

## KUMBH MELA

*Unlikely meetings, rivers flowing into each other  
Many mirrored small acts of purification  
Observation, and show; Bodies on show, and bodies not on show  
Tractors, and an elephant or two; Love, and fear; Loss and fear of loss  
Other people's gurus and, JOY, my own.*

*The Mela, the Kumbh Mela, the Prayag Kumbh Mela,  
the Once in One Hundred and Forty Four Years Maha Kumbh Mela,  
the mela, a beautiful mela.*

*Someone with me, not quite by my side, to love me through it all.  
Crossing the Ganga, one last look back,  
a desire for a record, leading to a loss on bridge eleven.  
Our mother, with unrecognised depths, moves on  
and one lover, pausing in the moment, loses the other lover,  
blind to the lesson of ceaseless movement being given below.*

*The lesson is a gentle one, an hour or so apart at most.  
The one that follows acquiesces, and an imposed wait  
leaves a bruise and a bit of a scrape when rashly ignored.  
A caution against presuming that the logic flows both ways.  
A caution against logic, and a push towards effacing acceptance.*

*The new place of learning is a train station,  
away from the magical reality of our mother and the mela.  
Leaving with things to keep and things to be taken  
(and, if you want it, this is for you).*

[Along with 70 million others, the author of this poem was at the  
Maha Kumbh Mela, where unexpectedly she met Swami Niranjan]



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# Satyananda Yoga Centre

## London Newsletter

### Spring/Summer 2001



Celebrating 30 Years

## EDITORIAL

Around the time of the last newsletter I was reflecting on the many years spent here, and realised that nearly thirty years had passed since my beloved guru Swami Satyananda told me to start teaching Yoga. In early March 1971 I taught my first class here, and as Swamiji was on a brief visit to London he came to lunch and gave his blessing to the whole enterprise. At the time I thought it was a mixed blessing, as I had a nice job in Chelsea and a flat in Kensington and didn't even know where Balham was! And Yoga was something that I did for myself.

However, the ways of the Guru are mysterious indeed, and the most important thing a disciple can do is to learn quickly to trust and accept the Guru's guidance – and if the Guru wants you to teach, then you must allow yourself to become an effective channel for that knowledge.

In those early years Swamiji did not come to London often, but he continued to guide and inspire me; and from one class a week, I gradually did more at the Centre and for Adult Education.

Some of those first students are still coming to class here, although they have also been teaching for years and are doing their bit to pass on the invaluable teachings of Yoga around and about. It is with great joy to me that we're still together after so long, and hopefully we shall see many of you old friends at the party on 3<sup>rd</sup> June – more details elsewhere in the newsletter.

In 1971 there was relatively little yoga in this country and much of it was very superficial and body-orientated. But since the wonderful Sixties and the arrival of Swamis and Gurus in London, there was a healthy interest in meditation and spiritual life also. We, in the Bihar School of Yoga tradition, have always attracted people who are interested in more than just well-toned abdominal muscles, and I would like to thank all of you, past and present, for the curiosity that brought you here and the dedication that keeps you here. We now have a large, varied and wonderful family in London and around the country, many of whom have made their own commitment to Swami Satyananda and to Swami Niranjan and are good examples of how Yoga, in the full sense of the word, can be

Drums, cymbals & harmonium too,  
voices together as one - as a whole.  
The joyful energy grew and grew,  
mantra and laughter to uplift the soul.

I have learned so much from our blessed Guru  
and am so grateful for my lucky find,  
For passing on great teaching and a message that's true  
The Satyananda Centre is in my heart and mind.

Thank You,

**Jivanmukta**

## CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE GERU KIND

My first encounter with SYC London was during what was to be Paramahamsaji's last visit to England. I remember clearly walking in and being met by a swathe of Geru clad, short haired, bead-wearing weirdos all buzzing because their Guru was in town. There was an energetic kirtan followed by much tea and excited chatter! Luckily not much has changed since that time. It is still a gathering place for people in various shades of geru and yellow, it still has the best kirtans in town and the tea is still endlessly flowing. It also has some of the best Satyananda Yoga teachers around, has the most fun shankhaprakshalana sessions and provides excellent teacher training.

