

CHICAGO CALLING

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God & His Divine Power

January 1st, 2016 is very special for the devotees and followers of Sri Ramakrishna & Ma Sarada.

Mother's Tithi puja & Sri Ramakrishna Kalpataru will be celebrated all over the world on this day.

On January 1st 1886 God manifested its "Unconditional Bestower of Divine Grace" aspect through the form of Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna.

Devotees believe that on this auspicious occasion anything prayed for with sincerity & devotion is fulfilled by God. Everyone likes to begin the year with the Devine Blessings.

Ma Sarada Devi, whom Bhagavan Sri Ramakrishna introduced as "Shakti" personified took birth in human form on Dec 22nd 1853. This time her Tithi Puja according to astrological calculation, falls on Jan 1st 2016.

It is rare to have the occasion to worship both God & His Shakti on the same day.

Are Sri Ramakrishna & Ma Sarada different personalities?

According to Shiva-Shakti Agama "Kala" or Shiva manifests as Shakti (power) for manifesting the universe and absorbing it again.

Shiva, the Reality, is both transcendent & immanent.

According to nondualistic Vedanta, Brahman



(the Absolute) becomes Purusha and Prakriti through its power of maya, but the two are always interconnected. *Shakti shaktiman abhedah*. The power and the possessor of the power cannot be separated. It is like fire and its power to burn, or milk and its whiteness.

The all-powerful God, for the sake of the devotees takes human form. This time God has incarnated as Sri Ramakrishna and his Shakti as Ma Sarada.

From Ramakrishna's viewpoint, Holy Mother was the Mother of the Universe; and from Holy Mother's perspective, Ramakrishna was the embodiment of all gods and goddesses.

To introduce Ma Sarada, the embodiment of God's power Sri Ramakrishna said- "Don't think her as an ordinary woman, 'She is my Shakti'. 'Do not doubt her (Mother). Know that she and I are one'".

Ma Sarada also said, "There is no difference between me and the Master (Sri Ramakrishna)"

Swami Vivekananda saw that the mother was Adya Shakti (the primordial energy). He recognized that an individual aspirant (Jiva) attains knowledge of brahman by her grace alone.

Swami Turiyananda said: "The Mother is the great divine power. She incarnates in this world to do good to humanity".

Swami Subhodhanada said: "The Master and the Mother are one, as the obverse and reverse of the same coin".

According to Ma Sarada, "Sri Ramakrishna is Para-Brahman and also Para-Shakti. ... Sri Ramakrishna is the embodiment of all deities and of all mantras. ... Really and truly one can worship all gods and goddess through Sri Ramakrishna.

Blessed are those who understanding Sri Ramakrishna as Para-Brahman and Ma Sarada as Para-Shakti pray for their grace.



A FEW BLESSED AMERICANS WHO HELPED SWAMI VIVEKANANDA

SWAMI KRIPAMAYANANDA

Minister, Vedanta Society of Toronto, Canada

This lecture was delivered on
Nov. 9th, 2013 at “Chicago Calling”.

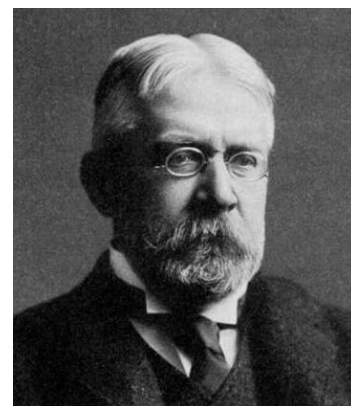
My pranams to our Revered General Secretary Maharaj, senior monks and my greeting to our monastic sisters and brothers and the sisters and brothers assembled here. It is such an occasion to remember Swami Vivekananda who was here 120 years ago. However, what we are feeling is not that 120 years ago he was here; he is very much present today, the joy that everyone is feeling and the way we are imbibing Swami Vivekananda, listening to him, relating to his teachings, his life stories, anecdotes etc make us feel that he is verily present here.

When we say a few Americans who are blessed to become the helping hand to Swami Vivekananda, first of all we remember Kate Sanborn. She met Swamiji when Swamiji was travelling by train while coming to Chicago through Canada. And later on she said to Swamiji: Chicago is very expensive, why don't you go to Boston? That will be less expensive and she gave her own home and made arrangement for Swamiji's stay. And it was Kate Sanborn who helped Swamiji to meet Professor John Henry Wright. When Professor Wright met Swamiji in the village of Annisquam in Massachusetts, he said: you don't need credentials; it is like asking the Sun its right to shine. Still he gave some address, some letters to the organizers of the Parliament of Religions and commented: Here is a man who is wiser than all our Professors put together. Somehow Swamiji lost this letter of introduction on his way. When he arrived in Chicago, he could

not find the letter and also the address with him. The third American who helped Swami Vivekananda to reach the Parliament of Religions was Mrs. George Hale. When, after walking a lot he couldn't find the address of where he has to go, tired he sat on the steps of a church totally surrendering to the will of God seeking guidance from Him. The door across the road opens and a lady comes and asks “Sir, are you a delegate to the parliament of religions? That was Mrs. George W. Hale. She took over herself the responsibility of Swamiji. All these were chosen by God to help the cause of Swami Vivekananda. Swami Vivekananda is not one person who is bringing one sectarian message to the world. He was bringing a universal message that the whole world needed so much and these blessed Americans were in fact doing that great job of putting forth that opportunity of making that great message to be given to the world from here in Chicago. I will talk about two or three other persons who really helped Swami Vivekananda further.



