

# Learning Yoga from Living Traditions

Krishna Prakash



Short essay on  
LEARNING YOGA FROM LIVING TRADITIONS,

**Krishna Prakash**  
Founder, Shrimath Yoga

Yoga is not a religion, but an aid to the practice of the basic spiritual  
truths in all religions  
*Swami Sivananda*

श्रीः

आत्म - समर्पणम्

स्वरूपनिरूपणोद्देशे श्रीगुरवे नमः

प्रदीप - ज्वालाभि - दिवसकर - नीराजलविधिः  
सुधाप्लुते - शन्द्रोपल - जललवै - रघ्वरचरणा ।  
स्वकीयैरम्भोभिः सलिल निधि - सौहित्यकरणं  
त्वदीयाभि - वाग्भि - स्तव जननि वाचां स्तुतिरिचम् ॥

*from Soundarya Lahari of Adi Sankara, in Sri's handwriting*

*Due to Her infinite Grace, She, the Divine Mother, appears in the form of the one whom we can relate to, and ensures the knowledge of the Self is shared.*

*To that form which i relate to... Sri*

कृपासागरमज्ञानमूर्ति सदाऽनन्दमयमातृस्वरूपं ।

सदगुरुश्रीसैलश्रीपूणानन्द प्रियनन्दनम् ॐ श्रीं प्रणमाम्यहम् ॥

Put your heart, mind, and soul into even your smallest acts. This is the secret of success.

*Swami Sivananda*

## INTRODUCTION

Namaste!

Dr Otto Stricker, the founder of the much-followed yoga.in initiative, was on a tour of India in 2018 to unearth and interact with Yoga Schools connected with the living spiritual traditions. During our interactions, the undersigned mentioned that not everyone who studies at the feet of the Masters / living traditions, become a teacher but only those who get a mandate to do so.

Thus, as per the living traditions, a certificate in Yoga is not an automatic passport to start teaching Yoga. It is just an acknowledgement that a course has been completed.

This short essay is a result of the interactions with Dr Otto & Flavia of yoga.in as well as the scores of students from various countries who throng Shrimath to study Yoga as a system.

Going through the essay would make each aspirant aware of the importance of staying connected with living traditions and through light on their contribution to the vibrant system of Yoga.

Thanks for your investing your precious time.

Jai ma!

Warm regards  
Krishna

The real spiritual progress of the aspirant is measured by the extent to which he achieves inner tranquility.

*Swami Sivananda*

# **Importance & Role of Living Traditions in Yoga**

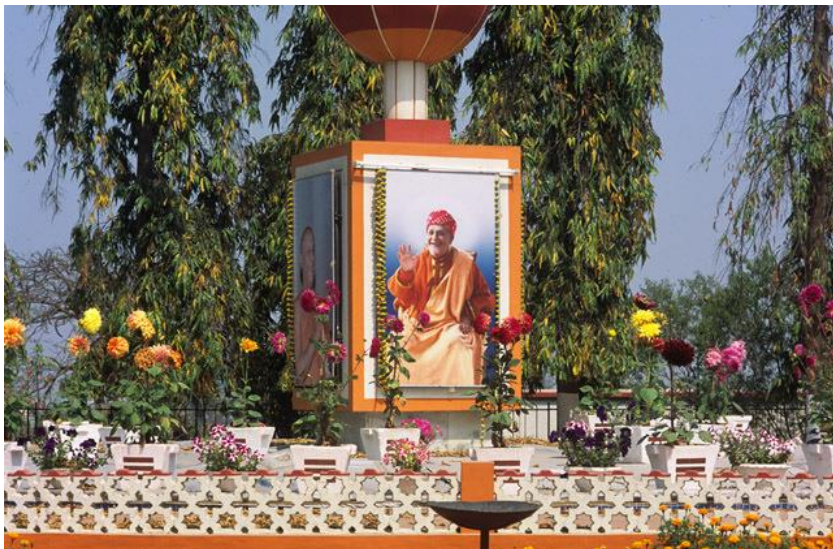


Yoga is not an ancient myth buried in oblivion.  
It is the most valuable inheritance of the present.  
It is the essential need of today and the culture of tomorrow.  
*Swami Satyananda Saraswati*

## 1. IMPORTANCE & ROLE OF LIVING TRADITIONS IN YOGA

### Introduction

Today there are innumerable styles of Yoga and equally impressive array of studios and great teachers. The obvious questions are, where to study, how to know whether teaching is authentic, what value to give to certifications etc. To understand the replies to these questions, it is important to understand the importance and role of living traditions in Yoga.



