

Satyananda Yoga

Bihar Yoga Bharati

Yogic Studies Certification Course
4 month Residential Course
October 2005 to January 2006
by
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Paramahansa Satyananda Saraswati, Rikhia 2005

Introduction

Bihar Gorukul and Satyananda Yoga

If you have never been to India before, it is an exceptionally long trip from the east coast of the United States, first stop London and then all the way to Calcutta. Before I went to India, I felt it was the single most important trip a yoga teacher must take and now after a long and difficult journey, I feel completely sure of that.

When I arrived in Calcutta I stayed in a very quaint middle-income hotel called the Fairlawn. Three meals per day were included in the price. I basically slept the whole time to recover from the time zone change and I was grateful to have food prepared for me. Calcutta was the first India city I saw and it was without a doubt third world especially where I was on Sudder Street, basically it was a culture shock for me. Three days later, I left on an overnight train to Jamalpur in Munger, the taxi driver put me on the wrong train and in the middle of the night, I had to change trains. This was the first frightening moment in India but I ended up in Munger.

Upon arrival at the Bihar school I was admitted to a shared room, a challenge for me as I was placed in a room with a Spanish woman who did not speak English, karma Sanyassin. She told me to go f--- myself because I was not cleaning the room her way, yes my friends I kid you not. After one month of this insanity I moved into a community room and slept on the floor, the swamis told me to move back in the room and I did. Two months into the program after much effort on my part and high resistance on theirs they moved me to another room. I witnessed many dysfunctional moments among the groups.

The course begins at the end of a very hot season so it was around 90 -100 degrees for the first month in Munger. I personally suffered without air conditioning and I am not sure what was worse extreme heat or cold, I endured both. My reaction to the extremes are a clear test for overcoming likes and dislikes. The last month it was freezing (for me anyway). It got so cold there at night, I never felt warm, always I felt cold to the bone and there is no heat or hot water. We had a few weeks to adjust before the program started many people left feeling this course was not for them. I wanted to leave but conquered my tendency to run away, perhaps that was the greatest spiritual lesson of all. Before I left, my teacher said to me "do not have a back up plan" and I knew exactly



what she meant. Every day I was there, I thought of a back up plan and even attempted to leave a few times by packing my bags and shipping things home. While in India I realized back in America, I live a sheltered life, air-conditioning, heating and air purifiers. This place was a complete shock to my nervous system. We slept on wood beds with mosquito nets around the bed in the 100-degree weather, the fans were barely enough to cool me off, so I slept on the floor. We could not drink the tap water only special filtered water, which we had to walk to every day and fill up our containers. We used our own utensils (most ate with their hands) and cleaned them outside in a fountain with ash. The showers are cold in the winter and hot in the summer. The toilets are squat toilets and you will be cleaning them so bring rubber gloves. The amount of Karma Yoga far exceeds the amount of yoga asana and if you are looking for something to continue your education in asana or continuing education as a yoga teacher this four-month program is not for you. If you are looking to shock your system in every way as means of transformation then you might like this place. At night you hear the sounds of dogs barking, cows mooing, pigs squealing, women screaming, trains passing and music playing all night long, so bring good earplugs.

Munger is very dirty and right outside the school are very poor families living in mud huts. The morning yoga class starts at 5:00 am then we do karma yoga, for me it was cleaning our dorm, next theory class, meditation, lunch, afternoon (cooking) and evening (gardening), dinner, kirtans/satsang, non-stop for 4 months. During the course we were required to setup a festival the Shat Chandi Maha Yajna ceremony a 6-day fire ceremony calling forth the Devi energy for her blessings. However it was the 20 days of intense Karma Yoga for the students that tested ones willingness to serve. If you got sick you were asked to go to a hospital or if sick in bed you still had to get your own food down the road but everyone thinks it was an extraordinary experience. I had encounters with some of the coordinators/disciples that where very difficult so I turned to Devi for a sublime experience and relied on the sound vibration of the pandits chanting mantras to carry me beyond my mind. At the at Sita Kaliyan Festival I was assigned the task of packing prasad but my allergies made it impossible to continue so I was sent to clean toilets and then I was placed on a mobile cleaning team, which turned out to be washing of affluent Indian men's hands after they urinate and defecate. I rebelled after one hour. I found myself drawn to where the pandits where chanting and it was the place I longed to be, so for the duration of the program, when I could go, that became my spiritual experience, the energy was sublime nadam. Upon our groups return from Rikhia we were required to set up yet another program in Munger, because they received a building permit and the ashram was going to have a week long land blessing, this turned out to be thousands of people each day and more karma yoga for us. It seems if you believe in this lifestyle you gladly serve until you drop. At this point the students where exhausted and felt overused. The certification course had 89 people from 35 countries. Most people left as soon as they took the exam and on the day we where awarded our certificates only 10 people where left, I am proud to say I was one of them.



The highlight of my trip was the opportunity to see Paramahansa Satyananda Saraswati who is the founder of Bihar Yoga Bharati. For me the greatest benefit was living in the ashram with Paramahansa Niranjananda Saraswati, whom has been named successor and guru of this lineage. He is a benevolent soul whom I have come to love and admire. He truly was the reason I stayed. He has been a swami from the age of 10, he lives his



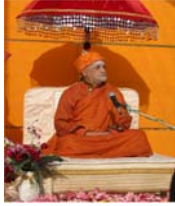
life with graceful dignity, he also has a very serious sense of purpose to serve his guru, which I deeply admire.

