

Yoga Teacher Training Notes/Study Questions and Answers (2005)

What does Hatha mean?

(1) Hatha yoga is a branch of Tantrik Kundalini Yoga. The practice of Hatha Yoga is a Tantrik practice designed to reveal the inherent divinity in our humanity; cultivating the body and its energies as a path of enlightenment. (Dharmanidhi's Module Notes)

(2) Hatha literally means forceful. According to Feurstein Hatha Yoga is the yoga of force which is the physical discipline aimed at awakening the serpent power (kundalini shakti) and the creation of an indestructible divine body (divya-deha). Harsh discipline, strong effort.

(3) The main aim of hatha yoga is to bring about a balanced flow of prana in ida and pingala nadis. The word hatha is comprised of two beeja mantras, ham representing the sun or solar force, and tham, representing the moon or lunar force. To bring about a balance between these two forces the body must be purified by the shatkarmas. The aim of hatha yoga is to balance these two flows so that neither the mental nor physical faculties are dominant. During the 24 hour period of the day, the flow of ida should predominate for about 12 hours and the flow of pingala for the other twelve. Integration between the two sides of the brain. The pingala (right) extroverted and the ida (left) introverted. (APMB)

2. What does Yoga mean?

Union, Path, Always together (non dualism), Technique

(1) The word yoga means unity or oneness and is derived from the Sanskrit word yuj which means to join. This unity or joining is described in spiritual terms as the union of the individual consciousness with universal consciousness. (SSS, APMB)

(2) On a more practical level, yoga is a means of balancing and harmonizing the body, mind and emotions. This is done through the practice of asana, pranayama, mudra, bandha, shatkarma (yogic cleansing techniques) and meditation and must be achieved before union can take place with higher reality. (SSS, APMB)

(3) Citta Vriti Nirodhah – stopping the mind from mental oscillations. From the Bhagavad Gita: Arjuna asks Krishna, “ Krishna, you have told me of Yoga as a communion with Brahman (the universal spirit) which is ever one. But how can this be permanent, since the mind is so restless and inconsistent? The mind is impetuous and stubborn, strong and willful, as difficult to harness as the wind.” Krishna replies, “ Undoubtedly, the mind is restless and hard to control. But it can be trained by constant practice (abhyasa) and by freedom from desire (vairagya). A man who cannot control his mind will find it difficult to attain this divine communion; but the self-controlled man can attain it if he tried hard and directs his energy by the right means.” (BKS, LOY)

(4) Yoga is the technology of ecstasy or self-transcendence. How this ecstatic condition is interpreted and by what means are employed for its realization differ from school to school. (Feurstein) Yoga is difficult to define but what all branches and schools have in common is that they are concerned with a state of being or consciousness that is truly extraordinary. One ancient yoga scripture, Vyasa's Yoga-Bhashya captures this essential orientation in the following equation: Yoga is ecstasy. In Sanskrit the word for ecstasy is Samadhi and Vyasa's definition has caused his commentators and scholars difficulties because how can Samadhi be a stable quality of citta when consciousness seems to change constantly? We can understand this only when we understand that purusha, the transcendental Self is forever in the condition of ecstasy and this condition remains the same regardless of the changing moods and qualities of the human mind. Samadhi is composed of the prefixes, sam, a, followed by dhi. Literal meaning of the term is "placing, putting together. What is put together or unified is the conscious subject and its mental object or objects. Samadhi is the technique of unifying consciousness and the resulting state of ecstatic union with the object of contemplation. We can only abide in and as the Self (atman or purusha) when we transcend the ego-self (ahamkara). (TYT, Feurstein)

3. Who is the Adi-Guru? What is his or her role in yoga?

Shiva is the essence transmitter, Shakti is the energy body (guru maintaining the transmission). Shiva is the primordial guru, Adi-guru, Adi-natha, the originator and transmitter of the Hatha yoga tradition. (Dharmanidhi's Module One notes)

Guru means the lamp of knowledge that dispels darkness. Often people translate guru as the remover of darkness; this is a metaphysical meaning coming from the break down of the aksharas (letters) in the word. 'Ga' stands for darkness and everything that gets in your way, 'U' stands for suppression and removal. Together 'GU' means removal of the darkness. 'Ra' is the fire bija (seed sound), and represents the good and bad of fire: anger and insight. 'Ru' is the suppression of the negative aspects of fire that disturb your pure vision. So the vibrational meaning of 'guru' is one who removes darkness and obstacles to our understanding.

