

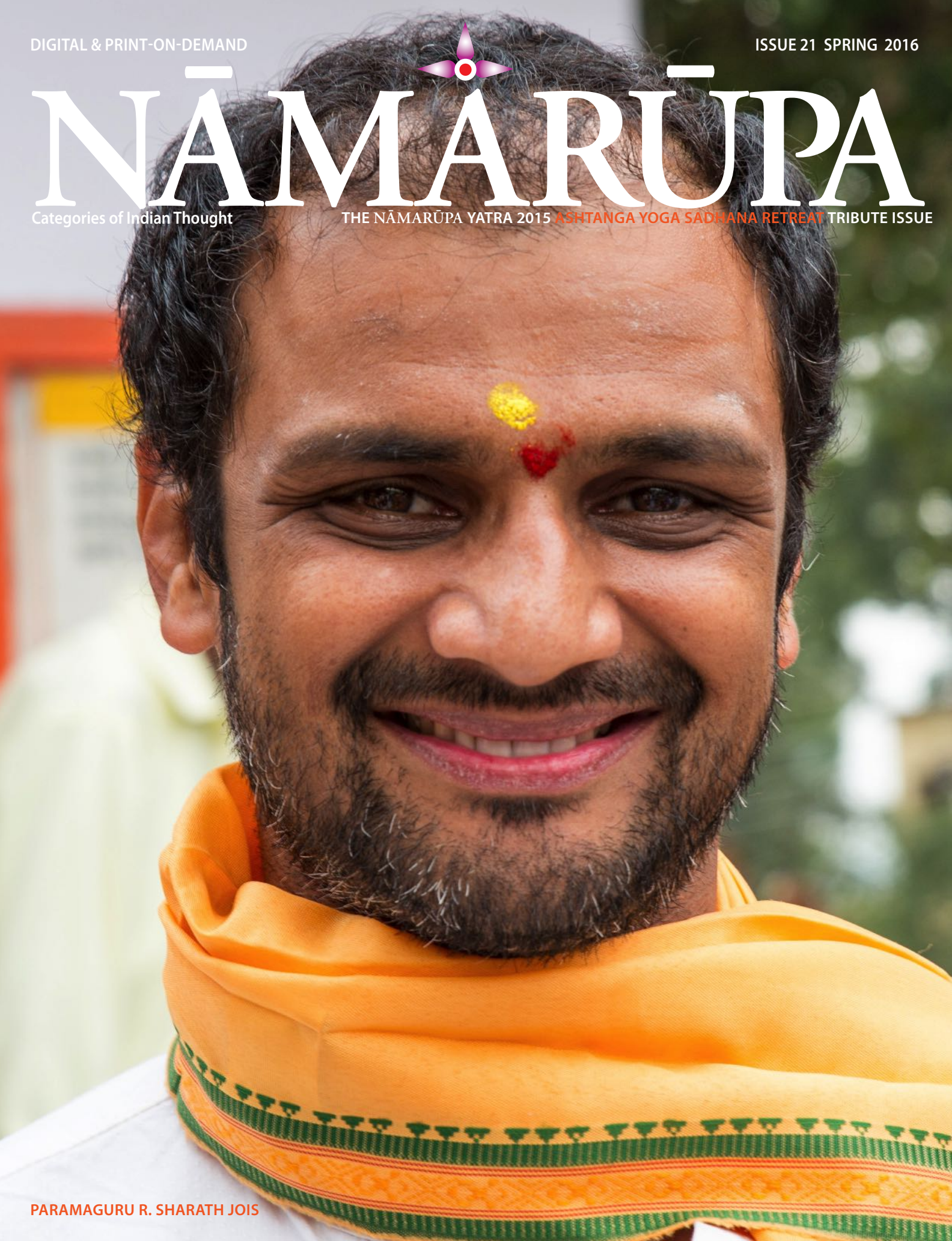
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ISSUE 21 SPRING 2016

NĀMARŪPA

Categories of Indian Thought

THE NĀMARŪPA YATRA 2015 ASHTANGA YOGA SADHANA RETREAT TRIBUTE ISSUE



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Back cover: *Welcome sign at Kashi Vishwanath Mandir, Uttarkashi.*

October 13, 2015.

NĀMARŪPA *Categories of Indian Thought*, established in 2003, honors the many systems of knowledge, practical and theoretical, that have originated in India. Passed down through the ages, these systems have left tracks, paths already traveled that can guide us back to the Self—the source of all names **NĀMA** and forms **RŪPA**. The publishers have created this journal out of a love for the knowledge that it reflects, and desire that its content be clear and inspirational, without any particular agenda or sectarian bias.

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NĀMARŪPA YATRA guides annual pilgrimages to sacred places in India.

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ISSUE 21 SPRING 2016

THE **NĀMARŪPA** YATRA 2015

ASHTANGA YOGA SADHANA RETREAT TRIBUTE ISSUE

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NĀMARŪPA uses

diacritical marks, as per the chart, for the transliteration of all Saṁskṛta words.

Many of the articles do contain these marks, but it is not a universal occurrence in the magazine. In

those cases where authors have elected not to use diacritics,

Saṁskṛta words remain in their romanized form.

अ	आ	इ	ई	उ	ऊ
a	ā	i	ī	u	ū
ए	ऐ	ओ	औ		
e	ai	o	au		
ऋ	ॠ	ऌ	ॡ	अं	अः
ṛ	ṝ	ḷ	ḹ	am̐	aḥ
क	ख	ग	घ	ङ	
ka	kha	ga	gha	ṅa	
च	छ	ज	झ	ञ	
ca	cha	ja	jha	ña	
ट	ठ	ड	ढ	ण	
ṭa	ṭha	ḍa	ḍha	ṇa	
त	थ	द	ध	न	
ta	tha	da	dha	na	
प	फ	ब	भ	म	
pa	pha	ba	bha	ma	
य	र	ल	व		
ya	ra	la	va		
श	ष	स	ह		
śa	ṣa	sa	ha		
क्ष	त्र	ज्ञ			
kṣa	tra	ñā			



*R. Sharath Jois
Conference at Tapovan Kuti,
Uttarkashi, Uttarakhand,
India. October 14, 2015*

NĀMARŪPA YĀTRĀ 2015

An epic pilgrimage in two parts
from Varanasi to the Himalayas
various options during October 2015

&

an opportunity to combine the yatra with a special
ASHTANGA YOGA SADHANA RETREAT



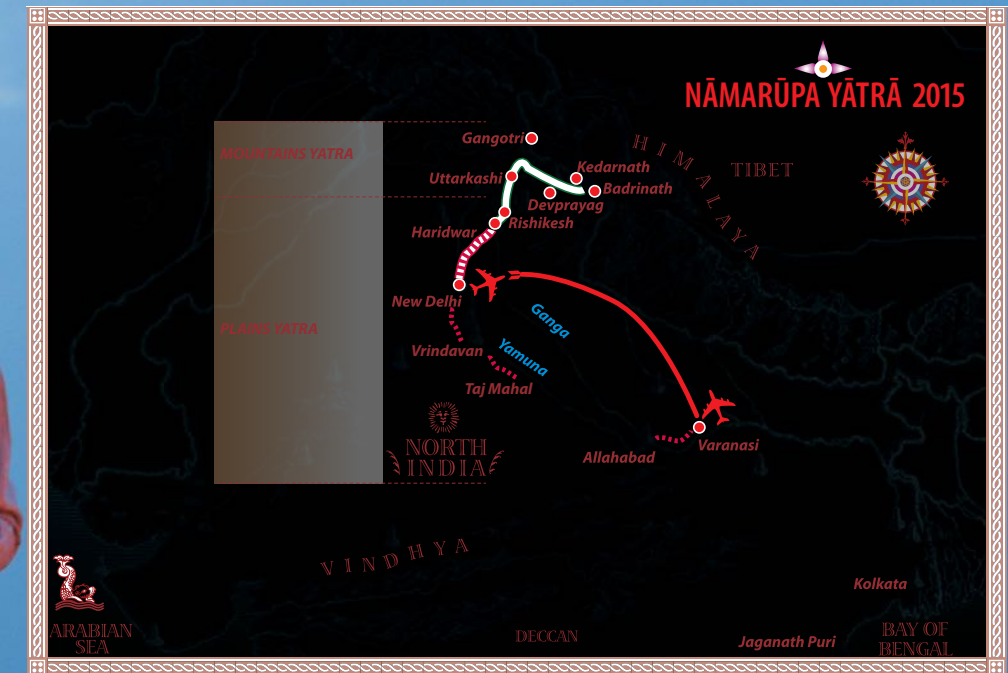
with **SHRI R. SHARATH JOIS**
in Uttarkashi, Himalayas, India
October 12-17, 2015

presented by

NĀMARŪPA & **ASHTANGA
YOGA
NEW YORK**



The poster for the Nāmarūpa Yātrā 2015. During the summer 2014 Nāmarūpa Yātrā Divine, we stayed at Tapovan Kuti in Uttarkashi, Himalayas and practiced morning asanas in their satsang hall. The energy of Swami Tapovanam, who had resided there for many years, inspired me to suggest to Eddie Stern that we have a retreat there. Eddie said that he had talked to Sharath often about going to the Himalayas. Eddie asked Sharath if he would teach a week there and Sharath said yes. This set our Yātrā 2015 in motion. Over 150 people attended. Photo: Bhagirathi River at Chirbasa, en route from Gangotri to Gomukh, 2014. ©Robert Moses.



Page from the brochure for the Nāmarūpa Yātrā 2015. Although the highlight of the Yātrā was the Ashtanga Yoga Sadhana Retreat in Uttarkashi, there were actually nine different options for people to attend. The full program would last the whole month of October and was divided into the Plains Yātrā, the Ashtanga Yoga Sadhana Retreat, and the Mountains Yātrā. The full itinerary included New Delhi, Varanasi, Vrindavana, Haridwar, Rishikesh, Uttarkashi, Guptakeshi, Kedarnath, Tunganath, Triyuganarayan, Kalimath, Badrinath, Kartikswami, Rudraparayang, and Devprayag. Photo: Ganga Arati in Varanasi at Assighat, 2014. ©Robert Moses



Group Photo. Tapovan Kuti, Uttarkashi, Uttarakhand, Himalayas. October 16, 2015

WELCOME SPEECH

PALLAVI SHARMA DUFFY

NĀMARŪPA YATRA 2015 IN UTTARKASHI, HIMALAYAS

GOOD EVENING, YOGIS.

Thanks to technology, I have my speech here on my mobile and not on a sheaf of papers for you to guess the length of the speech I am going to make, so you will have to take my word that I am going to be short and sweet. Just a short thanks and a background of why Namarupa Yatra 2015 and the presence of all of you wonderful people is so significant to us. I hope this is reassuring to most of you who hate formal speeches as much as I do. Also, if you find me looking at my mobile, I am just reading this speech as I have not memorized it. I promise I am not checking WhatsApp or Facebook messages.

As a representative of the residents of Uttarkashi, I am a bit late in welcoming you, since you have already been here for a few days. Let me instead express the greater sentiment of the people of this little town by saying that it is a great pleasure to see you all here and I am sure the sentiment has been expressed in a multitude of ways everywhere you go and interact with people of Uttarkashi, from the smiles on the faces of the people you meet, to the ringing tills of the businesses that are blessed by your presence. If you are wondering why we are so pleased to see you, this is why.

As some of you may already know, Uttarkashi was dealt a double whammy by nature when we had two floods within ten months. The first flood went unnoticed by most of the world, as it was a local disaster affecting just the district of Uttarkashi, but it had a greater impact on us as it contributed to the destruction caused by the second flood. The second flood got widespread coverage and attention as it affected a much larger area and killed thousands of people, and many are still missing.

The immediate impact of the floods was that people lost their loved ones, land, property, and possessions. The

roads disappeared, and food and supplies became extremely scarce. Most of us lived through it and looked for a brighter future. But, there was the long-term impact that few, if any, expected.

This was the dwindling of the pilgrims, or *yatris* as we call them, to the *chardhams*. The entire economy of this part of the Himalayas has for the past few years been dependent on the influx of *yatris* who come to visit the temples of Gangotri and Yamnotri in Uttarkashi district. With the *yatris* scared of coming to Uttarkashi because of the stories and news coverage of the second flood, the livelihood of thousands of people in this region was affected.

The sleepy town that had grown in the last couple of decades into a busy little hub for the *yatris* suddenly wore a deserted, sad look. The once bustling bazaar had hardly any people in it. The impact was not just financial, it was also emotional and psychological, which was reflected in the spirit of the people of Uttarkashi.

Two years have passed since the deluge washed our homes, businesses, and spirits away. For two years people have been struggling to devise ways to keep afloat, to pay off loans they took to build properties and businesses that are no longer there, two years of hopelessness and despair that saw several amongst us committing suicide, unable to bear the pressure of living a life that was devoid of hope. Love and sympathy that had poured in from across the world in the wake of the flood had dwindled and the harsh realities of life were hard for a lot of people to accept. The broken spirit found it hard to clutch on to slim hope and gave up. We lost many.

Now, you have come to us as a ray of hope. Yours is the largest group of people that has been to Uttarkashi since the floods. Your presence itself is a reason for many to rejoice, as it will send out the word to others that Uttarkashi is safe,



Uttarkashi is beautiful, and Uttarkashi should be included in itineraries of prospective yogis and travellers.