In conclusion you must search your heart to know where you need to be in your yoga practice. If you feel compelled to follow this tradition, I recommend you come here, however if you are devoted to another tradition and already have a guru you might want to think twice. I felt conflicted in Bihar and longed for my personal sadhana and my teachers. We were asked to forgo our former practice to take this course. I made a conscious decision while in Bihar to maintain the focus on my growth and no matter what, I will grow wherever I am planted. The journey was long, arduous and the layers of armor I built around myself have slowly peeled away.

Karma Yoga is the practice of service, a willingness to dedicate all your efforts to something other than yourself and it occupied most of my time when I was in India. In between we had classes which I had very little energy to focus on. Many times I felt the karma yoga was demoralizing and I constantly struggled with that on every level, anyway I did my best battling my resistance, overcoming my ego and dealing with a barrage of health issues and personalities. I survived, came home and went back to my full time work as a yoga teacher, after my return and I was diagnosed with multiple digestive disorders and parasites and as a result I was diagnosed with celiacs disease.

The greatest moment in India happened one hour before I left when I received initiation from Swami Niranjan, I will always savor that moment as a divine blessing. I will access his kindness

to heal my wounds from my trip and open my heart to forgive those who treated me with contempt. I will remember the few Swamis who treated me with compassion. In the end I could not wait to get home to Jivamukti Yoga and my beloved teachers. Nothing was sweeter than coming home, in my own bed, back to my personal practice and all my wonderful students whom I appreciate now more than ever.



Paramahansa Satyananda
Saraswati



Paramahansa Satyananda &
Nirnanjananda Saraswati



Paramahansa Nirnanjananda
Saraswati

Bihar Yoga Bharati CC 2006



That's me! (yea I know... wearing black...black sheep.....maybe I am not a sheep, maybe I am a goat!

Shivadasi, (Felise Berman) ACJYT, E-RYT

Felise Berman graduated from the Jivamukti Teacher Training Program in 2001 and is a full-time practitioner and teacher of Jivamukti Yoga. Felise is an intuitive yogini, sensitive and a well-trained teacher; she brings experience to the field of yoga, holistic studies, innovative thinking and metaphysical teaching. Felise teaches clients privately, in groups, lectures and workshops, she works on a very practical level, by trusting her abilities and continuing her personal studies she has offered loving guidance and yogic teaching to people around the world.

Felise was Born on Earthday April 22nd the child of 2 school teachers, 5 minutes after her twin brother. She took her first yoga class in high school however in 1987 she met Jyoti Crystal, the first yogini and shaman to inspire her. She began her full time yogic studies in 1997 with Sharon Gannon, David Life Ruth Minenti, Manorama, Sri K. Pattabhi Jois and Master Yoga Instructors worldwide. She is an advanced registered Jivamukti Yoga Teacher (ACJYT) and Advanced Registered Teacher with the Yoga Alliance (E-RYT). Shivadasi received a fellowship from the Nok Foundation to study in India where she graduated from Bihar Yoga Bharati Institute for Advanced Studies in Munger, India, under the direction of Paramahansa Niranjanada Saraswati in 2006 and received mantra diksha from him on January 28th, 2006 in Munger India. She is also a Master Yoga Instructor for Ballys Sports Club. Shivadasi currently lives and teaches in Northern New Jersey, New York City and conducts yoga retreats abroad while continuing her studies with her beloved teachers Sharon and David whenever possible.



Between 1985-1992, she worked in the performing arts and as a young woman she trained in music, theater and dance, eventually touring the US, the Caribbean and Canada as a dancer, singer and musician. In 1986, she was introduced to Buddhism by her ballet teacher, Douglas Wassel, and began practicing Nichiren Daishonin Buddhist Teachings. This included chanting the sutras in Japanese twice daily, two hours a day. In 1992 she began lecturing on metaphysical principles as her interests expanded in the study of the mind, philosophy and metaphysics. While on this journey a close friend Poet Dana Bryant invited her to a reading at the opening of the Jivamukti Yoga Center in New York City on February 18th, 1997 and she fell in love with Jivamukti Yoga and has been studying there since.

Shivadasi teaches yoga asana classes in a vinyasa style (asana sequence linked by breath and correct intention). Each class places a strong emphasis on the educational and historical aspects of yoga and the ancient teaching. Classes include music, spoken word, asana sequencing, yogic breathing and meditation. She recognizes the importance of her background in the arts and her intuitive nature; she incorporates her experience into her yoga teaching style. Shivadasi's commitment to continuing her personal studies is unfaltering, as is her strong belief in practicing a yogic lifestyle.

"I am exceptionally grateful for the Teacher Training Program at Jivamukti and my teachers, Sharon Gannon, David Life (TriPura Sundari, Deva Das) and Ruth Lauer Manenti. It is with deep honor, heartfelt gratitude and reverence for Sharon and David that I teach Jivamukti Yoga. I offer thanks and pranams at their lotus feet for their tireless efforts in creating vast changes within the yoga community".

Lokah Samasta Sukhino Bhavantu. May all beings everywhere be happy and free.

For more information go to www.shivadasi.com

