



# Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centre Singapore

October 2010 Newsletter

**Article: The Power of Asanas**

**Guru's teaching: What is Stress?**

**Workshops: Mindful Asanas, Monday 11th October, 8.00pm**

**From centre: -New On-going Restorative Yoga Class, Monday 10.15am, start 4th October**

**-Beginner Course, Monday & Friday 8.00pm, start 18th October**

**-Beginner Course, Sunday 11.30am, start 24th October**

**-Sunday 17 October Yoga Centre Close**

**-Yoga Retreat 23-27 December 2010, Canceled**

## The Power of Asanas - article

Yoga points out the defects of human existence-pain and ignorance-and offers practical ways to attain happiness and wisdom by applying natural laws. These laws are inscribed in every cell of our body and in the background of every thought we think. Here are three powerful processes which are activated when you practice asanas:

### **Unblocking Vital Energy**

The increase of energy or prana is a main motivation for the practice of asanas. While you hold a posture, pressure builds up in certain areas of the body, which are physical counterparts of major meridian crossing points. Whether it is pressure between the body and the mat, pressure on joints or gentle muscle stretch pain, watch carefully what happens when this pressure is released as you slowly come out of the asanas. While you spend some time lying in the corpse pose, relaxing before starting the next posture, you can positively experience an increase in energy circulation.

This is more than just having a more detailed body awareness. When you let go of the body, giving up the resistance to the pull of gravity, you can experience a feeling of lightness, a magnetic flow of energy from the feet up to the head. It is different and independent of the motor and sensory nerve impulses traveling to and from your muscles. The energy or prana currents are specific for each asana. Once you have learned to identify them during relaxation after the asana, you can start focusing on them even while holding the pose. With time you learn how long you need to hold an asana, simply by focusing on these energy movements. Once the energy is unblocked, you can leave the pose, relax for a while and then carry on with the next asana. In order to reap the energetic benefits of the

asanas it is recommended to remain in one system of practice.

**Swami Sivananda says:**

“Everybody should select a course of a few asanas to suit his temperament, capacity, convenience, leisure and requirement. Never change the asanas. Adhere to one set tenaciously. If you do one set of asanas today and some other tomorrow and so on, you cannot derive much benefits.”

**The Play of the Gunas**

Yoga describes the frequency of vital energy in three vibratory levels. These gunas or “qualities of nature” apply to the whole universe, including the body and the mind:

**Sattva**

Purity, clarity, peace, harmony, balance, awareness, happiness, joy, love, calm, silence, light, knowledge, intelligence.

**Rajas**

Activity, passion, agitation, worry, desire, anger, restlessness, impulsiveness, turbulence.

**Tamas**

Laziness, lethargy, delusion, ignorance, sleep, attachment, fear, depression, dullness, heaviness, decay.

Nobody will remain in any one of the three states for a long time. Just as night (tamas), day (rajas) and sunrise/sunset (sattva) repeat themselves in cycles, so also the gunas constantly change.

Today’s lifestyle in the big cities is characterized by an excess of rajas-the senses are constantly bombarded at great speed by exciting sights, sounds, smells and tastes. This hyperactive rush causes a great deal of agitation followed by prolonged periods of exhaustion or tamas-the vital energy is low and the mind cannot focus on anything. While one vaguely longs for the peaceful, creative, positive and uplifting energy of sattva, body and mind remain trapped in rajas or tamas.

Yoga helps to balance the play of the gunas by increasing sattva. Each time the vital energy starts to circulate in the asana class, it feels like drops of nectar entering the system. As the practice continues you can observe how asanas not only provide greater amounts of energy, but also improve the balance of the gunas.

Take for instance a three-minute practice of the shoulderstand: How you experience it depends on the guna which predominates at the time. If there is more tamas, the body will feel heavy and you would rather leave the posture and spend more time in relaxation. If you are in a mood of rajas, your body will want to move in and out of the pose, instead of remaining in it. In both situations focusing on your breathing will help you to hold the pose. Deep inhalations will give you enough energy to overcome the lethargy of tamas, and long and controlled exhalations will help you to control the jerking impulses of rajas in your muscles. Similar experiences can be had in other asanas such as headstand, plough, fish, sitting forward bend and spinal twist. After final relaxation, the play of the gunas is more balanced. You are then better able to meditate (sattva), to do energetic work (rajas) and to have a deep sleep at night (tamas).

