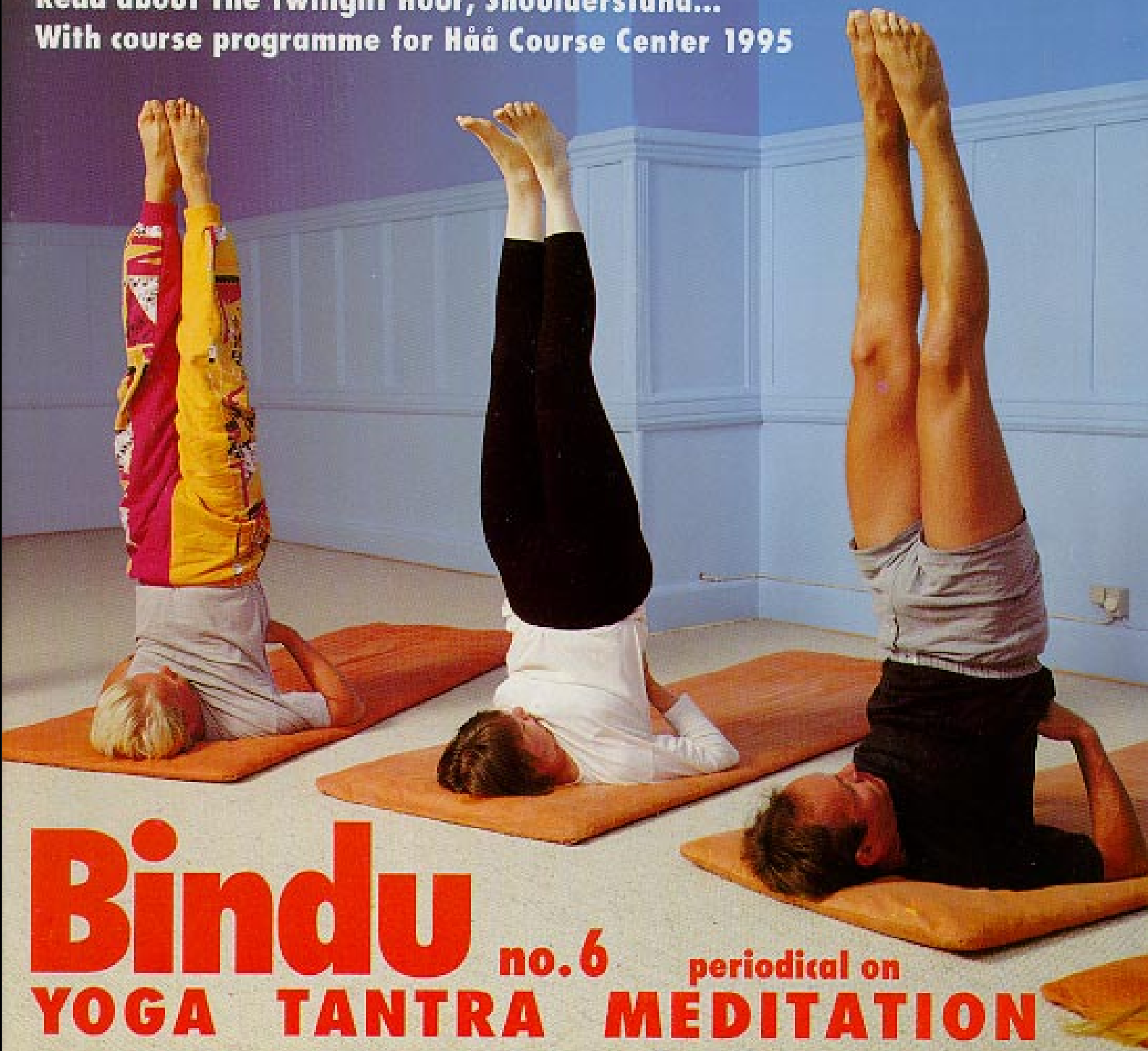


Read about The Twilight Hour, Shoulderstand...  
With course programme for Håa Course Center 1995



**Bindu**

no. 6

periodical on

**YOGA TANTRA MEDITATION**

# Editorial

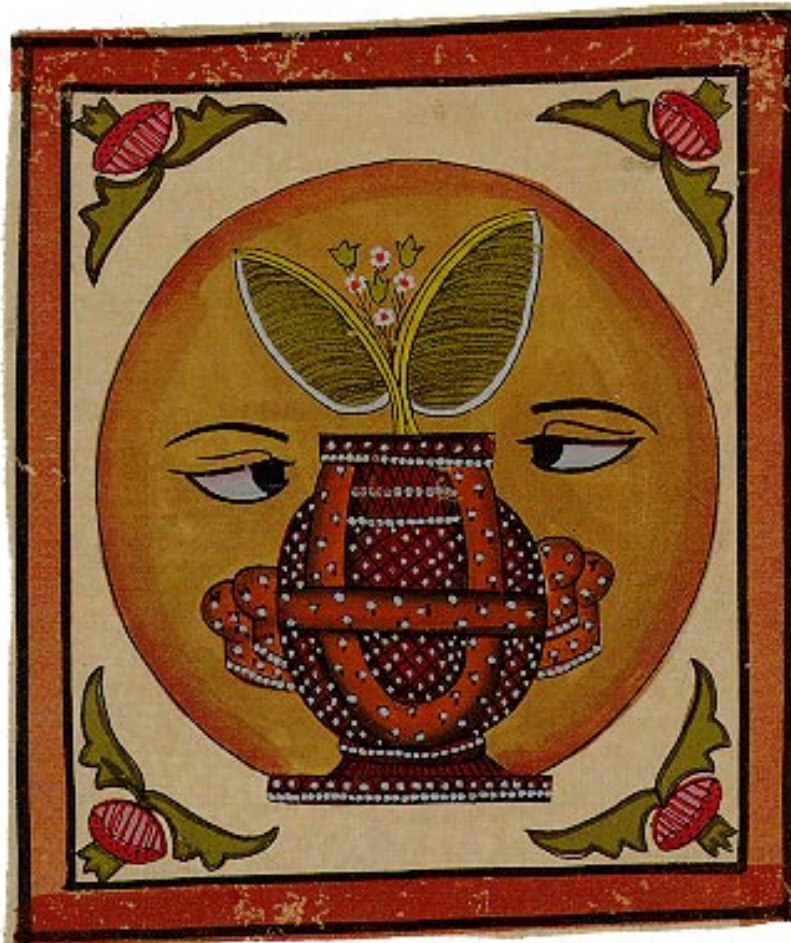
## A global collective meditation

One Sunday in August, 1994, a collective meditation took place the world over, from Europe to Australia. In London, for example, thousands of people gathered at Wembley Stadium to chant OM continuously from 12.00 midday to 12.08. We also took part. At our Håå course center, we were just ending a month long Kriya Yoga course, so this meditation was to be the last before departure.

After this meditation, I received a letter with a question on another meditation that was also to take place simultaneously in different parts of the world. The intention was that, with thoughts, one could repair the earth's energy grid of lines that run through the landscape, and make contact with lost civilisations. Thereby, from what I understood, we would be able to avoid global catastrophes. Other similar meditations are done to reduce pollution, some to end the war in Bosnia, etc, etc. I answered the letter with the following:

"Concerning the interesting stuff about energy grids, Lemuria ( and so on, fine, if it will do the individual participating, and the rest of us, any good.

In the meantime I will teach a few



more students yoga for their daily and their spiritual lives, to help them in the here and now - whilst everyone is waiting for the great miracle. What they are waiting for, I know not. Life itself is the great miracle."

Certainly one can direct energies towards a cause and manipulate thoughts and project them with good intent, but it is a question of whether one can call such an activity meditation. Therefore, one must discriminate. I am forced to explain that - what traditionally is

(\*) Lemuria is a prehistoric continent, (older than Atlantis). Supposedly situated in the Pacific Ocean.

called meditation, which we, together with many others do - is the deepest and most penetrating meditation. A meditation definitely worth daring: it requires only to let go of all demands to reach results, whether it be therapeutic or psychic, or to want the meaning of everything explained; and to have a strong desire to just be, to rest in oneself and take part in life and experience it...

To make sure that what we do is not based upon figments of the imagination, and to reach that deep and intense awareness we call meditation, we use a tried and tested meditation technique. To really meditate is so much stronger than the other, which I will here refer to as wishful

thinking and hypnosis. The state of pure being has nothing to do with thoughts, it is something you experience, not limited to expectations, it is something you are.

When you rest in yourself, yes, even when you are on the way to this, and you feel that you can let go of tensions, old attitudes and states, then everything falls into place around you and harmony arises. By manipulation, on the other hand, you use your energy on small details far removed from the essence of your being. You therefore never come close to real peace and energy.

## Meditation is definitely of current interest

Editorials in magazines and newspapers concern themselves with current events and tendencies. Can there then at all be an editorial in a periodical about yoga and meditation - isn't yoga timeless?

The answer to that is, that at all times the original, the artistic and effectual, the genuine and deep, is threatened by misunderstanding, by dilution, by negligence and fear; these creep in when something becomes fashionable.

Time and again throughout history an original mystical tradition has been watered down by people who want something to cling to, rather than wake up and expand their consciousness and get to know themselves. Through the sensationalism and misunderstanding of such people, the precious becomes inaccessible for the many. The so-called "easy" solutions, whereby one makes up things instead of learning

more than one knows already, narrows the scope and blurs the picture.

Euphoria is easy to bring about, and explanations and mythologies can always be invented - but profound peace, inner strength, and a knowledge of one's own being, is something quite different.

## Action creates change

*Action creates change*, was a political slogan of the 70's, but the expression is valid inwardly as well. When you act, you also change. If you want to grow and discover more about yourself, then dreaming and making plans is not the best solution, if they are not immediately followed up by action.

I came by this insight when, for a period of my life, I decided only to make those plans that I meant to carry out. That resolution cleansed my mind and had an unbelievable effect on my ability to act.

Real meditation in itself is also an act. It does not build upon dreams or fantasies, but leads to a place where deep calmness, tolerance and a keen awareness reign. There is no talk of ideals or beautiful thoughts here, but of experience. The paradox, however, is that such a meditation rubs off on life and becomes the starting point for outward strength and action.