It is not known how many of you would have come here on your own if it were not for Namarupa Yatra 2015 and the indomitable spirit of its organizers—Sri Robert Moses, Eddie Narayan Stern, and Sri Sharath Jois, the wonderful guiding lights that led you here to this beautiful area and the *Yog Bhumi* of Uttarkashi. I would like to thank each one of you and our very own Swami Janardana for providing this platform to the residents of Uttarkashi to express their heartfelt gratitude to all of you who bring with you a sense of hope and promise of better times to come.

I have no clue as to what it took to persuade 150 of you from 36 different countries to come together on this Yatra. Later perhaps, I will have to ask the organizers for the secret of their power of persuasion and organization, and implement it here in perpetuity to get more people to visit Uttarkashi than ever before. Here, I would like to thank all three of them for bringing all of you and spreading the word around that Uttarkashi is still beautiful and worthy of a visit.

Thank you. 🙏

Pallavi Sharma Duffy is a writer. She lives in the Himalayas observing nature and life as it unfolds.



Young girls of Uttarkashi wave a welcome.



PARAMAGURU R. SHARATH JOIS

CONFERENCES AT TAPOVAN KUTI, UTTARKASHI, HIMALAYAS, NORTH INDIA

FIRST DAY

*Om ajnana timirandhasya jnananjana
shalakhaya chakshurunmilitam yena
tasmai sri gurave namah*

THIS IS FIRST TIME FOR ME IN Uttarakhand; it's the first time I have ever come here. I know, for many of you it is the first time, too. This region of India is a very special place; it's a holy place for Hindus, and we come here to do lots of rituals. Many saints, many sadhus, and many yogis have come here and done lots of *tapas* here, so it's a very special place, especially for yoga practitioners.

As all of you know, what we are practicing is Ashtanga Yoga, which came from this part of India. Krishnamacharya travelled in this region and this is where he found a yogi called Rama Mohana Brahmachari. Rama Mohana Brahmachari lived somewhere in this region, but nobody knows where. We have only heard it through Krishnamacharya, and I heard it from my grandfather, Sri K. Pattabhi Jois. This practice that we are doing is an age-old practice; it has come from *parampara*, from the *guru-shishya* parampara—from Guru to his shishyas, Guru to his students. When a student becomes a master, then he becomes a Guru and passes his knowledge on to his students. Like this, the yoga knowledge has been passed on for generations. As we know it in this form of Ashtanga Yoga, it has come from maybe 300 years ago—I don't know for how many generations this knowledge has been passed on.

When Krishnamacharya came to this region, he was already a very great Sanskrit scholar. He had studied many Vedas and had eight degrees. To get one degree it takes twelve years—he had eight degrees. That doesn't mean that he had to spend twelve years on each degree; once you do one it is easier to do others. So he had eight degrees, Then he wanted to get practical experience;

he had all the book knowledge—theory he knew—but he wanted a practical experience, because without practical experience, you cannot know what yoga is. Yoga is experiencing within you. Anyone can read books and say, “Oh, *yogas cittavritti nirodha*”, but how do you experience that? It comes only through the teaching of a Guru; only a master can show you how to do that, only a master. So he was looking for a master who could teach him all the techniques so that he could get more clarity about yoga. He went in search of a Guru, and someone told him that he should go meet Rama Mohana Brahmachari, “Only he can teach you”. So he went to find him, and Rama Mohana Brahmachari wouldn't speak to him. He wanted to make sure that Krishnamacharya was a serious student. Now, in the Mysore shala, you make an application and you'll be accepted; then there was no application. If the Guru accepts you, only then can you learn from him. Rama Mohana Brahmachari said to Krishnamacharya, “No, you go, it's not possible for you to learn”, but Krishnamacharya was very stubborn; he said he sat there for two days, and then Rama Mohana Brahmachari came and started talking to him. Krishnamacharya spoke to him in Sanskrit, and Rama Mohana Brahmachari was impressed. He said to him, “How long can you stay here?” And Krishnamacharya said, “You have to tell me, however long you say, I will stay. I can stay here forever.” He stayed for eight years learning with Rama Mohana Brahmachari. So this method came because of Krishnamacharya; otherwise it would not be with us, and we wouldn't be relishing this practice.

So, why Ashtanga Yoga? As you all know it is eight steps: *yama, niyama, asana, pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana*, and *samadhi*. These are the eight limbs, or steps. But in *shastra* it says you have to do asana first (before *yama* and *niyama*)—*hathasya pratamangatvad asana purvam uchhyate kuryat tadasanam sthairyam*

arogyam changalaghavam (Hatha Yoga Pradipika, 1.16). First we have to make the body stable and make the mind stable, then only is it possible to go to the higher levels of yoga, the other limbs. When your body itself is not stable, when your mind itself is not stable, how can you think about pranayama, pratyahara, dharana, dhyana or samadhi? It's not possible. To bring stability to your body and mind, first they say you have to do asanas, asanas with breathing techniques, how we do *vinyasa krama*.

This is very important. When we do vinyasa krama, our whole body gets purified, all our organs inside get purified and become stronger; your body will become stable and your mind also will become more focused. For focusing the mind, we use *dristi*. You have to gaze in a certain place while doing asanas, and that improves your concentration or focus. Only once we master asanas, can we then go to the other limbs. This is the Ashtanga yoga method which Krishnamacharya taught; later on he passed it on to Gururji. Gururji is the one who carried on his Guru's teaching. This is the parampara.

Without *yama niyama*, this is not full, so then we have to think about *yama niyama: ahimsa, satya, asteya, brahmacharya, aparigraha, saucha, santosha, tapas, svadhyaya, ishvarapranidhana*. We will talk about this on other days. This is just a small talk on how this practice came—many of you already know how it came. So, thank you all for coming. I would like to thank Robert and Eddie—Eddie told me last year, in September, we should do something like this—there is *Namarupa Yatra*, so in that yatra we can do four or five days of yoga class. I have never been here so it was a good opportunity for me to come here and to teach a small class. So we'll see you again for four more days. Keep practicing. See you tomorrow. 🙏

Photographs of R. Sharath Jois talking to the group during conference after the morning asana classes at Tapovan Kut, Uttarkashi during the Ashtanga Yoga Sadhana Retreat, October 2015.



SECOND DAY

*Om ajnana timirandhasya jnananjana
shalakhaya chakshurunmilitam yena
tasmai sri gurave namah*

YESTERDAY WE TALKED ABOUT THE parampara—how this practice has come from Rama Mohan Brahmachari. Ashtanga yoga is the real yoga. Why? Ashtanga yoga talks about yama niyama. Yama has five sub-limbs: ahimsa, satya, asteya, brahmacharya, aparigraha. Ahimsa, non-violence. Satya, to be true, to be true to yourself, to others. Asteya, non-stealing. Brahmacharya, celibacy. Next, aparigraha. Not to hold. Not to steal. Not to take that which doesn't belong to you. This is niyama: saucha, santosha, tapas, swadhyaya, ishwarapranidhana. Saucha, to be clean, to be pure. There are two things in saucha. One is *antar* saucha, another is *bahir* saucha. Antar saucha is to keep clean internally. Internally clean means to cleanse our nervous system. That is why we do so many asanas, to purify the nervous system, to clean our nervous system. To have good thoughts is also to be clean. Internal clean and external clean. External clean means to keep your clothes clean, to keep your environment clean. This is called as *bahir* saucha.

Santosha, contentment, is to be happy with whatever you have. Some people have everything. Still, they are not happy. Oh, we want that. Happy is not just smiling like this. Happiness comes from inside. So be happy with whatever you have. That is santosha.

Tapas. Tapas is also very important. What is tapas? To lead a disciplined life is called tapas. Tapas is not only going to the mountain and closing your eyes; that needs lots of discipline. But also to have discipline in daily life; every day getting up at the same time, early morning, and doing your own practice, having food at this time, it's also a tapas. You can't go in the evenings and party till 2:00 am and come and practice yoga. It's not possible.

So how to have discipline in our life? That is also very important and tapas will take us to the higher levels of yoga.

Swadhyaya, self-study. This is very

confusing for many people. Self-study—"self"—many people think self-study means, "Oh, I don't need a teacher. I don't need a guru. I can just read books." Now there are lots of videos about yoga. Someone will teach you handstand. You see someone doing handstand. That means he's a big yogi. "Oh, I don't need a teacher. Oh, I'm doing swadhyaya." Long back I met a crazy person. She came to me and, "I was a trained dancer," she said—and she was asking questions. To the answers, "Oh, I know, I know, I know." If you know, then why are you coming to me and asking questions? Then I was very curious. I asked her, "Where did you learn yoga? Who's your teacher?" "Oh, I don't have a teacher. I'm doing swadhyaya," she said. "Swadhyaya, what does swadhyaya mean?" I asked. "Oh, I'm watching videos. I'm reading books. And I'm learning yoga." I said, "Okay. That's where your knowledge is only this much [gestures small amount]."

Swadhyaya means, whatever you learn from your guru, you try to know and practice that. After this workshop, whatever you have learned, to practice, and study that. To improve that in your daily life. And to read all the books. Not the modern books. Ancient books. Veda, Upanishads. *Bhagavad Gita*. Samhitas. There are so many books. *Patanjali Yoga Sutra*, *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*.

In Kannada, we have a saying, some students are lazy, but the teacher never forgets, the master never forgets. But if student is lazy, he doesn't even want to put effort to learn. So the teacher will never forget his knowledge, and the lazy student will never learn. Once you read those books, you get more knowledge about this practice. Practical experience is also important. And philosophy is also very important. When both come together, only then can you find a meaning for your practice. So that is swadhyaya, study. The teacher can teach you. But if you don't put in the effort to know what it is, you will never learn.

Only once we make the effort, that is the sadhana. Only once we make the effort to know what it is, then only can this yoga be understood. Ishwara-

pranidhana is the last one. Swadhyaya and ishwarapranidhana are almost the same. Swadhyaya says, *svadhyayat ishta devata samprayogah*.—[By swadhyaya, union with the desired deity is brought about.] That is, once we try to get attached to the divine—whichever god you believe in, get close to it, or get attached to it—that is when *japa* comes. Once you do *japa* with *artha* and *bhavana*, that is good, with meaning and with good intention. That is also very important. Have you heard of *japa*? *Japa* is to chant. Whichever deity you like, chanting that continuously is called *japa*. *Tajjapas tadartha bhavanam*—[To repeat the name of the divine, with reflection on its meaning is a benefit.]—the proper meaning, meaningfully, you should do *japa* with good *bhavana*.

Once we do this, this will help iswarapranidhana. Ishwarapranidhana means to surrender to the divine. Many people in the West, it's a different culture, when someone says "Surrender", get scared, they say, "Oh, I don't want to surrender myself". Indian culture is different. We surrender ourselves to guru. That is how the knowledge will come to us. If you doubt your Guru, then the knowledge will never come.

So this is very important in our ashtanga practice. Once we follow these limbs, while doing asanas. Just doing asanas, just bending the body, is not enough. It is not the final stages of yoga.

Doing asanas, it is to bring stability and strength, to purify the nervous system. Everything happens while practicing asanas. But that doesn't take you to higher levels. It is the foundation, but not the final levels. So when you practice all this yama niyama while practicing asanas, then there'll be a different meaning for your practice. So why ashtanga yoga?

*yogaanga anushthanat ashuddhikshyaye
jnana diptih aviveka khyateh*

*[By practicing the eight limbs of yoga
impurities are eliminated until
the rise of spiritual aspiration and
knowledge culminates in the
realization of one's true nature]*

This is what happens. By doing, by practicing these eight limbs of yoga, by *ashuddhikshyaye*, impurities in the body and mind will be flushed out, will be removed. Jnana *diptihi*. Jnana means the true spiritual knowledge will come to you. Once that spiritual knowledge comes, you become wiser in the practice. This is the benefit of doing ashtanga.

Questions & Answers (Selections)

SO YESTERDAY, I PROMISED YOU, IF you have any questions you can ask me. I want to keep the promise.

Q: I wanted to ask something about pranayama. I wonder about the pranayama that Gururji used to teach. Do you practice this or teach this?

R. SHARATH JOIS: I teach. When students are ready, I'll teach them. You can't teach everything to everyone. Still, this is what the problem is. Everyone wants to know everything, but they are not ready to know that. So this is when the problem starts. When someone is ready to know it, then definitely I'll teach it. We've been doing lots of pranayama classes in Mysore for senior students, who are students who come every year, or more often, to Mysore. We do pranayama. Pranayama should be done properly.

*Pranayamena yuktena
sarvarogakshaya bhavet |
ayuktabhyasayogena
sarvarogasamudbhava ||
Hatha Yoga Pradipika, 2.16*

This is what Sastra says. By doing pranayama, we can get rid of many diseases. If you are not ready, if you don't do it properly, then you will invite unwanted diseases. So this Sastra also says--

*tasmin sati swasa prasvasayor
gati vicchedah pranayama
Yoga Sutras, 2.49*

Asanam sade siddhi—this means that once we have mastered an asana, then only you do pranayama. Especially *kumbhaka* pranayama. *Kumbhaka* pranaya-

ma, you have first master an asana to do that. You can't just hold breath and do. There are different variations in that.

First, you have to be stable. When your body is not stable, can you sit in padmasana for half an hour? Suddenly you want to move, no? Now, in each asana, after five breaths you are waiting for me to count 5! Body stability has to come. Mind stability. Everything should be stable. Then you do pranayama, it becomes easy for you.

