

# SMRTI - YOGA

# YOGA OF

# MEMORY



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## *Smṛti-Yoga: Yoga of Memory*



## SMRTI-YOGA: YOGA OF MEMORY

Our contemporary science defines different types of memory depending on different types of brain functions and based in the neuronal connections. The ancient understanding of memory was less physical and more psycho-spiritual. Memory, in the ancient traditions, is not merely located in the physical cerebrum but becomes deeply ingrained in the subtle body in the form of samskaras, processed conditioning and modulations of the subtle body. It is on the model of the subtle body, as on a mould, that our physical bodies are then formed, deformed, reformed. All these processes take place in one life time or in many successive ones. Here we shall not discuss the hidden world of samskaras (imprints) and vasanas (proclivities arising therefrom) and the karmic fruition. (see this author's Commentary on the Yoga-sutras of Patanjali, volume 2) We shall eliminate the discussion of past life memory.

The Sanskrit word for memory is smrti (pronounced in different parts of India as smriti or smruti; r here is a vowel). In the Yoga-sutras of Patanjali, the word occurs in two different meanings: [\[1\]](#)

- a) anubhuta-vishaya-a-sam-pra-moshah smrtih (sutra 1.11). An experienced object not being lost from the mind is memory. This definition is limited so as to explain it as a vritti, an operation of the mind to be brought under control to attain samadhi.
- b) In sutra 1.20, a view parallel to the Buddhist one is enunciated. Samadhi may be attained by following five different methods, including smrti. Here smrti is no mere memory but the practice of mindfulness. The great commentator Vyasa here speaks of the practice of smrti-upa-sthana, the Pali sati-patthana (see our Commentary on YS. Volume 1).

We need to view these two denotations of smrti as interlinked. When Krishna says:

From anger arises stupefaction (sam-moha);

From stupefaction the confusion of smrti.

He is talking of the loss of mindfulness. So, at the end of the Bhagavad-gita we hear

Arjuna exclaim:

My stupefaction (moha) has vanished;  
Mindfulness has returned.

We have discussed this rendering of smṛti in our work on the Yoga-sūtras and need not repeat it here for our present purpose.

Mindfulness is a very refined form of attention, a state of awareness. The Pali texts go into great detail of the practices of six kinds of mindfulness (anussati = anu-smṛti) and four categories of related practices (anussati-kamma-tthana)<sup>[2]</sup>. No mindfulness, no memory.

My Gurudeva Swami Rama of the Himalayas said: memory means interest; you forget because you are not interested. What, or whom, you would love you would remember.

Here it is not possible to go into the details of all the practices taught in yoga for

1. cultivating mindfulness and
2. enhancing memory.

We shall explain the subject selectively.

Our memory and emotional states are closely linked. All our confusions are emotional ones; they befog the mind and rob it of its pleasant clarity of the mind, prasāda-guṇa (another term we have explained in YS 1.33 and numerous recorded lectures). This prasāda-guṇa is developed, cultivated and maintained by practising the four brahma-viharas, frolics in God, as prescribed in sūtra 1.33 by Patañjali.

These practices aid us in stabilising the mind (sthiti-ni-bandhana) whereby concentration, that is the prerequisite for memory, improves.

Actually, concentration is no effort; just clearing the mind of its emotional confusions. Once the fog is lifted, the sun shines clearly. A clear mind remembers; a confused mind forgets.

The primary archetypal reason for the weakness of memory is prevalence of tamas<sup>[3]</sup>. This may manifest itself under many categories. However, here let us just ask the simple

- 'Why' and
- 'How' questions.



The 'why' first:

- a) A Shiva-child is often forgetful. His/her tamas does not indicate stagnancy but stability from the past lives of purification through tapasya. Because of a deep inward urge, the interest in outward matters is absent and the child appears dull but may excel in spiritual attitudes, and in certain arts that can be practised in solitude, and so forth. One of the four major disciples of Shankaracharya, named Hastamalaka, is the highest example although there are many even today in some families, much misunderstood, but not with such excellence in spiritual realisation.
- b) Dullness of intelligence as a past karmic effect. For example a person with much pride in his scholarship and intelligence may be born 'stupid'. Intelligence is of many types but memory and intelligence are closely linked.

This just about sums up the 'why'. The 'how' is a little more detailed.

- Lack of spiritual preparations on the part of the parents, to be defined below.
- Mother's malnourishment during pregnancy so that the foetus does not receive all the nutrients needed to develop the strength or even the morphology of the neuro-cerebral systems. So also during lactation.
- Child's malnourishment so that, again, the nutrients required to develop the cerebral systems are in dearth.
- Lack of training in education as to how to use the mnemonic faculties.
- Over-dependence on technology, so that 'mental mathematics', so common up to the time of our grandfathers, is no longer known and without the calculator one cannot cube 25. Everything is noted down in a computer and nothing remembered. I find this phenomenon more among my western associates and assistants, also sadly increasing in traditional cultures of Asia.
- Overfeeding so the energy is needed to digest food and not spared for sharpening the mind that keeps becoming dull and less perceptive.
- Sleep deprivation that is a common phenomenon in the urban



industrial countries and communities.

- Alcohol and mind-altering drugs; these have long term effects.
- Tension, lack of relaxation.
- Poor blood circulation so that the brain is not receiving the necessary nutrients.
- Lack of training in associational memory triggers (see the list of 25 triggers given by sages Gotama and Vatsyayana below).
- Lack of training of analytical faculties resulting in non-comprehension.
- Emotional confusion and befogging; this, even if neuro-cerebral systems are well developed.
- Lack of interest in or love for the subject, person, etc, to be remembered.
- Information overload. But this can be overcome by increasing one's (a) emotional and (b) intellectual capacity – especially the emotional capacity. The emotionally weak or impaired cannot carry the load and become confused.