If one avoids taking part in life's many activities and believes that to dream and produce thoughts for an external purpose is to meditate, then one easily ends up in a no-man's land, where nothing happens apart from one's own imaginary and conceptual world (and then it doesn't matter if these thoughts are shared with others).

Certainly there is something called creative visualisation, and apparently it can bring about results - at least in the short run. But what is there to compare it with, if one hasn't experienced the essence of meditation?

# Contents

## Editorial

Meditation or hypnosis, transformation or manipulation - how to distinguish between a real experience and imagination?

## You can not pull at the grass to make it grow

Conference in Paris: "Invent Tomorrow's Education". Yoga can increase the quality of children's and young people's schooling.

## The Twilight Hour

Did we have a living meditation tradition in the North? Did grandmother meditate? Maybe, without knowing it was meditation - she called it something else.

2

6

8

## Shoulderstand

A yoga pose for the whole body. A bit about the beneficial effects of the pose on the blood pressure, the thyroid gland, asthma...

## Yoga, Tantra and Meditation in daily Life

Swami Janakananda's book in a revised and extended edition.

## Yoga

For increased body awareness and inner harmony. Experiences from a weekend course at Håå Course Center.

## Håå Course Center in Southern Sweden

is for those wishing to do a little extra for themselves - and learn yoga and meditation under the best possible conditions.

## Yoga shop

Neti pots, tapes, books...

22

16

19

20

21



## Transformation of the personal life

I have frequently seen people end a course and go home with an entirely new radiance. A radiance that they perhaps do not perceive immediately, but at home things fall into place around them and what they need seems to come by itself.

Naturally this is due to the old secret - when I really have the desire and the will to do something, then providence appears at my side. The inhibitions that hindered me from taking initiatives, I have removed through yoga. I see what I want, or in which direction I want to go, and opportunities present themselves....

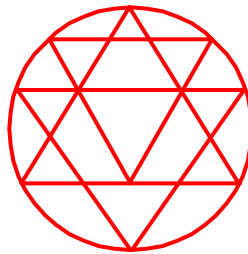
## Transformation of the surroundings

A few years ago, the organisation Transcendental Meditation arranged a large collective meditation in The Globe, Stockholm. I thought this was a good initiative, but I was surprised when I heard a couple of participants relate what they themselves had done. They had sent out good thoughts into the world - thoughts of peace, etc.

Once in the 70's, TM did an experiment in Atlanta, USA. Over a period, a group of people met every day in a house in a slum quarter and meditated. The method they used was genuine meditation, in the sense that they did not try to manipulate with or influence the surroundings. They just devoted themselves to the technique they used, namely a mantra. Briefly explained, it is a sound they repeat mentally in the mind for about half an hour, once or twice a day, with good results for their well-being.

At the conclusion of the period, after they had left the slum and the house where

they had meditated, they allowed some qualified researchers to study whether the meditation had had any effect on the surroundings. Statistics of serious crimes such as murder, rape and



assaults were compared before, during and after the period of meditation. The research revealed that during the period of meditation, the serious crimes had fallen to a minimum, but returned to "normal" for the area after the conclusion of the meditations.

Therefore I was greatly surprised to hear that the TM participants in Stockholm had been occupying themselves with thoughts and conceptions.

## Good thoughts - evil thoughts

Are "good" or "positive" thoughts of no use? Yes, if they do not foster guilt, shame or tensions, when trying to suppress the "evil" thoughts, then at least the "good" counter balance the "evil" ones. If we fight the thoughts, we end up getting entangled in them, and they do not let go. In meditation you avoid fighting the thoughts - for example, by looking at them attentively without clinging to them - and eventually you realise that you are not the thoughts. Thus the interest for them is lost and the mind calms down. Of course, this is not done by willpower or with effort, but by the meditation method used. Thoughts are dropped and awareness is maintained with the meditation object. The state is

concentrated and deepened.

It does not mean that one should not think good thoughts. Some people send good thoughts in all four directions, and up and down, before they start their meditation, but this belongs to the ritual with which they surround their meditation, and not to the meditation itself. This is the equivalent of religious rituals and meditations where the gods are first called upon to awaken energy and protection, before commencing with the actual meditation. I have nothing to say about this, only that it has my respect. I know that if one meditates on God with no other purpose than love and a desire to do it, then the meditation is irresistible.

However, I prefer the attitude that Lao Tze expresses with these words:

*"...when Tao is lost, there is goodness. When goodness is lost, there is kindness. When kindness is lost, there is justice. When justice is lost, there is ritual. Now ritual is the husk of faith and loyalty, the beginning of confusion. Knowledge of the future is only a flowery trapping of Tao. It is the beginning of folly.*

*Therefore the truly great man dwells on what is real and not what is on the surface. On the fruit and not the flower. Therefore accept the one and reject the other..."* and he continues:

*"Give up sainthood, renounce wisdom, and it will be a hundred times better for everyone; give up kindness, renounce morality, and men will rediscover filial piety and love; give up ingenuity, renounce profit, and bandits and thieves will disappear."* (Tao Te Ching; translated by Gia-Fu Feng and Jane English.)

The depth achieved when nothing other than meditation is sought, is vast and can



not at all be compared with “positive thinking” or hypnosis, which are other words for many methods in fashion today. Just as the past thousand years or more have suffered from too much discipline and blind authority, so will the future suffer from a lack of discipline and of not being able to stay with one thing. A great deal of confusion will arise as a result of this, when one forgets oneself and runs from one sensational method to the next - the goal is lost from sight.

## Behind the thoughts

I can also compare the way I have talked of meditation to the effect of yoga poses, as I experience them. When various yoga poses are used in a programme, then the individual exercises have, without a doubt, a specific effect on certain organs or functions of the body. We can see this from the research we are currently publishing in this periodical. But the use of a yoga programme also has a general effect. An effect, which is not about details, but an overall state of harmony. That which we experience as well-being, energy and concentration when we have done the exercises.

It is this general harmony I am interested in. I am certain that when it arises, possible disharmonious areas in the body or in the body's energy field will be affected by the whole. When the exercises are repeated regularly over a longer period, then sickness will disappear.

To me there appears to be a paradox in the “modern” way of curing sicknesses. To be able to cure, one must first and foremost, according to the prevailing opinion, know all about sickness, and not of health. In the Tantric tradition we start from the diametrically opposite point, that is, of the *fit and healthy person*. A cure does not happen

by “fighting” the sickness, but by returning to that optimal health, which in Sanskrit is defined by the word *swastha*, meaning both: *to rest in oneself, to be oneself* - and - *to be fit and healthy, in one's natural state*.

With this definition in mind, it can be understood why one should not manipulate in meditation, but seek the highest goal, which I can only describe with these modest words: *a total letting go - and being*.

No doubt it could also be expressed in other ways, religious, philosophical, etc. And not claiming that I have the only definition on coming close to the essence of one's being without strain, I shall again cite Lao Tze, and let him say it in his way:

*“Thirty spokes share the wheel's hub; it is the center hole that makes it useful.*

*Shape clay into a vessel; it is the space within that makes it useful.*

*Cut doors and windows for a room; it is the holes which make it useful.*

*Therefore profit comes from what is there; usefulness from what is not there.”* (Tao Te Ching)

Now it is a question of whether *non-effort* is easy or difficult? Yes and no, it must be learnt, and yet it is simple, like in *the twilight hour* which we describe in this issue of Bindu. But for that disciple who wants to achieve non-effort, the training principally involves giving up straining and learning to receive, or rather to realise that everything comes by itself, if the goal is held in sight and one stays on the path. When one has learnt not to follow all impulses, all desires to assert oneself and say something, instead of listening and experiencing, then great inspiration is gained. When one has realised silence, then one's

speech has greater effect. The journey can be straightforward and easy when one knows surrender, but it can also be painful and full of resistance; and at times the one who pretended to be a disciple runs away, when expectations and ideals are larger than the ability to experience the obvious and simple.

I follow a method in my meditation that safeguards, that it does not turn into ideas, expectations or self hypnosis, but provides a real experience, so the relaxation becomes genuine and consciousness is expanded harmoniously...

All the same, I would like to support the idea of collective meditation, globally or just in our school. If you are or have been a student of ours, you are welcome every Sunday at 8 pm (European time), when we meditate in the various schools. Or you can join us at home, wherever that is. Swami Janakananda □

## Bindu

We started releasing Bindu again a year ago with the ambition of publishing four issues per year, and this we have done the first year. But as we also need time to teach, and at the same time do not want to reduce the quality of Bindu, it is more manageable for us with two issues per year.

For the present we will publish one issue in March and one in October. This will also lighten the economy which is necessary for the existence of the periodical. Bindu is based on voluntary work at all levels, from writing and photography to printing - but it is also dependent on your desire to read the periodical, and therefore we invite you to make a contributive subscription, see p. 22. *The editors*

# You can not pull at the grass to make it grow

but the earth is enriched when children do yoga

by Ambika

The above statement I heard at a conference in Paris, November 1994. The title of the conference was "Invent Tomorrow's Education". Yoga teachers, educators, school teachers, psychologists, researchers and others presented their visions and experiences for a more humane education for children and young people. There were three hundred participants from 14 countries.

The lectures covered a wide field, from very theoretical; for instance, there was half an hours account on the nature of silence, analysed from all angles and presented by a very loud lecturer; to concrete experiences with the use of yoga, relaxation and meditation methods in the class room. While I sat there in the conference hall, a story came to mind: Two doors, on one it said "heaven", and on the other "lectures on heaven". The floor in front of the door leading to lectures on heaven was worn down while the floor in front of the door to heaven was almost untouched.

But - theoretical or practical - the general theme was a wish to introduce methods and ideas, which make it possible to learn, to understand and to relate to the subjects which are taught, from the basis of oneself, with motivation, energy and joy. The driving force is not only that a certain curriculum should be learnt and that the teacher expects a specific outcome, but also that the children are not just stuffed with knowledge learnt by rote.

One lecturer referred to a survey carried out in the French educational system, which showed that 95% of students felt stressed by school.