So I have been teaching this as a therapy, I have seen many people cured who have asthma, bronchitis, breathing problems. For the past four years I have been working on some people. One district commissioner of Mysore has come, he had severer asthma. He couldn't even breathe properly - I had to work with him for 3 months, to some of these breathing techniques. He was allergic to so many things, he was allergic to dust, to plants, and you know in India there is a lot of pollution, so he was affected by all these things. So once I tried for three months and it cured him a lot. He started feeling better, he could breathe properly, and there was no asthma attacks like he used to have. His attacks reduced. So I thought I should teach it to all of my students, so I started teaching it to everyone.

And there was one more boy who had two windpipes, have you heard? One was small, one was regular, and next to it was a very small one. So what the doctors said was that he had to do lots of breathing techniques, that you have to take him to a master. So he came to our shala and I taught him many asanas and breathing techniques. This vinyasa are very powerful. The vinyasa makes your

lungs very strong, it makes the organs strong, it even makes the nervous system strong. So I worked with him for many months. What the doctors said that if he breaths in the regular windpipe, then the other windpipe will die. Then it worked. Now he is feeling much better, he doesn't have any problem now. I have never told this, because I don't like to say "Oh I did this, I did that" because it is the yoga that does it. Just applying this thing we can cure many diseases. So this is why I started teaching these breathing techniques, and it has helped so many people - not just four or five, but many.

Good? Satisfied? [Laughter]

In India we have a few plants which are not very good for breathing. One is *parthenium*. Many people are allergic to that plant. Now it is getting less - it grows very quickly, but it is very bad for so many people. So this breathing technique is good to get rid of all of these allergies. I have tried myself with so many people, especially for the plants.

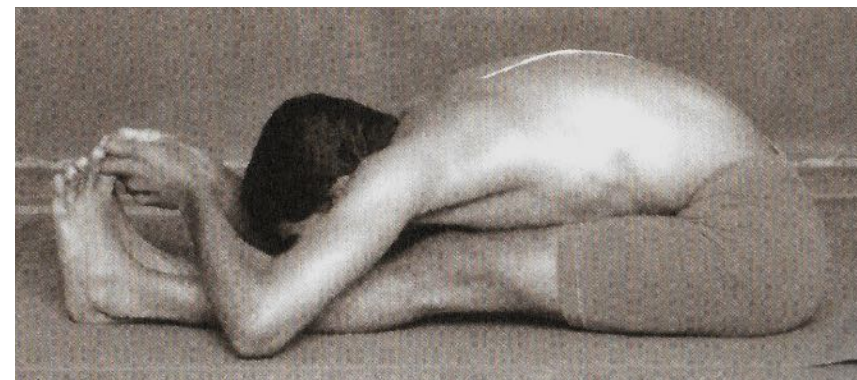
Q: Can you explain the nadis, and how many there are, and how they work?

RSJ: There are 72,000 nervous systems in the body. The particular nadis, they are so particular it will take one hour to explain everything. We can discuss it one day.

Q: In the *Yoga Makaranda*, it says to hold with the fingers, catching toes. How does that, how does that connect, energetically-wise?

RSJ: Which one?

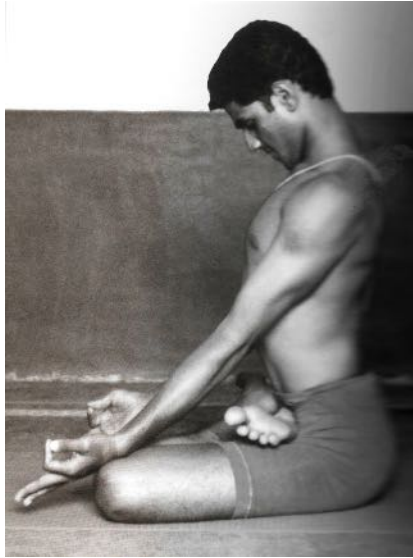
Q: Holding with the three fingers. Like it says it *Yoga Makaranda* we must do it with the three fingers. What does that do?



RSJ: What does that do? Means?

Q: Just –

RSJ: You can't hold with your whole hand, your toe is only this big (gestures) [laughter]. Each posture you hold like this, or like this, the energy flows. In Maricyasana and other postures, don't hold the hands like this (indicates jnana mudra), this should only be done in padmasana. Otherwise, Brahma, Vishnu, Mahesvara, everything is one, there is no two - this is the meaning. You should only hold the hand in a full grip



Jnana mudra in padmasana

in the asanas, then your body becomes stable.

When you hold the toe like this, see how much grip is there. Your body becomes more stable, steady. When your body is steady, stable, then the breathing happens, the cycle of breathing, inhalation, exhalation, inhalation, exhalation. Internal energy is generated. When you are doing vinyasa, when you are doing this practice, there's internal energy that is generating. When you're breathing more consciously, the energy also will flow inside. We are already doing pranayama in asanas. What is pranayama? To extend the prana.

Normally when we are breathing, inhalation and exhalation, 21,600 times a day. When you concentrate on the breath more, when you consciously breathe, then, it is pranayama. Can you put your attention on your breath, everyday, for how long? How many of you can keep your attention on your breath for many

hours? How long can you keep it there? You can't put your attention completely on your breath because your mind is somewhere else. When you are practicing, you're putting attention towards your breath, to your posture, to gazing. So there are so many things happening. And you're not breathing normally; when you're practicing, your breathing is longer than your normal breathing. If normally you breathe twice, when you're doing asana, it will be once. So you have extended the prana; you have extended life also. Your life is dependent on your number of breaths. Once you lengthen your breath, your lifespan also will increase.

So, many "Why?"s do not have answers — you have to do it like this, or that, because the energy will flow. It just happens.

Q: What is the minimum amount of time that you can do asana practice to get the benefit during the day, if you can't do your full practice?

RSJ: You do half an hour, forty minutes. Half an hour of asana, forty minutes of asana is very good for you. The whole day will be refreshed. But yoga should happen twenty-four hours. Long ago, someone asked, "How many hours is your yoga practice?" I said, "Twenty-four hours." He said, "Twenty-four hours? How it is possible to do Twenty-four hours?" What they think is, asana is all, asana is the only yoga. They think if you practice asana, that means you are doing yoga. Asana practice is for three hours. But the yoga practice is for twenty-four hours.

Every day, early morning, if you do *Brahma muhurta*, then it is very good. The whole day will be very good, very fresh. After practice, you'll become energetic. You can just straightaway feel that. One more question.

Q: Until today, in the standing deep forward bends, even though I'm practicing vinyasa and the breathing, when I come up, I feel dizzy, or I lose my balance. Is there a technique, internally, that I'm missing, that I can use so I don't get that dizziness?

RSJ: While coming up, when you're doing forward bend, suddenly when you come up, your blood will rush. Your

blood will rush opposite. When you're going down also. If you go too fast, your blood will rush towards the brain. So you have to be very careful when coming up, when going down. Especially if you have blood pressure.

Go slowly. And take a deep breath, and come up. The vinyasa is very important. While going down you should exhale, while coming up you have to inhale. When that circulation is not good, if it doesn't happen properly, then you get dizzy. You have to come slowly up, slowly down. You have to concentrate on the breath. And while coming up, also, you have to follow that inhalation, exhalation.

Until now, doctors used to say, "Don't do asanas for blood pressure. It's not good." Now doctors say, "You practice asana." Twenty years back, some students used to come to Mysore, to our shala. They had some body ache, or some fever, or something. They used to go to a doctor. Doctor says, "What are you doing in Mysore practicing yoga with Pattabhi Jois? Oh, yoga. Don't practice. It's not good for you." Now doctors say it's good for you. Now they're writing prescription, they write, "Go to Sharath."

Robert Moses: One doctor consultation, two doctors prescription, three doctors, cremation.

RSJ: Yes, my grandfather always used to say: *vaidya dvaiyam, rogi nipadabetu*. It means, "Two doctors will kill one patient." One doctor, consultation. Two doctors, prescription. Three doctors, cremation. You have a problem, One doctor writes one prescription. He says, "Take these tablets." You go to another doctor, who sees the prescription and says, 'Oh, you don't want this one. That doctor's not good. So come to me.' And he writes you a different prescription." You are confused. The patient is confused. He doesn't know what to do, to take this medicine or that medicine. Then he ends up taking both the medicines. Then he will die.

So Guruji, my grandfather, used to say, "Two doctors, the patient is dead." It's the same with the gurus. You go to this guru, he says one thing; another guru says something else. If you go on Facebook—I've never been. I'm not in Facebook; I'm not in anywhere—but I

keep hearing students saying, "Oh, this guy has a good post." In that post, he says, "Oh, I've been to this teacher, this teacher, this teacher." Like, he's had fifteen teachers. And he's a crazy guy. He doesn't know what he's doing, what he's teaching.

That's why in India, we always follow one guru, one lineage. Whichever lineage you feel is good, follow that lineage. If you see advertisement, or someone is putting up lots of big, big banners that say, Oh, they teach everything—yama niyama asana pranayama pratyahara dharana dhyana samadhi. Fifteen days teacher training course. After fifteen days teacher training course, they take you to samadhi. "How can I tell?" They give you a certificate; you're in samadhi now. If you do 200 hours, 500 hours, you can reach samadhi without any sadhana. You want to do that? After doing that, you'll come to know, "Oh, this was only for money."

Q: You talked about the need to surrender to your teacher. Why do you think somebody would be scared of taking that step and surrendering?

RSJ: They have some problem [laughter]. It depends on culture, also. You're brought up in different way. I'm brought up in different way. From childhood, I've been hearing about spirituality, about guru parampara, all those things. In India, we are all spiritual by birth.

At a young age, they teach you small, small chants. They'll teach you about guru, how guru is important in your family. You see, each and every family in India has a guru. A family guru. Whatever they want to do, they'll take a suggestion from the guru. If they want to do some puja, they'll go to the guru. This is not there in the Western culture. Now you are just coming to know what guru is. Your parents never taught you. They always taught you, "Don't surrender to anyone. You have to stand up and fight with everyone." For you surrendering has a different meaning. Someone will put you down, beat you up - that is surrender - if you get beaten by someone, that means you have surrendered. Here, surrender means to offer everything.

Here, if you want to learn some knowledge, you have to surrender to your guru. Surrender means from your heart. *Kayam manasa vacha*—body, mind, speech. If your mind is not attentive to what guru is saying, you will miss so many things. Surrender means with your senses, surrender your senses. Grasp what he's saying. Once the guru is talking, a student who's very attentive will grasp what he's saying. And through his swadhyaya, his own personal practice, he will improve. All of it will grow within him. If a student is not attentive, if you go and listen just to pass some time, and you like his jokes, you'll listen and come away and forget what he has told you. You just go there for fun, that's all. Just to hang around, or there's lots of people, it's nice place to gossip.

When there is a spiritual satsang, a guru is explaining something to you. If your attention is somewhere else, you're not listening to what he's saying; you're not surrendering to him. You're not grasping what he's saying. In India, we have a story. There'll be a talk on *Ramayana*. *Ramayana* is a big epic, the story of Rama. All night this guy is explaining about Rama, Sita, everything. In the early morning, five am, one guy who's been sitting the whole night gets up and he says, "Oh, what is the relationship between Rama and Sita?" He was sitting there. He was not attentive. He just slept. In early morning, he's asking, "What is the relationship between Rama and Sita?"

Some people are scared. They think, Something will happen if I surrender."

But, this is a very holy place. How has this come over the generations? There's so much vibration here, so much positive energy here. That is because of all the swamis who surrendered themselves to their guru, and did their own sadhana. Otherwise this kind of energy wouldn't be here. Uttarkashi is a very special place, because many, many yogis have done lots of sadhana here. That is why it's very special.

Are you satisfied with that? Okay. Thank you so much.

See you tomorrow. ❖



THIRD DAY Questions & Answers (Selections)

*Om ajnana timirandhasya jnananjana
shalakhaya chakshurunmilitam yena
tasmai sri gurave namah*

TODAY, I'LL GIVE YOU ALL A CHANCE to start the conference through your questions. Today will be the last conference. Tomorrow there is no conference. Next time, in Mysore.

Q: If you have pain in your wrist, how can you do *utpluthih* with modification?

RSJ: Utpluthih modification? Change the position of your thumb, or put some wrist band, so that it supports your wrist. With utpluthih, it is very important to employ your *bandhas*. Once the mula bandha comes, your whole body becomes very light. And you get the strength also.

The bandhas are very important in certain asanas. When we are doing *utkatasana*, for example, you have to lift up and then jump back, after finishing utkatasana. Only when you have the bandhas, is it easy. You'll be like a feather. You can just fly. I'll show you. I've shown this many times. I like to show off sometimes. [Laughter] When you do utkatasana, after you come down, then straightaway lift up like this. [Demonstration of transition out of Utkatasana] So without bandhas it's very difficult to do that. It's not about strength. Many people have strength, still they can't do this. Because of this, utpluthih is very important. That's why I make you stay for a longer time, so that you strengthen your lower abdomen, and you get mula bandha.

Q: Between *navasana*, do you recommend that you alternate the right leg on top, or the left?

RSJ: Navasana?

Q: Yes.

RSJ: Right leg on top.

Q: Always?

RSJ: Yeah.

Q: Okay.

Q: If I'm not mistaken, you were in a yoga conference this summer in main-

land China. I was just curious whether there was any difference in terms of stressing the spiritual side of the practice, or whether it was more difficult to talk about the spiritual side of the practice, and it was just primarily focused on the physical side.

RSJ: Did I have any difficulty explaining to them?

