte: "It helps me maintain the yoga for myself, to keep inner focus and get even deeper within myself. My emotional tensions are released."

Do you experience that you and your students are seeking for more than just the asanas?

Nicoletta: "Looking for something more in life is what brought me to yoga, over 25 years ago in Italy, where I grew up. I didn't necessarily know what I was looking for, but yoga has

been lighting this path for me ever since. As far as my students, I would say few are looking for something more when they start. Most attend to become more flexible, to soothe aches and pains or to relieve stress. Whether or not they are yet aware of it, though, I do believe it is the experience of "That" which makes them come back every week.

Tirild: "Of course. In every class, my students are seeking the 'more'!"

Charlotte: Yes, a deep longing for Self. The inner knowing of being who we are — that's what compels me as well as my students.

Yoga is so much more than asanas: Chanting, reading Sanskrit texts, meditating etc., do you feel like diving deeper into any of these practices?

Nicoletta: "Yes, my practice has been deepening over the years, and reading, chanting and meditating, are all part of my practice."

Tirild: "I would love to be a meditation teacher too, but right now in order to reach out to new students, I focus on the therapeutic aspects of Svaroopa® yoga. The other aspects would satisfy my current and deeper students with meditation, weekend workshops, studying texts, etc."

Charlotte: "Not now. For me the physical yoga practice is what I am deepening into."

Have you ever thought about hosting a training in your country?

Nicoletta: "Yes, many times. I have been wanting to expand the Svaroopa® yoga community in Europe, and have been talking to Master Yoga over the years. I feel very excited that it is finally happening. This month, two programmes are being offered, one here in Scotland and another one in Denmark."

Charlotte: "Yes, I hope that we can work it out together"

Talking with the other Svaroopa® yoga teachers in Europe was a delight for me. I hope that we can support each other in our teaching, and that we may spread Svaroopa® yoga to create a wider community in Europe.

A Deeper You

by Devi McKenty



Devi (Elizabeth) McKenty

I found this quote from Swamiji recently, when re-reading my notes from YTT.

"If you do yoga today, you will feel better today."

"If you do yoga today, in 10 years you will be a different person."

— Swami Nirmalananda

When you practice Svaroopa® yoga you feel better almost instantaneously. If you are not feeling well when you begin, you feel better after your practice. If you already feel good when you begin, you feel even better afterwards. Therefore, the

statement, "If you do yoga today, you will feel better today..." is not only true but easy to understand.

As wonderful as that is, your practice gives you more than merely feeling good today. Swamiji promises that if you do yoga today, you will be a different person in 10 years. When I read this, I chuckled because, as it happens, I wrote that note down just a little over 10 years ago!

Delighted, I commented to Swamiji that, indeed, with over 10 years of practice, I am a different person. Swamiji replied, "Actually, I find you are much the same — just minus a lot of your mind stuff." What an important refinement to my understanding of the process!

Being a different person might be really appealing to you or it might be downright scary. Consider who you are now; think about how you would describe yourself to someone you just met. Your description would probably include your name, your age, where you live, where you grew up, what you do for a living, what you like to do for fun, the people you know and your relationship to them (mother, son, wife, neighbor, friend, etc.). The way you know yourself is through your actions, who you are in relation to others and your thoughts.

These descriptions are real and true. Yoga does not take any of that away. Yoga affirms that you are all that, and more. Yet this list is just one level of who you are, a superficial level. Yoga shifts your sense of identity from an outer, more superficial level to a deeper inner knowing. Yoga draws you inward to experience your own essence, your own Self, Shiva.

Shiva is Ever-Existent, Ever-Expanding, Ever-Blissful Divine Reality, also called Chiti, the One who manifests the universe out of Her own Being. Chiti means Consciousness, specifically naming the Self-Knowing quality of Shiva.

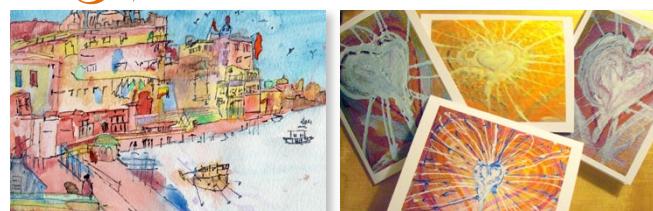
This means that you are the Ever-Existent, Ever-Expanding, Ever-Blissful Reality. If you were describing yourself to a new acquaintance, would you include, "Ever-Blissful Reality, manifesting the universe," on your list?

If not, it is only because your mind hides this truth from you. Shiva designed your mind to be always busy, to keep you from seeing all the way in to the deepest level of your own Self. Thus, the purpose of yoga's practices is to quiet your mind. Svaroopa® yoga practices excel at taking care of your body, quieting your mind, and (most importantly) turning your awareness inward, so you can see who you are at your core.

In a yoga class, when you open your body from tail to top, energy can flow immediately and unimpeded through your spine. This flow brings great healing to your body as well as an inner immersion into a deeper level of your own Self. This same flow of energy also happens when you repeat the enlivened mantra of the Svaroopa® Vidya lineage, whether you chant or repeat it out loud or silently. Your inner experience propels you beyond your mind to an experience of your own Self. Your old self-limiting identity begins to shift. When you go back to your life, you are not stuck in who you used to be. You are more you. You are the deepest you.

All the Svaroopa® practices give you direct access to the Bliss of your own Being, through the energy that rises through your spine. This energy is the same energy that manifests the entire universe; it is pure Shiva. In a human body, this energy lies in a form of pure potentiality called Kundalini. Svaroopa® yoga practices awaken Kundalini, which clears away the stuff that keeps you from knowing your own Self. With the inner blockages cleared, the bliss of your own Being arises from your own being and fills you completely. Now, in your life, you are much the same, yet unburdened by your former "mind stuff." Thus, whatever gets you started doing Svaroopa® yoga, if you do the practices, you will realize your Divine potential.