*Swami Satyananada Saraswati of Bihar School of Yoga. Photo: Coni Hörler*

Wherever one chooses to study Yoga, whether it is in India or elsewhere, it is important to know if Yoga is being taught

as a system or just a set of postures and breathing techniques.

Even in India, the majority believes that Yoga and Yogasana are synonymous. The truth is that Yogasana is one limb of the Yoga system. So, it is important to learn Yoga from a place where one can learn about all the eight limbs of Yoga.

### **Why it is important to study Yoga as a system?**

It is extremely important as such a study would help us to structure our life and lifestyle better. The first 2 limbs of Yoga teach us the importance of non-violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, moderated living, non-greediness, cleanliness, contentment, austerity / hard work, self-study and the importance of surrender to cosmic intelligence i.e. *ishwara*. If we understand the importance of these 10 qualities enumerated as Yama and Niyama by the great sage Patanjali in his Yoga Sutras, we would be able to not only have a healthy lifestyle but an excellent mind space that helps us to experience higher limbs of Yoga such as meditation with less mental and emotional disturbances. The understanding and practice of the first two limbs, helps us to learn

Yogasana and Pranayama which are the next two limbs of Yoga. As one gets steadier in the practice, one would find a beautiful balance of mind and body. Due to this balance and steadiness, the mind develops the ability to spontaneously withdraw, concentrate and meditate i.e. the subsequent limbs of Yoga. Finally, the practitioner is led to the state of Samadhi in the due course of time.

### **Role of living traditions**

Yoga is not a stagnant pool of knowledge but a vibrant living system that always addresses the needs of NOW. To illustrate the role of living traditions it is imperative to learn the monumental contribution of Swami Satyananada Saraswati of Bihar School of Yoga. He belongs to the dasanami sampradaya established by Advaita Vedantin Adi Sankara. Dasa (ten), nama (name) and sampradaya (tradition). Based on certain parameters Adi Sankara classified the monastic system into ten streams with each stream having a specific objective, role and purpose in carrying forward the ever-relevant ancient knowledge system, the Veda and its allied branches of studies. The main objective of these streams is to make the ancient

knowledge accessible to common public in a way they can digest, assimilate and use in their day to day lives.

It is with this background and training, Swami Satyananda Saraswati could intuit issues at the physical, mental and emotional states our generation would undergo, and design the set of 34 postures that comprise the Pawanamuktasana series. This series helps one to prevent and also work with possible rheumatic issues, digestive problems and energy blocks in our psychophysical energy system.

He redesigned the practice of Yoga Nidra and formulated it in such a way that it helps the practitioner to relax, rejuvenate, release stress, reclaim health lost due to fast paced and sedentary lifestyle respectively as well as realize legitimate desires in this very life.

Pawanamuktasana and Yoga Nidra are just two of the innumerable practices that He has shared with us. Such invaluable adaptations which are the needs of the time we live in is possible only if Yoga is learnt from living traditions.



*Swami Sivananda Saraswati. Photo: Coni Hörler*

Swami Sivananda Saraswati of Divine Life Society is the pioneer of today's teacher training programs. Since 1948, his Yoga-Vedanta forest academy offers Yoga-Vedanta study as a 2 months course. Almost all the books on Yoga written by any respected author that is available in the public domain would invariably have referred to Swami Sivananda's writings. It was He who restarted the ancient practice of initiating deserving women into the monastic discipline when it was unheard of in the 1950's. This is the power and courage of true living spiritual traditions. Swami Satyananda is one of His illustrious disciples. Similarly, till

the advent of Swami Sivananda's disciples in the Yoga education scene, only Asana and Pranayama were taught as Yoga. Thus, it is the duty of a sincere student to seek such living traditions or learn from authentic sources that are connected to these traditions.