Kate Sanborn



John Henry Wright

One of them is Sister Christine. Sister Christine or Christina Greenstidel met Swami Vivekananda in 1894 in Detroit at one of his lectures on 24th February 1894. After hearing Swami Vivekananda she says "Never have I heard such a voice, so flexible, so sonorous. It was the voice of God to me! That range of emotion, that silvery music—I have never heard in any other. It was sheer music". She started loving India after attending his lectures, she says "Our love for India came to birth, I think, when we first heard Swami Vivekananda say the word, "India". There was love, passion, pride, longing, adoration, tragedy, chivalry and again love in that single word". Christina and Funke went to thousand island park in July 1895 there is the cottage where Vivekananda was staying. Wet, bedraggled and totally unexpected but they were warmly welcomed by Vivekananda. Funke said later "He greeted us so sweetly, it was like a benediction". They stayed there from July 20 to August 9 and one day received initiation from Swami Vivekananda. Sister Christine later received vows of brahmacharya. He dedicated her to the divine mother saying "I dedicate you to her forever, this the highest, the best and the loveliest". Sister Christine arrived in India when Swami Vivekananda was there on April 7, 1902. She met Swami Vivekananda on seven days before Swami Vivekananda arranged her to go for Mayawati, because it is very hot there in the month of April and May. After 3 months of her coming Swami Vivekananda entered into Mahasamadhi in July 1902. Sister Christine joined Nivedita to work in the school founded by the former until 1914 when she returned to the U.S. and she died in New York in 1930. Sister Christine was the American who completely dedicated herself to Swami Vivekananda's work and therefore was blessed.

Sara Bull: Mrs. Sara Bull was the wife of Mr. Ole Bull, the great musician. Swami Vivekananda gave her name Dhira Mata or calm and patient mother. She met Swami Vivekananda in the spring of 1894. She was much impressed by the depth of his

spiritual knowledge. Mrs. Sara Bull herself was very spiritual by nature. In the summer of 1895 she invited Swami Vivekananda to be her guest. Swami Vivekananda soon became her Indian son and Guru. Sara introduced Swami Vivekananda to Professor William James of Harvard University and other dignitaries of her times. She visited India many times she was very generous and philanthropic she regularly sent money to Belur Math she even supported scientist Jagadish Chandra Bose and gave him 4000 dollars to set up his laboratory. Sara lived in the city of Cambridge, Massachusetts for forty years and died there in 1911.



Belle Hale



Christina Greenstidel

Another American who helped Swami Vivekananda was Miss Sarah Ellen Waldo. Swami Vivekananda gave her Indian name "Haridasi". Miss S.E. Waldo was a distant connection of the famous Ralph Waldo Emerson. According to Sister Devamamta, (Laura Glenn) Swami Vivekananda, while he was in New York, one day said to Miss Waldo "The food here seems so unclean, would it be possible for you to cook for me? She readily agreed. She lived in Brooklyn and Swamiji at 38th street in New York it took two hours for her to travel in a horse-car, but she did it every day leaving at about six, seven or eight in the morning remaining there with Swamiji and cooking for him and taking his care and returning at eight or nine in the evening. She became closely associated with Swamiji and served him. One morning Swamiji found Miss Waldo in tears, "What is the matter, Ellen? Has anything happened? Swamiji asked.



Sara Bull



Josephine MacLeod

She replied, "I seem unable to please you. Even when others annoy you, you scold me for it". The Swami said quickly "I do not know those people well enough to scold them. I cannot rebuke them, so I come to you. Whom can I scold if I cannot scold my own?" Her tears dried at once, and after that she sought scoldings; they were a proof of nearness. Miss Waldo was alert about spiritual teachers. She doubted Vivekananda. In the houses of New York in those days there used to be in the drawing room a tall mirror between the two windows. One day Swamiji was walking up and down the room, lost in thought. "Now the bubble is going to burst", she thought. "He is full of personal vanity." Suddenly he turned to her and said: "Ellen, it is the strangest thing, I cannot remember how I look. I look and look at myself in the glass, but the moment I turn away I forget completely how I look like." It is Miss Waldo who took the Raja yoga notes of Swamiji when he spoke its commentary extempore.

Now, about Josephine MacLeod. Swami Vivekananda gave her nick name "Tantine" or "Jo Jo" She herself said that she was Swamiji's friend. Once somebody said she is Swamiji's disciple. She denied that. But she loved Swamiji tremendously. "She loved Swami Vivekananda so much", her

niece says, "as if she was Swami Vivekananda herself, she tried to feel the unity with Swamiji". After Swamiji's passing away she became depressed for about two years after that she lived forty years and she became recuperated and became well and then she was in close connection with Ramakrishna Order for forty long years and helped it spread Swami Vivekananda's message and contacted George Bernard Shaw, Romain Rolland and always tried to tell them about Swami Vivekananda. She also was the one who saved Ramakrishna Mission from misunderstanding by the British government that they were involved in freedom movement. Romain Rolland wrote about Miss MacLeod "She never tires of pointing out Vivekananda's beauty, his charm, the power of attraction which was radiating from him". Even though she took a leading role in the Ramakrishna Mission's work of Hindu renaissance, she remained a Christian faith. In her words, she had become a better Christian through the influence of Vivekananda.

