



It is the objective of this Ashrama to disseminate the Teachings of
H.H. Swami Sivananda Maharaj
according to H.H. Swami Venkatesananda Maharaj

October 2018 - March 2019

Update from Sri Yogeshwari Mataji

Hari Om! Om! Loving greetings to all!

We celebrated Navaratri, the nine-days worship of the Divine Mother from 10th to 18th October in Her forms of Durga for purifying the mind, Lakshmi for wealth and prosperity, and Sarasvati for knowledge, both secular and spiritual.

On Vijay Dasami, the tenth day, we paid tribute to these powerful forces which remove difficulties and negativity with joyous kirtans. In the morning we offered prayers and waving of incense over the ashram's equipment in order to receive the Goddess's blessings.

On a more worldly level, at our management meetings from the end of last year we discussed ways



and means of combatting the rising cost of living, the most challenging being the continual increase in security costs. The changeover to a much cheaper company was largely due to the efforts and research of Kamala Wengrove. Thank you Kamala. The previous company was very understanding and even helpful in

the change-over, so we have much to be thankful for.

We put out a notice for a maintenance team for the ashram. The response has been most rewarding. We hardly recognize our friends in their workman's clothes and appreciate their tapas and seva.

On 7th November we celebrated Deepavali, which is always a joyous occasion. Lamps were lit, paving the way to the meditation room, also aglow with lamps. The chants and accompanying instruments lit up the light within!

On 24th November, we commemorated our Guru Swami Venkatesananda's Mahasamadhi with a puja to Swamiji's sandals conducted by our very good friend, Guru Krishna. After a short discourse, devotional chants were sung.

Swami Nirliptanandaji, Vice-President of the Divine Life Society Headquarters in Rishikesh, came to our ashram on 28th November. We were doubly blessed as our long-standing friend Swami Nischalanandaji from Integral Yoga Centre, Pietermaritzburg, also stayed at our ashram. Swami Nirliptanandaji

gave excellent talks on the 9th chapter of the Bhagavad Gita every evening.

Our annual Interfaith Service took place on 2nd December. Each leader of a religious community gave a talk on the theme, which was 'The Blessing of Suffering'. Swami Nirliptanandaji, who was the chief guest speaker, gave an informative and practical talk at the end.

Regretfully we bade farewell at the airport on 3rd December to both Swamis. We are most grateful that the quiet, unassuming Swami Nirliptanandaji came all the way from Rishikesh to South Africa to refresh and bless us all.

We closed yoga classes from 16th December to 13th January, but as always the Satsangs continued, a special one being on Christmas Eve with a short discourse, Christmas carols and kirtans.

On 29th December, the day on which we always commemorate Swami Venkatesanandaji's birthday, we had a joyous two hour Satsang.

Swami Vidyananda took a group to a pilgrimage in India from 17th December until 19th January. Swami Vidyananda remained in Rishikesh arriving

back from India on 26th February, ready to resume ashram activities the following day! On 27th February Vaniji left for Rishikesh, where she is enjoying discourses at the ashram and the freedom of being relieved of the many ashram duties she takes on here.

The first important event in 2019 was Sivaratri from 4th March 6pm till 6am the following

morning. During that time a few other groups joined us! The energy generated by the chanting of devotees made the hours pass easily with enough to spare for the activities the following day!

May God and Guru continue to bless us all!

With love,
Yogeshwari.



"The creations of the mind
are more numerous
than specks of dust in a
ray of sunlight."
-Milarepa

Cosmic links

"Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time."

Thomas A. Edison

"As you simplify your life, the laws of the universe will be simpler; solitude will not be solitude, poverty will not be poverty, nor weakness weakness."

Henry David Thoreau

"The acknowledgment of our weakness is the first step in repairing our loss."

Thomas a Kempis

"Solitude is strength; to depend on the presence of the crowd is weakness. The man who needs a mob to nerve him is much more alone than he imagines."

Paul Brunton

"And the greatest error, says the Vedanta is to say that you are weak, that you are a sinner, a miserable creature, and that you have no power and you cannot do this and that. Freedom can never be reached by the weak. Throw away all weakness."

Swami Vivekananda

"Prayer is not asking. It is a longing of the soul. It is daily admission of one's weakness. It is better in prayer to have a heart without words than words without a heart."

Mahatma Gandhi

"Those who gave thee a body, furnished it with weakness; but He who gave thee Soul, armed thee with resolution. Employ it, and thou art wise; be wise and thou art happy."