The organisers of the conference, R.Y.E. (Research on Yoga in Education) wrote in a presentation



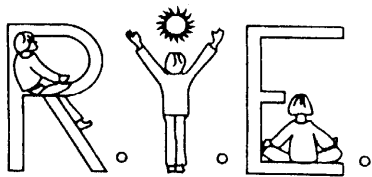
folder: "Teachers are asked to go through an ever more overloaded curriculum, but nothing is done to develop the memory. The children are told: 'Now listen!', but they are not taught how to concentrate."

Lecturer Jacques de Coulon, yoga teacher and head master of a high-level secondary school in Switzerland:

*"There should be different levels within education. If you compare a human being with a stagecoach, then the actual coach is the physical body. The horses are the emotions and the coachman the intellect. It is obviously important that a close cooperation exists between the coachman and the*

*horses. In the stagecoach there is a traveller, and he is the spiritual level, and here we deal with the meaning of life, because the traveller knows the destination of the journey, he knows where he wants to go. You can have a coachman who can really control and direct the horses, but if he does not know where the traveller wants to go, he will just go round in circles. Education ought to develop all of these levels and promote the interaction between them. Yoga creates interaction between the physical level, emotions, intellect and the spiritual level. In the educational system in Switzerland, where I work, 90% of the disciplines belong on the intellectual level."*

Leading a workshop was Paula Gatti from Montevideo in Uruguay, where she is one of two yoga teachers employed in a school with 200 pupils. At the start of a school day the whole school does a 10 minute relaxation or meditation and the same takes place at the end of the day - all 200 pupils at exactly the same time. All classes have two yoga lessons a week in a room used only for yoga. All other lessons start with a few minutes of silence. Either the pupils sit completely still with their eyes closed or - the smaller children - draw in silence. According to Paula the teachers experience the pupils as far more motivated, they find more joy in the work and have a greater sense of solidarity, when



## RECHERCHE SUR LE YOGA DANS L'ÉDUCATION

compared to ordinary schools. The title of the workshop was "A happy school in Montevideo".

R.Y.E. is originally a French organisation founded and run by Micheline Flak who is a student of Swami Satyananda. R.Y.E. has branches in many of the larger cities in France, as well as in five other countries, and aims to spread the use of yoga in schools and other educational facilities. One of R.Y.E.'s activities is to educate teachers, so that they become capable of using various physical exercises, breathing exercises and relaxation techniques in their teaching. The methods are modified so that the pupils either sit on or stand behind their chairs. A condition for taking part in the education is that you practise yoga regularly yourself.

At the Scandinavian Yoga and Meditation School, we often have contact with schools in the various countries where we work. We are visited by classes and we go out to the schools to make an introduction with both theory and a practise, where the pupils do not remain sitting on their chairs but get on to the floor and do an entire yoga programme, relaxation and meditation.

Some classes also choose to follow three lessons on three consecutive days, and in this manner they gain a clearer experience of how, for instance, they become better, through yoga, at directing their energy towards that

which is important to them and how they can improve their ability to concentrate.

That a school teacher, in the middle of a lesson by means of simple exercises, is able to create attention and interest among the pupils is very valuable. The greatest benefit from doing yoga at school, though, in our opinion is gained by combining the exercises mentioned above with actual yoga classes a few times a week, taught by a yoga teacher who has a comprehensive education.

It is very inspiring and refreshing to teach groups of children or young people, because they have a natural curiosity and motivation to explore what happens when you do yoga. And the questions they ask are very honest and direct. If you study children you see that from birth they have an incredible ability - and sometimes from one second to the next - to change their state of consciousness. A child can be going at full speed until all of a sudden it becomes occupied with something and forgets everything around it. Who has not experienced, for example in a bus, a child who stares at you. A gaze that simply rests on you, uninterrupted, without losing concentration for a single second, while you have looked away several times. One often experiences that children approach yoga in a very direct way, as if it is something they already know.

The relaxation Yoga Nidra is always very popular, also at our usual yoga classes for children. For about 20 minutes they lie

completely still with closed eyes and listen; Yoga Nidra is a relaxation where one is neither asked to relax, nor has to imagine that one is relaxed, the relaxed state is called forth by the technique. At the end of Yoga Nidra one should see various images, and this is something children are both very fond of and do with no effort at all. At some schools the tape with Yoga Nidra is used regularly in class, as a method of **really** taking a break and "wiping out the mental blackboard", to offer the pupils an opportunity and time to digest all of the information and impressions they receive.

Yoga is a means of returning to being yourself, in the middle of the life you are living, so that again you can experience, act - and learn. □



# The Twilight Hour - a time to be

edited by Swami Janakananda

*"I grew up on the Faroe islands. When I was about eight years old, I lived with my grandmother's sister in a small village, Hove, where, at that time, electricity was non-existent. I remember that when the day was drawing to an end, we sat silently in the kitchen, no one said a word. The paraffin lamp would not be lit until it was completely dark. I remember the children being shushed - we should just sit still and not say anything. I can't remember if I was asked to close my eyes. Grand-mother's sister, her daughter and son-in-law sat down, and we were all silent. A fantastic peace now settled over the day." (Shanti)*

In the North, which for us who live here includes all of the northern and Scandinavian countries, there is a tradition that has been such a natural part of our culture, that no-one has noticed that it is being forgotten.

I got the idea for this article when I remembered how, as a child, I was asked to sit still while the sun set and it grew dark. In the northern countries, the twilight is considerably longer than in the south, at the equator the sun goes down in a matter of minutes, whereas in the North, depending on the time of year, it can last much longer than an hour.

In my family we called it just that, the twilight hour. Occasionally I sat together with my mother and experienced the day fading, but when I visited my aunt it was quite consistent every time, no lights were lit, no radio, no talking, we just sat and experienced the darkness falling. When it was almost dark in my aunt's apartment, a man would come by on the street outside, Gammeltoftsgade

in Copenhagen, where she lived opposite the county hospital. With a long pole he would pull a small ring on the gas lamp outside the window so that its pilot light blazed up and lit the whole lamp - and so the dusk was over for us, and the evening began with all of its activities - mealtime, company, radio, etc..

A few years ago, when the memory of the twilight hour came back to me, I began asking my students, especially those in the Scandinavian countries, if they knew of this custom - and what they did in this period. It showed that between 10-20% of them either remembered the twilight hour from home or still used it. The further north one goes, in the northern part of Scandinavia and in Finland, the better it is remembered and still used. But also in the most southern end, Denmark, a strong tradition is still present. We have received some accounts of the "blue hour" from Germany and would like to hear more, and I would be grateful if people from Holland, England, Scotland, Ireland, Canada, Greenland, Chile, Tasmania and New Zealand, as well as others and hopefully more from the north, could tell us writers and readers of Bindu, if they know of what we are describing here.

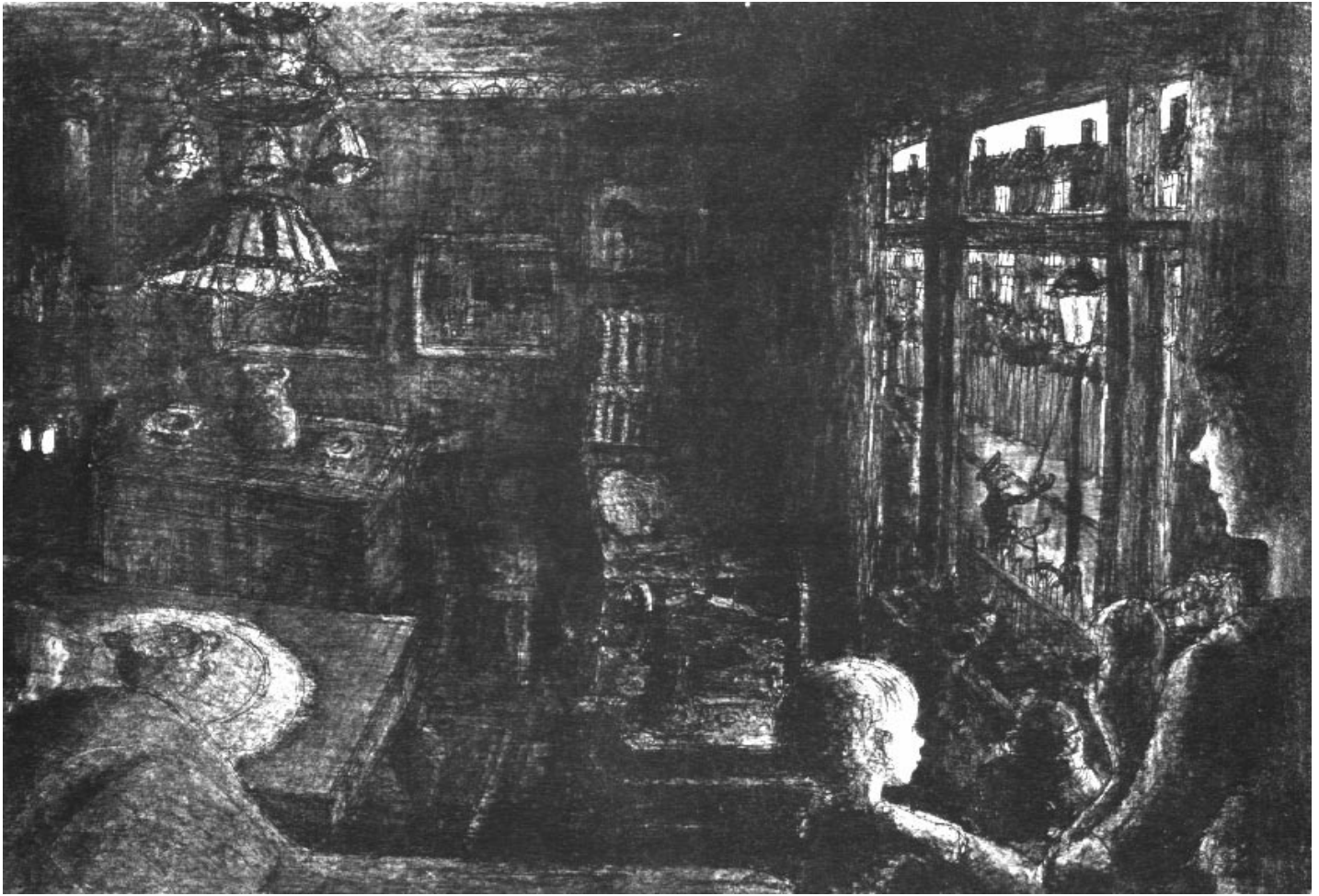
## **"Kura Mosning"**

*"..... it is called on the west coast (of Sweden, where elsewhere it is known as 'Kura Skymning'). When my mother, who was born in 1923, was a child, it was used daily by the older families. She was raised in an old fishing community that is now called Träslövsläge, just south of Varberg. She recounts that the entire family,*