Vivekananda makes a Christian a better Christian, a Muslim a better Muslim, a Hindu a better Hindu. This is how they became blessed- by being with him and helping and serving him. We also need to be blessed. There still is opportunity to serve Swami Vivekananda, to imbibe his message, to spread his message. Let us first read Swami Vivekananda, as my previous speaker said, to be full of the thought of purity of Swami Vivekananda. And then carry the message of Swami Vivekananda to other people to the greater audience. That will be real service to Swamiji and as a result we will be blessed.

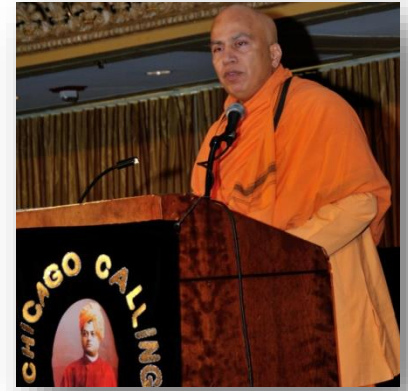
Thank you.

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA ON STRENGTH

SWAMI TYAGANANDA

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This lecture was delivered on Nov. 9th, 2013 at “Chicago Calling”



There can be no greater blessing than the opportunity to honor Swami Vivekananda on his 150th birthday in Chicago. It is Chicago which put Swamiji on the world stage. This made his teachings available not only to his contemporaries but also to later generations such as yours and mine. This celebration gives us one more chance to reflect on Swamiji's life and teachings. I shall limit my observations to the subject of strength.

Strength: My Own True Nature

These words of Swamiji come to mind right away:

Strength, strength is what the Upanishads speak to me from every page. This is the one great thing to remember, it has been the one great lesson I have been taught in my life; strength, it says, strength, O man, be not weak. Are there no human weaknesses? — we ask. There are, say the Upanishads, but will more weakness heal them, would you try to wash dirt with dirt? Will sin cure sin, weakness cure weakness? Strength, O man, strength, say the Upanishads, stand up and be strong.

Swamiji often quoted this from the Upanishads: *nāyam ātmā balahīnena labhyaḥ*, “The Ātman cannot be reached by the weak.” To realize our true nature as the Ātman, we need strength. It's good to keep in mind that strength is needed not simply for success in spiritual life but also for success in secular life. Swamiji said that he wanted us to develop “muscles of strength and nerves of steel.” Now, exercising in a gym may help us develop muscles of strength but not nerves of steel.

That requires a different kind of exercise, because we need a different kind of strength to develop nerves of steel.

Strength manifests in life as courage. Just as there are different kinds of strength, there are different kinds of courage. The courage of a soldier in war or of a firefighter on a rescue mission is easy to recognize. Not so easily recognized is the courage of a poor man or woman raising a family in a challenging environment. Even less recognized is the courage of a monk or a nun, or a sincere spiritual seeker, in persevering with the spiritual ideal in a predominantly materialistic environment. Every one of these instances of courage needs strength—physical, moral and spiritual.

Courage is generally seen as an ethical virtue, a much-admired quality, a quality that we need to develop. Swami Vivekananda refused to see courage as merely a virtue. He saw strength not as a quality but as our own true nature. The closer we go to our true Self, the Ātman, the more we manifest strength. Swamiji said: “Power will come, glory will come, goodness will come, purity will come, and everything that is excellent will come when this sleeping soul is roused to self-conscious activity”.

If strength is our true nature, how is it that we don't always feel this strength? Why do we so often lack courage in life? According to Vedanta, the answer is obvious: there is something within us which is preventing the manifestation of courage—and that something is, not surprisingly, fear and anxiety.



Fear and Anxiety

No one amongst us can claim to be completely free from fear and anxiety. How do we distinguish between fear and anxiety? Are the two really different? Yes and no. The similarity between the two is that they both are like poison for the mind: both fear and anxiety weaken us and make us feel helpless and vulnerable. In extreme cases, they can destroy us completely.

But fear and anxiety are also different: fear has an object, anxiety has no object. A person may have fear of snakes, for instance, and the solution to manage this fear is to keep away from snakes. We many not always succeed in doing so, but at least we know what we must try to do. But anxiety is different, it is nebulous, hazy: it has no object, and so it is more difficult to handle.

Anxiety is what results when we are not able to deal positively with change, external or internal, especially the change that threatens our own body or mind or ego. An intense form of anxiety is sometimes produced through one's troubled past, perhaps some horrendous event, often going back to childhood or early youth. In such extreme cases, anxiety can become pathological and, when that happens, psychiatric treatment may be needed.

But in most other cases, anxiety is not pathological but existential. Meaning, it's not so much an illness but the general condition of an average man or woman. Anxiety seems almost inseparable from our existence as human beings--and this kind of general anxiety we are all familiar with.