The problem is not often so much in memorising, in mnemonic faculties, but in recall. Everything we perceive even unconsciously, with any of our senses, is stored in our instruments of consciousness. But when we need any part of these stored data, we cannot get to the right file. This for lack of training, and through emotional befogging.

We know that the human mind is capable of enormous feats of memory. Even now there are thousands who memorise entire epics. The number of the Hafiz – who recite the entire Quran Sharif by heart in India alone is over 45000. Those who recite portions of the Veda are at the last count reduced to 2250. Millions in India recite the entire Bhagavad-Gita or the Chandi-patha daily. Among the 13000- odd who register Sanskrit as their first language there must be several hundred who memorised all the four thousands sutras of Panini's grammar at a very early age (as this author completed this entire memory work by the age of six and a half). There are again thousands who know the entire Lexicon called Amara-kosha, and the most popular text on prosody, the Vrtta-ratnakara, by heart. The “illiterate” mothers and grandmothers of ours sang entire kandas (cantos) of the Ramayana as we slept in their laps.

As the women planted or transplanted rice, as they grind on the janta (Bhojpuri pronunciation jaaNTaa, from yantra) chakki (from chakra), millstones,

as the kumhar potmakers swirl or beat the vessels to shape them, they sing entire epics, to their work rhythm, containing stories related to their work<sup>[4]</sup>. After lugging bricks on their heads whole day, the bhojpuri-speaking labourers sit around a fire and sing vast epics like Lorikayan, six versions of which have now been edited and published but the brick labourer does not know that some people got doctorates on what he, a mere 'illiterate', recites from memory! Where did he learn the memory training exercises? People with the unfortunate and ignorant Hindu high caste mentality in general are not going to lower themselves to go listen to these enormous works of “lowly” people's literature about the Abhira kings harking back to the time when “jaise ab tumhaar raaj baate, ahirvaa ke raaj rahaa” (as you people are the rulers these days, Abhiras used to rule)<sup>[5]</sup>. The 'literate' person seems happy with his inability to memorise a single poem from Macbeth – no brick layer he, nor an epic-singing kumbhar (potmaker), for he is a civilised urbanite! (The ignorant urbanite's definition of 'illiterate' worldwide: one who can sing an epic by heart without being able to sign his name! If you detect this author's anger here, so be it).

The transfer of the oral form of literature to the written form has been one of the instruments of memory impairment. But not quite.

The opera singer at La Scala, the Chakya who plays entire Kalidasa by heart, the Gerot who recites the genealogical epics in West Africa, the grandmother who recites Ramayana by heart, the bricklayer who sings the Lorikayan or the Alha, the nanad-bhaujai (sisters-in-law) grinding wheat together on the millstone and singing what this author has called “women's tragic work epics”, the katha-vachaka who knows the entire Bhagavad-Purana by heart, the Sanskrit grammarian who recites the 4000 'linguistic computer commands' (4<sup>th</sup> - 7<sup>th</sup> century B.C.) of Panini – they all have something in common. They did not go to learn memory-sharpening techniques but they have found in themselves the inherent faculty that others neglect. Only if one has found a faculty within can one sharpen it, like someone I knew who recited the 4000 sutras backwards, from the last one “a a” to the first one “a-i-u.N”.

There are those who have thus continued to treasure and pass on the art of sharpening the faculty of memory. One example is the shatavadhanis and, rarer, the sahasravadhanis – the person of 'hundred concentrations' and those of 'thousand concentrations'. Their existence was not known to the North Indians until the ex-prime minister Shri Narasimha Rao, a Sanskrit scholar, mentioned it to the public. There is quite a tradition of these in South India, especially in Andhra and Karnataka. It goes as follows: gather a group of people anywhere. The shatavadhani walks in and takes his seat. Someone asks a question. Then

someone requests, say, “please compose a verse on 'rain' without using the letter 'p' and 'd'”, or whatever. Then someone rings a bell, and so on. A hundred events take place as the shatavadhani sits in concentration. After the hundredth event, he responds to each in the same sequence. And, 'at this point the bell was rung 17 times', and “here is the verse on rain without using the letters 'p' and 'd'”. He goes on sequentially till he has answered all 100 questions or requests. Well, how about a World Cup for Concentration and Memory Olympics?

What do we have to say about those who have impaired memory faculty because of malnutrition, neural disease or other illness? What about those who have never heard the adage 'use it or lose it' and have been too lazy to use the faculty of memory and now it has atrophied? Also, how can we prevent the increasing impairment of memory faculty in the world society? There are many remedies, all interdependent.

### **Spiritual**

Japa of special mantras such as (a) gayatri, (b) medha-mantra (c) saraswati-mantra (d) brhaspati-mantra (e) in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition Manjushri-mantra (which incidentally, is identical to one of the Saraswati-mantras). There are also Shabara (of indigenous groups) and Muslim mantras and pra-yogas (practices and applications) for the same purpose. If the parents do an observance of 2,400,000 japa of gayatri before invoking a soul to be born through them, the would-be child might not need the formal education as we know it; s/he will have such a sharp intellect and memory<sup>[6]</sup>.

### **Psycho -spiritual**

- a) One looks deep within to see what emotions like anger, angst, fear, remorse, self-doubt, uncertainty, jealousy, insecurity, etc, are befogging the mind. One learns to clear the mind by the methods like chitta-karuna (compassion), mudita (joyfulness) and upeksha (indifference to negativities of others) (Yoga-sutras of Patanjali 1.33) or the practice of manasa-tapas, mental asceticism:

Manah-prasadah saumyatvam maunam atma-vi-ni-grahah

Bhava-sam-shuddir ity etan manasam tapa uchayate

The mental ascetic practice consists of making the mind clear and pleasant, a moonlike innocent and pure quality, saumyatva, nature of a meditative contemplative sage – mauna, silence, control over oneself,

purification of emotions and sentiments, holding only pure sentiments.