Q: Yes. Because of the position of the government on religion and spirituality.

RSJ: Actually, this whole conference was organized by the Chinese government. China, Indochina Yoga Summit, it was called. Indochina—India and China. The embassy of India got together with the mayors of Chengdu Province. They organized this.

Yoga is very new in China. So many people think yoga has come from America. They don't even know. Well, some teachers go to China and they teach them how to do handstand, and how to jump back, you know. There's so much about the physical aspect of yoga; they have concentrated only on that. They've not taken yoga as whole. It is. Definitely, it's difficult for someone to teach who doesn't know about yoga. And again, it's they're trying to brand yoga. Like in the U.S. U.S. is the first place where yoga went.

In 1893, Swami Vivekananda went and preached about yoga. He taught yoga for the first time in the United States. That is when yoga went there. Then later on, other gurus went. They taught yoga, and the physical aspect of yoga became so popular. Everyone thinks if you put your leg behind the head, that means it's yoga. That means you are a big yogi. They don't care about yamas niyamas. They don't care about any other aspects of yoga. They think that is yoga. The physical thing is very important, but that is not the final stage. You know, sometimes it's very difficult to make people understand. People who don't know. For example, take your own parents. Your own parents, how many of them wanted to practice yoga? And do they understand what yoga is? They don't know. If they had done it when they were younger, if they had learned from an Indian master, then they would have some knowledge about yoga.

It's always difficult for the first time to go to a country and teach something spiritual. As I was born in India, I know how spiritual it is, this practice. Also, what spirituality means. If you just read the whole *Bhagavad Gita*, you don't become spiritual. You have to adopt what *Bhagavad Gita* says, you have to adopt that in your life.

When Krishna says, "I'm everything, so just surrender to me," then you have to surrender to him. Then only will you have that spiritual knowledge. Spiritual knowledge should come within you, as I told you yesterday. Everything should grow within you. It's very difficult to make someone understand these things, who doesn't know anything about yoga.

Yoga is very new in China. They think they already know, but I think they don't know.

But there are many good students also. I have lots of Chinese students who come regularly. They practice. But still, it is very new. Now it is getting popular China, Korea. It'll take time for them to know what it is. Yoga is like a knife. You can kill someone or you can kill yourself with a knife, or you can cut an apple and eat. Relish the apple.

If you keep on doing asanas from morning till evening, you will kill yourself. I've seen some people doing asanas morning, afternoon, evening. They go to the beach, they do asanas. They do early morning class. Then they go to a swimming pool. They do handstand. They do all these crazy things. Again, in the evening, they do asanas crazy. That will make you crazy.

*yuktaharaaviharasya
yuktacestasya karmasu |
yuktasvapnaavabodhasya
yogo bhavati duhkhabh ||*

Those who are temperate in eating and recreation, balanced in work, and regulated in sleep, can mitigate all sorrows by practicing yoga.

Bhagavad Gita, 6.17

Everything should be limited. You should be limited in your food. You can't eat too much. If you eat Indian thali three times, your stomach will get

upset. So like that, you should be in your karma also. Karma is what your duty is.

If you're an engineer, your duty is to build a nice building, and to make sure that the building is very good. You know all those things. A doctor has to treat his patients properly and make sure that he's giving great medicine. Every day you can be a doctor for maybe twelve hours, thirteen hours, fourteen hours. You can't do it for twenty-four hours. You have to take rest. You have to.

Part of this karma is also your asana practice. In that also, you should be limited. Only one practice in the morning. Two hours or three hours. Whatever, however much your guru has taught you, your teacher has taught you, you should practice that. That is enough.

Even your sleep should be limited. You can't sleep for eighteen hours. You're not a wildcat. A wildcat sleeps eighteen hours. It is meant to sleep eighteen hours, because if it doesn't sleep eighteen hours, it'll start killing everyone. So that's why God has given the wildcats eighteen hours sleep.

For you, he has given eight hours sleep, so that in rest of the day—the sixteen hours—you can be more creative, and you can put everything towards knowing the divine. That's why, for your own personal sadhana, he's given sixteen hours, to be spiritual—to know. Some people, they think just work is their life. "Oh, I have to go. I have to work." "I have to work morning till evening." You work so you earn money just for you to be, so that you get food, you get a place to live. You don't need too much money; you won't have peace of mind. You won't have anything.

I have few friends who used to work at these big software companies. At 6:00 they get up. They don't exercise. They don't do puja. Nothing. They get up, take bath, have breakfast very quickly. And they run to the office. By 8:00 they have to be in the office. They all live in Bangalore. Bangalore is too crowded. From 6:00 am, there'll be lots of traffic. So it takes two hours for them to get to work, to get to the office. And they work from 8:00 in the morning till 8:00

in the night. By the time they come home, they'll be exhausted. When can he practice yoga?

Work is not everything. You have to make some space for everything. This is why tapas is very important. You have to work. But you have to make some time for your own personal sadhana. That is also very important.

If you keep on working only, these people, they get stressed. They get, within twenty-five years, thirty years, they get blood pressure, they get asthma, diabetes. They get everything; everything comes to them. They have not managed themselves. You have to be careful with all these things. I don't know from where to where I went. But it's good? Are you satisfied with the answer? No? Are you satisfied?

Q: Extremely.

RSJ: Thanks.

Q: I had a question about oil bath and purification. Can you elaborate a little bit on the importance of the oil bath?

RSJ: Oil bath is taken just to take soreness from the body. When we do asana practice, we generate lots of internal heat. Sometimes the overheat will be there in the body. So sometimes it is important to cool your body. So that is why you take oil bath. And when you're doing six days of practice, your body gets sore. Many asanas are difficult. You're working hard. Especially when you're trying to do these difficult asanas, your body gets sore. Just to remove that slightly, just take oil bath. You can use any oil. Castor oil is very good for the body, but castor oil is very difficult to remove. So just use sesame oil or almond oil. Almond oil is too expensive; if you can afford it, can just use it. Even olive oil is very good for your body. You need to take a weekly oil bath, when you are resting your body. The day when you're not practicing, that day, take oil bath and take hot shower. That'll take all the soreness away from the body. And it makes your skin very good. It opens all the pores in your skin, and when the pores are open, all the poison also will

come out. When you practice asanas, when the pores are open, it's easy for the toxins to come out through sweat.

Q: I think I heard once that we're not supposed to talk about our yoga so much. I mean, obviously not in this situation with our guru. But –

RSJ: Talk about yoga?

Q: Talk about our practice.

RSJ: Who told you?

Q: I mean spiritual experiences, like, internal experiences.

RSJ: Without talk, how can you learn? If I'm silent, I can't help.

Eddie Stern: Sharath, I think the question was that we're not supposed to talk about our personal practices. "Oh, I have knee pain." "Oh, I did this pose so well."

RSJ: Like that? Yeah. That is not good. You shouldn't compare to anyone. Many people, they discuss, oh, *kapotasana*. They'll have a huge discussion about kapotasana. In Mysore, when I give a posture to one student, they'll go to the coconut stand and discuss it the whole day.

In Durga Bhavan, a famous hotel in Mysore, where all the students go, they'll have a huge discussion. "Oh, how you should do this." Millions of opinions about how to do one asana. Whatever opinion you take, it'll come when it has to come. Just keep on doing it, without any thoughts. Then it'll come.

I never went and discussed about any asana with any student. And my grandfather said, "You do it, it'll come." Okay. *Gurubhyo namah*. Finished. Guru's suggestion is the final one. Finished. There is no discussion, or Facebook. Crazy.

Facebook is good for some things, but not for everything. All day: "Oh, *takatakataka [blablablablablah]*." "I did kapotasana!" "Sharath told me this." "What's your opinion?" There's hundreds of millions of opinions. Why do you need them. They're unnecessary. You are wasting your time, wasting energy. You are distracting your mind. If you have a focused mind, if it comes in this life, you enjoy it. If it doesn't come, you wait till next life. In India, we have many lives. If this asana comes in this life, okay. If it doesn't

come, you wait. Next life. There'll be a reason for you to take rebirth. To do kapotasana! If you learn everything, if you get everything in this life, then you won't come next life.

Q: What are a few of the most common mistakes you see among students in the asana practice, and maybe not even in the asana practice, but –

RSJ: Generally?

Q: Yeah.

RSJ: That Facebook thing. [Laughter] One mistake people make is following too many teachers.

As you know, as I told you, following one parampara, following one system, is always better for learning, seeking. So if someone goes here, there, here, there, then they get confused. They don't know what to listen to. It's the common mistake, generally. In asana, mistakes will be there, that you will learn, it needs lots of practice. You need to come more. You have to take more classes. Once you follow this shala, you will learn. That is not a problem.

You have to understand that he yoga itself is a very sacred practice. You don't have to go and discuss this with anyone, taking different opinions. It's not necessary. Yoga practice is very personal practice. It is for your own transformation. Having debate is different. When there are two scholars and debate, that is to bring more clarity within the system, towards the spiritual practice. When there are two scholars, they sit. Their debate, if you listen, is totally different. They don't talk about asanas. They talk about what this shastra is, what that shastra is, how this should be applied, how that should be applied.

Q: As students, we get a chance to practice together, and we get a lot of energy from each other too. Do you ever have a chance to practice with other people? Or do you always have to practice yourself? And do you wish that you could practice in a group, so you can get that energy?

RSJ: You have to practice together. You have to practice alone. You should be comfortable with both. Sometimes what happens is satsang. See how many

people, how many students have come here to practice? This has generated lots of energy here. That is also very important. Sometimes when you're practicing alone, then two days you'll do, three days you'll do, fourth day you'll feel like, "Oh, today, I'll just skip." When there are lots of students, it'll motivate you to do the practice. But everyone's mindset should be the same. Everyone's mindset should be towards seeking the spirituality, towards knowing what is spirituality. If everyone has that kind of mentality, then it creates more energy.

If someone just comes, "Oh, I don't care about what the system is. I want a certificate, that's all, to put in my house, in my shala.—See, I've been certified. I've been authorized." It's a bad energy, that one. You should practice yoga for your own transformation. Then it has a totally different meaning. Your understanding towards yoga will be totally different. When we started, we didn't want it. I didn't want to become famous. I didn't want to have millions of students. I didn't want anything. There was no desire. I just learned because I wanted to know.

From when I was small, I was always fascinated by spirituality. I always used to go and watch *Ramayana*. There was a theater called Ganesha Theater near my house, and for two months, they had *Ramayana* movie there. So almost every week, I used to go and see. Because I liked Hanuman. Oh, Hanuman was so devoted to Rama. How he did *seva*. I was so motivated by that, I wanted to become more spiritual. That is why. But the only thing is, my mother is the one who pushed me in that. I was little lazy. I thought, I'll go tomorrow, I'll go next week. She's the one who pushed me. Said, "Go." So from that I started.

When my mother was teaching, she had only seven, eight students. She used to travel from Lakshmipuram to near Gokulam. She used to travel alone. A lady traveling alone. Then Mysore was very small. There were not that many people. And she used to walk every day.

She used to go on her scooter every day. Sometimes on the local bus. She used to commute every day. It was the passion; it was that love towards the

practice and what it changes within you. That is really important. If you practice for that, then there is no limit. You can just enjoy this practice. You relish this practice, more than getting a certificate.

Q: I notice that every day, my body is a little different. Sometimes I have pain here, sometimes there. Specifically for me, I know sometimes my knees get irritated because my hips are not open. And so when I come here, you know, there's one energy. I get warm. And naturally I want to do deeper asana. So I go deeper. But then I have more knee pain. Then the next day, it's difficult for me to practice. And I know that for me, it'll take some time. I'm not trying to push. But what is the best way for me to communicate? Because I know what my knee issue is. What's the best way to indicate that to a teacher? Because I also want to respect the teacher, and surrender. At the same time I want to listen to my body. And so sometimes I feel confused, caught.

RSJ: There are two things. First, you have to know why you're getting that knee pain. What you are doing other than asanas. What are you doing? It is causing you that knee pain. Just stop that. That's all. Second thing is you have to know your limitation. I can do back-bending; I can catch my ankles. That doesn't mean everyone can catch. You have to know your limitations. By practice you can change your body, but you have to give your body the time to change. It doesn't change in one day. It takes a long time. Even for me, it took a long time for my body to change, to get flexible. When I was younger, I used to get up every day at 2:30 in the morning. 2:00, 2:30, getting up, going to Lakshmipuram to learn yoga. There was lots of hard work; it didn't come that easily. And I didn't do anything else. I didn't bicycle. I didn't run. I didn't hike. I didn't do anything. Only yoga, that's all. Once you practice yoga, you don't need to do anything else. There's lots of exercises happening here.

And you have to give time for the body to change. If you do jogging, running, all those things, your body becomes stiff. Here, in asana practice,

you're loosening your body. You're loosening your hips, you're loosening your knees. Everything becomes flexible. Those other things tighten your body, tighten your muscles, tighten your joints; everything gets tightened.

So if you practice asana, then you should just keep doing that. That's all. You can't do two things; that'll break your body. When I was a teenager, all my friends used to jog, run. I said, "Oh, I should do that too." And we also used to bicycle from Gokulam to a huge lake in Mysore called Kukkarahalli Lake. So we used to bicycle there. Two of my friends, they were training for a Republic Day parade. So they had to go through severe training. They had to run, they have to jog, they have to do so many things. I did half of it—they used to run for twelve kilometers, and I ran for six kilometers. After this was when I moved from Lakshmipuram to Gokulam. And when I went back to practice yoga, I had to struggle a lot. The most I struggled was in *eka pada*. That is where I got stuck for many months. Because I did so much running for those two years, all the joints got so stiff. There was so much pain. When you're young, it's okay. You don't feel that much. When you get little older, say around thirty-five, forty, then you have to slow down.