From our own experience, we know that it can take many forms, such as anxiety associated with guilt, emptiness and death. While these can enter into our lives at any time, usually these anxieties dominate certain stages of life. For instance, the anxiety of guilt and condemnation often occurs in early youth; the anxiety of meaninglessness and emptiness takes hold of us in middle age (we call this the "midlife crisis"); and the anxiety of fate and death occurs when old age is upon us.



Anxiety: A Vedanta View

How does Vedanta look upon anxiety? Vedanta looks upon anxiety as a natural result of forgetting that I am the Ātman. When we deny our true nature, we become fearful and anxious. We read in the Taittirīya Upaniṣad, Udaram antaram kurute, atha tasya bhayam bhavati, meaning, fear arises as soon as we separate ourselves from the Ātman. The Ātman is pure, perfect and free. The Ātman is one with existence, consciousness and bliss—which is why it is often characterized as Sat-Cit-Ānanda.

Anxiety of guilt and condemnation is the denial of the essential purity of the Ātman—or ānanda aspect of the Ātman. Anxiety of emptiness and meaninglessness is the denial of the inherent perfection of the Ātman—or the cit aspect of the Ātman. Anxiety of fate and death is the denial of the very existence of the Ātman—or the sat aspect of the Ātman.

The only way to eliminate fear and anxiety is through cultivation of strength. There are at least three sources of strength, and hence three kinds of courage. The first kind is moral courage, which derives its nourishment from dharma. When we take refuge in dharma, enormous strength is unleashed. Taking refuge in dharma means practicing dharma, no matter what. No price too small and no sacrifice too great to hold on to dharma with faith and determination. This requires enormous will-power, and through his teaching on karma yoga, Swamiji shows us how this kind of courage can be developed.

The second kind of courage is religious courage. Here the source of strength is the deity, often one's "chosen deity", or the iṣṭa. When we are able to develop unshakable faith in our iṣṭa and practice complete surrender to our iṣṭa, nothing in the world can frighten us. In order to develop this kind of faith and surrender, we need to purify our emotions and feelings, and direct them toward God in the form of our iṣṭa. Swamiji taught us how to develop religious courage through his teaching on bhakti yoga.

The third kind of courage is the courage to be one's true self, the Ātman—and since the true self is the spirit, we can call this courage spiritual courage. When we assert our true self, that is, when we live with the awareness that we are the Ātman, what results is abhaya, the state of fearlessness. When King Janaka attained this state, the sage Yajnavalkya told him, abhayaṁ via janaka prāpto'si, "O Janaka, you have indeed reached the state of fearlessness." Swamiji taught us how to develop spiritual courage through his teaching on jnana yoga.

Swami Vivekananda's four yogas are spiritual manuals that point us to the different sources of strength, they teach us how to cultivate them, and they inspire us to do it now, not postpone it for later. Swamiji's life is the best commentary on his teachings. If there is anything in his books that we don't understand, we only have to study his life and see how he lived what he taught.

Swamiji's teachings on strength are powerful. When we feel despondent or helpless or weak, we only need to read his words. I'll conclude with Swamiji's words: "God is not to be reached by the weak. Never be weak. You must be strong; you have infinite strength within you. How else will you conquer anything? How else will you come to God?"

"Stand up and die game! ... Do not add your weakness to the evil that is going to come. That is all I have to say to the world. Be strong! ... The sign of life is strength and growth. The sign of death is weakness. Whatever is weak, avoid! It is death. If it is strength, go down into hell and get hold of it! There is salvation only for the brave."

"Therefore, stand up, be bold, be strong. Take the whole responsibility on your own shoulders, and know that you are the creator of your own destiny. All the strength and succour you want is within yourselves. Therefore, make your own future. ... The infinite future is before you, and you must always remember that each word, thought, and deed, lays up a store for you and that as the bad thoughts and bad works are ready to spring upon you like tigers, so also there is the inspiring hope that the good thoughts and good deeds are ready with the power of a hundred thousand angels to defend you always and for ever."

If we were to seek Swamiji's guidance, this is what we may hear him say. These are Swamiji's own words: "Be strong, my young friends; that is my advice to you."

ARISE, AWAKE, AND STOP NOT

In 2008, when Katie Stagliano was in third grade, she planted a cabbage in her garden. After a lot of hard work, it grew into an impressive 40 pounds. She decided to donate it to a soup kitchen. The cabbage was big enough for the meals of 275 people. Katie was amazed at how many people she could help with just that one cabbage. It inspired her.

At only 11 years old, she got the idea to start her own nonprofit organization called Katie's Krops. It grows food and gives it away to soup kitchens. The organization has 6 gardens, where they grow thousands of pounds of lettuce, tomatoes and other vegetables, all of which they donate to people in need.

Everyday, Katie tends to the plants, managing to take care of them while also playing tennis, swimming and maintaining the highest GPA in her class. Her idea has really brought her community together. The seeds for the plants are donated by the organization Bonnie Plants and the organization Fields to Families has sent a professional gardener, Lisa, to help care for the plants. Katie's family, classmates and local volunteers also help by working in the gardens.

Katie encourages everyone to help in any way that they can. She reminds people that even the smallest effort can make a big difference. Katie's Krops is also accepting applications from other kids aged 9-16 who want to start their own charity garden. The winner will be awarded a grant to help fund their new garden.