### **Tradition and customization**

When we learn Yoga from anybody and everybody, we lose sight of the need of today as well as our personal need. When we learn from living traditions, the teachers help us to customize the Yoga processes based on our need. So, there is a distinct possibility to customize the set of asana, pranayama, mantra etc., to each student. As mentioned above, the living traditions would reveal a few processes that are the need of the day. This aspect and beauty of Yoga would be missed if we choose to study under a teacher with little or no link to living traditions.

### **Yoga and religions**

Kerala is God's own country and is the authentic home to Ayurveda. Irrespective of their religious denomination, the

science and art of Ayurveda is thriving in Kerala. Similarly, Yoga is a gift of Sanatana Dharma to the World.

The Yoga system existed even before the word “Hinduism” was coined. So kindly stay away from those who try to paint a religious texture to Yoga. Think for yourself. Analyze the facts and come to your own conclusion. This is the only way to come live without colored by anyone else’s prejudices, biases and perspective.



*In the Divine Life Society, Rishikesh. Photo: Coni Hörler*

World’s oldest knowledge system, the Rig Veda has a portion called Arunaprashna and its verses are still used in doing Sun Salutation practiced in India. The Yogic Sun



Salutation is rooted in that Vedic practice. It is important to know this fact as Yoga practices existed even before the advent of organized religions.

## **Conclusion**

Yoga is the best system and example to practice the precept, “prevention is better than cure.” Not only physical ailments but regular practice of Yoga helps us to stay balanced, creative, focused and successful in all our undertakings.

Thus it is your responsibility to analyze your needs, research on the living systems or the authentic sources connected with these living traditions, choose the duration of course and finally practice whatever you learn faithfully for a sustained period of time to derive the incalculable benefits that Yoga as a system has to offer. Happy learning!

<https://blog.yoga.in/2019/07/19/learn-from-living-traditions/>



# Tripadvisor Travellers' Choice 2020

## Shrimath Yoga



### SHRIMATH YOGA



RECOGNISING 5 CONSECUTIVE YEARS OF CONSISTENTLY  
HIGH RATINGS FROM TRAVELLERS

Shrimath Yoga receives students from more than 40 countries since inception in 2011. They work towards their 200 hrs, 500 hrs, Yoga Nidra, Foundation, Certificate and Advance Certificate courses in Yoga.

Shrimath Yoga is the only YOGA SCHOOL in TripAdvisor to be consistently ranked in the top #3 since 2013.

**TRAVELERS' CHOICE  
2020** award officially announces our arrival as the top 10% of hospitality properties of the World

These awards are a result of implementing the principles of Yoga at Shrimath Yoga.

Jai Ma!

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[www.youtube.com/shrimathyoga](https://www.youtube.com/shrimathyoga)

Krishna Prakash is the founder of Shrimath Yoga (India), a traditional gurukul model Yoga School. Since 2011, students from 40+ countries have studied Yoga as a system.

Shrimath Yoga bagged the rare TRAVELERS' CHOICE 2020 award from TripAdvisor i.e. recognized as one of the top 10% hospitality properties of the World. For winning the CERTIFICATE OF EXCELLENCE for 5 straight years, Shrimath entered TripAdvisor's HALL OF FAME in 2019. It is a matter of pride that Shrimath is the only Yoga School to achieve these recognitions.

Shrimath is the first Yoga School in the World to be approved by Yoga Alliance International to offer teacher training in Yoga Nidra.

In 2019, Krishna was inducted as a "Life Time Member" at Government of India supported Indian Yoga Association (IYA) conceived by BKS Iyengar, Sri Sri Ravi Shankar, Sri Jaggi Vasudev, Swami Ramdev, Hansaji, Sri Ishwar Basavaraddi and other living Yogis. Shrimath is one of the recognized 50 ASSOCIATE CENTERS by IYA to learn Yoga in India

Krishna continues to learn from the living traditions of Bhagawan Nityananda of Ganeshpuri, Sri Ramakrishna Mutt, Bihar School of Yoga & other Siddha traditions

Kindly visit [www.shrimathyoga.com](http://www.shrimathyoga.com) for more details



FIRST PUBLISHED AT  
**BLOG.YOGA.IN**