Bhagavad-Gita 17.16

1. Certain yoga-asanas, especially the inverted ones that supply extra blood flow towards the brain. The headstand is the supreme one of these but it is not for everyone. (Not recommended for those who suffer from blood pressure problems)
2. Practices of concentration. These need to be learnt from a yoga master.
3. Pranayamas, not all, but the ones appropriate for memory improvement.
4. Shavasana relaxation practices.

## **Psychological**

There are many well-known psychological methods for the improvement of memory such as creating mental associations with words or forms. For example, you are trying to remember a person's name. You had met him in the rose garden. You establish a memory trigger. Remember the rose garden and you remember his name. This is rather simplistic. The psychologists have devised many such methods and we need not go into them here. However, these methods only help trigger the memory of the 'little' factors and do not much contribute to the general improvement of the mind-brain relationship.

Also one tries to find out whether one has an unconscious aversion to some aspects of whatever one is failing to remember. Renouncing the aversion will help remember it better.

Many such devices can be utilised. The Nyaya-sutras of Akshapada Gotama (one of the six major systems of the Vedic philosophy) lists 25 ways of association whereby a memory may be maintained or aroused. Vatsyayana's classic commentary on the same elaborates as follows:

1. Pra-ni-dhana: (a) concentration of mind with desire/intent to remember (susmoorsha); (b) remembering some marks of the object/entity to be remembered.
2. Ni-bandha: tying together a number of objects in one list; the list may be remembered in sequence or some objects be remembered



out of sequence.

3. Abhyasa: practice, repeating a matter.
4. Linga: four kinds of marks.
  - i) Samyogin – conjoint, like smoke and fire,
  - ii) Samavayin – inherent, like horn of a cow,
  - iii) Ekartha-samavayin – sharing one possessor such as hands and feet of the same person, or form and touch of the same person,
  - iv) Vi-rodhin – contradictory such as being that is contradictory to unborn and destroyed.
5. Lakshana: sign, such as a branding sign on cows of different Ashrams, 'this one belongs to the Vidas', 'this one belongs to the Gargas'.
6. Sadrshya: similarity such as between a person and his portrait.
7. Pari-graha: belonging, such as the owner is remembered by something owned and something owned is remembered through an owner.
8. Ashraya: dependence such as by seeing a village president one may remember a villager.
9. Ashrita: dependent, such as seeing a villager one may remember a village president.
10. Sambandha: relationship, such as seeing a disciple one remembers the guru or seeing an officiant (yajamana) one may remember the priest who performed a worship for him.
11. Immediacy: an act that follows immediately after another act as in a sequence of ritual practices<sup>[2]</sup> (or one stage of an experiment in chemistry that may follow a preceding stage).
12. Vi-yoga: separation, such as a separated lover remembers the beloved.
13. Eka-karya: similarity of acts such as seeing one person performing an act of skill one remembers someone else who does the same.
14. Virodha: opposition, seeing a contestant one remembers his opposite contestant.
15. Ati-shaya: excess, such as remembering one who caused the excess.

16. Prapti: receivable, such as one remembers the person from whom something is to be obtained.
17. Vyava-dhana: concealment, such as sheath reminds one of a sword.
18. Sukha-duhkha-hetu: cause of pain and pleasure so that one remembers whatever causes or has caused a pain or pleasure.
19. Icchha-dvesha: desire and aversion, so that one remembers the object one desires or is averse to.
20. Bhaya: fear. One remembers what/whom one is afraid of.
21. Arthitva: desirousness, for example one desires a meal or a piece of clothing.
22. Kriya: act or skill. Seeing a chariot one remembers the chariot maker.
23. Raga: attraction or attachment. A man remembers a woman one is attracted/attached to.
24. Dharma: virtue, good karma, whereby one remembers the good acts of previous life of what one had studied/learned in that life<sup>[8]</sup>.
25. A-dharma: vice, transgressions. One remembers the causes of current sorrow in the past transgressions of virtue.

These triggers do not operate in simultaneity but in their own sequence. Nor is this enumeration, says Vatsyayana, exhaustive but only illustrative.

The modern psychologists can develop many different kinds of mnemonic devices on the basis of the above listing.

## Improved nutrition and remedies

These are suitable for a mother to take

- a) in preparation for a pregnancy and during pregnancy, to help form a child's brain,
- b) during lactation, to nourish the same, and
- c) after that for the child to take. For example,
  - d) The judicious use of almonds and saffron in milk. Saffron at night, almonds in the morning – prepared in the traditional Indian way. But, many people unfortunately drink coca cola instead of baadaam-thandaai (an almond drink in traditional India), to help support the WTO regime (and keep hoping for improved memory!)
  - e) Certain applications of ghee, in defined quantities, especially the many kinds of Ayurvedic herb-infused ghee. Ingested and/or massaged into the head.
  - f) Certain Ayurvedic herbs such as:

Brahmi: BACOPAMONNIERI (Linn.). Indian pennywort. Hindi, braahmi.

Jyotishmati: CELASTRUS PANICULATUS (Wild) Staff tree. Hindi, maalkaangani.

Vacha: ACORUS CALAMUS (Linn.) Sweetflag. Hindi, bacaa.