Bicycling or running or lifting weights—it's not good. Later on, your joints will become very stiff and your muscles will become very stiff. They'll get arthritis and get all the problems, so you can't move. You'll have to sit in one place. So yoga is the only practice, asanas especially, which makes you flexible and strong for long time. Even if you're eighty years old, you'll be very active. Because all your muscles are strong and flexible. All your joints are strong and flexible.

My grandfather, when he was ninety, he used to sit like this straight. And I never saw him sitting slouched. When he passed away, we had to bury him. So we took him where we burned him. And after, his backbone was not burned.

He had fallen so many times, we were wondering, I and my mother. Nothing used to happen for Guruji. He used to

get up many times, he used to climb all these big, big chairs to put garlands to Sankaracharya, and he fell two, three times; he used to fall, and then he used to get up and smile. He used to laugh.

Many times, he's fallen on scooter—he learned scooter when he was 78 years old. He bought this new Bajaj scooter, which has four gears. This one student, a very devoted student—he was not that good at asanas, but he was devoted to it—he was our relative also. He used to take him near the university, and teach him how to ride a scooter. So every day, he used to give a lesson. One day, he has lifted his leg to sit behind Guruji—Guruji is gone. Guruji is going on his own. Enjoying. And his student, his name is Sudi, he stopped another guy who was going on scooter. He said, "Oh, my Guruji has gone on scooter. Can you just follow him?" He said, "Yeah, okay."

And he sat in the back, and they followed Guruji. And then he said, "Guruji, stop! Stop!" And Guruji said, "Oh, you're there." He was so excited about the scooter, he just went. But he learned scooter very late. And many times he used to fall. But he never used to tell my grandmother. Otherwise she will scold. So he used to bring the scooter. We had a small ramp. We had, like, five steps. And in the middle, in the old shala, there was a ramp where you can take your scooter or anything inside. Only when he's taking the scooter on the ramp, then only my grandmother used to come to know that he's fallen. Otherwise he never used to say. He never used to tell anyone. One day he had a huge cut. But he never told. When he was putting the scooter inside, my grandmother saw his dhoti was dirty. And there was lots of blood there. He was such a tough man.

Q: What is lost in translating the Upanishads from Sanskrit in to English, for those of us that just read English?

RSJ: I mean, you have to see which translation. Some are really good. But many times, there is no exact meaning for so many things. For example, *dhya-na* is not meditation exactly. Dhyana is withdrawal of all the senses. You know what I mean? Meditation can be just

bringing focus, what we call a *drishti*—just to put your mind in one place. But dhyana is withdrawal of all your senses; nothing external affects you. That is dhyana. Many things are lost in translation. When they put in the translation, "mediation" for dhyana, meditation can be just focusing. Trying to focus your mind in one place can be meditation. Some real masters, they say, "*Dhyana* is not *meditation*. *Dhyana* can't be translated." There are many things like that, which can't be translated. You lose so many things.

Q: Which do you think are better translations, then, of the Gita into English?

RSJ: There are many. Ramakrishna Ashram has beautiful translations. And Chinmaya Mission has some beautiful books. They have written very nicely. Read one or two. It's very difficult to understand if you just read one. You have to keep on reading it. Don't say, "Oh, I've read the *Bhagavad Gita*. I've done, finished." It's not like that. You have to keep on reading it.

Each time you get deeper in *Bhagavad Gita*, you get to know better things. You will have better understanding, more clarity. You'll get all these things. That's why you should always keep this reading as a habit. That is very important. Don't read all the modern books. Someone writes about yoga; don't read it. There's nothing spiritual in that. Only read the real masters, true masters. There are lots, like Chinmayananda, Ramakrishna—their books. Sankaracharya. He explains amazingly. There's so much knowledge in his books. Sankaracharya explains about all the yogic methods. Of course he doesn't tell you about how to do handstand, or those types of asanas. The true knowledge, the spirituality knowledge, comes through Sankaracharya. He talks about bandhas. He talks about so many other things which will help you improve your own personal sadhana. So read one or two. Read two or three translations, so that you can get the proper meaning.

There are so many books. You start with one book. Start with *Bhagavad Gita*. If you want real spirituality,

there is no book like *Bhagavad Gita: gita-sugita kartavya*. Gita is the real, true knowledge, which comes directly from Krishna, from the god. Everything to keep us sane. Just read *Bhagavad Gita*. The true knowledge of yoga is in *Bhagavad Gita*, so start there. If you keep reading it, you'll get so much knowledge through that. All eighteen chapters talk about yoga.

Then there are lots of other books, once you read that. There's *Yoga Sutras*. There's *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*. There's Upanishads, Samhitas, so many. Sankaracharya has done so many books. *Aparokshanubhuti*, *Yoga Taravali*. There are so many other books. But if you buy all the books, you won't read them. Just start with one book, *Bhagavad Gita*. Maybe it will take you two years to understand. It's a lifelong practice. Yoga is lifelong practice. It's not one or two days' practice. Lifelong. You should keep reading; you should learn. Once you think, "I've learned everything," that is the end of your learning; you have not learned anything. Once you think, "I know, but I don't know everything," that is how you seek. That is how you learn. That is when the knowledge will come to you. Okay. Thank you very much.

Voices: Thank you.

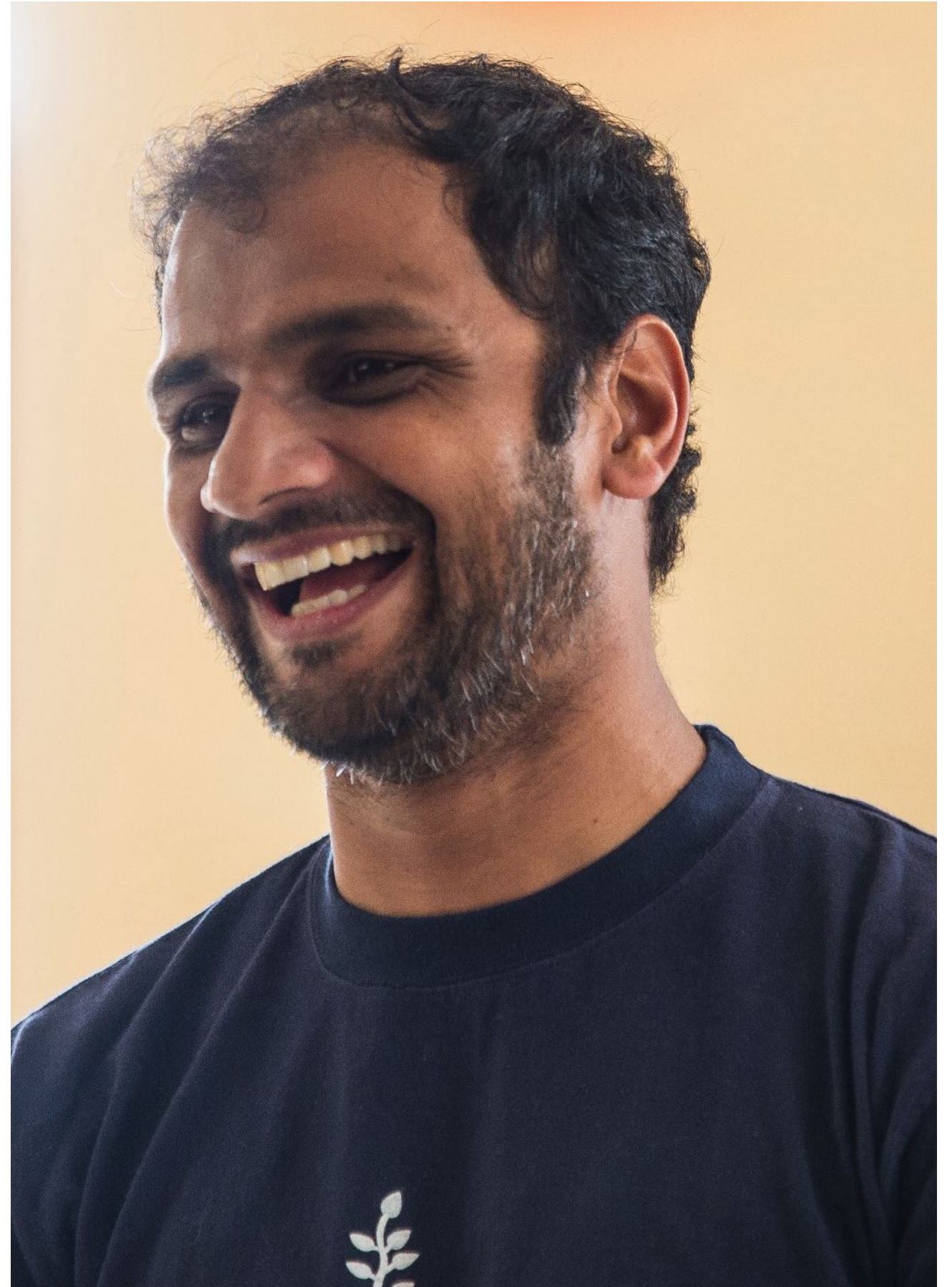
Saraswathi Jois: Keep practice.

RSJ: Thank you very much. God bless you all with lots of happiness—inner happiness, not material happiness. Inner happiness. And keep practicing. This is the true knowledge. Keep practicing. Don't worry if you get asana or not. Being there is very important. Practicing every day is very important. See you next time. I don't know where or when. But I'll be in your thoughts, Guruji will be in your thoughts, my mother will be in your thoughts. So keep practicing. God bless you all. 🙏





Guru Ma Saraswathi Jois



Paramaguru R. Sharath Jois

THE GURU TRADITION IS ONE OF the oldest foundations of the Hindu tradition. The Upanishads and Epics are filled with instructions, dialogues, and teachings of the great Gurus, Sages and Rishis. These teachings have been passed down to us over thousands of years. Holy places such as Banaras, Haridwar, Rishikesh, Uttarkashi, and beyond, have been the dwelling places of these revered teachers where in yoga's long past they performed tapas. To be able to perform sadhana in the same places where they did is considered to be a blessing.

It is widely known that a Guru never calls himself a Guru—it is a title bestowed by his or her disciples. The Guru has no desire for fame, or for being revered; a Guru only has the desire to perform service to humanity, to teach the knowledge that is related to liberation, to be devoted to the removal of suffering, and nothing else. But sometimes the disciples of such a teacher wish to call him or her by a special name, and not simply by their given name.

It is for this reason that we sought out the counsel of the elder Sannyasis and Sadhus of Uttarkashi, who also agreed that it was time for Sharathji and Saraswathiji to be formally bestowed with titles, and who, after conferring among themselves, decided upon an honorific title for each of them. It is an offering of respect, of love, and of gratitude.

Brahmachari Dev Chaitanya, on behalf of all of the Sadhus and Sannyasis of Uttarkashi, will now explain to you the significance of the holiness of Uttarkashi, and bestow the titles upon Sharathji and Saraswathiji. It is a special occasion, and we offer this moment to Sharathji and Saraswathiji with great humility and appreciation.

Dev Chaitanya: I'll tell you first what Uttarkashi is. You should know that when you have come here to Uttarkashi, you are bringing your practice here, right? This, whatever you are practicing, is not an ordinary thing. It is taking you somewhere—knowingly or unknowingly.

There is a place called Kasi. Have you heard about it? All the rishis used to

practice all these yoga practices, Vedanta practices, and whatever is connected to the *shad darshanam*, in Kasi. That is a place of *shravanam*, listening and learning. After learning for a very long period of time—because it takes good time to learn from the teacher properly—then we are supposed to practice on our own, *mananam*. For mananam, the disciple who really wants to practice on his own now comes from Kasi to Haridwar and Rishikesh and stays there. He does a lot of contemplation on whatever he's been learning. He starts studying by himself and he becomes master over the teaching. Once he becomes master, he travels to Himalayas, to Uttarkashi. He stays here; he rests in his knowledge, *nidhidhyasana*. This is the place of *nidhidhyasana*. Whatever he has learnt in Banaras (Kashi), and contemplated in Rishikesh and Haridwar, when he



comes here, he lives it, he becomes a yogi. Until then, he's a student. If you come here and stay amongst the sadhus, then you take *upadhi* of a real yogi.

[To Sharath] Now we consider you as one of us. That you now can become a leader, and lead us. Because you have properly understood whatever has been taught by parampara. We are very happy to have Sharath here, who has taken part in the parampara itself.

From today onwards, we call this upadhi, Amma, as Guru Ma. And Sharathji as Mahayogi* R. Sharath Jois. Now, from today onwards, there's a bigger responsibility of leading the world onwards on the path of yoga.

RSJ: Thank you.

Saraswathi Jois: With all credit going to Pattabhi Jois.

RSJ: Thank you so much for giving this place for us to practice and for me to teach. There couldn't be a better thing in my life. I've experienced something different here. Swami Chinmayananda and the sadhus and sannyasis who've done tapas here, their tapas has brought this energy. They leave everything behind. They leave everything. They leave the whole samsara. They come here and do tapas. It is not a small thing. You need lots of courage. You need lots of dedication, devotion, and determination to leave everything and come here and do sadhana. That is what I've seen here. I've seen all the sadhus; they've done so much sadhana here.