An important factor should be mentioned here: Deepening the sattva during your asana practice and remaining in that state afterwards depend mostly on what you eat before and after the practice. Meat and alcohol create tamas;

stimulants like tea, coffee, onions and garlic enhance rajas. The vegetarian satvic yogic diet is a tremendous help to keep the gunas in balance.

### **Concentration and Positive Thinking**

Wanting to be a good, positive person is a natural tendency of the higher mind. Yet while one may know quite well one's negative thought trends and habits, it often remains difficult to shift to the positive side.

The Raja Yoga Sutras of Patanjali observe this phenomenon in a very neutral and objective way:

#### **When the thought waves are stilled, the perceiver rests in his own true nature (1,3)**

When the waves of a lake are stilled, one can see the bottom clearly. Likewise, when the modifications or thought waves in the mind subside, one's essential nature becomes evident. This true nature is the same for everybody and manifests as peace, love and bliss.

#### **When the mind is not concentrated, the perceiver identifies with its modifications (1,4)**

When thought waves arise, there is the immediate tendency to identify with them. Especially during so called "free time" the mind is in a distracted state, as it does not have to focus on any specific task. In this situation it is very difficult to get rid of instinctive thoughts of lust, anger, hatred and jealousy, simply because the mind is not focused. Without concentration, we take the "movie" of the mind for actual fact.

#### **When negative or harmful thoughts disturb the mind, they can be overcome by constant pondering over their opposites (1,33)**

Through constant alertness and focus, it is possible to replace useless thought waves with positive thoughts. Asanas develop concentration naturally. Fine-tuning the postures with conscious breathing and relaxation quickly brings the mind into a focused state.

During an asana class the group atmosphere and the instructions of the teacher easily guide the mind to concentration. This is why you may prefer to take a class rather than practicing at home. Try to practice at home what you have learned during the class and come in touch with the magic focusing power of the asanas. As you relax deeply, the thoughts become as light as a feather and miraculously move to the positive side.

**by Swami Sivadasananda**  
**director of Sivananda Yoga Vedanta Centres in Madrid**

## **What is Stress? - guru's teaching**

What is stress? How much stress can we take? How can yoga help? Primitive man lived in the forest. His main way of living was by hunting and gathering berries and roots. He did not have the problem of modern stress because he was able to use his energy in the right way: that is, through the mechanism of flight or fight. If he suddenly heard the sound of a tiger, what would he do? He could only do one of two things – either run or fight. This is called the "flight or fight mechanism". He would try to run or fight to survive. Either way, he had to use his physical energy. Either way, he released that energy. But we are not in the forest. We are living in cities on the 5th, 10th or 100th floor. How far can we run from the stresses of modern living?

Stress cannot be diffused unless there are specific techniques. We have to attack stress on three levels – the physical, the breathing level and the mental level. On the physical level, if you want to remove stress you must be aware of the stress first. If you are not aware of stress there is no way to release it. That is what yoga does. Each time you

do an exercise you allow the body to relax consciously by giving a counter suggestion.

Then you regulate your breathing. Firstly, you breathe deeply for a few minutes to give oxygen to neutralize the acid, and then you consciously send a message to the muscles to relax. That conscious message is necessary. This is what is lacking in your daily life. You build up tension and you think that you can release this tension by drinking and smoking, but it is only further aggravating the condition. Yogis say that if you know how to regulate your breathing you can remove tension. Automatically, the moment your thought is concentrated you regulate the flow of prana. Prana is not breathing. The impulse coming from your respiratory centre to the respiratory muscles – this is the impulse you are regulating. It is the primary impulse of life, the very life force. It is this that you are controlling when you are concentrating. If you know how to breathe properly you can also remove stress and strain on the emotional, mental and psychic level.

Finally, sensory perceptions like sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch stimulate our minds. That is why meditation is important – you learn to focus your mind. Proper exercise, proper breathing, proper relaxation, proper food, positive thinking and meditation – that is the way of controlling stress and strain.

**by Swami Vishnudevananda  
UPADESA**

## **On-going Restorative Yoga, every Monday start 4th Oct, 10.15 - 11.45am - centre**



This class is for those with a desire to practice at a slower, more gentle pace, with more emphasis on proper stretching and releasing of tension.