A qualified Ayurvedic physician can prescribe the correct doses and frequency. For example, brahmi leaves taken in large quantities will produce dizziness<sup>[9]</sup>, although I have seen in Bangkok the cool Brahmi drink (I do not know the Thai name) being sold by the roadside in unmeasured amounts. Jyotishmati or maalkaangni has to be given in even more carefully measured amounts. The usual way is to take one grain on the first day, increase it to seven grains on the seventh day, and then reduce it again one grain per day, and increase the same way, every seven days. Vacha is more complex. Consult your Ayurvedic physician. Often the physician will prescribe the pathaya and anu-pana, the dietary prescriptions and restrictions to go with the administering (a-sevana) of these medicinal remedies.

## Mnemonic Exercises

There are many complex mental exercises for improving the attention span

and memory.

1. Count the numbers, or preferably, count the breaths. Up to an arbitrary number (108? 51? 11?)

Next stage, count by skipping two numbers at a time, both ways. For example 2-4-6-etc and 108-106-104-etc. Or 1-3-5-etc and 109-107-105-etc. For one week.

Next, skipping four numbers both ways. For one week.

Increase the numbers at any stage. From 108 to one million and eight if you prefer and can handle it.

1. Count multiples of numbers by an arbitrary figure. 2-4-8-16-32-64-128-256-512-1024-etc, up to whatever limit you set up (up to 10008 or more) and backwards 1024-512-256-128-64-32-16-8-4-2; and then all over again.

Or do multiples of 3; 3-6-9-12-15-18-21-etc, and back; or (very difficult) 3-9-81-6561-43046721; and backwards.

So keep increasing the complexity and permutations, (deductions, divisions, squares, cubes, square roots, cube roots) till you can play chess mentally without looking at a chessboard.

The best is to do these with counting of breaths. In that case one cannot go to very high numbers but the cerebral systems respond better. There are many scientifically proved reasons for that.

3. There are a number of other methods using words (especially the Vedic ones). There are primary eight verbal permutations in the traditions: jataa, maalaa, shikhaa, rekhaa, dhvaja, danda, ghana, ratha. These may be learnt from the Vedapathins (the traditional reciters of the Vedas). These mnemonic devices have been used for the thousands of years that the Vedas have been memorised by heart. For example, one permutation in reciting the Vedas would be as follows : taking the first three words of the Rig-veda 'agnim ide puro-hitam'. It would be recited in the sequence of:

1-2, 2-1, 1-2;  
2-3, 3-2, 2-3;  
1-2-3, 3-2-1;  
2-1-3; 3-1-2;



2-3-1;

3-2-1;

1-2-3.

This is the simplest of the permutations for just the first three words of the mantra. The traditional Vedic reciters recite thousands of mantras in their eight-fold systems of permutations and that is how the Veda texts have been orally preserved for thousands of years so that not a single vowel's intonation has been altered.

### **Other**

Some of the contributory causes of lapse and weakening of memory are

1. Sleep deprivation,
2. fatigue
3. overfilled stomach,
4. shallow breath,
5. over talkative habit,
6. lack of fresh air,
7. lack of exercise,
8. constant worrying,
9. anger and anguish,
10. depression, habitual sadness.

So also are certain brain diseases, like Alzheimer's, that are fatal. As we can see, some of these can be easily controlled and with some we are helpless.

Here we return to the total philosophical concept of the equation of mindfulness, memory and practice. Let us look at some words.

We have already seen how the verb root *smr* means both remembering and practising mindfulness. Without mindfulness there can be no remembering. One can go into this equation in great detail but here we must restrain ourselves.

Another connection is between remembering and practising to memorise. Phonetically the verb, *man* (contemplating, meditating, from which are derived the words *Manu*, *manushya*, *mantra*, *manas* – Hindi *man* for mind - *manana*, *muni*, *mauna*, English *man*, *human*, *woman*, *mind*, *mental*, *mentate*, Latin *mens*, Greek *menos*) is related also to the verb for practising to memorise.

The Paninian verb root is *mna* (pronounced *mnaa*) cognate to the words like

'mnemonic', 'something related to memory'.

Zeus and the goddess Hera had a temporary liaison from which was born Mnemosyne (or Mnamosyna), the titanic goddess of memory. It is she who is the inventor of words. In the Greek mythology, and the mother of the nine Muses (nine aspects of Saraswati, one might say). She is the memory or remembrance (mneme) herself. I have also come across a European goddess Menothea, a goddess of the mind, (not to be confused with phyllachora menothea, one of the species of funghi) the armoured and sword wielding goddess of knowledge and wisdom, but I cannot at this time provide a ready reference for the same. So, purely phonetically an equation is clear between deep thinking, contemplation and meditation on one hand and the fact of memory and remembrance itself for which mins, manas, is the instrument and mantra an invariable aid. The relationship with other words derived from the verb root man can be seen above.

From mna (which in Panini's dhatu-patha – list of 2000 verbs – means practising: 'mna abhyase') is derived the word amnaya, a revealed text that must be committed to memory. A collection of syllables or words such as (a) in the analysis of the alphabet and (b) in a Vedic thesaurus or lexicon, is called sam-amnaya. In the texts on grammar and etymology we read phrases like

ity-akshara-sam-aa-mnaayah,  
samaamnaayah samaamnaatah,

so'yam askhara-sam-aa-mnaayo vaak-sam-aa-mnaayah<sup>[10]</sup>,  
referring to such collections of syllables and words.

The tradition has it that after a text is revealed to a sage, rishi, and he has recited to the disciples, they 'sit facing him' which is the literal meaning of 'abhi+asa=abhyasa' and practise to memorise the same. Then they go off on their own to sit under a tree or by a river, or by the sacred fire of homa, facing the river or the (abhi+asa=to sit facing) and recite to memorise. This process is known as svadhyaya, studying on one's own. But in the Yoga-sutras the word is used for mental recitation of a mantra in meditation, because, as the text is recited, slowly it is assimilated into the mind. At which point the practice becomes japa. Thus,

listening,  
mentating,  
contemplating,

reciting,  
memorising,  
doing japa for concentration and for purifying and clearing the mind  
(prasadana)

are all different shades of the same spectrum. Memorising without contemplating will be futile.