I'm really thankful for all the sadhus, sannyasis, and other rishis who gave me these blessings to come here and teach you all. I would like to come back again, whenever time permits.

SJ:: Yes. There is more energy here in this place. Everything is nice.

RSJ: [to students]: You have wealth, you have book knowledge. You have everything. If you don't put your mind towards *adhyatama*, your heart towards spirituality, towards jnana, it's no use having this life, having everything. Guru is very important. Guru is the one who teaches, who will take us towards that jnana which is the true knowledge. He removes all the obstacles in us and he removes all the pollution in us. He gives us the true knowledge, jnana. It has touched my heart deeply, all the love and affection everyone has given. Thank you so much. See you again.

SJ: Thank you very much. ❖

*The title conferred upon R. Sharath Jois by the Sannyasis and Sadhus of Uttarkashi was Mahayogi. When this article was first published, *Namarupa* had the title as Paramaguru. This title came later on and was not bestowed by the Uttarkashi swamis.



Brahmachari Dev Chaitanya, head of Tapovan Kuti, honors Sharath and Saraswathi and presents beautiful Uttarkashi shawls.

Maricāsana B



Inset: Sharath at Guptakashi, after having visited Badrinath in the Himalayas

ASHTANGA YOGA SADHANA RETREAT

NĀMARŪPA YATRA 2015 IN UTTARKASHI, HIMALAYAS

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROBERT MOSES



Most of the group, outside Sri Kashi Vishwanath Mandir in Uttarkashi. Everyone had just bathed the temple swayambu lingam while chanting Om Namah Shivaya mantra, then gathered outside for this photo. October 14, 2015



Jānuśīrṣāsana



Śīrṣāsana







Saraswathi













A conference held alongside the Bhagirathi, one of two head streams of the Ganga. This is the place where H.H. Sri Swami Vishnudevananda's body was cast into the waters on November 10, 1993, after he attained Mahasamadhi on the previous day in South India. Photograph ©Tejas Moses



Swami Sharvananda, Acharya and Vice-President of Adi Shankara Brahma-vidya Peeth, Uttarkashi.

INDIAN CULTURE

SWAMI SHARVANANDA

NĀMARŪPA YATRA 2015 IN UTTARKASHI, HIMALAYAS

INTRODUCTION BY
SWAMI HARIOMANANDA:

Swami Sharvanandaji studied with Swami Chaitanyananda Maharaj. As the eldest one amongst us Swamis here, he is a lovely elder brother. Swamiji is the leading support for the Sadhu Samaj here. Sadhus in this area, if they need any help, come running to him because they are sure he is somebody who supports them. At present we have the practice of reading all the Upanishads, Brahmasutra, and Bhagavad Gita. We read, we chant, and it takes about six to eight hours every day. Then every evening we have discussions and lectures about one topic. Swamiji initiated this and we took it up.

SWAMI SHARAVANANDA CHANTS ...

*shruti smriti puranam
alayam karunalayam
namami bhagavadpadam
shankaram lokashankaram*

I salute the compassionate abode
of the Vedas, Smritis and Puranas
known as Shankara Bhagavatpada,
who makes the world auspicious.

*shankaram shankaracharyam
keshavam badarayanam
sutrabhashya kritou vande
bhagavantau punah punah
shruti smriti purananam
alayam karunalayam
namami bhagavat pada
shankaram lokashankaram*

Prostrations again and again at the feet
of Bhagavan Sankara, the storehouse
of scriptures—shruti, smriti and
puranas—who is also a storehouse of
compassion, who confers happiness
and prosperity, who has written
commentary on the sutras and belongs
in the lineage of the guru parampara of
Keshava, Badarayana.

*ihwaro gururatmeti murti bheda
vibhagine, vyomavad vyapta dehaya
dakshinamurataye namah*

There is no difference between the
Guru, Self, and God. Obeisance to
Lord Dakshinamurthy who is the
personification of the Supreme Self
that permeates through space.

Om Shanti Shanti Shantih.

LET US CHANT FOR THE NEXT FIVE
MINUTES:

*Madhur Madhur Naam
Sita Ram Sita Ram
Madhur Madhur Naam
Radhe Shyam Radhe Shyam*

This is all Indian culture that we love.
We dance, we sing the name of the Lord!
This is the best thing in India: we love
to dance, to sing the name of the Lord!

And what does this culture mean?
From our very infancy, we don't know
how to eat, how to sit, how to stand,
but gradually we grow up, we come to

know how to walk, how to eat, how to
sit, how to talk, how to talk to a senior
man. Gradually, as we grow up, we can
understand. This is called the gradual
development of the culture.

Similarly, you have to inculcate in
yourself that culture which will lead
you towards the Supreme God. That
is an additional quality that you have
to inculcate in yourself. It is already
there, but we have not paid attention
to that side in human life. India is
the land of spirituality; we start from
religion and end in spirituality. So this
is the land where you can understand
what spiritualism is. And this culture
you have to inculcate in yourself. You
have to give scope for that. Connect
your mind, body, and intellect with
the Supreme entity. Which is already
there. Now we simply pay attention to
our body, mind, and intellect, but what
is the thing which is giving existence,
consciousness?

What is that consciousness? And how
can we take our mind towards it? Yoga
teaches us that if you can sit constantly
for three to four hours in the same asana,
if you can keep your mind constant on
a particular subject, or particular object,
then gradually you will understand the
all pervading entity which is already
existing in you.

Veda shows us this thing. Right from
the beginning of the life. Our first Guru
is our father and mother; from them
alone we understand how to eat, etc.
Wherever you are born is immaterial.
The language of your parents and other

surrounding people will automatically come. Afterwards, by virtue of your own quality or intellectual capacity, you can learn so many other languages. But first your mother tongue will come to you; that language is in the environment you were brought up in.

After that, you have to go to school, to learn the external knowledge, the objective sciences. In India, in the *Gurukul* system, which is a type of school where, especially in olden times, they used to teach the Vedas—Vedic mantras. Then there are six *Vedanga*—"limbs of the Veda"—that are traditionally associated with the study and understanding of the Vedas. These are: *Shiksha*: phonetics, phonology and morphophonology; *Kalpa*: ritual; *Vyakarana*: grammar; *Nirukta*: etymology; *Chandas*: meter; and *Jyotisha*: time measurement, forecasting planetary movement, astronomy.

The four Vedas and six Vedanga. Without the anga (limbs), you cannot learn Vedas completely. So, in the first stage of the life, people used to go to the Gurukul. In present days, you see people go to school, but they are learning the objective science. All the sciences are there in the Vedas, but also the inquiry "Who Am I?" You see, you are not the object; you are the enlightener of the object. That is spiritualism: "Who am I? Where have I come from?" This type of inquiry starts.

Where do you start working on this part, on the spiritual side? We start with religion. Why do we start with religion? As we grow naturally, first we learn how to eat, how to sit, how to talk. When we go to school, then we learn how to sit, how to speak with elderly people, how to behave with your same age people. Then comes the religious part. Suppose a man does cultivation. Generally the rains come but some years there is no rain. Now when there is no rain, he thinks "What to do? There is no rain, how can I keep my family?" Suddenly he sees one person going to the temple. He says to that person, "There is no rain this year. Is there any way that the rain can come?" This other person knows the Vedas, so he says, "Yes, there is a way. There is a *daan*, a sacrifice. If you

do this sacrifice, with proper rules and regulation, it will rain."

*pratyaksenanumityd vu
yastupayo na budhyate*

Where there is no way you can know directly, and you cannot know by *anumana* (inference by association) or by logic, then you have to resort to something. That is Veda.

*pratyaksenanumityd vu yastupayo na
budhyate etam vidanti vedena
tasamid vedasya vedata*

Ved means *knowledge*. Why is it knowledge? Because in the general way of knowing, we cannot find the means to reach that goal. But the Vedas tell the way to reach the goal. A person doesn't have a son. If he fails by doing all the medical treatments, scriptures say there is a way. You do *putrashtila*, you will get a son. And it will not fail; it will never fail because it was told by the scripture, and it has been tested by the saints and the sages in their lives. If you want to reach some goal and you are not finding a proper method for that, then Veda shows us the proper path to reach that goal.

If I want to become a mathematician, if I want to become an economist, then the method is taught in school and college. But if I want to realise God, if I want to realise the Self, then I study the Vedas. How can I know the method? That is taught in the Vedas. That is taught by our spiritual tradition and teachers—that this is the way to reach the goal.



*Matsya avatar
in Satya yuga*

WITH YOGA AND MEDITATION, BY cleaning out the internal dirt, we become transparent and light reflects in the transparent self. *Antahkarana* is like a glass. It is covered with the dirt of desires, but if you can keep your mind steady and constantly on the Lord, then it will be clean. It will reflect the real nature of the object. As in the rear view mirror of a car, you can see behind—how far the other car is or how fast it is going—so seeing the virtual image, you can understand about the object. Similarly, while seeing the reflection in your Antakarana, you will be able to really understand "Who Am I?"

The Veda tells, first you go to the Gurukul. Study Vedas and practice *Brahmacharya*—maintaining celibacy and control of the mind and the sense organs. If you do this, the first step of your life is completed. Then, if you want, you can enter family life, *Grihasthasa*, then *Vanaprasta*, and finally *Sannyasa*.

These are the four stages of life which have been described in the Vedas. Generally it is told in the Veda that the *ayurvedapurusha*, a man, has age 100 years of life. For the first 25 years, we are given the time to practice the Vedas in the Gurukula. After that 25 years, we enter into *Grihasthasa*. In *Grihasthasa*, we maintain family life, not for the sensual enjoyment, but to further continue the progeny. You allow your progeny to grow up according to his own nature. When he enters *Grihasthasa*, you take *Vanaprasta*. This means you leave the responsibility on your son and his wife—you give the responsibility of the house to them—and you isolate yourself to think about God and the Self. That is called *Vanaprastasa*. *Vanaprastasa* is mainly *upashchana*, meaning meditation. In *Vanaprastasa*, there are few rites and rituals. After *Vanaprastasa*, when *Sannyasa* life comes, then there is no duty other than: "How can I know my self?" The day this inquiry starts, even if it starts early in the life, you can renounce the worldly world. There is no injunction for that. You have to wait. It's like when a pointed thing pierces you and

causes pain, similarly, the worldly pleasures will cause pain. Now the worldly pleasures give you pleasure, but when you feel that this pleasure is more pain, then you try to run away from that! If it happens in the early part of your life, then you take the *Sannyas* path.

This is the Hindu lifestyle or spiritual lifestyle. First you go to the Guru, learn the Vedas, read the scriptures, then you enter into *Grihastasam*, and spend the *Grihastasam* on the path of religion: dharma, artha, kama. Still keeping yourself on the religious path, you earn money and fulfil your desire. These are the three *Purusartha*. The fourth *Purusartha* is Moksha. Dharma (right action), Artha (prosperity, material well-being), Kama (pleasure, love), and Moksha (liberation), these four are the goals of human life. I should have money, I should have a wife, wealth, like this. It's okay. In *Grihastasam*, have money, have wealth, but be on the religious path. Perform the rites and rituals, worship the Gods, wealth will ultimately come to you. Spend the money for society. Progress on the religious path. After *Grihastasam* we come to *Vanaprastasa* where gradually you renounce worldly things and try to keep yourself concentrated on godly thoughts: How can I realise my self, be unified with the God, because there is nothing but one only. After spending a few days in *Vipasana*, meditation, then the mind becomes concentrated. Then if you listen, you can understand *Tat Tvam Asi* (That thou art), you can realize. Then you are free from all the world.

This is the course of life. Each stage is a garment you are wearing. When you change this garment, you will be the same man. What garment will you wear? That, you yourself will decide. According to your activity and thoughts, you will get a new garment. With that new garment again you will work and again you will create some *samskarams*. When this garment becomes old, we are throwing it away. In the same way, our body will become old and a new body will come. This is also a garment. So, as I cannot be the

garment, because I am wearing it, I am observing it—I am the 'See-er'—similarly, I am the observer of the body. In any other type of body, you will not have the same facility. A cow, a dog, cannot go to the temple; a cow cannot do meditation. This human body is the best garment given to you. Utilize it properly. How to utilize? Do yoga, do meditation, think of God, chant on God, sing. In India, we love, we dance, we sing, in the name of God. Gradually, God will infuse your mind.

*dadami buddhi-yogam tam
yena mam upayanti te*

To those who are constantly devoted and worship Me with love, I give the understanding by which they can come to Me.

I will give you *Buddhi* (intellect), so that you will realise the self—this is the way of the utilisation of the human life.

I pray to God that everyone should come to Uttarkashi and get this facility. First you have to make this your goal—What is it I am longing for? For what am I searching? Everybody has a common desire: to live in peace. I want happiness, permanent happiness. If I tell you that I have three tablets—one will give you peace for ten years, one for twenty years, and one for thirty years, which will you want? All three! If you want all three, this means you want to live in happiness forever. Isn't it? Now, you search the whole universe, you have the opportunity to travel around the whole world. Is there anything that will give you eternal happiness? Only



*Kurma avatar
in Satya yuga*

one thing is there, that is God. God is eternal; only through God, you get eternal happiness.