The literal meaning of guru is teacher. This can be relative to spirituality or other sciences as well. In yoga and other Vedic sciences there is an understanding of three levels of guru.

1. The siksha guru teaches you the basics and tells you where to search for information. They basically teach you how to tie your shoes. On a material level this is your primary educators. On a spiritual level it is your local yoga teacher or on a religious level it is the Sunday school teachers. The siksha guru can be the same spiritual level as you but just know things you haven't found yet.
2. The diksha guru is a teacher who gives you initiation into a mantra or meditation or some kind of sadhana (spiritual practice). They pass on a certain life energy or understanding to you. They must have a high level of accomplishment in the path you wish to learn from them. On a material level this is the mentor you have for a particular field of work who teaches you the final application of your learning. On a spiritual level this is someone who has mastered a spiritual practice and is passing on the teaching. On a

religious level it is the priest or rabbi that performs religious rites and initiations.

3. The Sat Guru is one who has achieved the final goal of the particular path and is a guiding light to the student walking the path. On a material level this is someone like Michael Angelo for an artist. On a spiritual level this is someone like Amachi, or Ramana Maharishi, or the Saints, Mohammad, or the Baal Shem Tov. On a religious level this is divine beings like Jesus, Krsna, or Rama (at this level religious and spiritual levels are similar or vary depending on religious philosophy). The important aspect of the Sat Guru is that they have completely attained the final goal. They can affect you whether they are embodied or not. Thinking of them or mediating on them guides your consciousness and lets you know your goal.

We have many siksha gurus (the more the better), few diksa gurus and one or two Sat gurus. Siksha gurus are easy to find, Sat gurus are transcended and we don't even need to meet them to connect into their guidance. But good diksa gurus are hard to come by and you only get them when you are ready.

*Then there is the transcendental aspect of Guru that is very important in Yoga. According to Yogic philosophy the universe and everything in it is made of the five elements. Akash (space), air, fire, water and earth, with akash being the most subtle permeating everything yet containing everything within it (just like god). The planet Jupiter relates to the akash (space element) and in Sanskrit the word for Jupiter is 'Guru'. So Jupiter (Guru) is the planet ruling akash, that which contains everything and permeates everything. Astrologically, the position of Jupiter shows the relationship with the Guru, and how gurus in your life manifest. (Yoga Living November/December 2004 Vol VI Issue II.)

Then there is the Supreme level of Guru called 'Adi Guru', which means the original Guru. Patanjali said in pada 1 verses 25-27 that Aum is a word denoting Iswara (god). In him (Iswara/Aum) is the seed of all knowledge. Not being limited by time, Aum is the Guru of the earliest teachers. Patanjali, then advises constant repetition of Aum. In this way, the Guru tattva (essence of the Teacher) is brought into our lives. The Guru tattva starts at the level of the Adi Guru, then is seen in the transcendental Guru astrologically, then manifests in our lives as the various levels of gurus we encounter. Knowledge comes through the Guru, whether directly from the highest level or through the physical manifestation of guru in our teacher-student relationships. The yoga texts teach that there is no knowledge without guru, without the removal of darkness/ignorance.

By paying respect to the Supreme Guru we improve and strengthen our guru karma and open the way for more knowledge and understanding to enter our lives. This is often done by chanting Aum before a yoga class. Having teachers' pictures around exalts the teacher/Guru and shows respect. Yoga teaches that the types of gurus we attract to ourselves in our life is a reflection our own guru karma. Thursday has been set as the best day to show appreciation to the Guru and your gurus.

4. What is the principle of bhimba-pratibimba?

Bhimba-pratibimba means the source of radiance and its reflection. The ancient rishis or seers/visionaries of the yoga tradition realized that the Absolute, non-dual source of this universe (bhimba) is completely reflected in each being. By attuning ourselves to this source we can spontaneously respond to the never-ending pulsations of its radiance. Yoga practice and philosophy arose within these sages due to which they as pratibimba or the reflected became one with the source (bhimba) of their reflection.