Story adapted from <http://forinspiredlives.blogspot.com/>

Further information: <http://www.katieskrops.com/>



"Truth, purity, and unselfishness — wherever these are present, there is no power below or above the sun to crush the possessor thereof. Equipped with these, one individual is able to face the whole universe in opposition."

Swami Vivekananda, CW1: Karma Yoga

"Unselfishness is God. One may live on a throne, in a golden palace, and be perfectly unselfish; and then he is in God. Another may live in a hut and wear rags, and have nothing in the world; yet, if he is selfish, he is intensely merged in the world".

Swami Vivekananda

CW4: Writings: Prose, On Professor Max Müller

HOW TO BE A BETTER STUDENT

Welcome to the Youth Corner. This column will feature inspirational messages for the youth, addressing issues such as success in studies, development of will-power and memory, concentration, competition, and other challenges that are faced inside and outside the classroom. You are invited to write in to ezine@chicagovedanta.org with questions that we will attempt to address.

Q Even though I decide to study, I find that there are many distractions and I postpone studying. Please advise on how to focus on studying.

In the previous issue, we saw the definition of will-power and its genesis. We also saw that the main cause of the tragedy of human lives that prevents the manifestation of all good qualities is the failure of the will-power. We now continue with a discussion of how to generate that will-power.

In working terms, will-power is the positive and creative function of the mind which impels, propels, and enables us to do chosen actions in a definitive way, and avoid doing unchosen actions in an equally definitive way. It is that power of the mind which enables us to do what we know to be right, and not do what we know to be wrong, under all circumstances favorable or unfavorable, known or unknown.

It is important to know and believe that will-power can be increased by everybody, without any exception, provided we are ready to apply ourselves to it and work for it steadily and methodically. An up-turn towards a nobler, better state of existence is possible at any chosen point of time. As Swami Vivekananda has said: "Stand up, be bold, be strong! Know that you are the creator of your destiny. All the strength and succor you want is within yourself."

Once we have firm belief in this message of Swami Vivekananda, we can develop a will for developing our will-power. This is the first stepping-stone and a problem with most of us: we often do not even have the will to develop the will-power. With Swami Vivekananda's message, that within ourselves is unlimited power, firmly ingrained in our mind, we can develop the mind to manifest all power in our life, by unhesitatingly cutting out all delusions and illusions which are to the contrary.

We are now ready to take the most important step in developing our will-power. This step is to eliminate the dichotomy between the head and the

heart, between the intellect and emotion, between the thinking and feeling. This can be achieved only by loving the truth of our being. If we are convinced that we are divine, with a great history behind and a great destiny ahead, we will desist from doing things which are unworthy of us. Our thoughts and emotions will unite and enable us to do the best expected of us by ourselves. There will likely be a struggle, but we will succeed if we fight without allowing hypothetical fears to sabotage our self-confidence and energy supply. You must be brave enough to take courage and follow the truth to its logical conclusion. You may argue that you do not have the will to fight the fears and obstructions. However, that is not the real problem! The real problem is that you have not developed adequate love for the truth. Once you intensify the love for truth, the mood for facing all opposition will spontaneously develop in you.

Two forces will oppose the creative move for the love of truth within us: regrets about the past, and worry about the future. They are detrimental to the development of will-power because they hamper living in the present; they undercut all forward-looking creative positive movements within our minds. Worries about the future should be avoided as they waste our store-house of energy and time. Similarly, sins committed in the past should be acknowledged and true contriteness expressed; resolve not to commit the error again, and seek forgiveness from God; but then one has to move on. One should have such burning faith in God that one can say: "I have repeated the name of God, so how can sin cling to me? How can I be in bondage any more?" Resolve to keep the resolution made to God, and repeat his Name. Repetition of God's name gives us the power to keep our resolution. Live in the present moment with an unencumbered mind, according to your highest convictions. As per Meister Eckhart, "In the heart of this moment is eternity!"

To live in the present wisely, we require the guidance of a sound sense of values. As per the Vedas, there are four classes of values for the typical person: artha (wealth), kama (desires), dharma (righteous conduct), and moksha (liberation). All pursuits of artha and kama have to be subordinate to dharma. If we live in dharma and follow a sound set of values, dharma protects us. When we live positively with a sense of living rightly, we develop a power of conviction which releases a new force within us, a force that aids the development of will-power. Therefore, believe in Vedanta, or Sri Ramakrishna, or your own Atman, and you will observe how the will-power grows.

The sound sense of values that we follow needs to be zealously protected against the chaotic forces of various contrary ideas. To do so, we must (i) constantly discriminate between the real and the unreal; (ii) keep ourselves busy doing those things that we have decided as being beneficial; and (iii) avoid idle curiosity about things that do not pertain to our main pursuit in life. For (i), if needed, take the aid of a teacher or the scriptures. For (ii), follow strict self-discipline. For (iii), be vigilant against that the sabotage efforts by that unregenerate part of our mind which will act up in the mental struggle. On the basis of (i), (ii), and (iii), plan a simple routine for our daily life keeping in view that we are seeking self-preservation and self-improvement on all levels: physical, mental, and spiritual. This routine should be able to actualize our human relations, recreational needs, ideals, and aspirations harmoniously. In the preliminary stage, this is a very helpful method to get a firm grip on the mind. Our senses simply obey the decisions that have been made with due circumspection.