Like all good Indian philosophy however, there is a strong thread underlying all these activities and that is the unswerving dedication of Swami Pragyamurti to her Guru and to her Guru's mission of propagating Yoga. It is this *bhava* (feeling, sentiment) that provides the focus to all the activities of SYC London. Anybody can open a yoga centre, but unless there is an aim or direction which is not based on some form of personal gain, it will never propagate the true message of Yoga. SYC and Swami Pragyamurti have provided countless people with an insight into the true meaning of Yoga and the message of our Guru, and are still spreading the message 'from door to door and shore to shore'.

May we all aspire to such one pointed bhava.

**Achyutananda**

I was reading sometime ago that to know the quality of a Guru, one needs to see his disciples. What a Guru is Paramahamsaji for having such a disciple as Swami Pragyamurti.

Thanks to all of you who have permitted the existence of this place with your devotion and your karma yoga, and a thousand thanks to Swami Pragyamurti. Long life to Satyananda Yoga Centre!

With love,

**Nadashakti**

## **MEMORIES OF THURLEIGH ROAD**

When I look back in nostalgic mode  
On the important things that happened to me,  
I think of discovering Thurleigh Road  
and the yoga classes of Swami P.

We'd gather for class on Friday afternoon  
a motley crew were we,  
And do chandra namaskar on every full moon,  
bhastrika and bhramari.

We worked on our chakras and our shakti,  
Pragya took us to our innermost parts.  
We tried to develop our karma and bhakti  
And to open up our hearts.

To do yoga nidra was such a treat,  
we'd all go in so deep,  
Releasing right down from our head to feet  
trying hard not to fall asleep.

On Guru Purnima we enjoy a feast  
all out in the garden sun,  
There's food enough for a hundred at least,  
But only after karma yoga is done!

On Friday evenings we all squash in  
for kirtan chanting sweet and mild,  
But it sounds as if we've been on the gin,  
Ten minutes later it's frantic and wild.

integrated into life in a busy 21<sup>st</sup> century Western culture.

The other great Yoga in my life is my children and I would like to thank them all – officially, here and now – for all those evenings of enforced quiet between 7.30 and 9.00 and for putting up so nobly with many Saturday shankhprakashana sessions, which thoroughly disturbed their desire for a lie-in, not to say having total strangers taking over their loos for most of the day.

It's been great, is great, and with the continuing Grace of Guru, will go on being great for a while yet. Thank you all and see you at the party, at Guru Purnima, or at class!

**Swami Pragyamurti**

## **ORANGES AND LEMMINGS**

Lemmings rush furiously and blindly towards the precipice, spurred on by adrenaline and the excitement of the chase... chasing dollars, chasing dreams... wanting more, wanting to move. *On, On, On* is their mantra. *On, On, On. Do, Do, Do. New, New, New.*

Oranges hit the brakes, ask questions, strive in a different way. Learning to stop. Silence. Stillness is their aim. To balance doing and being. *Om, Om, Om* is their mantra. *Om, Om, Om. Be, Be, Be. Whoah, Whoah, Whoah.* Is there a force out there trying to make us be still? Slow down? Train crashes, floods, foot and mouth, holes in the ozone layer, strikes, go slows. This will not do!

**Swami Bhaktipoornananda**

## **SWAMIJI IN SPAIN — MAY 2001**

Swami Niranjan is coming to Spain to run a 3 day residential retreat entitled "Yoga: Health & Inner Harmony", hosted by the new Barcelona School of Yoga. The confirmed dates are Thursday 17th May to Sunday 20th May. The venue is a 3-star hotel directly on the Mediterranean, 1½ hours from Barcelona City. Seminar fees will be 35,000 pesetas per adult (around £132) which includes hotel accommodation, taxes, meals & transport by bus from Barcelona to the venue if required. Booking leaflets will be available soon from the London Centre. For further information contact Atmatattwa or Achyutananda in Spain, phone/fax 00 34 93 487 0293 or send an email to [barcelonayoga@tiscalinet.es](mailto:barcelonayoga@tiscalinet.es)

## **SITA KALYANAM DATES FOR 2001**

We have received this invitation from Swami Satsangi, on behalf of Paramahansa Satyananda:

"Namo Narayan. Sita Kalyanam will be held from 10th to 19th December both days inclusive. By popular request Sat Chandi Mahayajna will be held again this year. As Christmas will be soon after, Swamiji has said that after Sita Kalyanam those of you who want to stay on for the celebrations at Akhara (from 20th to 25th December) can move in to the Ashram and witness that."

## **NEWS FROM RAJASTHAN**

On 12 May we are celebrating our second fundraising day for Nirvanavan Foundation. Last year's day was a great success; we enriched our own lives and raised much needed funds for a worthwhile cause.