5. Who are the Rishis? What sex were they?

The word Rishi means a Seer, from dris, to see. He is the Mantra-Drashta, seer of Mantra or thought. The thought was not his own. The Rishis saw the truths or heard them, seers of thought which existed already. The Rishi is only a medium or an agent to transmit to people the intuitional experiences which he received. Lord Brahma, the Creator, imparted the divine knowledge to the Rishis or Seers. The Rishis disseminated the knowledge. The Vedic Rishis were greatly realized persons who had direct intuitive perception of Brahman or the Truth. They were men and women (householders).

6. Is there a such thing as a pure lineage of yoga (one which rose independently of all other traditions and was not influenced by any others?)

The very precise Hatha yoga traditions which abound today had very imprecise origins and have been cross pollinated by each other and edited over and over again through the millennia. Therefore, for a research scientist to piece together with any great certainty, EXACTLY how, where, and by whom yoga developed is not possible. This is precisely why most practicing yogis will lean upon oral/mythological tradition. The orally transmitted view of yoga actually informs its practice and fruition better than an archeological or anthropological understanding.

7. What practices come under the heading “Tantra”?

Ayurveda, Hatha yoga, Jyotisha, Vastu Shasta, Hasta Samudhika. Tantrik practice makes use of mantra (sacred sounds), yantra (sacred diagrams), tantra (here the word means sacred text), guru (teacher who empowers the students with practice), diksha (initiation), and puja (ritual) with the aim of awakening the pure energy of consciousness called kundalini. Tantra also lays heavy emphasis on the body and its energies and capacities as mediums of realization.

8. Is Hatha Yoga a branch of Tantra?

Yes. (See answer to question one)

9. Do the concepts of kundalini and kundalini yoga come under the category of Hatha yoga?

Yes. Chapter Three of the Hatha Yoga Pradipika on Mudras states:

1. As the chief of the snakes is the support of the earth with all the mountains and forests on it, so all the Tantras (Yoga practices) rest on the Kundalini. (The Vertebral column.)
2. When the sleeping Kundalini awakens by favor of a guru, then all the lotuses (in the six chakras or centers) and all the knots are pierced through.
3. Susumna (Sunya Padavi) becomes a main road for the passage of Prana, and the mind then becomes free from all connections (with its objects of enjoyments) and Death is then evaded.
4. Susumna, Sunya, Padavi, Brahma Randhra, Maha Patha, Smasana, Sambhavi, Madhya Marga, are names of one and the same thing.
5. In order, therefore, to awaken this goddess, who is sleeping at the entrance of Brahma Dwara (the great door), mudras should be practiced well.

And Chapter 4 on Samadhi states:

10. By means of various postures and different Kumbhakas, when the great power (Kundali) awakens, then the Prana becomes absorbed in Sunya (Samadhi).

10. What are the essential elements of Tantra?

Tantra comes from two words which mean to stretch, expand, and release. What is being released is our energy and conceptions which are under a self limiting state of tension. The release of tension and subsequent merger with our essence, the essence of the universe is what a Tanrika calls enlightenment.

11. What is a Mahasiddha? Could you be one?

A Tantrika yogin experiences a very profound and radiant state of this accomplishment they are known as a mahasiddha (light body). There are many wonderful teachings embedded in the tales of the lives of the 84 mahasiddhas who are claimed by Buddhist and Hindu traditions alike.

12. Sticky Mat

13. guru

14. What is the traditional length of time a disciple trains under a master?

12 years .

15. Which of the two alignment principles must we master to have a solid foundation in hatha yoga?

physical and structural alignment and breath

16. Which alignment principle has the most influence on our yoga practice?

Motive “The first and most important alignment to check is our motive for practice. Our practice should be aligned with our motive. For example: If I’m practicing Hatha Yoga to heal my liver, my practice should contain movements and breathing necessary to perform that function. On the other hand, if my motive for practice is to deepen my meditation, the asana and pranayama should reflect that motive and be focused on strength. Once my motive and actual practice are aligned, I can ask myself, “Am I aligned with this practice?” In other words, have I left behind my other concerns of my life while I perform my practice? Am I naturally focused on my practice and really engaged in it in an open way so that it can actually re-pattern me? This is the way we should meet our practice each day.

17. When did yoga classes become the norm over the tradition of specific one-on-one instruction?

1940s, Sivananda and Krishnmacarya.

18. In yogic breathing 2 components exist: the mechanics and the energy (sensation/quality). Briefly describe what is meant by this. How does one awaken energy/sensation of breath?