The greatest help in developing will-power will come from the power of concentration already attained. The two of them go hand-in-hand, bootstrapping each other's presence. The power of concentration helps the growth of will-power, and will-power helps the power of concentration. The simplest way to increase the power of concentration is to pour our whole mind into the

work at hand, to the exclusion of all else. Clearly, this applies to your studies also.

To stay focused on the work at hand, we require a sufficient reserve of mental energy. To do so and to prevent a leakage of the mental energy, stop useless activities such as daydreaming, purposeless talks, futile controversies, gossiping, finding fault with others, and backbiting. Observe around you that men of powerful will are dynamic and intense, but are also men of few words who live a life of purpose. Conservation of mental energy also implies conservation of physical and sex energy, which can be done by following a life of brahmacharya. Physical energy is conserved by living a moral life of purity and moderation.

Although failures may come in our attempts at developing will-power, we must not give up, for failures are the stepping stones for success. In the end, the sweet fruits of our labor will be ours. Despite our best efforts, if we do not succeed in developing our will-power, it is because of a wrong thought process that results in wrong actions. Stop, think, and analyze the entire situation. If you realize your true weakness, do the simplest thing, which is to pray to God for will-power, and that your entire will-power be united with God's will. Ask that you may be able to do what is right and desist from doing what is wrong. Prayer and repetition of God's name remove all evil thoughts and purify the mind. Take care to hunt out all the inner blemishes and acknowledge them to yourselves and to the God within you. Consciousness of our helplessness leads us to self-surrender. Self-surrender, when genuine and complete, removes all inner bondages which cause the weakening of the will. This will bestow a whole world of strength. It is the will of the pure mind that is invincible. Become the master of your mind. He who controls his mind conquers the whole world. You will easily be able to focus not just on your studies, but on any task of your choosing.

Reference: Abridged from: Swami Budhananda, Will-Power and its Development, Advaita Ashrama, 48 pages, 22nd impression, 2004.

BETTER HEALTH THROUGH YOGA : FOR PEOPLE WITH ARTHRITIS

Swagata Saha

Yoga is a safe and effective way to increase physical activities. Yoga promotes muscle strength, joint flexibility and also helps boost positive mental energy as well as positive feelings. Regular physical activity is important for patients with arthritis as it can reduce joint discomfort significantly. The kind of physical activity yoga provides is an essential part of the treatment of osteoarthritis (OA) and rheumatoid arthritis (RA). In arthritis people normally tend to suffer from greater pain and disability in those parts of the body that are not active compared to those parts of the body that are active.

Arthritis is an inflammation of joints, usually in the small joints of the hands and feet. People with arthritis have swelling and stiffness in their joints that makes day-to-day activities very difficult. In Rheumatoid and Juvenile arthritis the immune system does not function properly and attacks healthy cells around the joints, causing swelling and inflammation of the joints.

According to the Arthritis Foundation, food like sugar, alcohol, and gluten in wheat and flour can cause a flare up of arthritis symptoms. So these kind of foods should be avoided as much as possible. People with arthritis should follow a diet with low salt, low fat and carbohydrate to avoid joint inflammation. Such patients should also avoid having tea, coffee, dairy products, and should drink plenty of water (at least 8 to 10 glasses a day). In addition, arthritis patients must quit smoking. Banana, curd and rice should also be avoided by people suffering from arthritis.

On a psychological level, Yoga can play a vital role in reducing stress and frustration that result from pain and disability. Individuals with limited range of motion and poor flexibility due to arthritis would benefit the most from regular Yoga practice, as it would slowly increase flexibility,

strength, and balance. Chair Yoga is ideal for such patients as it is taught entirely in a seated position and designed in such a way that it never demands a whole lot of flexibility. The patient should never feel demoralized because of limited flexibility. In the beginning the patient should focus on the meditative quality and breathing pattern of each asana, which help to erase the stress from the disease and invokes positivity and motivation. Hatha Yoga is the most beneficial form of yoga for arthritis patients, as it provides the combination of asana (poses) and pranayama (breathing practices). Therapeutic yoga is all about experiencing the connection of the body and mind through the breath. Breathing exercises like Kapalbhati (Shining Skull), Bhastrika Pranayama (Bellow Breath), Nadisodhana Pranayama (Alternate Nostril Breathing), along with meditation are especially beneficial for patients with arthritis.

The complex postures that require a great deal of flexibility, strength and balance should not be attempted by OA and RA patients. During a flare-up of arthritis, it is important to give the body enough time to recuperate and wait until the rigidity in joints eases before performing any posture. If there is pain at any point when performing a posture, the patient should stop immediately. Postures that demand hyper-extension of the neck (Halasana or Plow Pose, Chakrasana or Wheel Pose), hip opening postures (Baddha Konasana or Bound Angle Pose, Utthita Hasta Padangustasana or Extended Hand to Big Toe Pose, extreme back bends (Natarajasana or Lord Of Dance Pose, Dhanurasana or Bow Pose) are generally not recommended in the initial phase of yoga practice. The quadriceps muscle should be addressed gently for those with mal-aligned knees or lax knees.