Nirvanavan Foundation's present base is a little stone hut on top of a huge boulder on one of the hills of the Aravalli mountains in Rajasthan. Below there is a valley with a few villages, and all around there is a jungle where once many tigers roamed freely. Now the jungle is being destroyed and the tiger is on the brink of extinction. The deterioration of the ecosystem has resulted in unwanted weather changes; unpredictable monsoons and droughts. The hard life of the villagers is even harder.

In winter I visited Nirvanavan Foundation, saw the work currently being done and learnt about future plans. Sariska Tiger Reserve, where Nirvanavan Foundation is situated, occupies 1122 square kilometres. It comprises the core zone (dense jungle) and the buffer zone (outer jungle). There are 200 villages in the area and we are working with all of them.

The life of the indigenous people and the environment are closely interconnected. Planting trees and introducing correct watershed management, for instance, will benefit both. We believe that by empowering the villagers, especially the women, through educational and vocational training, positive changes will happen. The villagers will create a better life for themselves, learning new and valuable skills while retaining good practices and traditional

But how thrilled she was with her new name and status. All of us who knew her in those days were very pleased for her and we have since followed her progress along her destined path with pride and admiration. She is an inspiration to all her students. When she opened her home as a yoga centre all those years ago, did she, I wonder, envisage the hundreds of pairs of feet that would pass through her doors, wear out the carpets and trample over the garden? Did she foresee all the pairs of hands that would clean windows, weed the garden, vacuum the sadhana room, all in the name of Karma Yoga? Did she realise just how large her circle of friends and fellow yogi/nis would be? Somehow I doubt it.

I have spent many happy hours in class at SYC London, practising shankhaprakshalana, drinking tea and chatting around the kitchen table and doing my share of Karma Yoga. In the summer, weather permitting, classes were held in the garden. Why was it that the neighbours always decided to mow their lawn on a Friday afternoon? But everything has a purpose, for when one adds the noise of passing aeroplanes, the road traffic, children's voices and birdsong then what could be more perfect for the practice of antar mouna?

It has been and still is a privilege to be part of such a caring and vibrant yoga centre – long may it continue thus.

**Bhagavati**

## **BIRTHDAY GREETINGS FROM COGNAC, FRANCE**

Hari Om. Happy thirtieth birthday to Satyananda Yoga Centre - so many memories! Shall I start with the fantastic energy which resonates from the kitchen to the attic? Or with the warm welcome, full of compassion for the poor lost yogini I sometimes was? What a comfort to feel enveloped by love and protected to take a run up and start again on the path. Of course, I don't forget the evening kirtans, the very serious yoga classes, the delightful surya namaskars in the garden, nor the Guru Purnima celebrations.

And the soul of this magnificent place, Swami Pragya-murti, our Mataji who looks after the wellbeing of everybody and everything, whose firm and rapid step, or the cough (alas!) inform us of her coming.

I see another figure garbed in geru, and yet more long black hair - who can this be? Why does Verona spring to mind? Ah yes, it's Jyotimani - the Italian One - come back Jyotimani (with the lovely Jeff and new baby of course!)

But the picture is incomplete. Something or Some One is missing. Who or what can it be? I see a tall upright chair at the end of the kitchen table and a shaven head. What can the connection be? I hear mantras in my head:

*Monday Morning Cleaning - Friday Morning Shopping...*

*Monday Morning Cleaning - Friday Morning Shopping...*

and what's with the geraniums?

*Out in the Summer - In for the Winter...*

*Out in the summer - In for the winter...*

*In and Out - In and Out - Year after Year - Year after Year*

I glance out of the window and see again the tall strong oak in the middle of the garden. Solid, always there, sheltering, protecting, growing imperceptibly year after year. Suddenly the haze clears - and is it? Yes it is! There, in the centre of the garden I see the stooping figure of Swami Pragyamurti, hands deep in the soil, potting the geraniums.

And today, sitting watching the snow fall, I suddenly realise what's with the geraniums. It's the colour isn't it? How come it took me so long? Sometimes it takes years for the obvious to become clear. I feel a posture coming on (yogic of course).

*Year after Year - Year after Year - Year after Year*

Soon the geraniums will be out again.