*and often work mates and neighbours as well, gathered inside when it began to grow dark. Quietly they sat together, without doing anything, they just sat and experienced the dusk. Occasionally they talked about various things that had occurred during the day, and now and then the old people told stories. They sat together until it was completely dark. Then the paraffin lamp was lit and gradually people would return to their homes." (Mira)*

In the North there is a big difference between summer and winter. In Denmark we have the "light nights" for a large part of the summer, where it never really gets dark. And the further north one goes in summer, the lighter it is at night. In the northern parts of Sweden, Norway and Finland, and in Iceland and Greenland, the sun does not go down at all for a part of summer, but moves close to the horizon at night. In the middle of winter, on the other hand, it gets light late and dark early. In Denmark dusk occurs in the middle of the afternoon in December and January. But for the rest of winter, spring and autumn dusk happens late in the afternoon, when many can make use of it. At the equator, Singapore for example, the sun rises and sets at more or less the same time every day, year round, and it happens disappointingly fast for a northerner - it is, though, possible to experience a relatively short dusk of a few minutes at the equator - that is, if one does not have an errand in a shop while it is still light - five minutes later when one comes out it is pitch-dark, apart from the street lights.





**Dusk. Circa 1927.** At that time of year, when it was dark before bedtime, we had twilight. The dusk filled the sitting room and subdued conversation, which could turn into stories or adventures. On the street the darkness crept forward between the gas lamps, which along with us waited for the lamp lighter. He would come on a bicycle, but with a walking stick. Out of that he would pull a long pole with a hook in it, that could take hold of something up in the lamp so it would light. Often it didn't matter when he was a little late. (Ib Spang Olsen, see p. 15)

## “Nightfall”

*“In my childhood home it was a natural thing that we often - although not every day - ceased our activities and sat and watched the darkness fall. We used two kinds of ‘blue hour’, a winter version and a summer version.*

*One for the **winter afternoons** inside, in the sitting room - I remember some beautiful sunsets out of our sitting room window. We didn't have a television and I doubt that there was anything on in the afternoon back then in the early sixties. In the afternoons my mother would iron clothes or else work with*

*her wood-cuttings and sometimes I would listen to children's hour on the radio. After children's hour I think there was just the latest shipping forecast, so we turned the radio off and sat still until it was completely dark. Afterwards we turned the light on, and started preparing the evening meal.*

*My grandmother visited every Wednesday afternoon. She was otherwise a talkative and active woman, but the blue hour would make her more subdued. If the adults talked a little, it would be a quiet philosophical conversation on the deeper things of life. In the semi darkness recollections and realizations came forth. We could not see each other's faces clearly in the blue half light and that feeling of togetherness and peace one had, made us far more tolerant towards each other.*

*When my grandmother grew old, she used to enjoy sitting in her favourite chair and let the darkness descend, at least when I visited her.*

*In **spring** and **autumn** we children would play outside after the evening meal. I remember coming boisterously into the sitting room when my parents sat silently in the dusk. It wasn't popular that one disturbed, also not at friends' homes when their parents sat like that.*

*The **summer dusk** consisted of the family taking an evening stroll in the woods, over the marshes, by the swaying corn fields or along the beach. When the sunlight faded everything took on an enchanted glow and the other senses became sharper when one could not rely upon the sight. We were completely silent. 'I am here to experience nature, not to listen to you', we were told if anyone dared to say something. Sometimes we would sit on a bench, until it became as dark as it can be in summer.*

*The enchantment fell with a crash when we came home and turned on the light.*

*The tradition of the evening stroll comes from my Finnish grandmother, who called this dreamlike state 'Nirvana'.*

*I don't know for sure if they used the 'dusk' in my father's childhood home, as neither he or his mother are alive*

*any longer. But something indicates that they did, because my father, a rational thinking economist, was there together with my mother while the darkness fell. Almost nothing was known of yoga - and meditation was something or other esoteric - a self-hypnosis or trance state, that no-one was interested in.*

*The twilight hour was a completely natural thing in my childhood. It didn't even have a name, as it was just something one did because it was pleasant. Therefore I believed that it was a kind of physical need to collect oneself a little at sunset, just like we yawn or stretch ourselves in the morning. I also believed that everybody did it if they had time. I regarded people that barged into the room where one sat, and turned on a light shouting, 'Heavens, are you sitting here in the dark?', as both rude and disrespectful.*

*When I have time and it fits naturally into my day, I use it still. So does my mother. I haven't consistently carried on the tradition to my own family, because it's not known of on my husband's side. They think it's a little crazy to sit in the half dark. I have continued with the evening walk, as one has to be silent to hear the nightingales sing at the end of the twilight hour, an enchanted ice cold evening in May." (Susanne Seerup)*

## **The twilight hour in Indian music**

In Indian music specific ragas are dedicated to the time we call twilight, both in the morning and evening - before sunrise and at dusk, they are called *sandhi prakash* ragas. When the musician plays at that time of day he chooses to present precisely these ragas, to support the twilight and awaken its atmosphere of silence and reflection.

## **Light, dark and bio-rhythms**

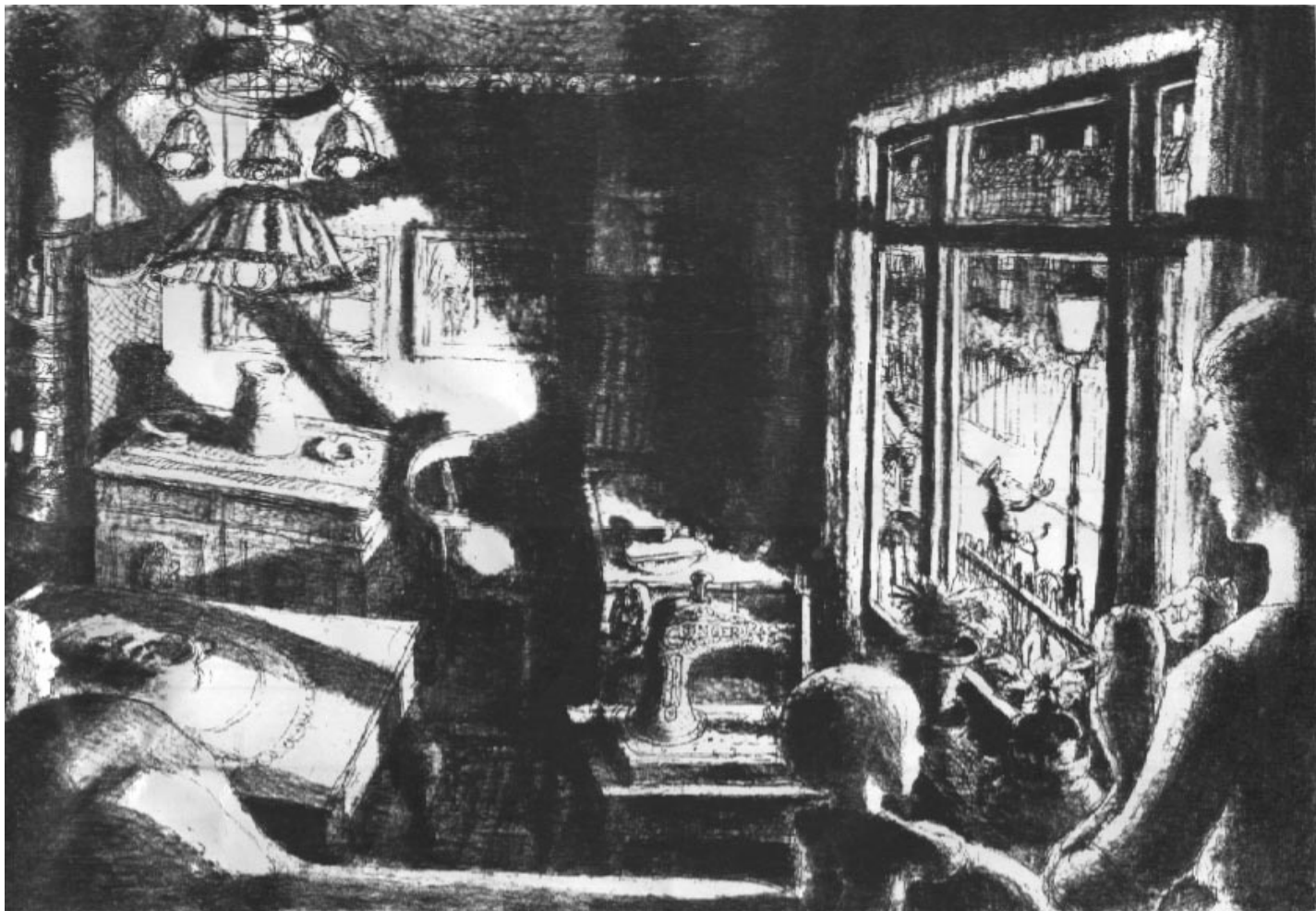
Everybody, who has given themselves time to experience a twilight in silence and without electric light, knows that it is a special time and that the body and mind are attuned differently than at other times of the day. It is a simple experience, and experiences counterbalance all theory. Nevertheless, we are as human beings unsure and search for confirmation of our experiences, and therefore we study life's phenomena whilst we carefully go forward through life.

A little theory can also support the twilight hour, we could mention how light and dark influence people's states, moods and bio-rhythms.

During winter, when the days are short and there is very little light in the atmosphere, some people in the northern countries get winter depression. An effort is now made to cure these people, they are exposed to strong light for about an hour every day. They put on white clothes and sit in a hospital, in a strongly lit room with white walls.