Asanas such as Virbhadrasana or Warrior Pose, Trikonasana or Triangle Pose, Setubandhasana or Bridge Pose, Marjariasana or Cat Pose could be extremely helpful in the initial stages of yoga practice for arthritis patients. If the patient does not feel any kind of discomfort after the first few yoga sessions, then the intensity of the postures suitable for arthritis can be increased. In later stages of practice, postures like Ustrasana or Camel Pose, Ardha Bhekasana or Half Frog Pose and Janu Sirasana or Head to Knee Forward Bend may be attempted. Some of these postures are discussed below.

Ustrasana or Camel Pose

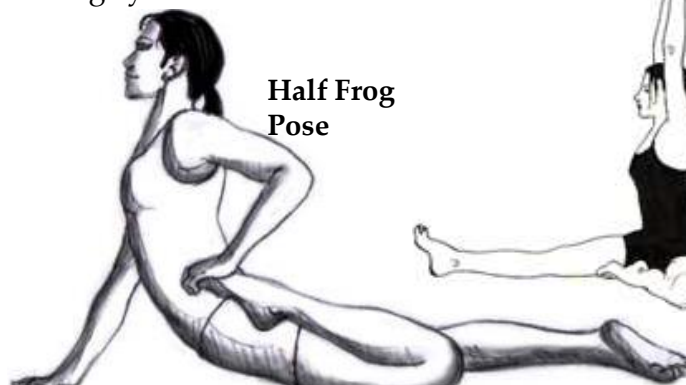
1. Kneel on your knees with hip distance apart.
2. Rotate the thighs inward.
3. Rest your shins and the feet into the floor.
4. Lengthen your tailbone.
5. Lean back slightly. At first rest your hands on the back of your pelvis.
6. If you are comfortable then lean back more and rest your palms on your heels with your fingers pointing towards your toes.
7. Keep your thighs perpendicular to the floor and hips directly over your knees.
8. Keep your arms stretched outward without squeezing the shoulder blades.
9. Hold the posture for 30 to 60 seconds and then bring your hands back to your front



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Ardha Bhekasana or Half Frog Pose

1. Lie on your chest with your legs stretched back.
2. Place your hands with palm side down on either side of the chest.
3. Bend your left knee drawing your left heel



Half Frog Pose

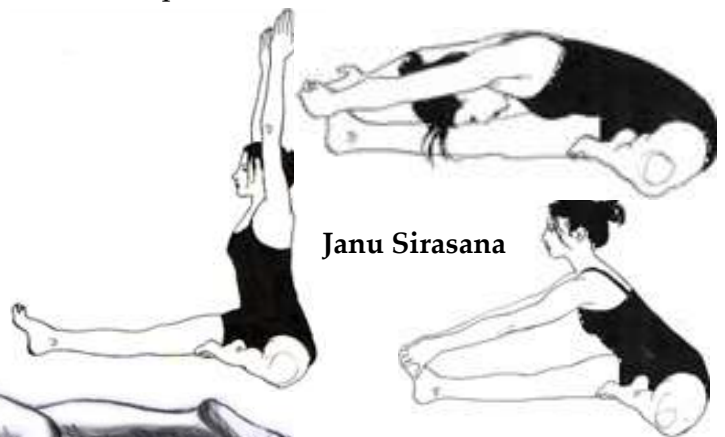
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toward your left buttock.

4. Stretch your right hand forward.
5. Now inhale deeply and raise your chest, upper torso right below from your navel.
6. Bend your left elbow and place your left palm on top of your left foot.
7. Hold the posture for one minute and then do the other side.

Janu Sirasana or Head To Knee Forward Bend

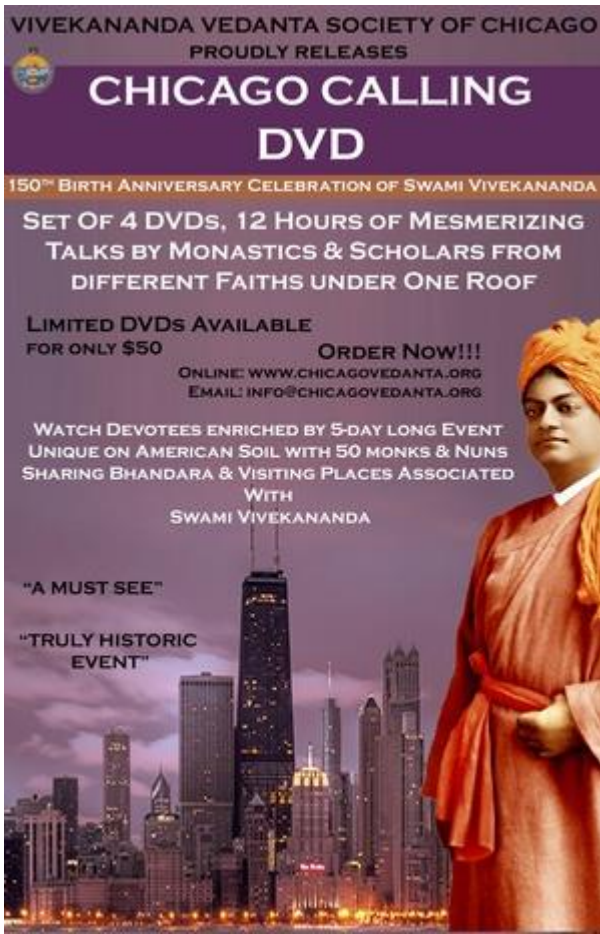
1. Sit in Dandasana with both legs stretched forward.
2. Bend your left knee and draw your left heel toward your groin, placing the sole of your left foot on your right inner thigh.
3. Lower your left knee and bring it down to the floor.
4. Inhale and lift up through your spine.
5. Turn your torso slightly to your right so that it is aligned with your right leg.
6. Flex your right foot and contract the muscle of your right thigh.
7. With an exhalation, draw your chest and sternum forward as you fold your torso over your right leg.
8. Grasp the sole of your right foot with both of your hands.
9. Place your forehead on your right knee or on the right knee if you have less flexibility.
10. Place your hands on the floor with your elbows bend and place them either side of your knees.
11. With each inhalation lengthen your spine more and more deepening the stretch.
12. Hold the posture for one minute and then do the



