



SATYA Q & A

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GROUP MEDITATIONS

Several questions are listed below, following up on a recent Q&A. Swamiji put in numbers after specific questions or key lines so you can track them to her answers below.

Question:

I just read the SATYA Q&A about Group Meditations. A couple of years ago, when it was brought to your attention that a few teachers are chanting and meditating with students once a month and they share your contemplation article also. You said, "How Wonderful!" (1) I asked you if it is ok if we don't teach and not charge to come together to meditate, and you gave your blessings. So, I do have few people that come to the Center once a month just to meditate...

Please trust me when I say I totally understood and understand that our training does not allow us to cope with people's needs, if they go deeper, (2) and would never have even done this without your permission. I only do this because I thought you approved it...

Question:

After receiving and reading the last Q&A. I was surprised by the question about group meditations. I was not aware that you cannot sit with students in meditation for 20-25 minutes. That was my goal when I took the Meditation Teacher Training. (3) I have had meditation training before with 2 other teachers (8) and have sat in groups in silence for several hours. I wanted to honor Master Yoga in all I do, so I was planning to sit at some time with students after class when the time was ready. It just started to happen when this question came up about the meditation.

I asked some other teachers that had done the training and did not recall the protocol. (4) Can you please explain or tell me again why we should not sit with one another without doing the 3 week class all the time? (8)

Question:

I have some questions about your Q & A response about the meditation “reunions”. I have not taken the Meditation Teacher Training, but I own a studio and one of my teachers has taken the training (5 years ago). She has offered several of the 3-week meditation sessions over the last couple of years at my studio.

Recently, students who have taken these 3 week courses with her have asked if we could do a once/month “open meditation” on a drop-in basis, to support them in continuing with meditation. They feel like this would be a good opportunity for them to reinforce what they learned in the 3 weeks and to get some of their questions answered. (5) Would this be what you mean by a “meditation reunion”?

If so, and you don't want us to do this, I am wondering how we as a studio can support students in continuing with meditation. (6) These students have a lot of questions, and if they can't get their questions answered at our studio, they are probably going to go elsewhere (to different traditions) where they can get supported in continuing with meditation. (7) Many of these students are really dedicated to *Svaroopā*[®] Yoga, and I would hate to lose them because of this. You say in the Q & A that you explained to teachers why they should not hold regular meditation classes, but since I did not do the training, I do not know what your reasoning is and what to tell students when they ask for more meditation support. (8) Can you offer me some advice as to how we can continue to support them in developing their meditation practice once they have done this 3 week series? Is it okay if students who completed the 3 week series re-enroll in the next one? (6)

♥ Swamiji Answers:

Thank you all for your beautiful questions and important points. I'll try to give brief answers, but these are very subtle matters and are hard to explain in writing, and even harder to explain succinctly.

- 1) **Your question:** "...a few teachers are chanting and meditating with students once a month and they share your contemplation article also. You said, 'How Wonderful!'"

Swamiji answers: I clearly remember this event. You are right, I did say, "How Wonderful!" However I went on and explained why they need to stop doing it. I'm sorry if I gave that answer in a way that you (or others) could misunderstand it.

Clearly you remember my delight, but not the 5 or 6 minutes I spent explaining why the Meditation Teachers should not do it.

- 2) **Your question:** "I totally understood and understand that our training does not allow us to cope with people's needs, if they go deeper..."

Swamiji answers: Though you asked a question about why you cannot lead Meditation Groups, you summarized some of the issues quite nicely, indicating you truly understand it:

"...our training does not allow us to cope with people's needs, if they go deeper..."

- 3) **Your question:** "I was not aware that you cannot sit with students in meditation for 20-25 minutes. That was my goal when I took the Meditation Teacher Training."

Swamiji answers: I'm surprised that you had the goal of offering regular meditation sessions when you took Meditation Teacher Training. Caroline and Rukmini know that this training does not prepare teachers to offer regular group meditations and would have denied you enrollment if that is what you wanted to learn.

I'm truly sorry that what you wanted to learn and what we actually taught were two different things – but they were. You are not qualified to lead a regular group meditation in *Svaroopā*[®] Yoga Meditation. You are trained to present a 3-week course on meditation, and have enough material to vary that course considerably. Thus, students can repeat the course and get more out of it each time. Many meditation teachers have told me they are doing this, and I have talked with many students who have repeated the course frequently.

- 4) **Your question:** "I asked some other teachers that had done the training and did not recall the protocol."

Swamiji answers: I'm shocked and disappointed that you and the other teachers you asked don't remember this! In every training, there has been a long discussion with lots of questions and explanations. I didn't think a handout or a written agreement would be necessary because everyone was so engaged in the discussion – and this was true in all four of the trainings I have taught.

I suppose that it shows the power of selective memory. Thus I'm glad these questions are being asked now so that you are completely clear on this. It would also help if any of the 50+ grads remember this – your comments might jog other peoples' memories!