It is obvious that whilst it is day, and when it is light, we owe it to our organism to be in the light, to be active and experience the sun and the day. It is common sense to discover a therapy as the aforementioned. And it works. It is invaluable to those who, every day in the winter, can come out into the daylight and the sunshine. I am certain that the sun's light at any time is more beneficial than the electric light we expose ourselves to, unfortunately both day and night, in our houses and our cities.

But darkness also has its qualities, for instance, it is easier for most to sleep when it is dark. The darkness also influences us positively when we follow the daily and yearly rhythms. It has been shown in yoga, that when in *Nada Yoga*



***The lamp lighter has lit.** Circa 1927. When he lit the lamp, the light poured out on to the street and into the sitting room and formed strange shadows. The lamp lighter went on unaffected, and we rolled down and lit our own lamps and started to talk of bed time.*

*The gas lamps disappeared from the street, by all accounts as it was too easy for the mischievous boys to turn them off at night and light them during the day.* (Ib Spang Olsen)

(the yoga of sound) you listen to the inner sounds, it is noticeably easier for a beginner to detect these sounds at midnight, when the sun is on the other side of the globe, than at any other time of the day. When the darkness is deepest, the greatest possible relaxation can happen.

The brain's state is influenced by

light and dark, and therefore we usually close our eyes to relax or meditate. But it does not just depend on the eyes. Medical research in the USA has proven that the body and the cranium are penetrated by light, which can contribute in affecting the general condition. Likewise, it is known (according to an article in the Danish

“Ugeskrift for Læger”, a journal for doctors) that the pineal gland is light sensitive. This gland is found in the middle of the head and is connected with *Ajna Chakra*.

## **Meditation**

Measuring the brain waves shows that a spontaneous relaxation occurs when



we close our eyes - the brain's state changes from *beta* to *alpha* waves (see Bindu no. 4). The twilight hour with its increasing darkness is naturally an ideal time to meditate. Also socially, being late in the afternoon, after the day's activities and before the activities of the evening with family and friends - a moment in between, a time for calmness.

There are meditations where one observes the darkness and realizes that even pitch darkness, which one normally "sees" with closed eyes in a dark room, is not at all dark, but that colour and light phenomena in the eyes, brain or mind can be perceived. Such a meditation is quite advanced and involves more than this, it is mentioned here just as a curiosity. One seeks then to learn the contents of the apparent darkness, thereafter to move towards an even deeper darkness, till at last there is nothing to "see". It is a tantric technique that is built up in steps and should only be learnt and practiced in its most advanced stage when one is familiar with a fundamental meditation, such as Inner Silence (Antar Mauna).

But there are also meditations where

the eyes are kept open, and meditations where one alternates between having open and closed eyes. It is naturally a precondition that one sits in a dark room or a room with strongly subdued lighting.

An instruction to a meditation with open eyes could sound like this: Sit upright, with open eyes and look at the floor about a meter in front of you. You do not stare at anything but just gaze relaxed in front of you. Neither do you look around for anything in the surroundings, nor at anybody else that may be present, and you do not sit with closed eyes, caught by the activity of the mind, you look impartially in front of you. In this way you are to a lesser degree pre-occupied with anything inner or outer.

## A native American tradition?

I have heard from a good friend and old student in USA (Kellie Williams) about her maternal grandmother, who grew up in a native american Indian community, that every day at dusk before the late evening meal, she would sit still until it grew completely dark. And when the children asked her later what she did at that time, she would reply that she, "traveled to the spirits to listen".

## Hatha Yoga

Within yoga we deal with, among other things, the body's energy currents, and out of the 84,000 *nadis* or currents that are found in the body, the three that run through the back are the most important: *ida nadi*, *pingala nadi* and *sushumna nadi*. In brief, *pingala nadi* stands for the active and physical- the sun, *ha*; *ida nadi* for the mental side of our being - the moon, *tha*. *Sushumna nadi* is the central current in the back that the two others wind around, through all the chakras from muladhara chakra to ajna chakra, from where *sushumna* continues alone

up to *sahasrara chakra*. When the other two energies are in balance, they combine and flow through *sushumna*. The *ha-tha yogi* aims for this balance. *Ida* and *pingala* also have connections with the two brain halves, therefore we can say that in yoga one aims for a better balance in the brain (about this subject, see the two previous issues of Bindu).

A constant interplay takes place between the two currents and their effects on the organism, day and night. It happens in **smaller cycles** of an hour and twenty minutes where one current dominates, followed by a short period where there is a balance, then the other energy is active for a similar length of time. Every time the two currents are equally strong and in balance, every time *sushumna* opens and energy flows through it, then is the best time for meditation.

One can feel the breath in the nostrils by holding the back of the hand under the nose and ascertain which of the two energies is active. The sun nostril is the right and *surya swara* (the sun energy) can be felt here. The moon energy, *chandra swara*, can be detected when the left nostril is open. In this way, respectively the one and then the other energy is active throughout the day. To observe and use this knowledge, and eventually influence these currents is called *Swara Yoga*. When both nostrils are equally open, *sushumna swara* flows.

The physical difference between day and night, in the **larger cycles**, plays a role in our state and perception of reality. In the classical yoga scripture **Hatha Yoga Pradipika** it says in chp. 4, v. 17:

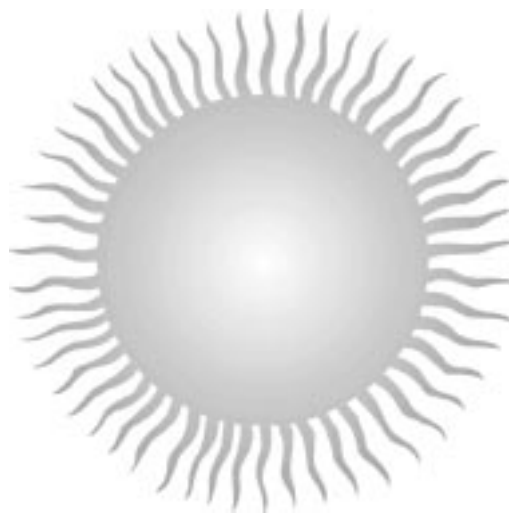
"The sun and moon divide time into day and night. *Sushumna* is the consumer of time. This is the conveyed secret."

In his commentaries to the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, **Swami Satyananda** writes about this verse:

*“The external sun and moon divide each twenty four hours into night and day, and the internal sun and moon, i.e. ida and pingala, are responsible for our perception of night and day, that is duality. Ida nadi predominates at night, the parasympathetic nervous system is active, there is a greater release of melatonin hormone within the brain and the subconscious mind is active. During the daylight hours pingala predominates, the sympathetic nervous system is more active and serotonin hormone is released within the brain which brings conscious functions to the fore and the subconscious mind submerges.*

*The two nadis, ida and pingala, and the two nervous systems, pull the awareness from one extreme to the other, binding us to the duality of mundane circumstances because of the interconnection and interrelationship with the external force of the sun and moon. The entire biological system is programmed to the movements of the sun and moon cycles. However, a yogi can develop control of the autonomic nervous system so that the body and mind are not swayed to the extremes. It means developing the voluntary and central nervous systems, activating sushumna nadi and ajna chakra. Such a person lives in a perfectly balanced state of being.*

*The period of time when day meets night is known as sandhya. It can be seen as an external event but it is an internal event. It represents the period of sushumna. We cannot alter the external happenings, but a yogi can make the moment when ida and pingala merge a prolonged experience.”*



## **What did they do - or do they do - at dusk?**

*“Be silent and you will see”*, it is written in the Bible. From my experience I would take this to mean, do not expect anything, do not imagine anything, but be receptive.

By this I do not mean that the twilight hour was, or is, a religious phenomenon, rather that it is an act of mental health - or quite simply something one does, because it is pleasurable and does one good.

What kind of insight, or should we say *experience*, is reached whilst sitting there in the twilight alone or together with others? Naturally, this cannot be explained satisfactorily as the people and families who uphold the twilight hour are different, but I can give a few examples.

One of our yoga teachers, Elisabeth Kiil, relates from her teaching at our school in Århus: *“On a yoga course for the elderly in the spring of 1992, we finished a class one day by doing the first step of Inner Silence. We sat on chairs in the yoga room with the window open, it was around 2 o’clock in the afternoon, and there was a great*

*deal of sound in the surroundings, for instance, road work on the street outside.”*

The first step of the meditation technique Inner Silence consists of listening to the sounds in the surroundings - no sounds are left out and one does not pay attention to only one sound at a time - none are emphasised and none are avoided. The environment is experienced as a whole - one listens to all the sounds at the same time.

*“After about a quarter of an hour we ended the class, and one of the older ladies remarked ‘that was just like keeping twilight.’ I asked her about it and she recounted that she had known it since her childhood.”*

What did we actually do, say the people I have asked, and there have been various suggestions: - nothing really - listen to the surroundings - let the thoughts flow by - experience the day again, with its events, feelings and thoughts. - Sometimes I forget myself in a dream, but return to the experience of the dusk and the silence.

Finally I would like to ask: Being



still, inner and outer, is that not just the same as *to be*? And when we *are*, then we do not lose ourselves.

## In literature

In his novel "*Somebody Else*", the Danish author Tom Kristensen writes: *"She rose and lit the lamp, and at that moment, as the room sprang forth in a clear golden light, our intimacy vanished. I sat at the table and finished a drawing of Martin Luther. It amused me to put shadows in the folds of the monk's cowl and to make them arch out of the paper. The work absorbed me. I sweated and whistled and forgot that the lamp's light had, in an incomprehensible way, caused me a new sorrow and had again estranged me from my mother.*

*With every dusk we came closer together. Mother stopped her sewing for a moment and sat still at the table. 'Valdemar, - you don't want the light on you?'*

*'No.'*

*'Oh, how it is nice at twilight. All the small evil thoughts run out of me. They disappear in the darkness.'*

*'What evil thoughts, mother?'*

*'Oh, you know. That embroidery should be finished! That hat should be finished! The boss doesn't care for the small cloth flowers! Everything that hurts,' she sighed. She sat rather stiff, and the dusk and her dark dress flowed together. It was just an insignificant dream face that issued forth through the darkness and spoke to me."*

And Gyrith Lemche, "*The Sins of the People*": *" 'How I love the dusk time!' said Ingeborg, 'it's as though my soul expands in the infinite to absorb all this I see and hear; I seem almost to be at one with all of nature around me...' "*

## The simple

When I began asking my students about the twilight hour a few years ago, I grew more and more surprised at how close the experiences of different people, in relation to the twilight hour, are when compared to some of the steps that form the meditation *Inner Silence*. It has once again confirmed for me that a real meditation is founded upon natural processes that the mind follows when it calms down and goes deep. They are processes common to us all, as people's physiology and minds are essentially the same everywhere on the planet; but perhaps the daily and yearly cycles affect people differently who live closer to the two poles, as we do in the North. The influence Swami Satyananda talks of, that the sun and moon, or day and night, has on people, has a completely different rhythm up here, compared to India, for example.