Janu Sirasana

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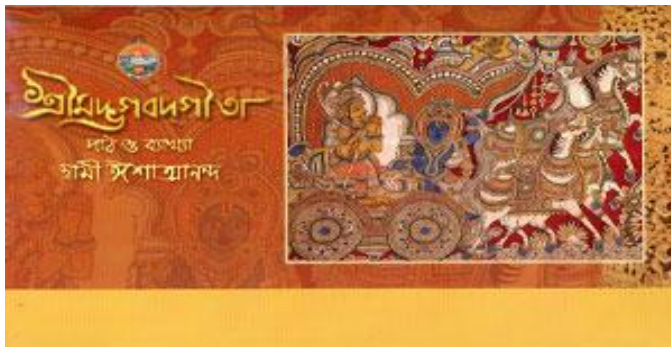
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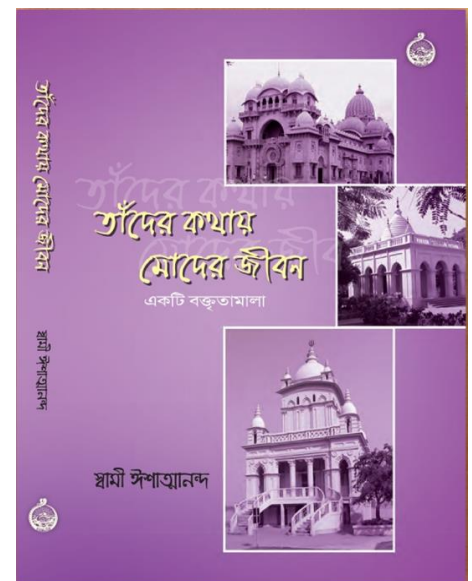
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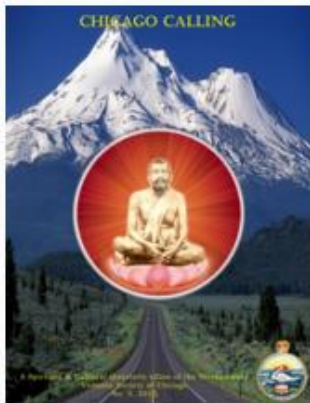
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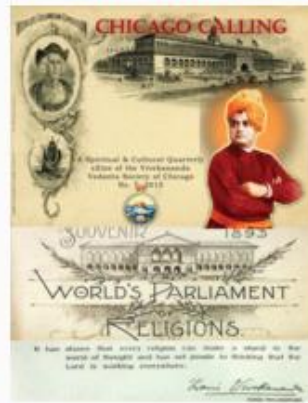
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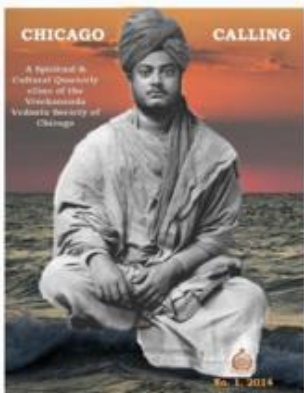
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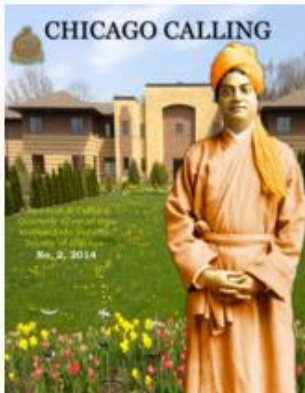
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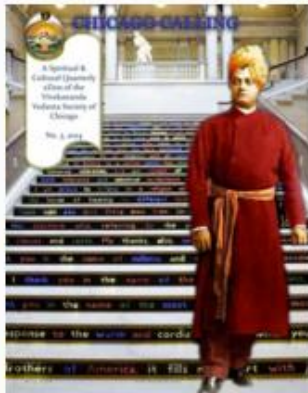
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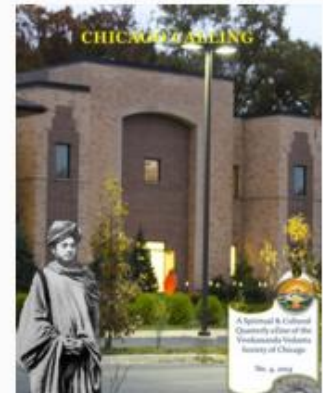
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