Make your mind firm. Truly speaking, with the experience of my life, if you want really eternal happiness then take your mind to happiness. If you try, God will help you. God helps those who help themselves. Isn't it? Whoever is asking anything from God, God satisfies you in that. If you want from God worldly pleasures. He will be happy to give them to you. Because a mother is busy in her household work, when the child is crying for milk, the mother doesn't give milk; what will she do. The child is crying, "Mummy, I want you only!" Then she will be bound to give the milk. Similarly, I pray to God that after coming to Uttarkashi, you must have this mental strength in you, that you want this and this is the way to reach the goal. I may walk a little slow, you may walk a little fast. Some variation may be there, but we reach the goal. I pray that you will be happy in your life—come to Uttarkashi again! 🙏

*Om puurnnam-adah puurnnam-idam
puurnnaat-purnnam-udacyate
puurnnashya puurnnam-aadaaya
puurnnam-eva-avashisyate*

Om shaanti shaanti shaantih!

Om, That is Full, This also is Full, From Fullness comes Fullness, Taking Fullness from Fullness, Fullness indeed remains.

Om Peace, Peace, Peace!

Swami Sharvananda is Vice-President of Adi Shankara Brahma Vidya Peeth, Uttarkashi, Uttarakhand, Himalayas, India (www.somashram.in) and resides at Pranav Dham, Uttarkashi.



*Varaha avatar
in Satya yuga*

*Swami Janardanananda chanting kirtan
with sadhus on the occasion of 'Sunday
Prayers' held at Tapovan Kut. Chanting
was followed by distribution of dakshina
and prasad to the assembled sadhus of
Uttarkashi by members of the Yatra.
Swamiji is General Secretary of Adi
Shankara Brahma Vidya Peeth,
Uttarkashi, Uttarakhand, Himalayas,
India (www.somashram.in) and resides
at Vishnudevananda Tapovanam,
Uttarkashi, Himalayas, India.*



INDIAN CULTURE

SWAMI HARIBRAHMENDRANANDA

NĀMARŪPA YATRA 2015

UTTARKASHI, HIMALAYAS

INTRODUCTION BY
SWAMI HARIOMANANDA:

*Om Om Om! Om Namah Sivaya!
I hope you enjoy Uttarkashi Himalaya!
Today I want to introduce you to
Swami Haribrahmendrananda. He is
an acharya of Adi Shankar Brahma
Vidya Peeth. Today Swamiji is going to
talk to you about Indian culture so you
will have some introduction. Swamiji
Haribrahmendrananda came here to
Uttarkashi in 1994, when he was just
13 or 14 years old. He did regular studies
in the school only up to the 9th standard.
He had some inquiries of his own and he
couldn't find genuine answers in the school
syllabus or from his school teachers. He had
to continue his journey to find the answer.
So he came here and studied with Swami
Chaitanyanandji who was a guru bhai of
our guru Swami Vishnudevananda. In
2003, Swami Chaitanyaji passed away.
Then Swami Haribrahmendranandaji
continued his classes. Uttarkashi is known
for study. Traditionally we don't have
many rituals or those sorts of things. Here
the main stream of activity is traditional
study and contemplation.*



*Narasimha avatar
in Satya yuga*



*Swami Haribrahmendrananda, Acharya and
Secretary of Adi Shankara Brahma-vidya
Peeth, Uttarkashi.*

Om
Om tana jala dhara rujaya
gopavedhuti dukula chauraya
tasmai krishnaya namah
samsarameyerihasya beejaya
chotamani krita vidhur
vanayekrita vasukihe
bhavo bhavatu bhavyaye
neelaa tandava pandita

Om Shanti Shanti Shantih!

Om Namah Shivaya Om Namah
Shivaya Om Namah Shivaya

WHEN WE THINK ABOUT INDIAN culture, it is very difficult to summarize it. There are so many variations, so many different methods, different practices, different gods and goddesses; so when we talk about India, or the lifestyle of India—the religion of India, we cannot say one single word—that this one word contains the religion of India. I will try to explain something of the variations that we, the differences that we see in religion, how they develop and then try to understand how the philosophy thinks about that.

Vedo akhila dharma moolam. The Vedas are the basic philosophy of our life. Religion is based on Vedas. There are four Vedas. When we try to study Vedas, the difficulty is the language. The Vedas are in Sanskrit. Do you know how many mantras there are in the Vedas? One lakh (one hundred thousand). We say the essence of Vedas is Vedanta; we study Vedanta. Vedanta has only 4000 mantras. And what about the other 96,000 mantras? 80,000 are related to karma or karma yoga. 80,000! The 16,000 left are related to *upasana*, or different types of meditation. So there are 4000 in Vedanta. Now we see how the Vedas bring the common man to an enlightened soul—*jivanmukta*. These 4000 mantras are talking about the ultimate truth which is to be experienced by a *sadhaka* in his life. Ultimate reality is what we want to experience.

80,000 mantras discuss the different types of karma yoga, or karma. The

karmas are the only means to purify our body and mind. When we try to understand the reality, we should be well prepared. We should purify ourselves. For that, the Vedas give this method of karma yoga. Without practicing karma, we cannot go beyond. In Indian culture we say that these Vedas include each and every person, every common man. The Vedas give a method or lifestyle to each and every person who is trying to fulfil his life, gives him suggestions, *sadhanas*, and some rules and regulations. There are many methods of *sadhana*.

The problem starts from the life we lead. We have so many desires. Of course, to lead life we have to have some desires. There are so many desires that are unnecessary from the view point of life. The first thing the Shastras or the Vedas try to say: You have to try to understand which desire you need for life, which is necessary and which is unnecessary. It is very difficult for us to decide.

Which is necessary—how do we decide? We don't know how to decide. What is needful? We don't know. The Vedas say what desires you need, what you require to live—food, shelter, our maintenance—and what you can leave. To achieve those things we need, we find so many ways, so many methods. We work in offices, or in the fields, and use so many other methods to fulfil those desires. So the shastra gives some methods—rules and regulations—to achieve those desires and live a happy life.

When somebody claims something, we ask if what he says is right or wrong. A question arises in the mind. How does

he know this? How can he be correct? So when somebody suggests something, we ask him for his 'certificate'. For example, if somebody is trying to teach yoga or he starts a new yoga center, we enter his office and ask: "Where did you learn? Who is your guru?" Everything should be certified! In the same way we ask, what do the Vedas say about our life and desires, and is it correct? Can we follow or not? It is very difficult to make somebody believe that which we cannot see through our eyes. If a common man is trying to achieve his desire, like the farmer, for example, because in Indian culture, farming was the main source of livelihood. So a farmer makes his fields ready for his farming but unfortunately, sometimes, if there is no rain, then he cannot do his farming. He is in trouble. Whatever he knows, he does—cleaning the farm, keeping the seeds. Everything is ready, but the rain is not in his control. He cannot bring rain. He faces difficulty. So he goes to a priest and asks him "Can you help me by bringing the rain? Do you have some method?" The priest thinks, "Yes, the farmer is now inquiring about something that he cannot achieve, that is beyond his capacity. He is asking for that." This is an important point. We think that we do everything for ourselves. That is our common understanding. We do everything we want to, because we work hard, earn money, and we enjoy our life. If we don't work, we don't get money so we can't enjoy! When we think that we do everything for ourselves, then we are not believing in God or anything beyond the world. Now this farmer, he is in trouble, so he is thinking about something beyond his capacity and beyond the world. So he asks the priest and the priest says, "Yes, there is a method. I will tell you the method. What I say you have to follow. Are you ready?" So he says, "I am ready." The priest tells him, "Tomorrow you bring some milk, some curd, some rice, and some ghee for the Puja. We will do something and after one week there will be rain." The farmer is very happy! He brings these things for the ceremony and the priest does a small Puja and after one week the rain

comes. So he is very happy! Now you see what happened: the farmer's desire was for rain but he was unable to bring that, so he tried through this priest. The priest did some rituals and, after that, the rains came. So now, whatever the priest says, the farmer is ready to believe. Ready to follow. Why? Because now he understood. What I cannot do, the priest can. How does the priest do this? He has some knowledge of rituals that are described in the Vedas and the Shastras. So slowly, the common man, like this farmer, when he practices these rituals, he comes to believe.

When we have a disease or a problem, we do yoga and pranayama to get the benefits. We believe in yoga and we practice pranayama, we practice meditation.

Now slowly the farmer will practice all that the priest tells him to. This becomes the life. Desire is there, needs are there, and we have to maintain our life, but we can find a method, a regulation for that—that is what the Shastras say. These 80,000 mantras which tell you about karmas, all are about desires. The fruits of those karmas are achieving the desires. Like this farmer—he was weeding the farm for his fruits, slowly he achieves that and slowly he learns to understand and believe in God. God means that which is out of our sight. We don't see. We do what we can see, but bringing the rains, this we can't do—it means there is God. So he believes in that and slowly he turns to this life of Shastras. This is the basic method of our Indian culture.

We enter into this Karma Kanda (the ritual portion of the Vedas), practice karma yoga, and so many rituals, meditation, Sandhyavandanam, puja, Sahasranama. So many different Gods are there. We believe in that, we pray to them. Then everything comes. When desires and the mind are calm and quiet, we sit and think about that God which has given everything and is fulfilling our desires. Thus comes the meditation.

THERE ARE SO MANY TYPES OF meditation in the Upanishads which are not practiced now because they are a little difficult to practice. We

practice some other meditation which is related to yoga. Yoga meditations like *trataka*, etc. In the Upanishads there is meditation on the sun, the moon, water, air, sky, etc. After these meditations, the mind is concentrated and purified. For a concentrated mind, we have to control our desires. When I use control, it is not control by others, it is control by myself. When we are driving a car, we are controlling the steering wheel. It is not like that. This concentration is whatever is happening inside the mind, and we are controlling the mind. When we ourselves control the mind, that control is actually not control. If it is controlled by some other, it is control. This controlling is actually to regulate. The concentration starts by regulating the thoughts. We slowly try to regulate the number of thoughts that we have. When we do it ourselves, we feel happy. If someone else tries to control you by saying, "Think like this. Sit like this," then concentration cannot happen.

Here is what we have to understand: this meditation—these *Upasanas*—it is happening in our own mind, in our own intellect. It is an understanding of the mind. When this happens, we can concentrate on any object and understand the truth of that object, the reality of that object. This is what the Yoga Sutras say. Now, when you try to understand the reality of an object, there come the Vedas. Till now, there is no hope for Vedas. Why? You have to remember that farmer. He wasn't trying to know how the paddy comes out, or what this paddy is, what this mud is, what this water is, what this rain is—he wasn't looking like that. Then, the Veda doesn't work. When you try to

understand what the object is all about, then the Vedanta works. For that, you need concentration. You have to regulate your desires. You have to know what is happening in your mind. You have to know how the mind works, how you think, understand—then you can know the truth of an object.

THIS UNIVERSE—WHAT WE SEE IS from Brahman, only Brahman is there. Brahman is the truth. When we understand the universe as Brahman, with that we understand our self. When we inquire, "Who Am I?" When I say "I am thinking," "I do," "I understand," "I eat," "I work," who is this "I"? We don't know. Without knowing this "I", we do everything. You know how we do this? For the sake of our life, we understand "I" as this body. We never inquired, what is this "I"? Without inquiring, without knowing, we just think that this body is "I"—in some conditions. In other conditions, the mind is "I". Within yet another condition, the intellect is "I". Ultimately, what we think is that the Ego is "I". So Vedanta lifts you beyond these conditions. When we say this body is "I", Vedanta says, try to understand what this body is. Then you will understand that this body is not "I". When you say the mind is "I", Vedanta says, try to understand what this mind is. If you know the mind, then you will understand that this mind is not "I". The mind is an instrument I use for my thinking process, thinking and understanding. This is an instrument. So slowly, you go beyond ego. Then we know what we are. This is the short and summarised form of our culture, karma yoga, and Vedas, and how this life is connected to Vedas. 🌿

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Vamana avatar
in Treta yuga



Parusharama avatar
in Treta yuga

NAVARATRI

SWAMI MITRANANDA

NĀMARŪPA YATRA 2015 IN UTTARKASHI, HIMALAYAS

WHEN WE LOOK AT THE *SHASTRAS*, the number three has a very deep significance. For example, we say there are three states of the mind: waking, dream, and deep sleep. We have three different obstacles: obstacles are from the known, obstacles from the unknown, and obstacles within. For a seeker there can be unknown obstacles coming from far away, from forces which cannot be changed. And then there are obstacles from the known, and then there are obstacles from within. When we invoke the lord we say *shanti* thrice: *shanti shanti shanti*. *Shanti* means *be at peace*. Let the obstacles which are far away, unknown, be at peace. Let the known obstacles be at peace. Let me be at peace within, let me progress toward the divine.

So you have three mind states, you have three obstacles. You also have three bodies: *Shtula*, *Shuksma*, and *Karana*: gross body, subtle body, and causal body. And there are three *gunas*: *sattva*, *rajas*, *tamas*. All of us have these three. I will give you the their easiest translations. Tamas is highly lethargic, lazy, postponing, procrastinating. "Want to do something?" "No. Tomorrow or maybe the day after." In the tamasic mode I don't want to do anything active even though I am capable. I simply while away the time.

Then there is *rajas*, which is restlessness. You can't sit quietly even for a few moments, you are very restless. We have a youth empowerment program. The young people give one year for service, community service. They go to spiritual and cultural leadership trainings. In one of the programs we put them alone in a room. Nothing is in the room, no phones, no music, nothing. Just be alone for twenty four hours. Oh, they go crazy. It's so hard to spend twenty four hours just by yourself. Why is it so hard? One guy, he came out, "Swamiji please don't make

me do this again." "Why?" "I am so restless." "So what did you do?" "I was shifting furniture, taking it from one corner to another."