At the twilight hour it is not about having special abilities or achieving something. There is no question of an everlasting therapy, where for the rest of eternity one should go backwards and relive one's childhood, or stirring up emotions that one is not capable of evoking in natural life situations or that emerge by themselves in meditation to be relived there. On the contrary, it concerns a method - such as *Inner Silence* and to a certain degree the twilight hour - that brings one closer to the essence of life, to the balance that at the same time is experienced as a wholeness in everything and as one's own essential being - life itself and the consciousness behind life - the energy, nature and I who experience it.

And the very simplicity is the genuine, not to perform anything, or to strive after this or that experience, here

it is a case of a naturalness and peace that even a child can understand - and for my part, they can keep the miracles - life itself and the everyday is, as I see it, the biggest miracle. By that I do not mean that one cannot develop and deepen one's meditation.

## Can we maintain a conscious and creative attitude to the changes that are happening in our culture?

We have with this article described a tradition in Europe that is almost disappearing. We will in the future investigate if other traces can be found in our culture of a more conscious inner life, maybe deeper and more developed practices that we can compare to that which we know from the living Tantric tradition. If so, we will present it in coming issues of Bindu.

The fate of the twilight hour, that it has just been forgotten, has presumably come about because it has been such a natural part of our everyday that we were unconscious of its value and also the culture has gradually changed our habits in the course of two or three generations. When we try to rediscover these things then it is done best through good instruction and guidance, so that we do not cheat ourselves by taking too little or too much into our heads.

A lot can stand in the way of experiencing the twilight, children's hour on television, strong electric lights in the houses and on the streets, rush-hour in the city...

And in the countryside, the mechanised farming, where there is no more contact with peace, the tractors have music, the farms have noisy ventilation systems and machines...

Where did that experience go I had as a teenager when a warm summer afternoon I drove with the horse rake to gather the hay; or when late in the autumn I ploughed while it grew dark, albeit with a tractor, but without cab and stereo. Or when, at dusk, I was bicycling to or from work between large fields, through small villages and woods with no street lights. It is at dusk that the animals move about and can be met by the road.

A special twilight is at full moon, and especially at the equinox, spring or autumn, when the moon rises while the sun sets. This moment should be appreciated, both as an experience of unity in nature and for silence and meditation.

*“When I was a child in the early sixties, my mother gathered us children when it began to get dark, and we would keep the twilight hour. I enjoyed it very much.*

*Then my mother would tell stories of her childhood in the countryside of Jutland, or she would sing quiet songs. After a while as the darkness fell the conversation would quieten and silence grew in the room - and in the body. The darkness felt almost material, it was like it wrapped itself softly around you, that was a very reassuring feeling and at the same time it felt like being at one with the sitting room.*

*So we just sat there and were completely still, which was otherwise difficult for three boys - but not when we had twilight.*

*When it was completely dark, mother stood up, turned on the light and started to make the evening meal as father would be home soon.*

*What I remember most of when we had twilight is the silence, the feeling of security and the red glow from the stove, as it was winter time when we*

*kept twilight. But television soon came and forced its way in, and children's television was on at that hour and the custom went out of use. But as an adult I still practice twilight now and then and my mother cares very much for it, but otherwise I don't know anyone who knows of this custom.*

*My mother has told me that when she was a child it was normal to keep twilight, everybody did it, and then it also saved on electricity.”*

(Robert Konstantinovitsch)

Finally, a thank you to all who have contributed to this article with written and verbal material.□

The pictures on pages 9 and 11 and the accompanying texts are from the book “Little boy in Østerbro” by Ib Spang Olsen, Bogladerne Østerbro, Copenhagen. We thank you for permission to reproduce them.□



# Shoulderstand

- a pose for the whole body

by Franz Jervidalo

*"What is this pose good for?"* is one of the most frequently asked questions in the yoga class. *"Find out for yourself. Experience the pose while you are in it,"* is a tempting reply. When there is knowledge beforehand then one is pinned to some particular expected effects, and misses one's own overall impression.

When this question concerns the shoulderstand, the answer could be more precise, but not less teasing: *"This pose is good for everything."* *Sarvangasana*, as the shoulderstand is called in Sanskrit, means "the pose for the whole body."

## The inverted poses ...

Shoulderstand belongs to the group of inverted poses - those poses where the head is downwards and the legs upwards.

In the article on headstand (see Bindu no. 3) we mentioned how the inverted poses increase oxygen intake and ease the blood's return flow to the heart, which is thereby relieved. We described how the increased blood supply to the brain gives nourishment and oxygen to the cells and tissue, and how the abdomen, intestines and inner organs are eased as they now hang inverted.

## ... and shoulderstand

What is special about shoulderstand is that while the body is inverted, the throat and head are bent in the so-called chin lock. This raises the blood supply to the entire upper part of the body and stimulates the glands in that area, in particular the thyroid gland in the throat, which has to do with the hormonal balance and the cells' metabolism. A healthy thyroid gland leads to a healthy function of the body's organs and the circulation.

Moreover, it has been shown that shoulderstand definitely benefits the breath, and for asthmatics and people with bronchitis it can be an invaluable supplement to treatment.

With a normal cold the shoulderstand can alleviate the symptoms and accelerate the healing process.

We shall also see how shoulderstand helps with certain injuries of the throat and neck resulting from traffic accidents.

But first and foremost it has a harmonizing effect on the whole body, giving mental balance, strengthening the constitution and preparing the body for meditation.



## How to do shoulderstand

Lie on the back, on a mat or a folded blanket, and calm down.

Slowly raise the legs off the floor and tilt them over the head so that the back lifts up from the floor.

When the back is in a vertical position, support it with the hands and forearms. The palms press against the back as close to the shoulder blades as possible, and the elbows are on the mat, a shoulder widths distance apart. In this way the torso remains upright while you straighten the legs vertically. Now the body is standing as straight as a "candle", as some also call this pose. But the head is bent and the chin touches the chest.

When first coming into the shoulderstand you sometimes experience a certain restlessness in the body and a desire to come down again at once. But if you remain in the pose a little longer, restlessness will disappear, replaced by a deep calm, a desire to stay and just rest in the pose.

Therefore, give the body a little time and experience how it is to be completely motionless in the pose - ½-1 minute to start with. Thereafter gradually increase the time to 5-10 minutes and remain standing until you have felt calmness in the body for some time.

Our own experiences are confirmed by an investigation described in the journal *Yoga Mimamsa* no. 1 and 2 from 1926. In shoulderstand the blood pressure increases slightly coming into the pose, which is natural considering the movement involved, but decreases again and normalizes after 2-3 minutes. After coming out of the pose, the blood pressure falls for a while to a little below normal.

This signifies that the blood pressure is made more flexible and that the exercise together with other classical yoga poses prevents a permanent high or low blood pressure. People also recount that when, for instance, after a sickness or an operation, their blood pressure is a little

high and will not go down again, then it normalizes when they resume their yoga practice.

## Respiration

Ordinarily one inhales and holds the breath when coming into the pose. Thereafter you breathe normally; if you want to deepen your state in the pose, then concentrate on the normal breath.

When you have used the shoulderstand for some time and know the peace that emerges, you can occasionally intensify the effect further by holding the breath for periods. This has a mental effect, and can help with colds: after having calmed down, inhale slowly and deeply and hold the breath as long as is comfortably possible. Breathe slowly and carefully out again. Let the breath calm down. Repeat the entire process a couple of times more while staying in the pose.

Before you come out, inhale again and hold the breath - lower the legs slowly down to the floor. Then lie still and relax.

## In a programme

Shoulderstand belongs to the sequence of yoga poses we call the classical programme. Here it comes after *the headstand* (and *the palm* - where for a moment you stand on your feet - ) and before *the plough*, and these poses supplement each other perfectly.

After headstand one more swiftly acquires the calmness in shoulderstand and its effects are enhanced.

After being in shoulderstand it is natural to lower the legs down over the head into the plough and thus increase the stretch on the back side of the body.

In the counter pose, *the fish*, one lies on the back with the legs in the lotus pose, taking hold around the toes with the hands (in an easier variation of the fish, the legs are straight and the palms are placed under the buttocks). The chest is raised while the head is bent backwards, resting on the crown.

For a further introduction to the classical programme, and to different variations and the use of chakras as areas of concentration, we recommend Swami Janakananda's book, "*Yoga, Tantra and Meditation in Daily Life*," (Rider Books, UK and Weiser, USA).

## A happy story ...

One of our students earlier had problems with the thyroid gland and the metabolism. At the time she started attending yoga, it was so severe that she was scheduled to be operated. She learned shoulderstand and continued to use it regularly every day, and after a period of three months the production of hormones became so normal that it was no longer necessary for her to be operated.

Now, one example does not prove anything, you could say. But the fact that the shoulderstand's beneficial effect on the thyroid gland, by regular and systematic use, is described in the yoga literature, confirms the general value of this story.

## ... and a research project

Not just our own and our student's personal experiences with shoulderstand, but also research of yoga and meditation shows how effective the pose is.

Doctors Udupa, Singh and Settiwar, of the Institute of Medical Science in Benares, India, researched in 1975 the effects of six months regular use of shoulderstand (together with the counter pose the fish) and compared the results with similar tests of the headstand and the plough.