Another way of memorising the sacred texts was/is common in all the culture of Asia. It is to write a text in beautiful calligraphy again and again. It must be done

slowly,  
beautifully,  
lovingly.

Thus it was that preservation of texts, improvement of memory and practice of contemplation and japa, as well as all the practices of mindfulness, altogether formed what we may now term as smṛti-yoga.

This is one direction of interiorisation. There is another. It is called yoga-nidra, yoga sleep, conscious rest, converting sleep state into a step towards samadhi. It is referred to in Yoga-sutra 1.38. The first steps in this complex system of practices is prayatna-shaithilya, relaxation of effort (see YS. 2.47), going on to a series of mental practices performed in the corpse position. Many yoga teachers stop at placing the students into corpse position for they do not know what more to do with or in that position. Some who have been initiated into the Himalayan tradition of yogis lead the students through a series of

1. progressively complex and advanced relaxation methods
2. practices of the pranamaya kosha, the prana sheath, and preliminary exercises of the manomaya kosha, the mental sheath.

Many are known to refer to this series of practices as yoga-nidra. However, true yoga-nidra is not easy to come by. It may be defined in several stages and the ways of practice:

- a) Being aware of one's sleep state and directing it.
- b) While producing delta brain waves, that indicate non-REM deep sleep, one remains aware of one's surroundings<sup>[11]</sup>.
- c) One's meditation and sleep are simultaneous; while the surface mind sleeps, the deeper mind meditates.
- d) Entry into heart cave, permitting neither mantra nor thought. This

can be fully entered only through initiation although the foretaste may come during the various breath preparations that are taught to train the mind to enter yoga-nidra<sup>[12]</sup>.

In yoga-nidra by the fourth definition,

1. one may learn a language or another subject;
2. do quick memory work;
3. remember forgotten facts;
4. become a master of sleep – needing no more than two breath cycles (three and a half hours) of sleep every 24 hours;
5. may heal certain ailments or alleviate acute pains in oneself;
6. may write a new constitution or compose an epic (see it in a few minutes and then take years to write it down);
7. may receive intuitive knowledge such as a new scientific theory or a mantra.

The depth of yoga-nidra depends on

1. how well one has been prepared,
2. how deep the teacher's own experience is,
3. how emotionally balanced and self-controlled the practitioner is.

For learning a language, this author

1. Takes one lesson in pronunciation.
2. Picks up a grammar book and scans through it for a few hours to understand the general holistic structure.
3. Holds side by side the original text and the translation into the language to be learnt.
4. Goes deep into the heart cave, with eyes slightly open so that nothing else is being seen except the text, keeping the muscle groups completely relaxed.
5. Reads the text once, or listens to his own or someone else's recording of the translation.



6. Takes it into the yoga-nidra cave and mentally repeats it, without the slightest contact with the speech physiology.
7. May do the same once more.
8. That is it; one is ready to guide a meditation in that language.
9. Slowly one adds to the vocabulary, very easily, by following the same method.

I will narrate the story of two experiments.

I had leafed through English grammar books in India but had not learnt to compose or speak the language. After spending a little over one year at the request of the Indian community in Kenya I arrived in London in November 1953. In Mahatma Gandhi's autobiography I had read the name of the London Vegetarian Society and that was my only starting point. I asked to meet the general secretary who offered to organise a lecture tour of the vegetarian societies of UK. But the tour was yet nine months away as in the western countries such events are organised well in advance. I could barely understand the English of the General Secretary, leave alone feel ready to lecture! In the meantime a contact was established with the Hindu Association of Europe (later replaced by other titles) and I began to lecture to the Hindu community of London in Hindi. But the absence of English was irksome.

If one is used to taking short cuts to knowledge one has no patience for the slow and laborious class room methods that waste years and decades of one's life. One born with Sanskrit grammar and yoga-nidra combined can understand the processes of Java, the computer language, in a few days, leave alone a simple language like English. Attending one English language class at the Regent Polytechnic in London taught me to abandon that approach forever.

I needed to concentrate. I left London in April 1954 and rented a room in Hamburg, Germany, for two months. During that time I read through the works of Shankaracharya, especially his voluminous commentary on the Brahmasutras. I kept no English books with me, not one! After two months I sent a message to the Hindu Association of Europe in London asking to have the lecture series resumed. I arrived back in June. The members gathered to hear the lecture and expected the usual Hindi-Sanskrit. They were surprised at the fluent English. "what did you do in Germany? Did you attend an English course?" - they asked.

Here is the explanation. All the words one has seen in the English books, all the headlines of English newspapers of London, all the sentences that have been

spoken in one's vicinity, and a touch of the basic principles of (Sanskrit) grammar (the mother of grammars) – all these are stored in one's unconscious mind. In other words, they are all in one's memory. All one has to do is to recall. Mental information retrieval, one may call it.

Now, there is something I have not said about the varieties of yoga-nidra. Let me explain. Two of the most precious segments of our 24 hour day that we waste are

- While we are falling asleep. The time is wasted in unnecessary reverie and fantasy.
- While we are waking up; the time is wasted tossing and turning.

These are our most creative times. If one understands the processes of consciousness in these two segments of time one can create immortal works. I was well used to utilising that time since the age of five or six. So, in that Hamburg room, I had ample opportunity to use the familiar method.

While one is falling asleep, one's mind is freed of all exterior distractions, but one has not yet entered the sleep state. This twilight period is akin to yoga-nidra without having to learn it; one does need to learn how to use this time!

