



Yoga Sutra 1.33 ~ David Life

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Focus: Shri Brahmananda Saraswati Location: Jivamukti Yoga, NY

This month we're featuring Shri Brahmananda Sarasvati who was our guru and who's the guy in orange up there, and I'm going to try and tell you a little bit about him actually in a circuitous way today. It's going to be pretty hard for you in this month to get a good idea about what Shri Brahmananda Sarasvati was like, to tell you the truth, because you're going to get a lot of different ideas about him. For example tonight, Joan Suval is coming tonight. And her form of presentation is to read from the great masters like Rajneesh or Nishargadatta or any of a number of people's books and then give commentary on it. And as you know Manorama's coming soon to give a Sanskrit workshop which is her main thing. She teaches Sanskrit that's it. There are other devotees of Shri Brahmananda's that would come here from Ananda Ashram; one of them might just do Homa fire. You know Homa fire, they build little campfires and put stuff in it and you chant Vedic chants and that's all they do. And you might get someone else coming, say Charta or Dr. Patel, and they would say *"yeah, Shri Brahmananda, promoter of the arts, supporter of theater, supporter of music, dance and drama, the yoga school of dance and drama."* So you're hearing all of this, you know, teaching from the great masters, Sanskrit, Homa sacrificial fires, arts and theater who is this guy? What was he like? And we can take a great lesson from this. Because whether you know it or not right now you're going through a similar process to what these people have gone through.

When you meet a teacher that somehow has an impact in your life, a yoga teacher, you meet them at a certain time in their life, but they are still a living breathing changing kind of person. They might be interested in one particular kind of thing when you meet them and that's what they're teaching from, their current experience, whatever it is. They might have just read a book and they're excited about it so they're teaching from it. And then you go away for 2 years and you come back excited to get into that class again to see your teacher again. It's completely changed! What's going on here? They've abandoned me! You used to play Beatles! All the time! Now all you play is David Newman! What's the deal?

When we met Shri Brahmananda he, as many of you have heard in recordings he could, you couldn't understand his speech because he had several very severe strokes and had been paralyzed essentially on one whole side of his body and after that speech was very effortful. And that was our experience of him we always had to hear him through a translator not because he was speaking a foreign language but because it was very difficult to understand what he was saying. But you could meet someone else and they'd say "Shri Brahmananda so clear! So intelligent, his speech so direct and to the point and so easy to understand." Is this a different guy they're talking about? Well yes, in a way it is a different guy. I would hope so. I would hope that as teachers, and I know a lot of you are teachers, that you continue to grow. That you continue to explore new avenues and that you continue to be inspired. Because really you know, each of us, we have to draw inspiration from our daily lives, what's going on right now. We can't continually live in the past or some wishful future we need to really be present in our lives every one of us for what's coming in front of us right now and not just throw up as a defense the way things used to be or the way I used to be.



And yoga teachers are especially obligated to continue to learn and grow and be inspired so that they can stay one step ahead of you guys who are like right on their heels. Otherwise what's the use of it, what's the relevance of it? It's not helpful.

So you know the story of the blind men and the elephant? For those of you who don't know, some blind men were asked to examine an elephant, and so one of them grabs a hold of a leg, finds a leg. Another one holds the tail, and another one's got the trunk, and another one has, you know, his hands on the body. And then afterwards they were asked, "*Describe an elephant.*" And one says, "*Well, they're shaped like a tree, about this big, and they are vertical.*" Another one says, "*They're very snake-like, with a fuzzy head on one end and very long.*" And another one might say, "*Well they're very undulating and kind of have an amazing vacuum apparatus at one end of their body.*" And the other one says, "*They're as big as a giant boulder and with no features just smooth and round.*" So there you have it, there's Shri Brahmananda. From many different points of view you'll experience this. What you can do in order to really know him is don't try to see him as an unchanging image, as an unchanging or he was only one way, he was only like this kind of a phenomena. He was a growing, changing, moving, presenting to each student differently kind of a guy. So you could receive it in that way, knowing that he's appearing to you now in a way that's different than any one who talks to you about him has experienced it.

(Sharon: "*David he continuously told us 'I am like the blue sky. Immense and what you cannot touch.'*")
That's right. Not even a body.