It was confirmed that shoulderstand stimulates the body's glands and metabolism, and the research especially underlined the physiological effects on the blood circulation and the respiratory system. The ability to hold the breath is improved and the girth of the chest is enlarged, giving a greater vital capacity (the volume of air exhaled after a full inhalation). The researchers' study show

that the lungs, in the course of the six months, became capable of inhaling up to 25% more air, or about a litre more per breath - and thereby take in more oxygen.

According to several sources, shoulderstand purifies the blood (Swami Satyananda, Swami Narayananda, et al.). We must conclude that, among other things, it is due to the increased oxygen intake that supplies the lungs and therefore the blood while standing in the pose. Through this training of the lungs, the respiration generally improves.

Shoulderstand (and the fish, where the chest is expanded and the throat stretched) therefore is an important pose for one who wants to achieve that harmony which is defined by yoga, and which forms the basis for real success with advanced yoga and meditation.

On the basis of this research together with our own experience we can conclude that the shoulderstand contributes to the alleviation and prevention of common respiratory problems for people suffering from asthma and bronchitis.

## Asthma & bronchitis

A student, who has chronic asthma and bronchitis, has related to us how she uses shoulderstand:

*"When I feel bad, I can't do shoulderstand properly, it is too much of an effort, but there is absolutely no reason to give up! I lie on my back, bend the legs, roll up on to the shoulders, stretch out into the correct posture with support from the elbows and remember to do a thorough chin-lock. I stay as long as I can and roll out in the reverse order. Often the pose must be interrupted early due to coughing, then I roll quickly out of it again, sit up, finish coughing and resume the pose again and again until it is stable. As a counter pose I use the fish in its easy form, followed by a resting pose, such as the crocodile or the hare.*

*In my opinion, these exercises are far more effective - at least as far as I am*

*concerned - than both traditional and modern lung therapy. The back is massaged and mucus is loosened. In general, sarvangasana helps in coughing up the mucus. An asthmatic mostly breathes with the upper part of the lungs. The chin lock forces one to breathe with the stomach and the pressure upon the diaphragm eases exhalation. In the long run, the lungs function better, supplemented, of course, by other yoga exercises and especially breathing exercises.*

*There is no reason to give up when suffering from asthma, even though there is a tendency to hold back. In the majority of cases, it is possible to do much more than is thought possible. Think of the many top athletes who have serious asthma. They are incredibly active anyway and achieve remarkable results."* (Lilian Nørhede)

## Neck injuries (whiplash)

The following account is testimony to that even deep seated muscular tensions can be resolved by shoulderstand. We have heard from our school in Bergen, Norway, of people who have received injuries to the neck and throat as a result of a car driving into the back of their own car. First the head is thrown backwards with great force, and then thrown forwards.

After being the victim of such an accident, one is prone to lock in the pain by creating tensions in the muscles of the neck and head, and consequently it becomes chronic - the pain can be so intense, that it is impossible to work. Though it is not always visible on an X-ray. Years ago, people suffering this injury were not taken seriously by the authorities. However that has changed. Now victims of whiplash receive an invalid pension.

Here is an example, where a woman with this injury came to yoga classes. She started like everybody else with a

beginners program of small easy exercises from pawanmuktasana (Swami Janakananda's book and Bindu no. 4). To loosen the tensions she used especially, and with great care, the warm up exercises for the neck and throat before head rolling, and head rolling itself. This gave a noticeable improvement, but the pain and headaches persisted. At the end of winter, the class she was in reached that stage where they were able to use the classical programme with the shoulderstand and plough. In the beginning she found the two poses agonizing to be in, but after using them for a short period, she loosened the tensions completely and the pain disappeared. *"I feel like a new person"*, was her surprised comment.

## Children and shoulderstand

Children and adolescents in puberty should not do shoulderstand in the way we use it in yoga, where we stay in it for extended periods. While the thyroid gland is developing it should be left in peace. When the thyroid gland is completely developed, one can begin to use shoulderstand. As far as we know this is the only yoga pose with limitations concerning children.

## Your own practice

*"People cannot feel or think properly when their mind is not in a comfortable state; the various parts of the human body are so harmoniously arranged that if just the smallest part hurts then the whole system is disturbed. To reach an accurate insight into anything, or rather, to feel it clearly with the heart, the use of asana is necessary."* (Sri Yukteswar)

Shoulderstand can be learnt quite quickly by most, also by those who can not as yet, or dare not, do the headstand. If one is in doubt as to whether it is advisable to do shoulderstand, then ask a qualified yoga teacher. Also seek advice if you suffer from swollen thyroid gland, high blood



pressure or a weak heart. Shoulderstand keeps the body vital and healthy, especially considering its effect on the back, where the tissue around the nerves and at the nerve ends are abundantly supplied with blood. The spine is a yogi's main instrument, it is not just the nerve channels governing the body that are found here, but also the principal energy currents (nadi) and four

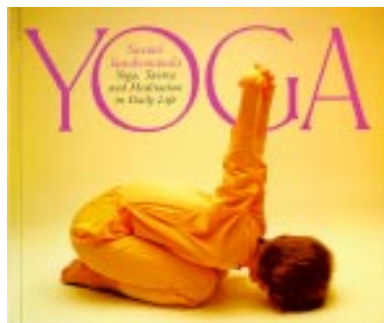
of the nine main psychic centers (chakra). Therefore, one strives to keep the back healthy and free of tensions and blockages. This implies, among other things, that, when you use the yoga exercises regularly, you will not encounter a great lack of energy - or unexpected and disharmonious experiences of a sudden increase of energy. The fundamental aim

of yoga is to support a harmonious evolution of man, that does not happen in unexpected jerks, caused by the whims of nature or outer influences and stimuli, but as a even growth.

Shoulderstand can be done once or several times a day, but wait, as with all other yoga practices, until four hours after a large meal. □

## Yoga, Tantra and Meditation in Daily Life

Swami Janakananda's book in a revised and extended edition (Rider Books, UK and Weiser, USA)



**This book** offers an alternative to the way many books deal with yoga, wherein they maintain the misunderstanding that one must take on a new lifestyle to use yoga and meditation.

Swami Janakananda does not only stress the practical side of yoga and meditation in this book, but shares the tantric wisdom and view,

giving you the freedom to practise yoga and meditation entirely on your own terms.

As you follow the exercises in this book, you will realise that yoga is based on a profound knowledge of human nature: a knowledge not limited to any age, lifestyle or nationality. It is the fruit of a living tradition, where knowledge is passed directly from teacher to student, from generation to generation. Step by step you are guided through the subject, and in a practical manner you can benefit from the different poses, breathing exercises, meditations and the tantric sexual yoga.

*"I have read many yoga books and tried to follow them, but they were not filled with much information. Your book tends to go more into detail about each asana, breathing exercise and meditation. Many of my friends didn't understand yoga until I showed them your book and they found it very fascinating."*

(C. Blackmore, Regina, Canada)

*"I recently obtained a copy of your book Yoga, Tantra and Meditation in Daily Life. For a long time I have had a yearning to take up yoga, but have been put off by the narrow scholarly*

*and religious approaches that often seemed apparent. Your approach, and the convenient inclusion of tantra and kundalini was so refreshing, and just what I had been looking for. I could thoroughly identify with everything you said; not only that, but I felt that the way in which you communicated your knowledge and beliefs was perfect."* (V. Williamsson, London, UK)

*"...I have had the book 6 months, since I took up yoga, and it has been wonderful. A book for life..."*

(M. Thompson, Dublin, Eire)

*"... congratulations on producing such a fine work on Yoga. It has really enriched my life and the lives of many of my friends and family, as it is the present I most often give for birthdays."*

(D. Carr, Oakland, CA, USA)



# Yoga for increased body awareness and inner harmony - account from a weekend course at Håå Course Center by Camilla Sternberg

Yoga is an old Sanskrit word meaning union or wholeness. And wholeness was really what I experienced during three days at the Scandinavian Yoga and Meditation School's Håå Course Center in Hamneda, South Sweden. The course center lies in a beautiful area and it felt wonderful to be there - entirely removed from stress and demands and I was completely able to concentrate on what I was there for - to learn yoga.

*"Yoga and meditation were not originally part of any religious system. Their objective is broader: not to bind people in ignorance and prejudice but rather to transform and develop human consciousness. In this way free and independent individuals are created, who make their own experiences, fulfill their potential, each living in a personal and truly social way."*

As quoted from the book *Yoga, Tantra and Meditation in Daily Life* by Swami Janakananda. After participating in a three days course in yoga, I understand what that means - to transform and expand the human consciousness. I am much more conscious of my body and my thoughts, and feel I have received a fantastic tool to meet myself with.

This does not in any way concern running away from what is difficult, some kind of ready made positive thinking - no, it is more about being yourself and daring to be so - a natural way of getting to know yourself and to well-being.

My first course in yoga started with an intestinal cleansing (not something obligatory to take part in the course) but I did everything directly. A certain number of glasses of saltwater and simple exercises, the water flowed through the intestines instead of through the urinary tract, which I experienced as a wonder and a great release.

After a beautiful afternoon's rest, the course started Friday evening with an introduction by two very pleasant and professional

yoga teachers: Adam Moltke and Sita.

Slowly and softly we were led into the world of yoga, movements, breathing exercises and relaxation. When I went to bed the first evening, I felt a great peace



and slept the whole night, which I had not done for a long time. I woke at 6 the next morning and felt surprisingly fresh. We met in the yoga room at 7 o'clock and started with a candle meditation. This involved gazing at the flame of a candle at eye level whilst sitting crossed legged in a yoga pose. After a while we blew out the light, closed our eyes and the flame's afterimage appeared on the retina. We were instructed to move the afterimage to a point between the eyebrows. After having done this a few times during the stay at Håå, it was easy to move the flame and really be concentrated. Afterwards, as mentioned, followed two days of intensive physical exercise, breathing and meditation exercises.

Weeks afterwards, I still long for the yoga room. In that room I have done exercises

that I thought impossible for me.

I get up every morning now and do my yoga exercises for half an hour. If sometimes I find I do not have time for it, then I do it in the afternoon. The yoga course in itself has helped me to take that time for myself. I feel an increased sense of well-being, greater concentration and inner harmony and a very noticeable effect is that I lost 3 kg, I have no desire to stuff myself unnecessarily. I have a strong feeling when there is something the body does not want. Increased awareness it is called.