- 5) **Your question:** “Recently, students who have taken these 3 week courses with her have asked if we could do a once/month “open meditation” on a drop-in basis, to support them in continuing with meditation. They feel like this would be a good opportunity for them to reinforce what they learned in the 3 weeks and to get some of their questions answered.”

Swamiji answers: there are a lot of practical considerations in your questions, which is what I will focus on now – plus the bigger issues that I will introduce in #8.

A lot of it has to do with money. I understand how expensive it is for you to take a professional training. Remember, I did years of trainings! Not only do you have the costs of the training itself, plus the travel, accommodations and meals, but you also have the lost income while you are absent, or the cost of your substitute teachers.

In addition, you are paying for your yoga studio, whether it is on a full-time basis, on a per-class basis, or in your own home. There is the cost of heating or cooling it, plus lights, etc. There's the website, the brochures, the phone lines, etc.

It's wonderful that students want continuing support, but they want it for free. They want to get some of their questions answered, but they want that for free as well. Meanwhile, you spent a lot of money getting the qualifications that make you able to answer their questions – and when do you actually begin to make money on the investment in your professional qualifications?

Even if you are willing to give your studio and your time for free, there will be a time when it is just too much for you to do. Seva is great, but offering your professional services to people for free is impossible to sustain on your own. Unless you like the “doormat phenomenon.”

A much bigger issue is whether you are prepared to answer the questions they will ask once they have been meditating for a while. I'll address that in #8.

The bottom line is they can get lots of support by simply repeating the 3-week class!

- 6) **Your question:** “I am wondering how we as a studio can support students in continuing with meditation.”

Your question: “Can you offer me some advice as to how we can continue to support them in developing their meditation practice once they have done this 3 week series? Is it okay if students who completed the 3 week series re-enroll in the next one?”

Swamiji answers: yes, they can repeat the class. Some Meditation Teachers are giving discounts to students who repeat. I wouldn't, because they generally ask much harder questions, which makes the class harder to teach.

- 7) **Your question:** “These students have a lot of questions, and if they can’t get their questions answered at our studio, they are probably going to go elsewhere (to different traditions) where they can get supported in continuing with meditation.”

Swamiji answers: it’s OK if they go somewhere else.

First – Your worry that they might go somewhere else is a fear response. We don’t have to keep them with us. They’ll come back if they want to come back. They’ll find the right place to be, whether we try to keep them or not.

Next – it’s wonderful for them to explore other traditions, so they can figure out where their spiritual home is. By experiencing other meditation systems, they’ll better understand what they get from *Svaroopā*[®] Yoga Meditation, which I’ll say a little more about in #8.

Lastly – they won’t find many other yoga studios that offer free meditation programs. There are two reasons for this: 1) most asana teachers aren’t able to teach meditation; 2) most yoga studios don’t offer free programs like this for practical reasons (see the money discussion in #4 above).

- 8) **Your question:** “I have had meditation training before with 2 other teachers...”

Your question: “Can you please explain or tell me again why we should not sit with one another without doing the 3 week class all the time?”

Your question: “I do not know what your reasoning is and what to tell students when they ask for more meditation support.”

Swamiji answers: Since you have had meditation training with two other teachers before, you can tell the difference with *Svaroopā*[®] Yoga Meditation. While sitting in silence for hours is wonderful, it’s even better when you can get to that deep inner immersion in a matter of moments, or in just a few breaths. The power and ease of *Svaroopā*[®] Yoga Meditation comes from the grace of my Guru and the phenomenal teachings of Kashmiri Shaivism.

The problem with regular group meditations is either “too much” or “too little.”

Too Much: Because this *Svaroopā*[®] yoga a *shaktipat* tradition, the experiences that the meditators in your group will have might be so strong that you don’t know how to handle them. Everyone who took the Meditation Teacher Training knows what it is like when another meditator is having overwhelmingly powerful experiences! Since you have done only one week of training, you simply are not qualified to handle this level of experiences – which leaves your students in an unprotected and unsafe condition.

Too Little: because you are not qualified, the shakti might abandon you and your students. She won’t stay where she is not honored and supported. Then you will all be going through the motions, but not getting the profound and easy results that *Svaroopā*[®] Yoga Meditation is designed to give.

Neither of these situations is beneficial, which is why you cannot hold regular meditation groups. I can create a structure that will support the shakti and the teacher, while protecting the students from being unprotected and unsafe. However, I need time and space to do this. Once I get the Ashram going, I’ll have an organization that is dedicated to providing this structure and these teachings. Then I can create these regular programs, as well as train the Meditation Teachers in how to run these programs. It will all come to fruition, as I am able to turn my time and

attention from the Master Yoga curriculum to the Ashram.

There is significantly more to explain about this, which we discussed in each of the Meditation Teacher Trainings, but too much to write about here. I hope this brief answer has helped. Thank you for your love of the teachings and practices, and your deep desire to share them, but that must be done in a way that protects the teacher and the students together. Please respect the teachings enough to follow them. Thank you.

About what you tell the students – don't even try to explain all of this. You have too little information to explain it to someone else! Just tell them that they will get even more out of the 3-week course when they repeat it, and even more when they repeat it again.