In the twenty-four hours, maybe you can sleep ten hours. For fourteen hours you still need to be with yourself. Being with yourself is so difficult. We need something 'other' to escape from ourselves. You don't mind listening to the same music again and again, reading the same magazine again and again. But just being yourself, doing nothing. "Oh, that's so boring." Who is boring? I've seen people sit and watch a movie which is absolutely boring. They say, "This movie's so boring." There is no compulsion; you can get up and walk away. Why are you watching it? "I would be more bored without this movie, with myself." People who are absolutely active, you ask them to sit quietly and meditate, they find it difficult. The mode of action is called *rajas*.

And then there is serene, pleasant, calm, quiet; that is called *sattva*. Three modes: *tamas*, *rajas*, *sattva*.

All the thoughts that we have in our heads can be classified according to these three: *tamas*, *rajas*, and *sattva*. All the thoughts. Whatever the thought, it is either predominantly tamasic (lethargic), rajasic (restless), or serene, quiet, calm, pleasant (*sattvic*). All the thoughts will fall into these categories. The rishis found this classification.



Rama avatar
in Treta yuga

To discuss the significance of Navaratri, we need to understand these three: *tamas*, *rajas*, and *sattva*. Navaratri: *nava* means *nine*, *ratri* means *night*. There are nine nights and days of celebration. One has kirtan, puja, getting up early—you know that program. The first three days of Navaratri are dedicated to overcoming *tamas*. There is *tamas* in us, ignorance and lethargy. The beastly traits in us have to be overcome. Ignorance has to be overcome. For this, you need a mighty power.

THE STORY GOES THAT LONG AGO there was an *asura*. *Asura* means *un-divine*: *sura*, *divine*, a *sura*, *un-divine*. This *asura* was a mighty person, very powerful. He was misusing his power. Power should be in the hands of the capable. Power should be in the hands of people who have wisdom. If power is not with wise people, then the power can be misused. Please remember, Albert Einstein was responsible for atomic energy. He took the initiative. As long as that knowledge was with him, it was absolutely fine, safe. When it reached the hands of power and very rajasic, greedy people, then it became a bomb. So the responsibilities of power should favor the people of highly *sattvic* natures. The beastly power of this *asura* became very strong; he was so mighty and nothing could be done. Therefore people had to invoke the goddess and Durga came forward to kill this *asura*. Basically we have to invoke the divine power of Durga the goddess. "O Mother, Help me to transcend the beastly traits in me." Because I want to move toward the divine. You see it's normal that we live as humans but the beauty of life is when human evolves to divine. The success of our life is: born human, become divine. Success has to be measured that way. If I have evolved, if I have experienced divinity, realized divinity, than I'm successful. The purpose is fulfilled. This *asura* was so full

of beastly traits, he has to be destroyed. There are similar traits within us. These are powerful. I need something more powerful to overcome *tamas*, ignorance, the beastly traits. To transcend them we need goddess Durga's strength.

On the second three days of Navaratri, we worship goddess Lakshmi. We invoke the goddess of prosperity. In our culture, we say there are four things one needs in life: *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*, *moksha*. *Dharma* is righteousness, your responsibilities and duties. *Artha* means prosperity in one's life, wealth. *Kama* means to enjoy life. Life gives us different aspects of celebration. Festival is one, *tirtha yatra* is one. Life offers many, many, many ways to celebrate. Enjoy life. What's the point, if one lives and is not able to celebrate life? So *dharma*, *artha*, *kama*. But that's not all. Don't get stuck here. Go to the next level, called *moksha*. *Moksha* is absolute liberation—liberation from all limitation, liberation even from the identification with the body. I need to understand that this body which I thought was me is only a tool. To help recognize the divine.

DHARMA, ARTHA, KAMA, MOKSHA. The second part of Navaratri is dedicated to goddess Lakshmi, the goddess of prosperity. Let us prosper. Let the whole world be happy. *Lokah samastah sukhino bhavantu*. Not just me. Let the whole world be happy. That is the universal prayer that the rishis have given us. They have not given it to one particular community or to one particular geographical area. The whole universe was in their vision. They said, let the entire world be happy. That becomes a normal daily prayer: Let there be progress; let there be prosperity. At the same time, I should not be attached to prosperity. I should have it but not be attached to it. That's the secret. All who can manage this in life take a long stride toward evolution. You are allowed to have but not to possess. Do you know who said this? You are allowed to have but not to possess? Want to take a guess?...Madonna. In the album *Ray of Light*, not "Papa Don't Preach." Madonna was a confused woman. From

Papa Don't Preach to *Ray of Light*, Madonna went through a kind of transformation. In *Ray of Light* there's that song where she says, "I've been told to have but not to hold." She's talking *vedanta*. It's an art to have but not to hold. That is *sannyas*. *Sannyas* is dispassion; you have it but you're not holding onto it. Anything we have—all the prosperities which are there—we can have, but don't hold. Seek prosperity, invoke goddess Lakshmi, but at the same time don't possess it. So the second three days are dedicated to goddess Lakshmi to get prosperity, but we must hold onto Vishnu, not Lakshmi. Invoke Lakshmi but realize that the intention should be with Narayan, it should be with the truth. To get there it's not easy. For that we need upanishadic wisdom. To enter prosperity but not to be entangled by it we need wisdom.

THE LAST THREE DAYS OF NAVARATRI are dedicated to Saraswati, goddess of wisdom and knowledge—*sattva*. First we transcend *tamas*, then we meander with *rajas* and go beyond it, then we establish ourselves in *sattva*. In the fourteenth chapter of the *Bhagavad Gita* which talks about *rajas*, *tamas*, and *sattva*, Krishna says to Arjuna that a tamasic person is attached to ignorance—he revels in ignorance, lethargy; a rajasic person is attached to activity; a *sattvic* person gets attached to knowledge. We need to be careful because knowledge can be a kind of addiction. There is a possibility that people will get attached to knowledge, not internalizing it but just feeling good about it. My master,



Krishna avatar
in Dwapara yuga

Gurudev Chinmayanandaji, he called them professional listeners. Retreat after retreat, they will go listen, afterwards asking "When is the next camp? We would like to come." He used to joke, saying, "I know this guy. He always sits in the seventh row, eighth bench." We invoke Goddess Saraswati to bring knowledge. Saraswati is *sattva* and transcends *sattva*.

We invoke Durga to transcend *tamas*; to transcend *rajas*, we invoke Lakshmi; finally, we invoke Saraswati to transcend even *sattva*. Beyond these three traits is the truth. After nine days of *sadhana*, the tenth day is called *Vijaya Dasami*. *Dasami* means *tenth day*, *vijay* is *victory*. Victory on the tenth day. We transcend the three *gunas*, we go beyond, we experience that which is always within.

In *Ramayana*, Ram goes to fight Ravana. Ravan is called *dasamukha*—a person with ten heads. So Ram fights a ten-headed monster. The ten heads represent the five *karmindriya*—organs of perception: eyes, ears, nose, taste, and touch, and the five *jnanindriya*—organs of action: hands, legs, etc. We need to go beyond these to have everlasting victory. That victory is within us; that victory should be ours: "I have transcended the ten senses. I have transcended the three *gunas*, I have overcome the human, and I am now divine." The day that happens is the victorious day, *Vijaya Dasami*. In *Ramayana*, the battle between Ram and Ravan happened over nine days. On the tenth day, Ravan was destroyed.

THAT IS HOW THIS BEAUTIFUL festival of Navaratri is celebrated, invoking the goddess for three days to overcome *tamas*, for three days to overcome *rajas*, for three days to overcome *sattva*. On the tenth day we are victorious; we experience the divine. Our victory in life is when human transcends human and becomes divine. Not becomes, recognizes. Because we are divine even now but we don't recognize it. Recognition is the victory. ❦

Swami Mitrananda is a adventurer disciple of H.H. Swami Chinmayananda and is Director of All India Chinmaya Yuva Kendra. [Learn more here.](#)



*Balarama avatar
in Dwapara yuga*

Trishul of Shakti at Sri Kashi Vishwanath Mandir, Uttarkashi. Shakti is worshiped here as this giant Trishul, estimated to be over 1500 years old, 26 feet high, of metal with Tibetan inscriptions on it. When one applies the slightest force to it with one's fingertips, it sways gently in its narrow base. It is said to be the weapon the Goddess hurled at the Asuras. Her temple was undergoing reconstruction during our yatra and so the roof had been removed, affording a view of the huge trident not usually seen.



*Kalki avatar
in Kali yuga*

The illustrations portraying *daśavatāra* (ten descents) of Lord Vishnu in this article on Indian culture were created by **Satya Moses**. He is currently investigating the mystical mythical origins of the universe via pen and ink illustrations.



FINE ART PHOTOGRAPHS

SUAN LIN • DURING THE NĀMARŪPA YATRA 2015



Suan Lin is a ceramic artist and photographer based in New York City. Her pictures are about people and signs of humanity. She is a member of Film Shooters Collective. More of her work can be seen at: <http://suanlin.photoshelter.com/> and <https://ello.co/suanlin>

Suan brought her old black paint LeicaMP, an all manual rangefinder film camera, on the yatra and shot these beautiful images. She used Kodak Portra 400 film and a rare Konica Hexanon 60mm f1.2 lens.

Vrindavan Night



Vrindavan Night



Portrait of India



Discover Life



*Discover Life
Rishikesh*



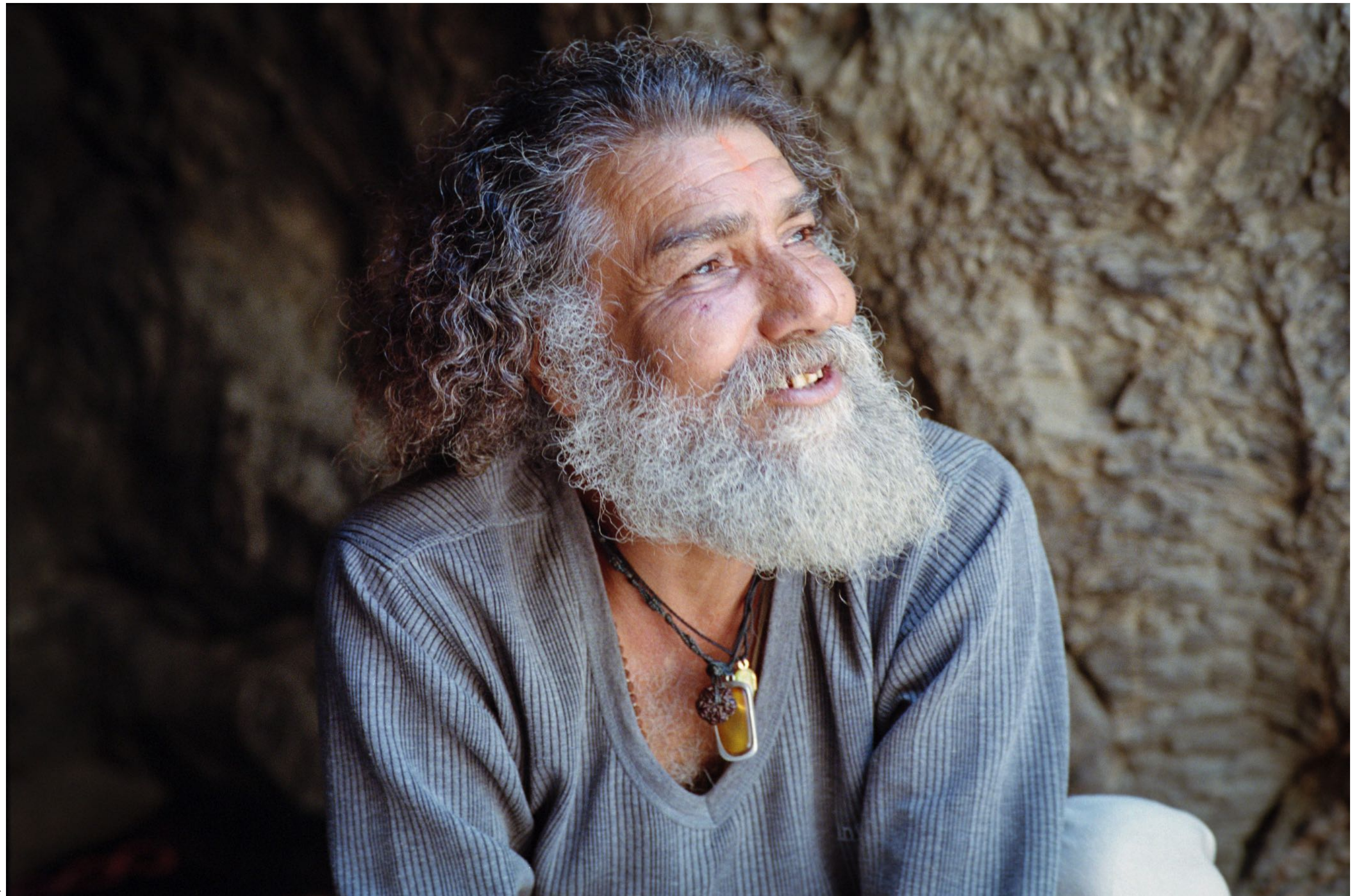
*Behind the curtain.
Uttarkashi*



*Best chai in India.
Kalimath, Himalayas*



*Portrait of India.
Tiryuga Narayan,
Himalayas*



*Portrait of India.
Devprayag, Himalayas*



Vrindavan Night



Address Label