Akhenaton

"We are all full of weakness and errors; let us mutually pardon each other our follies - it is the first law of nature."

Voltaire

"God's grace is at its best in weakness, so we need never fear our weakness. In fact, these weaknesses will determine in what way we shall glorify God for all eternity."

Mother Angelica

Swami Sivananda's Integral Yoga

By Swami Venkatesananda



These questions are often asked: "How can you say that the body is impermanent, not real, and yet practise hatha yoga which seems to assume that the body is important? How can you consider God omnipresent, nameless and formless, and yet indulge in some kind of singing, chanting and worshipping?" There is a beautiful verse which is attributed to Hanuman. Hanuman was a great devotee of Rama in the legend called the Ramayana. In that, it is said that even Rama depended

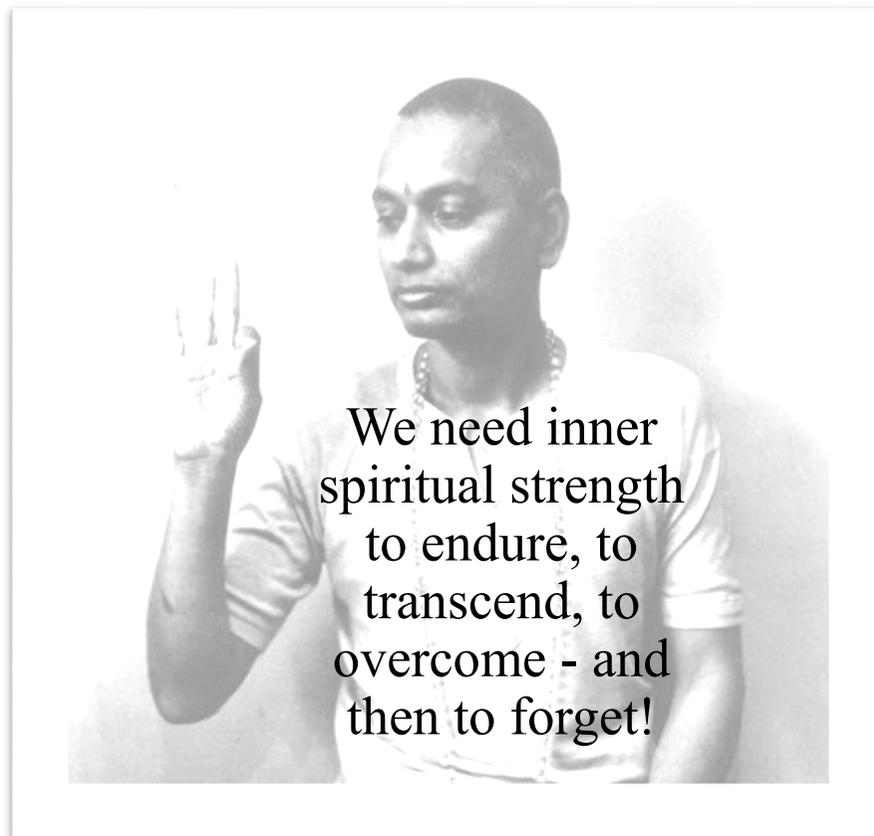
upon Hanuman to win a victory over his enemies. One day it is said that Rama asked Hanuman: "Thank you for all that you have done for me. Tell me, what do you think our relationship is?" The answer that Hanuman gave was very beautiful: "When I think I am this body, I am your humble servant. When I feel I am a living soul, I feel I am part of you. When there is an awareness that I am a personality, I am part of you and therefore at that moment I feel tremendously strong: I feel grace flows from you to me, and therefore I am able to work wonders. Then when the body-consciousness is completely lost, in that superconscious state I am you, you are me, there is no difference. I don't exist at all, only you exist."

We are aware of these three states in our own daily life. Sometimes the ego-consciousness is very strong; sometimes it is nearly not there, there is just a shade of ego-consciousness; and sometimes it is not there at all. The inner light must observe this parade. When there is strong body-consciousness, that must be utilised and also attacked by doing karma yoga. Karma yoga in that sense includes asanas, pranayama and all the rest. When there is just

a trace of ego-sense, of ego-consciousness, one must engage oneself in prayer, in chanting, in meditation. When the ego-consciousness is completely absent, what happens happens as He wills it.