Well the other thing I want you to reflect on in your own yogic life, a similar thing is going to happen to you. You'll experience a teacher at one point, they might be talking about one thing, you'll experience them that they change, that they go to something else, and that they go to something else. You'll hear about great teachers like Krishnamacharya who spawned great teachers like Pattabhi Jois Astanga yoga, Iyengar yoga, Deshekachar yoga, Indra Devi yoga. Probably the four most influential yoga teachers in the world, in our time, every one of them completely different from the same guru. So just know that that's the way it's supposed to be, that it's a little hard to handle sometimes, because we like to be very dogmatic about things, we like to see things, although the world is a continuously changing panorama we like to think of it as staying the same. We like to go back and visit the house we were born in and see it exactly the same as when we were born there. We're very resistant to change because we want continuity in our lives. We're desperate for some kind of continuity from day to day and year to year.

You will not find that continuity in the relative world. Know that about the relative world and celebrate what a great changing panorama it is, fearlessly jumping into all kinds of strange experiences and new adventures in your life and look for continuity in the pulsation of I-AM, beyond body and mind and beyond all these words. You feel it inside and it's the same feeling you had when you were 4 years old, it's the same feeling you had when you were 15, it's the same feeling you had last week when you were 23, and it's the same feeling you'll have next week when you're 53. That's where you find the continuity, not in this relative world of changing undulating phenomenon that we live in.



How do you stay still how do you find stillness in a world that's constantly changing and moving? Look at what the planet does it's spinning on its axis and it's moving through space at some incredible velocity in big circles around the sun I don't know what else it's doing it's wobbling. How do you find stillness there in that kind of an environment? How? You look past the outer differences to the inner essence where you will find stillness. But you will never find it in the outer experience. In the relative experience you will find constant change. Know that that's the case with your yoga teachers, know that it was the case with our yoga teachers, know that that's the case of everything you experience around you. This building is falling down as we are sitting in it. It's crumbling. It's hard to see it because it's crumbling slowly, but come back here in 200 years and see what's here in this spot. You might be surprised. It won't look the same.

We all know that inherently we all know that things that I'm speaking about and yet we live in a kind of denial about it and we're constantly looking for “Will you always love me? Will you swear forever and ever til death do us part?” “You've changed. You're not the same. I've changed.” And on and on the drama goes, right? So I just want to say it's a great gift of yoga to give us the sense of continuity but don't expect it in Shri Brahmananda in fact expect the opposite. Expect a magician; expect a master of illusion and mystery. And then he will appear as he really was to you, like the blue sky, as he always said, and always there with you. Because he wasn't always there with us, we had to go, we had to leave him, we had to visit him and leave him, now he's everywhere, he's right in this room today, so we'll celebrate that with a chant. Let's do this is a good one on page 10 Yoga Sutra 1.33, because it's about meeting change as an adaptable being. It's about being there in the moment for whatever's appearing.

(chanting)

OM, OM, OM

Maitri karuna mudito peksanam sukha dukha punya apunya visayanam Bhavanatash chitta prasadnam

Maitri karuna mudito peksanam sukha dukha punya apunya visayanam Bhavanatash chitta prasadnam

OM, OM, OM

Let's sit for a few minutes now in silence just allow the vibration of those words without translation to resonate inside. OM

You can keep the chanting books near by but let's move a little bit first so you don't feel too constricted but you might want to consult them in a minute. *(asana)*

Come forward to your knees and sit in virasana sit in between your feet. Often we're asked by reporters is yoga for everyone and we say “No. It's not. It's not for people who are perfectly happy and don't want to change.” Right, it's for people who are interested in the phenomenon of change and they want to participate in that. They want to become part of a positive change, part of an evolution, a revolution of everything that is going to upset the status quo. We don't like the status quo because it's like, not true. Things don't stay the same. It's like a denial of the fact of the world. So this sutra that we chanted I particularly like, it's really great, down to earth, practical, every day advice about how to begin to activate this in your life. Because remember the cemented idea the dogma it starts here, it starts in the mind with a certain idea about how things are supposed to be, and if you see anything varying from that you get mad, get offended get angry about it the whole thing right?



So it says “*to preserve the innate serenity of mind*” it starts out on a positive note because that is your normal condition serene. Everything else is overlaid on your serenity. This is a very important principle in yoga, that underneath all the disturbances we are serene. We just need to remove the disturbances and everything will be fine. But the disturbances are tricky. So it says in order to preserve this first of all a yogi should be happy for those that are happy. Doesn't sound too bad. You know every year here we have a Mauna New Year's Eve celebration where we don't speak we just drink lots of tea and meditate and have a great time here. I hope you can come this year because it's going to be an extra special one this year, because it's this year. And this year is different from last year. But you know when I'm walking home at 2 am, 3 am, 4am, whatever it is after, and I'm stepping over puddles of vomit, and I'm seeing people in the street very happy (*makes happy drunk sounds*) you know, barely able to walk, do you know how hard it is for me to not be judgmental? Do you know how hard it is for me not to say “*You should have been meditating instead you were drinking all night?*” Guess who gets disturbed, who gets a disturbed mind when that happens. Them? (*Students: “No!”*) No! They are so way gone that they're fine. My serenity of mind, however, is Gone-O, bye! Right?