**Krishnadhyanam (Richard Roberts)**

## **WELL, WOULD YOU BELIEVE IT?**

Well, would you believe it? The Satyananda Yoga Centre is thirty years old! Something I find hard to believe is that I've known Swami Pragyamurti for 26 of those 30 years. I first met her when she became my yoga teacher at Nonsuch Mansion, Cheam. She was then known as Laya. I was with her a few years later when she was initiated by Swamiji whilst at Yoga Congress at Dublin University. How different she looked without her long blonde hair!

values. They will protect the precious environment, realising its importance for their own wellbeing.

Nirvanavan Foundation has already done some work in informal education and in building school facilities. The villagers approve and get fully involved in the projects. A detailed plan for teaching dressmaking and basketry is ready, but we need premises and machines. Many other projects can be started as soon as there are funds.

I have met the villagers and found them proud, hardworking people, and their children pure, bright and eager to learn. They are now forever in my heart. They all deserve the best. We can offer them our love and support and in return learn something very precious from them; courage, patience, wisdom and purity of heart.

**Nirmal**

## **CREATING CHANGE: EVOLUTION THROUGH YOGA**

A new book by our own Swami Bhaktipoornananda is now available from the Centre for just £8, partnered with a double CD at £12.

"Creating Change: Evolution through Yoga" is a practical workbook, with the CDs containing instructions for some of the practices in the book including Kaya Sthairyam, Antar Mouna, Ajapa Japa, Relaxation and Yoga Nidra. A recent book review by Mary Callaway says:

"Many of us come to Yoga because we hope to find a better way of living. Ill health or major life events have perhaps shocked us into realising that we cannot go on as before. We find a class and (with luck) feel much better as we stretch, breathe and relax. But what then? Perhaps like the Buddha's disciple we will be told 'Begin and continue'. It can be a hard road though and we may find ourselves turning this way and that for support. Bhakti's workbook could be invaluable here as a companion and guide for the journey.

Always practical and encouraging, Bhakti presents Bihar School of Yoga techniques in a very accessible way, and intersperses them with a host of ideas and tools for change, drawn from different self-development methods. The text is lively with quotations and anecdotes from Bhakti's own experience.

Definitely one to work with and return to over a period of time, whether you use it systematically or just dip into it for inspiration. Teachers — recommend it with confidence to your students.”

## **A FIRST TRIP TO RIKHIA**

*Namo Narayan* - we had arrived a day or two later than planned but this was India after all. *Namo Narayan* - it seemed that everybody in the community surrounding Rikhia, whatever their age, called this greeting to all who passed by. Sita Kalyanam and the presence of Swamiji in the region had evidently touched everyone's lives - *Namo Narayan!*

The Sita Kalyanam programme started the next day at 6.30am - breakfast followed by Kirtan, Ramayana chanting and Satsang with Swami Satyananda. This was my first time and I was very excited! The next three days passed in a haze of delicious sattvic ashram food, chanting and the infectious laugh of Swami Satyananda together with the strict business-like organisation of Swami Niranjan, but not without a touch of humour too.

I loved the Ramayana chanting; it haunted me at night and I would wake up with the sound in my head each morning. As the days passed the vibrational level increased and the arrival of the Brahman, who would be building the altars for the ceremonies to follow, caused a ripple of excitement. Chanting took place through the evenings and beautiful altars of fruits and flowers were assembled.

The following days flowed from one to another with the giving and receiving of presents. Members of the local community received cows, rickshaws, bicycles for the girls to get to school and tricycles for the disabled - it was very moving. We also received gifts of mirrored dresses, framed poster mementos of the event and a small book on Bhakti written by Swamiji. No one was ever missed out and prasad was given as we left each day.

The wedding of Sita and Ram was the culmination of this amazing event, enjoyed by local school children and their families together with followers from all parts of India and hundreds of Western visitors.

trained under Swami Pragyamurti, taught regular Yoga classes and helped in the day to day running of the Centre, there are too many great memories to recount. As a Karma Sannyasi it is an important place to connect with other Sannyasi, and to keep in touch with the teachings and inspiration of Paramahansa Satyananda and Niranjanananda.

Swami Pragyamurti has become a great and trusted friend, always welcoming and wise, whatever the weather. I discovered the inner joy of a cup of Luaka tea and chocolate hobnobs even at 6am on a TTC weekend (just how many can you eat in one weekend?)

Here's to another 30 years. Love and respect.