The consciousness in this transition from wakefulness to sleep, when freed of reverie and fantasy, is also a variety of yoga-nidra and may be utilised for the same purposes. The deep sankalpa, power of intent, inherent in the very consciousness – chit-shakti – gives a slight nudge to the layer of mind that is just next layer underneath the common chattering mind. It is told to take a certain direction, to channel thoughts of a particular stream into consciousness. Thus, one may create whatever one wishes.

In my Hamburg room I would lie in bed at night, and establish this state of consciousness, the pure unadulterated transition towards but not yet into sleep. Then nudge the mind towards what I wish to create. I visualised the hall in London (Caxton Hall near Victoria Station, later demolished), visualised a crowd sitting there. I would begin in the mind (there should be no physiology of speech involved); “Ladies and Gentlemen, today's topic is the Hindu Concept of God.” The mental lecture would proceed as an unhindered flow. All the words that had been unconsciously imprinted on the mind, all the rules of syntax integrated with the same, would come flowing forth. An hour's lecture does not require an hour of mental production; it may not take more than 15 minutes, or, after some practice, even less, as the thought operates at a much higher frequency than articulated speech.

Once the final 'Thank you' was said to the audience, I would fall asleep.

Better at this time to

(a) keep one's mantra and/or

(b) go through the dream control practices in the mind, and then fall asleep.

Many of my poems, constitutions for various organisations, articles to be published, or important lectures to be delivered the next day, are composed in this way.

The problem is that next morning one may forget everything. Here, remembers that the transition from sleep into wakefulness occurs through the same states in reverse. Here, just as soon as one gets the very first flicker of self-awareness, of being, immediately begin the process of recall of what was created in the night. Once that recall has been done, the created piece is yours forever.

In 60 days of stay in Hamburg I thus composed 40 lectures and upon returning to London was able to surprise everyone. Even now I sometimes use the material, and phrases from those 1954 compositions done in yoga-nidra in Hamburg.

Next, skipping the many successful experiments made during the intervening 42 years, here is one more, in 1997.

I had never lectured in Italy before; had absolutely no knowledge of Italian except some totally futile efforts at trying to understand the writings of Giuseppe Tucci (the great Indologist) and Raniero Gnoli (whose translations of the works of Kashmir Shaivism are most highly respected). I do conduct guided meditations in Spanish which has the same similarity with Italian as, say, Bangla with Assamese.

I arrived in Florence the city of the Medicis. The lecture was scheduled for the next day at the cathedral, the Basilica di San Miniato della Monte, as part of a series titled “Tempio di Pace”, “Temple of Peace”, sponsored by the city of Florence. The hall was going to be full.

Normally, where one does not know the language the hosts arrange for an interpreter. That works very well. However, there is a vibration to leading a guided meditation and untrained interpreters are in no position to lead the minds of thousands into meditation. It is the meditation guide's own state of mind that is conveyed through his body, speech and voice, creating a common mind field among the audience and everyone present is taken for the same dive into the interior stillness.

I expressed my concern to the director of our Himalayan Institute in Florence, my personal host, a person of German background, as to how to guide the

meditation the next day as I knew no Italian. He offered to be the interpreter, but I was not convinced. I proposed to do it differently.

I lay down in shavasana, went into the yoga-nidra cave and spoke sentences which he translated into Italian. One set of meditation processes was thus translated – only once, no repetition. I thanked him and he offered, “we can do a repetition before leaving for the Cathedral tomorrow”. I assured him that it was not going to be necessary. I could see incredulity on his face. That night I repeated the process in the yoga-nidra transition phase. Next day, I was believed that I had taken a lesson in Italian before. They did, however, ask: why does your Italian have a little German accent?

After that first lecture, the next day's meditation was 45 minutes; the following day more than one hour, and so it progressed. I do now teach from Dante Alighieri's II Paradiso, with the help of a translation, as a text of the different degrees of the experience of light in higher meditations – and I do so without German accent.

Here I must give credit not only to yoga-nidra but to the knowledge of Sanskrit which teaches the structure of every language. However, without yoga-nidra, a Sanskrit scholar would not be able to duplicate the performance. That is why I can read 17 languages with varying degrees of fluency (I do not speak all of them – accomplishing that would require time away from my spiritual sadhana and from my spiritual service to the people of all continents.) All the mantras in my Vedic language composition, Chhaandasi, have been received in the yoga-nidra state<sup>[13]</sup>.

Just the knowledge of Sanskrit and yoga-nidra as mere techniques will not do. A light stomach, freedom from emotional disturbances through the practice of inner calm and equanimity, keeping the mind unwrinkled – these are equally important. For example, my daily diet goes something like this (variable):

Morning : one glass of yoghurt (dahee)

Lunch : large bowls of vegetable preparations, a glass of milk or a little fruit.

Before the evening lecture: (I go into minimum two hours of silence here), a small bowl of fruit, maybe some nuts.

After the lecture at night: full meal of daal (lentils), vegetables and usually one chapatti (Indian flat bread).

As I work (sometimes answer 50 e-mails a night, and take care of meditation groups on all continents) and meditate or write through the night, I may need a small snack.

Keeping the stomach light helps keep the mind un-befogged.

But that is not enough; there is more to it. To clear the mind and keep it unwrinkled, the conquest of anger is the first step in 'emotional purification'. All these accomplishments may take years and decades to perfect. If you have done twenty years of meditation practice in a cave but you still speak loudly, get angry, get jealous, speak ill of others, belittle others, become defensive with a compulsion to 'protect yourself', you are not a yogi. Only a yogi can practise the true yoga-nidra.