So it's a practice. You have to be aware that you're doing it. As soon as you realize that you have, you know, I need to celebrate happiness wherever I see it, even if I disagree with the source of the happiness. You could be right in disagreeing with the source of happiness when you see a bunch of people jumping up and down cheering because of a beheading, it's justifiable not to be supportive of that, but in not being supportive of it realize you are losing your serenity of mind. It may be worth it. You may need to get upset but on the other hand what good does it do me to get upset walking home after New Year's Eve? Is that helping anything? No, it just makes it harder for me to get to sleep when I get home. So your level of awareness in the midst of what's going on is very important.

Secondly compassionate towards those that are unhappy. That means, you know, as an example, when you have a friend calling you up that is unhappy, you don't get unhappy with them and then everybody's unhappy together. That's not compassion. Compassion means you have a bit of objectivity still. You understand their unhappiness and you offer, you have something to offer because you're not inside of it. You haven't made yourself unhappy thinking you're unhappy, I'm your friend, I've got to be unhappy with you otherwise what kind of a friend am I. You're supportive, you're understanding, you're compassionate but you're not buying into the unhappiness, you're preserving your serenity of mind.

And then I just want to do these fast delighted for those that are virtuous. My hardest one here, I don't know about you, but you see when they announce the lottery winners in the Post? And their picture's on the front page, 5 trillion dollars, and it's some butcher from Queens. And I'm thinking you know, of course the main reason I don't win is because I never buy a ticket but let's say I did. Or you know why can't it be some little nun doing a homeless shelter on the Lower East Side that wins the lottery instead of some guy who slaughters animals in Queens? I don't know but anyway that's his virtue coming to fruit. No matter what I see his life as he did some charitable act in his past and this is the time when he reaps his reward and I have to see it as his virtue that makes him deserving of that prize. Otherwise my serenity of mind is gone and he doesn't care because he could buy my mind.



And finally indifference to the wicked. This is a very hard one, kind of plays back to the one of the jihad celebrant at a beheading. Indifference to the wicked is one of the hardest ones, you know. But being otherwise disturbs your serenity of mind. And not only that if you respond to wickedness with violence it means that you are playing into the cycle of violence breeding more violence. I mean look at all the wars that have ever been. They all have the same result more wars. We have yet to see an end to war. That's because what it's going to take it's very obvious what it's going to take the people who are in a position to wage the next war say *"No thanks. We're not going to participate in that."* Soon as somebody major does that then things will change but until that point of indifference to wickedness we will see the same cycle of wars leading to more wars leading to more wars leading to more wars. We see this individually and we see it collectively. So that's something about how we can work on this in your daily life because every time you turn on the cable channel every time you pick up a newspaper every time you see someone in the street doing things or at a party or whatever this goes on, right, this kind of thing that I've been talking about. So you can work on it secretly in your mind, right you don't have to tell everyone at the party *"I'm being indifferent to wickedness right now. Pretty good, right?"*

You just work on it secretly and quietly and see if it does help. I mean you get better at it if you practice it. But if you never practice it you won't get better at it. And how do you practice it in this room? What do the asanas have to do with what I've been speaking about? We are going to go through a lot of different things in a few minutes, a lot of different postures. Some of them you will like, some of them you will dislike, some of them might be painful, some of them might be pleasurable. Every one of them is going to be a different shape. So what we're looking for is continuity and an undisturbed continuous flow of bliss but we're doing it by participating in continuous change.

So what is your job to find as we move from asana to asana to asana what are you looking for there? What's next? (**Sharon** : *"chitta prasadanam."*) Chitta prasadanam. How are you going to preserve that serenity of mind? By identifying with the stillness. If you can for example what stays the same asana to asana? Your breath should stay the same. If it doesn't, it's telling you there's a little disturbance there. Bring it back the same each time. So that the breath is really our helpmate and our advisor about how we're doing on the project of not looking for changelessness in the changeful but looking with X-ray vision through the changes to the essence, to the life force, to the vitality that instigates the movement. And you should do the same with your yoga teachers. Don't be fooled by the outer look.

There is only one yoga teacher. And you hear that yoga teacher coming in many voices, in many styles of clothing on, male, female, many different variations in skin color and ethnic origin, but it's one voice. And that's what you want to keep hearing, that one voice, that special voice, that although it continues to change, it's always the same. So that's your job, that job of discrimination between the real and the unreal. And that's the yogic practice.