I do not experience this as something mystical - but as something natural. The physical exercises make me more aware of my own body, here I gain both strength and training of the muscles. My lung capacity has increased due to the breathing exercises, I breathe in the correct way nearly all the time (it takes time for women) and the meditation exercises are delightful and really something a modern person needs.

The best of all is that I can do a little or a lot, I am not fixed to one particular programme. Already after three days at Håå I know enough exercises to be able to benefit from them.

And it is exciting and developing - a way to remain balanced and participate in what is happening. This three day course is sufficient to be able to use yoga for a very long time to come, but I am sure it will not be long before I go on their ten days course - we shall see - there will be a report about that! I shall return!□

**Camilla Sternberg** is the editor of SMRF's members periodical *The Masseur*. This article is printed in *The Masseur* no. 4, December 1994. Swedish Masseurs Union, SMRF, is an active union for approximately 550-600 masseurs from the whole of Sweden. To be a member of SMRF, attendance of a school that fulfils SMRF's demand on education, qualitatively and quantitatively, is a must. SMRF also demands obligatory further education every year. SMRF masseurs also have a role at various official sporting events.

## A refuge in Southern Sweden

## Holiday at Håa Course Center

*It is one thing to benefit from yoga and meditation classes a couple of times a week or on a weekend course. Something quite different is for a period to really allow yourself to go deep and get insight.*

In cultures around the world it is customary for a while to withdraw and, by means of certain techniques and under favourable conditions, open up for increased clarity, energy and inspiration. It may give quite another richness to your daily life and you may increase your knowledge of yourself. Within the esoteric tradition of Europe, for example, the alchemists and mystics lived in *refuge* for periods of time, with the purpose of committing themselves to exercise and study, in seclusion, in a creative environment, alone or together with others. In modern Japan it is quite common even for business people and officials for a shorter or longer duration to stay in a monastery, to withdraw and contemplate. Indians, Eskimos and Aborigines have always made use of living in isolation, once or several times during their lives. One of the few living traditions which combines retreat with contemplation and esoteric science is the Tantric yoga and meditation.

In our society the interest for these techniques has grown since the beginning of the century. Today it is common for employees at hospitals, schools and in companies to attend courses in yoga and meditation.

Characteristic of the mystic tradition is precisely the mystical, not understood as something strange or foreign, but rather as a science where the foundation is not the analytical comprehension by the mind

but a concentration and absorption, based on the ability to experience and to be present.

*"The mind is only a thin flickering dimension of your being."*  
(Swami Janakananda)

Maybe this corresponds to science's claim that we human beings only make use of about 10% of the brain's potential. Through yoga and meditation slowly and steadily a permanent balance and strength is created enabling us to awaken the deeper aspects of our being, and thereby creating the foundation for a clearer perception of reality and a greater freedom.

To make the process of expanding consciousness possible, one must go about it thoroughly and systematically. At the courses in Håa we supplement yoga and meditation with physical activity, for example in the forest or in the fields - this, together with cleansing techniques and above all a period of silence. Thus the teaching and the interest and awareness of the individual create a process which forms a unity of it all.

To teach at this level, the best possible conditions are required for the course or retreat. In the yoga tradition a place like this is called an ashram, which can be translated to: spiritual workshop or laboratory.

In 1972 the Danish yogi Swami Janakananda founded the ashram in the village Håå, by the shore of a lake, in southern Sweden. Here he and the teachers of the school teach yoga, tantra and meditation - a tradition whose origins we find traces of in Europe, in South and Central America and in Scandinavia. Today it is being re-established as an important part of our cultural heritage.

*Omkarananda* ☐

## 10 and 14 days courses 1995

**18 - 28 May 4000/3200 SwCr**

Kim Paulsen and Anandananda

**28 May - 10 June 4300/3400 SwCr**

Gunnar Petersen and Ambika

**11 - 24 June 4300/3400 SwCr**

Jørgen Hastrup and Joachim Rodenbeck

**25 June - 8 July 4700/3800 SwCr**

Ananda Murti and Robert Nilsson

**9 - 22 July 4700 SwCr**

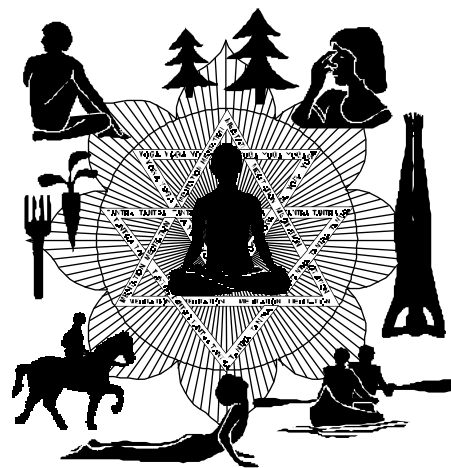
Franz Jervidalo and Mira

**3 - 16 September 4700/3800 SwCr**

Robert Nilsson and Laxmi

**12 - 22 October 4000/3200 SwCr**

Shanti and Adam



## The Kriya Yoga Course

**22 July - 20 August 7100 SwCr**

Swami Janakananda and Mette Kierkgaard

## The 3-months Course 1996

**23 January - 20 April 17500 SwCr**

Swami Janakananda, Sita and others.

*- a unique retreat in modern yoga, not just to learn something valuable - but an event, a special period in one's life, to sum up and get a view of past, present and future...*

Get the brochure for Håa Course Center, it describes it all thoroughly. 2nd price is for students, unemployed & pensioners.

# Experience Yoga Nidra - A cassette tape of extraordinary quality

Two deep relaxations, based on Swami Satyananda's classic yoga nidra, created and guided by Swami Janakananda, who has also composed the background of nature sounds. Music by Roop Verma. Also released in German, Swedish and Danish.

All you need is to lie down and follow the instructions on the tape - completely still and with closed eyes!

As a background and introduction there is a 18 page booklet inserted in the tape box.

*"This tape is a hit, if you can talk about hits within relaxation."* (A. Thomson, therapist and New Age bookseller in UK)

*"The tape is one of the most inspiring I have heard for a long time. It is a multi-dimensional work of art of a nature that is rarely seen."* (M. Lammgård, musician and therapist, Växthuset Kaprifol, Sweden)

*"After a number of years of having a stressed life with a job that almost ruined my ability to live in the present, I'm now*

*again happy to face each new day, not to unnecessarily worry myself about tomorrow. I have learnt to laugh again. I think it's fantastic."* (E. Berg, Ludvika, Sweden)

*"Yoga Nidra is much more than a deep relaxation; it is a total experience that touches and awakens all parts of your being."* (Swami Janakananda)



## Read Bindu

Previous issues are still available, with articles on:

No.2: music and meditation...

No.3: On the ability to experience, Headstand, Nosecleansing...

No. 4: Kriya Yoga I, The effect of yoga on the finer energy called prana or Ki...

No. 5: Kriya Yoga II, Psychic energy, The Pyramid and Pratyahara...

## Yoga shop

**The book:** *Yoga, Tantra and Meditation in Daily Life* (see p. 19.)

175 Sw.Cr. + 30 Sw.Cr. postage.

**The tape:** *Experience Yoga Nidra* 120 Sw.Cr. + 30 Sw.Cr. postage

**The periodical:** *Bindu*, no. 2-5, 40 Sw.Cr. each + 30 Sw.Cr. postage.



## Nose cleansing pot with instruction

**brochure:** *Joghush*, (right in picture) blue, red, yellow, green or black. 140 Sw.Cr.+30 Sw.Cr. postage. *Krutis*, (left in picture) blue, white or green, 170 Sw.Cr. + 30 Sw.Cr. postage.

**The brochure (free):** about the retreats at Håå International Course Center.

We can only accept payment in Swedish Crowns by Eurocheck, international money order or to our postal giro acc. 73 86 03 - 0 in Sweden. No personal checks please, they are too expensive to cash.

## SCANDINAVIAN YOGA AND MEDITATION SCHOOL

<b>Sweden</b>	<b>Håå Course Center, 340 13 Hamneda</b>	<b>tel. +46 372 55063</b>
	Stockholm Västmännag. 62, 113 25 Stockholm	tel. +46 8 32 12 18
<b>Denmark</b>	<b>Copenhagen</b> Købmagergade 65, 1150 Copenhagen	tel. +45 33 14 11 40
	Århus Vestergade 45, 8000 Århus C	tel. +45 86 19 40 33
	Elsinore Kongensgade 12 B, 3000 Elsinore	tel. +45 49 21 20 68
<b>Norway</b>	<b>Bergen</b> Georgernes Verft 3, 5011 Bergen	tel. +47 55 32 78 40
	Oslo Skytterdalen 6, 1300 Sandvika	tel. +47 67 56 95 55
<b>Finland</b>	<b>Helsinki</b> Sukula, 30100 Forssa	tel. +358 16 4350599
<b>Germany</b>	<b>Hannover</b> Egestorffstrasse 3, 30449 Hannover	tel. +49 511 454163

**Publisher:** Bindu, Håå Course Center, 340 13 Hamneda, Sweden. Tel. +46 372 55063 Fax. +46 372 55036 Postal acc. 73 86 03 - 0.

**Circulation:** 3,000 in English.

**Printed:** Karma Yoga with various teachers from Håå Course Center.

**Translation:** Mark and Ambika.Consultant: Robyn Taylor.

**Pictures:** Front page, Birger Vilén-Petersen, p.9 and 15 from the book "Little boy in Østerbro" by Ib Spang Olsen, p.12 and 13 Anandananda, p. 6 and 7 Robert Nilsson, p.16 and 20

Omkarananda. Back page, p.2 and 23. Sarat Chandra, Calcutta.

Copyright © 1995 Bindu and Scandinavian Yoga and Meditation School.





सू०	पं०	मा०	वृ०	श०	कु०	जा०
५	६	३	४	०	०	०
१६	६८	२८	२२	०	४	०
३३	२२	१५	१८	०	२८	०

॥ महाश्री यदुधि

भक्त ललाटपूज ॥





श्रीगुरुपादिका

परमात्मा  
जीवात्मा