Human mind is a creature of habit. Whatever is habitual to us we consider to be 'natural'. It is in fact only a small part of its natural potential and power. All one needs to do is trigger it, activate it. Any habit can be changed. The mind can be re-trained. In the theory of neuroplasticity it is now known that even the functions of the different parts of the brain can be altered and those parts re-trained. It can be done through abhyasa. Sit down, face your goal, and practise. Whatever the mind is taught to do repeatedly, through a quiet interior resolve, sankalpa, that will become mind's habit, and that is the discovery of another hitherto concealed treasure in the nature of mind.

It is not possible to learn a language from scratch in one night.

First, one must master yoga-nidra, that is, remaining conscious while producing delta brain wave.

Then learn how to remain in dual mind: deeper mind in yoga-nidra, shallower mind listening to a language recording and absorbing.

Having listened, then do mental recall of what has been learnt.

Then it is part of you;

use it.

For more information on Yoga-nidra see the publications:

OM: The Eternal Witness by Swami Rama

Path of Fire and Light by Swami Rama

**Audio recordings of guided Yoga-nidra practices**<sup>[14]</sup>

This is a brief, preliminary version of Yoga-nidra. It is a way of taking quick rests during the day for a few minutes. It may be done sitting in a chair, resting on a sofa or lying down.

- a) Close your eyes, relax, and be aware of your entire body from head to toe.

- b) Breathe diaphragmatically as though the breath is flowing from head to toes and toes to head.
- c) Bring your awareness to ajna chakra (the space between the eyebrows) and exhale and inhale three times.
- d) Bring your awareness to vishuddha chakra (the throat center), visualise an immaculate full moon there and exhale and inhale there three times
- e) Bring your awareness to anahata chakra (the heart center) and exhale and inhale three times.
- f) Feel as if there is a cave in anahata chakra and breathe as if you are inhaling into the Cave and exhaling from your toes.
- g) Breathe with no thought, no mantra – but only the awareness of the breath and prana flow.
- h) When you feel rested, open your eye and gently sit up.

The enhancement of memory depends on the combination of all the attitudes, restraints, training methods given above. We are not pursuing smrti, memory, alone. We are pursuing smrti-yoga.





Mahamandaleshwar Sri Swami Veda Bharati (1933- July 14, 2015), was a rare Sanskrit scholar of our time, unsurpassed in his profound depth of knowledge, philosophy and practice of Meditation. He was born in a Sanskrit-speaking family and raised in the centuries old Vedic tradition. He taught the Patañjali's Yoga-sūtras for the first time at the early age of 9 and the Vedas from age 11. Having never attended any school, he received his M.A. from the University of London and a D.Litt. from the University of Utrecht in the Netherlands.

From 1952-1967, he spread the Yogic and Vedic teachings in many parts of the world, including Africa and the West Indies. In 1969, he received the highest initiations into the mysteries of Meditation from his Guru Swami Rama of the Himalayas who linked him to the sacred lineage of the Himalayan Yogis.

Thereafter he established and guided Meditation groups and centers in all parts of the world. He had access to 17 languages and taught Meditation in all of the major languages of the world and to followers of all religions.

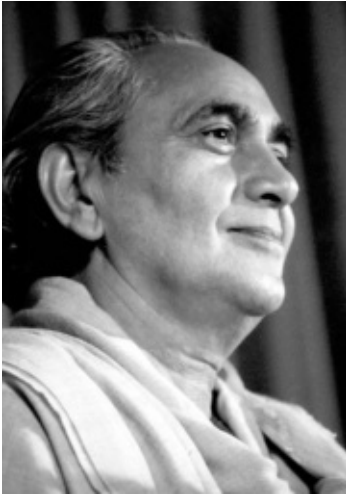
In continuation with the oral tradition of the living lineage of the Himalayan Sages, Swami Veda taught: “योगः समधिः | yogaḥ samādhīḥ | Yoga = samadhi | Yoga [is] samadhi. He proposed that the entire yoga science must be studied and practiced on the basis of this definition of yoga. All other definitions are subservient to it. He revealed the authentic teachings of Classical Yoga through his 1500 page commentaries on the (first two chapters) Yoga-Sutras. This commentary has been hailed among scholars and practitioners both as the most authentic and authoritative.

He has recorded more than 3,500 hours of courses on all aspects of meditation, its texts, and philosophical systems apart from teaching the ancient

texts like the Vedas, Upanishads, and the Bhagavad Gita in an experiential context for meditation. Following in the footsteps of his Guru, he maintained a keen interest in the scientific studies of yoga mediation and subjected himself to a number of researches in the field of Neurophysiology of the Meditative states.

Swami Veda Bharati emphasized the universality of yoga as a science, which transcends chronological time, geographical boundaries, religious discrimination, and manmade sectarianism. Although he always liked to keep a low profile, he was well known for his teaching in different communities and cultures all over the world and for his expertise in instructing students in accordance with their own religion-philosophical background. During his lifetime, he participated in numerous interfaith dialogues, activities, and conferences with an aim of improving understanding among various religions. He found the experience of meditation to be the common ground among all religions. Prepared on the occasion of the United Nations 2000 World Peace Summit of Leaders in Religion and Spirituality, his short work, "Unifying Streams in Religions," provides a fresh perspective for bringing the different faiths closer together.

In 2002, he founded Swami Rama Sadhaka Grama in Rishikesh, which houses the headquarters of the Association of Himalayan Yoga Meditation Societies International (AHYMSIN) and serves as the centre for his global network among nearly 100 groups in 26 different countries; spreading the teachings of the Himalayan Tradition. We can best repay his extra-ordinary efforts by availing ourselves of the fruits of his experiential teachings to further our own yogic practice for our own enlightenment and the welfare of all.