To realise that there is no contradiction at all in this synthesis, one must see it in action. It was my good fortune to have seen this in my guru Swami Sivananda. He could combine what one normally thinks of as

contradictory points of view without any conflict at all. He was extremely humble, but not meek or weak. He was soft like butter, but when you tried to crush him he was like granite. He could be a very strict disciplinarian, and yet extremely generous and loving. One could see in his daily life that he literally saw God in everybody, and yet he was very regular in his own spiritualistic worship. He lived in the realisation that the world doesn't exist as one sees it.



Don't Be Weak

By Sri Swami Sivananda

Shyness is a great hindrance in life. It is a form of timidity or low fear. Almost all boys have got this weakness - and yet this is a feminine quality. Shyness manifests when one is on the wrong path. Every woman knows that the goal of life is God-realisation, and yet she engages herself in sexual matters. This wrong action makes her shy when she appears before any man.

A shy boy or man cannot express his thoughts boldly. He cannot look directly into the eyes of another man. He cannot freely approach any stranger. A shy man does not get on well in business or in the office.

Modesty is not shyness. It is decency or chastity. This comes from politeness and polish of character. Those who are shy should try to talk with others boldly. They should look directly at the face of others. Shyness is a great weakness. It should be eradicated quickly by cultivating courage.

Timidity is another weakness, due to faintheartedness. It is a form of fear, akin to shyness. A timid man has a chicken-heart. He is unfit for any public activity and for any kind of adventurous work.

A timid man cannot become successful in life, he cannot deal boldly with his customers in business. A timid man is afraid of losing his life. He is much attached to his wife, children and property. He is afraid of public opinion.

A timid man cannot talk even a few words with force and emphasis. So eradicate timidity. Eradicate it by developing courage. For timidity is a curse - and it weakens a man.

Pessimism is a temper of mind that looks too much on the dark side of things. It is the doctrine in which the whole world is bad rather than good. This is very depressing. Vedantins are wonderful optimists. Though they say that the world is unreal and they talk on dispassion, this is to create a distaste for the worthless life of this world, and to create a taste for the immortal, blissful life in Brahman.

The opposite of pessimism is optimism, which always looks on the bright side.



Children Of Light School

During his visit to Ananda Kutir Ashrama, Swami Nirliptananda of The Divine Life Society Headquarters, Rishikesh, shared with the staff of the school: The children of Children of Light School are the light. This light is covered by ignorance and the school should provide the scope for this light to gradually evolve.

LISTENING TO OUR CHILDREN

A common approach to teaching is to feed the child with knowledge, expect them to comply with routine and planned activities. As a teacher one feels that one understands the child, based on the child's behaviour, age and social context.

But to our wonder at school this term, as our approach is one of facilitation within a disciplined, consistent and predictable daily routine, we have been amazed to observe changes in the child as we listen to the child without any preconceived ideas.

During self-directed free play, children are singing, they are imitating new scenes as they are now having new experiences, they are using their imagination in the most fascinating way. For example, they are building houses, their compassionate nature comes

out as they protect each other by giving each other blankets and place sheets as a roof over their heads. Their compassionate nature is seen regardless of them fighting with one another. They always go to meetings with a baby wrapped in a blanket in their hand. In their play they pray and preach in these meetings. Their creativity and imagination flourishes as they play.

**“If a young child has been able in his play.....
to give up his whole living being to the world around him.....
he will be able to in the serious tasks of later life
to devote himself with confidence and power
to the service of the world.”**

Rudolf Steiner

To our surprise, two children noticed hatha yoga asana pictures on the wall and began to imitate the poses. We as teachers took this as our cue to commence building on this interest. They feel safe and secure in the space to express themselves through use of their body. This is how hatha yoga at the start of the day has been introduced. It is done in a fun way, with songs and stories.

GRATITUDE

We are very grateful to all individual donors who donate to the school on a monthly basis. Our appreciation to all volunteers who assist with dedication and co-operation. Gratitude to The Rylands Homecraft Club for groceries and The Siva Aalayam for the weekly fruit and milk for the children.

PARENT SUPPORT GROUP

In January 2019, the parents of the children voiced their need for support and honestly expressed the challenges they experienced in their home environment. This was extremely valuable as to facilitate a transformation with children, we are working with the parents. The parents expressed an interest in attending a weekly Parent Support Group.

We have been very blessed to have two very skilled and dedicated practitioners who were committed to running the Group, namely, Vassi Pillay (BSc Psychology) and Maya Kooverjee (Kinesiologist).