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Upcoming Programs

Click on [titles](#) for info about Programs. DYNC is Downingtown Yoga Meditation Center.

| NOVEMBER 2014 | | |
|---------------|---|---------------------|
| 6 | Sri Guru Gita 6:30 – 7:45 am | DYMC |
| 6 | Meditation 101 begins 7:30 – 9:30 pm | DYMC |
| 7 – 11 | Foundations of Svaroopa® Yoga | San Diego CA |
| 9 | Swami Sunday 8:30 – 12:15 pm | DYMC |
| 11 | Taking It into Its Fullness | DYMC |
| 11 | Satsang 7:30 – 9:00 pm | DYMC |
| 15 – 16 | Slow Down! | DeKalb IL |
| 15 – 16 | Slow Down! | Warren MA |
| 17 | Pose Clinic 12:00 pm | DeKalb IL |
| 25 | Meditation Made Easy 6:00 – 7:00 pm | DYMC |
| DECEMBER 2014 | | |
| 2 | Satsang 7:30 – 9:00 pm | DYMC |
| 5 – 14 | YTT Level 2 | The Desmond Hotel |
| 13 | Free Yoga Class 1:30 – 3:00 pm | DYMC |
| 13 | Free Yoga Class 3:30 – 5:00 pm | DYMC |
| JANUARY 2015 | | |
| 14 – 18 | EYTS Top to Tail | The Desmond |
| 22 – 25 | DIY: Heart Openers | The Desmond |
| 28 – Feb 4 | ATT 262: Yoga Therapy – Treating Pain | The Desmond |
| FEBRUARY 2015 | | |
| 7 – 20 | India Yatra – Ganeshpuri's Grace | Swamiji in India |
| 22 – 27 | Embodyment® Yoga Therapy Training | Brisbane, Australia |
| 27 – Mar 1 | Experiential Anatomy | Brisbane, Australia |
| 27 – Mar 1 | Yatra to Downingtown | DYMC |
| MARCH 2015 | | |
| 1 – 5 | Foundations of Svaroopa® Yoga | The Desmond |
| 6 – 10 | Foundations of Svaroopa® Yoga | Brisbane, Australia |
| 6 – 15 | YTT Level 2 | The Desmond |
| 10 | Year Long Program with Swamiji begins | Phone Course |
| 14 – 15 | Weekend Workshop | Brisbane, Australia |
| 19 – 22 | YTT Module #1A – Daily Practice | The Desmond |
| 20 – 22 | Shaktipat Retreat | TBD |
| 25 | Yogify Your Life Begins begins | Phone Course |
| 27 – April 3 | ATT 402: Deeper Practice | The Desmond |
| APRIL 2015 | | |
| 11 – 16 | Embodyment® Yoga Therapy Training | The Desmond |
| 17 – 19 | Experiential Anatomy | The Desmond |
| 23 – 26 | EYTS – Foundations Review | The Desmond |
| 26 – 29 | EYTS – Deceptive Flexibility | The Desmond |

| MAY 2015 | | |
|----------------|--|---------------------|
| 01 – 03 | Shaktipat Retreat | The Desmond |
| 07 – 10 | DIY: Knots in Your Neck | The Desmond |
| 12 – 17 | Foundations of Svaroopa® Yoga | The Desmond |
| 20 – 24 | YTT Module #1B – Lower Spinal Release | The Desmond |
| 29 – 07 | Level 4 | The Desmond |
| JUNE 2015 | | |
| 16 – 19 | EYTS – Foundations Review | The Desmond |
| 19 – 28 | Level 1 | The Desmond |
| JULY 2015 | | |
| 7 – 12 | ATT 201: Leading Half Day Workshops | The Desmond |
| 14 – 19 | Foundations of Svaroopa® Yoga | The Desmond |
| 23 – 26 | YTT Module #1C – Upper Spinal Release | The Desmond |
| 28 – Aug 2 | Meditation Teacher Retreat & Continuing Ed | The Desmond |
| AUGUST 2015 | | |
| 5 – 9 | EYTS – Embodyment® Poses | The Desmond |
| 20 – 23 | DIY: Strength & Flexibility | The Desmond |
| 28 – 30 | Year Long Program Retreat | The Desmond |
| SEPTEMBER 2015 | | |
| 2 – 9 | Leading a Discussion Group | Phone Course |
| 3 – 6 | YTT Module #2A – Abdominals | The Desmond |
| 11 – 20 | Level 3 | The Desmond |
| 25 – Oct 5 | ATT 465: Yoga Therapy – Neck & Shoulders | The Desmond |
| 25 – 27 | Shaktipat Retreat | Swamiji at TBD |
| OCTOBER 2015 | | |
| 10 – 15 | Embodyment® Yoga Therapy Training | The Desmond |
| 16 – 18 | Experiential Anatomy | The Desmond |
| 20 – 25 | Foundations of Svaroopa® Yoga | The Desmond |
| 23 | Shaktipat Retreat with Swamiji | Brisbane, Australia |
| 24 – 25 | Weekend Workshop with Swamiji | Brisbane, Australia |
| 27 – Nov 1 | ATT 262: Yoga Therapy – Treating Pain | Brisbane, Australia |
| NOVEMBER 2015 | | |
| 1 – 5 | Retreat with Vichara with Swamiji | The Desmond |
| 8 – 15 | ATT 403: Lower Spinal Release | The Desmond |
| 18 – 22 | YTT Module #2B – Backbends | The Desmond |
| DECEMBER 2015 | | |
| 4 – 6 | Regional Conference – Full Spectrum Yoga | San Diego CA |