**Indradeva**

## **WHAT'S WITH THE GERANIUMS?**

(gentle memories from a residential home north of the river)

The snow is falling gently outside as I sit here in my armchair cosily hugging my rubber hottie, its knitted woollen cover soothingly warming my cold hands. The fire crackles in the grate as I pull my serge dressing gown closer and take another sip of hot chocolate. The brown local authority mug nestles comfortably in my hands. I allow my mind to drift like the falling snow, and memories of "institutions I have lived in" waft in like the snowflakes settling on the leafless branches of the mighty oak which stands solidly in the middle of the garden.

Ah, the garden. Intimations of geraniums appear like snowflakes thrusting through the dark earth of my unconscious mind. Is this a yoga posture I see appearing before me, held on the green green grass of Thurleigh Road? And who is this hazy figure in orange garb sitting motionless before me gently coaxing my limbs into pranic posture? Is it? Can it be? Why yes, it must be Swami Vedantananda - she of the long black hair (as opposed to the one with no hair at all - more of that one later!)

Scenes from the garden flutter by my mind - meals on the massage table, Guru Purnima feasting, karmic yoga weeding, prostrating in the hammock (an essential Thurleigh Road practice - no sadhana is complete without it), and do you remember the pyramid? Whatever happened to the pyramid?

## THURLEIGH'S THIRTIETH CELEBRATIONS

The remainder of this bumper newsletter celebrates thirty years of the London Satyananda Yoga Centre with articles from students, teachers and Thurleigh Road residents past and present. Please join in the celebrations on 3rd June, and look forward to the next thirty years at Thurleigh Road!

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY SATYANANDA YOGA CENTRE

The overall strength of SYC that has always impressed me is continuity – these thirty year celebrations are a tribute to that. The Centre has been and remains the place where many of us have lived, worked, taught, done karma yoga, attended yoga classes, seminars, done our first shankhprakashana, supervised our first shankhprakashana (ugh!), swallowed bandages and drunk tea around the kitchen table, had joyful Guru Purnima celebrations, bathed in the glorious vibes of our Gurus, Swami Satyananda and Swami Niranjanananda, and had many other experiences too numerous to mention over the last thirty years.

This has all been possible through the dedication, devotion and enthusiasm of Swami Pragyamurti who has been the guiding light for the Centre for all these years. Even though she now holds a bus pass, we sincerely hope she will continue for the next thirty years. Swami Pragyamurti is synonymous with SYC.

I first came to the centre in 1983 for Kirtan and it was my home for most of the years from 1989 to 1997. Reflecting on the image of that naïve yogini from Surrey whilst writing this has made me realise what changes we have all gone through over the years and how lucky we have been to have had SYC as a checking-in point, both with each other and for ourselves. So thank you Swami Pragyamurti for being a constant force and for providing us with a middle point, in South London, where we have all been inspired by Satyananda Yoga in its many and diverse forms. OM.

Swami Vedantananda

## OM SWEET OM

Seventy Thurleigh Road has become an important address in my spiritual diary. Having been lucky enough to have lived there,

Each of us was given an opportunity to walk around the sacred altars each day. In parallel we were encouraged to think of all spiritual paths leading to the same end, whether this was represented by the giving of Mass at the beginning of the ceremony by the visiting priest from Athens, or through Moslem, Christian or Hindu worship, or by the devotion of other faiths. Bhakti was the key to the future of humanity.

Sita Kalyanam is a fantastic opportunity to meet many wonderful people from all over the world with the same spirit and joy of sharing experience. So when you see on the noticeboard of Thurleigh Road that the auspicious dates have been set for the 'India Event', put it in your diary as I did and go! It is truly an event to be experienced, not talked about. Hari Om.

Radha

## MAGAZINES & PUBLICATIONS

**Yoga Magazine**, published by the Bihar School of Yoga, Munger, India, is available from the Centre. If you would like to subscribe, please send an SAE for further details.

The excellent twice-yearly **News Sheet for the International Yoga Fellowship Movement UK & Eire** needs your support. We have copies here for your perusal, and you can contact Lalitambika for subscription details (41 Charlton, Singleton, West Sussex PO18 0HU).

## AUTHOR, AUTHOR!

We are always on the lookout for yogic articles to put in the London SYC Newsletter, so if you have a burning desire to write something for the next issue or feel inspired to draw a cover illustration, please leave a note for Nadarupa at the London Centre or send an email to nadarupa@hotmail.com. Around 350 words nicely fills a page – any format is fine, emailed, wordprocessed or handwritten.