Below, is a report by Vassi and Maya of the group process thus far.

Aim Of Programme

The programme aims to engage parents in becoming more

involved in their children's activities and to support the values and behavior instilled at the school. This also includes assisting mothers in their own personal development.

Attendees

In these initial stages we have conducted exploratory discussions. Here parents have expressed a desire to change their own behaviours, such as to stop smoking, to stop drinking and to stop fighting. They also desire to improve relationships with their children and husbands/partners. They also feel a need for anger management. They also expressed their gratitude for having someone with whom they can talk about their problems and difficulties.

Facilitators' Report

As these are exploratory sessions, facilitators have addressed issues as they arise. Attendees were also made aware of social workers with whom they could discuss problems.

Discussions have centred around, inter alia, improving self esteem, building confidence, understanding the actions of children, improving relationships with their children. We have also used certain breathing techniques in helping the mothers to learn to control stress. The facilitators have

also introduced knitting as a practical task to show mothers ways of keeping themselves occupied and productive.

Some mothers have reported that they carried out the "homework" that they were given i.e. spending time and playing with their children in the park. One mother reported cutting down her daily smoking from 12 cigarettes 4, and of another reduced her wine intake by half.

Challenges

At this initial stage we need to keep mothers motivated in coming to the group session regularly, bearing in mind that they are constantly returning to an environment which does not lend support to these weekly meetings.

Yours in Service

Maitri Mala Makan

Whatever you lost
through fate, be
certain that it
saved you from
pain.

~Rumi 

Community Yoga Classes

The Maitland Town Hall continues to fill with enthusiastic students every Tuesday morning. It is so often that those with the more serious health challenges express the benefits they feel with regular attendance. Nothing seems to deter them, be it a cochlear implant, a new pacemaker, not even a leg cast boot. Of course, it takes an experienced teacher to accommodate and to adapt her class each week to match such a variety of ailments and Devi Harker shines at this.

Apart from Devi's involvement in this project, this group now has a backup teacher on board for those sessions when Devi is unable to teach. Avril Dawson joined this team some months back and brings a valuable skillset to this class. Avril completed two years of Iyengar training but further training was interrupted by a knee injury following a fall. This saw her taking a slightly different path in becoming a Yoga teacher as she continued her training at Ananda Kutir Ashrama. She loved the less goal directed focus and the more spiritual approach of the Sivananda lineage and, for her, the emphasis on the use of breath and movement gave her the skills that she felt she needed. At the same time, the precision inculcated by her Iyengar teacher has also

informed her style of practising and teaching asanas. What a privilege to have received instruction from these two lines of Yoga.

The Maitland Garden Village class, now in its fifth year, is in need of a new volunteer teacher. Unfortunately, both myself and Shanti Roopnairan have found ourselves with commitments this year which make it impossible to continue teaching. We are hopeful that another teacher will step in as this is a group of very committed students. In a meeting with this group some weeks back, I was struck by some of the feedback. Quite apart from feeling so much better when practising asanas and pranayama, there is a wonderful by-product that has come to the fore. It is the cohesion of this group. The administrator who manages the community hall pointed out that of all the volunteer programmes that are run for this community, the Yoga class stands out as the one that has had the biggest and most positive impact on the mindset and attitudes of those attending. As someone who has taught this class for the last four years, I can attest to seeing gradual changes in outlook, but it was interesting to hear this from the group. We know that yoga impacts on all

levels but to see this playing out over time has been a real privilege and one wonders, just how this work has changed us, as teachers. Apart from the health benefits and the need to reduce stress levels, one of the reasons we were invited to teach in this community was to provide a space where better relationships could be built. This certainly has taken shape and, for now, it is clear that there are a group of women who have learnt to stand alongside each other.

I would like to thank Shanti for her long-time commitment to

this project. These students will have gained enormously from her input and were always a little entranced by her gentle presence. Thank you, Shanti!

We are currently looking for a replacement Yoga teacher for this Friday morning class and so please contact Lynn Wengrowe on 074 1342922 if you would like to become involved.

Kamala Wengrowe



Disturbing Thoughts

By Swami Venkatesananda

Question: I meditate and practise yoga daily, but often get strange, unpleasant, even cruel thoughts. How do I deal with this evil which comes out of myself?