Swami Rama was born in the Himalayas and raised by his spiritual master in the legendary Himalayan cave monasteries where countless generations of yogis have been trained and initiated into the deepest mysteries of the sacred science of yoga. A monk in the Shankaracharya order, he held the highest position of Shankaracharya, which he later renounced.

Swami Rama pioneered many early scientific studies in measuring the physiological correlates of the yogi's internal experiences using modern scientific equipment. A philosopher and author of over 40 books, Swami Rama was a master of many arts including poetry, music, architecture, sculpture, painting and martial arts. Swami Rama was a multifaceted personality and truly beyond description; a spiritual master and master of the art of living.

A great philanthropist, Swami Rama founded many charitable organizations and teaching centres such as the Himalayan Institute as well as the Himalayan Institute Hospital Trust.

Swami Rama left many disciples around the world who carry on various parts of his work. He remains in their hearts as one who truly personifies and represents the perennial lineage of Himalayan masters.



The Association of Himalayan Yoga Meditation Societies International (AHYMSIN) is a world-wide organization dedicated to imparting the knowledge of yoga meditation within the tradition of Himalayan Masters, as taught by Swami Rama of the Himalayas. Swami Veda Bharati, disciple of Swami Rama, brought spiritual seekers from around the globe together to found AHYMSIN in 2007 and served as spiritual guide of the organization until his Mahasamadhi 14<sup>th</sup> July 2015. We have been blessed with his loving guidance and that guidance continues through Swami Ritavan Bharati whom Swami Veda named as his successor as spiritual guide.

With affiliated centres in 24 different countries and sadhakas on every continent except Antarctica, AHYMSIN teaches the science of yoga as well as carrying out research and publication and doing charitable work. We have initiates from many religions and participate in inter-faith activities, discovering the common ground we share.

Our logo bears the words: yogah samadhih (yoga [means] samadhi) which were written by the great sage, Vyasa, in his commentary on the very first sutra of the Yoga-sutras of Patañjali

Himalayan Yoga Publications Trust (HYPT) is dedicated to making available the teaching of Swami Rama and his disciple Swami Veda Bharati. We publish and sell books and booklets as well as audio lectures and guided practices. HYPT also operates a bookstore at Swami Rama Sadhaka Grama and acts as an archive of the teachings of Swami Veda Bharati.

For more information, please visit [ahymsin.org](http://ahymsin.org) and [yogapublications.org](http://yogapublications.org).



Swami Rama Sadhaka Grama (SRSG) is a spiritual community, training institute and retreat centre which serves as the global headquarters of AHYMSIN.

SRSG is dedicated to preserving the purity of the ancient tradition of Yoga Meditation and sharing its philosophy and practice for the benefit of all humanity. We welcome people from all countries and backgrounds who wish to learn about and experience this path of self-discovery, as taught by Swami Rama and his disciple, Swami Veda Bharati.

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[1] Previously published in Life Positive Magazine, Delhi. Here edited and amended.

[2] A course on this topic was taught at our Rishikesh Ashram on 11-28 February 2004. Recordings are available from Himalayan Yoga Publications Trust. Contact [info@yogapublications.org](mailto:info@yogapublications.org)

[3] For understanding the three gunas of prakti, read (1) Bhagavad-Gita chapters 14, 17 and 18, especially in Swami Rama's Perennial Psychology of the Bhagavad-Gita. (2) Tattva-Samasa-sutra translated in the beginning of our Commentary on the Yoga-sutras, and (3) Tattva-samasa: Contemplations on the Essence of Sankhya by Swami Nityamuktananda. All available from Himalayan Yoga Publications Trust. Contact [info@yogapublications.org](mailto:info@yogapublications.org)

[4] This author wrote his Doctor of Literature thesis at the University of Utrecht, Holland, on the topic of Ritual Songs and Folksongs of the Hindus of Surinam, publ. E. J. Brill, Leiden, the Netherlands 1968. Surinam, on the northern coast of the South American Continent is one of the five Bhojpuri speaking countries outside India.

[5] This author was told this by an “illiterate” man of the aheer caste in Surinam, South America.





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**KAPWING**



[6] This author, as a result of such pre-conception practices by his own repeated exercises, never went to school and never had a tutor but at the age of 13 expounded for hours, on any mantra of the Veda cited to him.

[7] Hindu priests perform many hours long rituals and liturgies all by heart, unlike their western counterparts who have to use a book almost always. The Hindu priests reciting these liturgies use certain mnemonic devices for the purpose.

[8] As this author did public discourses on the Vedas at the age of 13, the Vedic scholars interpreted it to mean that the child had remembrance of the Vedas from past life.

[9] This author was given fresh brahmi leaves regularly in childhood.

[10] Please ask for audio-recordings of this author's lectures on the Philosophy of Alphabet. Available from Himalayan Yoga Publications Trust. Contact [info@yogapublications.org](mailto:info@yogapublications.org)

[11] As demonstrated by this author's Gurudeva Swami Rama of the Himalayas in the Psychophysiological research Laboratory in Topeka, Kansas, USA, in 1971. Available from Himalayan Yoga Publications Trust. Contact [info@yogapublications.org](mailto:info@yogapublications.org)

[12] All these methods are taught in depth at our two Rishikesh ashrams.

[13] This author also uses yoga-nidra to control his angina pectoris. Sometimes when walking and climbing – or if he was very tired – severe cardiac angina ensues. He would stop, stand for 2 minutes where he was; control the angina by going into the yoga-nidra cave. A practitioner of yoga-nidra will also not suffer problems like constipation and irritable bowel syndrome. But it has to be the yoga-nidra power and not the preparatory mental exercises that often pass for yoga-nidra.

[14] Available from Himalayan Yoga Publications Trust. Contact [info@yogapublications.org](mailto:info@yogapublications.org)