While the class sticks strictly to the basic principles of a typical Sivananda-system yoga class, more time will be spent on the releasing of tension in both body and mind. The class will include the basic breathing exercises, and the warm-up sun salutations.

But unlike the open and beginners classes, this class will include more stress-relieving sequences, such as neck-rolls and eye exercises. Each class will also have more emphasis on certain asanas, so that by the end of the course, students would have a chance to learn different asanas, resulting in a more well-rounded practice. The class will also end with a longer relaxation session, to deepen the sense of calmness.

The aim of this class, is not to learn as many postures as possible, but to go deep into selected ones, and cultivate the awareness of the utilization of our muscles.

It is not necessary to have any previous experience to take this class, but a desire to learn to how to slow down and stay calm, would help enhance your experience.

**This is on-going practice class, students can join in anytime!**

## **Weekday Beginner Course, Monday & Friday 8.00 - 9.30pm, start 18th Oct Weekend Beginner Course, Sunday 11.30am, start 24th Oct**



A systematic introduction to the theory and practice of yoga for beginners or for anyone



looking to renew their practice. This course takes a step by step approach for developing strength, flexibility, good breathing habits, concentration and relaxation through:

- Yoga postures (Asanas)
- Breathing exercises (Pranayama)
- Relaxation exercises
- Introduction to 5 points of yoga
- 12 basic asanas and their benefits

Course meeting dates for Weekday course, **October: 18, 22, 25, 29, November: 1, 8, 12, 15**

Course meeting dates for Weekend course, **October: 24, November: 7, 14, 21, 28,**

**December: 5, 12, 19**

Class duration: 90 minutes.

Fee: \$200 for 8 scheduled classes + 2 ongoing classes + YOGA Your Home Practice Companion Book.

Pre-registration and payment is required.

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## Mindful Asanas, Monday 11th Oct, 8.00 - 9.15pm - workshop



We always heard the word "Mindful", understand it means we are aware of the present of whatever we are doing. The most common mindfulness is mindful breathing. When watching our breath, aware of how we breathe.

However, when we do yoga asanas (postures), how to bring mindfulness in the practice?

This workshop will bring you to the practice of mindfully moving in and out of the posture and holding the posture with the right mindset to reap the maximum benefits of yoga postures. It is not a standard class that we practice everyday, it will focus mainly on a few asanas that will open your eyes and mind how mindfulness plays in the quality of your practice.

010, Canceled - centre

Yoga retreat to Lembang, Indonesia as the location provider suddenly changes places that is suitable, couple of good places have been fully booked. Resorts are not ideal for yoga retreat as they lack of quietness and we have to cancel the trip this time. We sincerely apologize for any inconvenience.

Pre-registration and payment is required.

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## Schedule - from centre

Time	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
9.30-10.30am						Satsang	
10.00-11.15am							Beginner
10.45-12.00am	Restorative Yoga 10.15-11.45am					Open	Course (Beginner) 11.30-1.00pm
12.30-1.45pm						Beginner	
6.30-7.45pm	Beginner	Open	Beginner	Open	Beginner		
8.00-9.15pm	Course (Beginner) 8.00-9.30pm	Beginner	Open	Beginner	Course (Beginner) 8.00-9.30pm		

### **Satsang:**

25 mins silent meditation, followed by devotional chanting and an informal talk on the practical philosophy of Yoga and Vedanta. Kirtan (chanting) books are provided. The program is free and open to all.

### **Beginner:**

Class includes Pranayama (breathing), Sun Salutation, a regular series of asanas, and relaxations. This class provides an ideal introduction for students who are new to yoga and who need to learn a better foundation. Students will learn coordination between breathing and postures, gaining more flexibility.

### **Open:**

This class is open for intermediate and advanced students. The class includes Pranayama (breathing), Sun Salutation, 12 basics postures (and their variations), and relaxations. Students will practice and be assisted in their individual level of competency.

Not suitable for beginner.

### **Course (Beginner):**

A systematic introduction to the theory and practice of yoga for beginners or for anyone looking to renew their practice.

This is 8 classes course takes a step by step approach for developing strength, flexibility, good breathing habits, concentration and relaxation.

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**Serve, Love, Give, Purify, Meditate & Realize**