Swamiji: It is good you realise that they come out of yourself. If you want immediate but temporary relief, you may substitute some holy or pleasant thoughts. But these are all thoughts, and hence they offer no permanent solution. The key to the answer is indeed yoga, the Path to Perfection which is a total integration. But can one clearly understand what is meant by the word 'integration'?

When we talk of integration of the personality, we should not commit the error of assuming that the personality has somehow broken into pieces. As Christian Scientists will tell you, that disruption is but an illusion. Those who have experienced nightmares, however, will assure you that the illusion is real so long as it lasts. 'Integration' refers to the disappearance of the illusion.

The violent thoughts are obviously your own; they are from you, they are part of you, they are you. Can you run away from yourself? Can you throw yourself away? If, for instance, you eat

some bitter fruit, the moment you realise it is so, you can spit it out. But you cannot spit out your tongue or a sore stomach. If your tongue or your stomach hurts, have you watched yourself, what you do? You have to live with it; yet it hurts, it is unpleasant. Therefore, you are extremely

vigilant and cautious to ensure that you do not let it hurt you now.

In the same way, if you realise that the evil thoughts are in you, part of you, you, and you realise that they are unpleasant and disturbing, you will be ever vigilant to ensure that they do not arise in your mind.

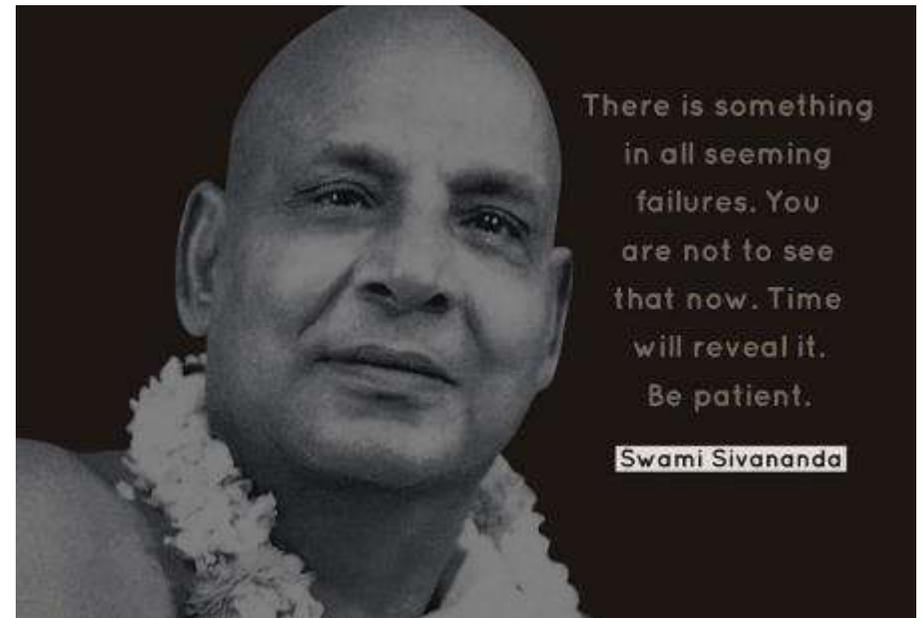
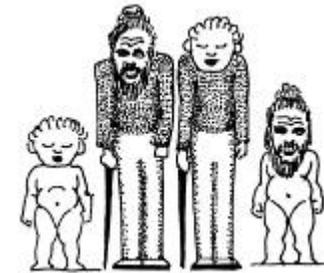
This vigilance makes you extremely strong. Perhaps that is why our Gurudev Swami Sivananda used to say, "In your weakness lies your real strength."



Wisdom from Mother Yogeshwari

A young head on young shoulders is the norm, so is an old head on old shoulders.

**A young head on old shoulders is not out of the ordinary.
But an old head on young shoulders is the greatest blessing on earth.**



There is something
in all seeming
failures. You
are not to see
that now. Time
will reveal it.
Be patient.

Swami Sivananda

Ananda Kutir Ashrama Membership Application Form

Seekers who are keenly involved in the Ashrama and who are actively supportive of its objectives can become members. A member receives a copy of Swami Sivananda's 20 Spiritual Instructions and Swami Venkatesananda's Prayer. A member can vote at the AGM and can serve on the management committee.

PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

R200 for a one-year membership.

Name _____

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**For more information please contact:
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Cape Town, South Africa

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Cape Town, South Africa

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Donations to the Ashrama

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Account No: 275500551
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