One must first understand the proper mechanics of administering the breath and then only can they awaken the appropriate energies. This also goes for each “asana.” When performing yogic breathing you are getting the whole body to breathe.

19. Define puruka:

To inhale.

20. List 5 physical benefits of pranayama:

1. 9 out of 10 adults in the U.S. are chest breathers – shallow breathing into the chest, not reaching deep in the lungs at all. Children are born as belly breathers because it is HEALTHIER and more NATURAL breathing for the body. Stress and environmental conditioning change us into chest breathers as we mature. We can regain our ability to breathe in a slow, deep, and healthy manner through pranayama – breathing from the belly button on up.

2. In most people, the top 1/3 of our lungs is “dead space.” We breathe so shallowly, we hardly use this 1/3 at all. For individuals with respiratory concerns, learning to breathe into the healthy, undamaged top 1/3 of the lungs, where there is pink healthy tissue to absorb oxygen, can be beneficial.

3. increases the rate of metabolism (to aid with weight loss) – also Agni, the digestive fire, is extremely important in Ayurveda (Eastern Medicinal Branch of Yoga) – having a healthy digestion will improve your entire state of health – body and mind

4. Strengthen the immune system

5. calms and steadies the mind

6. improves focus and concentration

7. can raise or lower blood pressure, depending upon the technique chosen and the desired result

8. body uses oxygen more efficiently, increasing our health

9. provide sufficient oxygen for the functioning of every cell in our body. Without sufficient oxygen, we cannot metabolize food properly, and nutrients are wasted (take time to breath deeply between your bites of food during mealtimes – aids digestion in many ways)

10. for those suffering from lung damage (emphyzema, etc.), can learn to draw air more deeply into the lungs, reaching undamaged lung tissue and allowing easier breathing.

11. reduce stress – when encountering stress, one of our first responses is to hold the breath, or breath very shallowly. This is a “fight or flight”, primitive response that may have served us at one point in our evolutionary development. However, now, we respond this way to even slight stimuli – while driving in traffic, buzzer on a microwave going off, etc. We spend a great deal of our day actually holding our breath. Learning to consciously focus on deep breathing relaxes the body and calms the mind, and keeps the oxygen flowing, improving our health!

12. better emotional control and equilibrium – As a common remedy for stress, we use the expression ” take a deep breath.” Breathing actually allows us to respond to events more clearly, rationally, and calmly by supplying the brain with ample oxygen. A lack of oxygen can cause lack of concentration and emotional unbalance.

13. improved physical control of the body

14. remove waste products such as Carbon Dioxide and other toxic gases from the body, so they do not remain in the blood stream – this exchange is done through the alvioli in the lungs

15. spiritual benefits of breathing – healthy body, calm mind, and inner serenity. These take you on the road to spiritual discovery.

16. Nasal passages have many nerve endings, and breathing techniques can stimulate calming centers of the brain.

17. Open the Nadis and remove blockages to energy flow in the body

18. Strengthen and gain control of the diaphragm – improving abdominal tone, singing capacity, and health.

19. Learning healthy breathing techniques benefits the following conditions: asthma, allergies, high or low blood pressure, stress-related heart conditions, hyperactivity, insomnia, chronic pain, some psychological conditions, metabolic and endocrine imbalances. This is not intended as a substitute for proper medical care.

20. Men average 12 to 14 breaths per minute. Women average 13 to 15 breaths per minute. Children average 15 to 18 breaths per minute. This is natural for each group. Breathing more rapidly (hyperventilating) depletes the body of carbon dioxide. Your body needs a certain amount of Carbon Dioxide to maintain the appropriate Acidity/Alkalinity levels for your blood. Learning to breath deeply and smoothly can ensure that you maintain appropriate levels of oxygen and carbon dioxide in the body. build better digestive system, helps with respiratory illness,

21. Describe the differences between natural breathing and full yogic breath.

Natural breathing is the first pranayama taught and yogic breathing is the second. Natural breathing introduces practitioners to their own respiratory system and breathing patterns while full yogic breath is used to maximize inhalation and exhalation it's purpose is to gain control of the breath, correct poor breathing habits and increase oxygen intake.

22. Describe ujjayi pranayama and its main benefits.

Ujjayi pranayama is a cooling when it is performed in a subtle fashion, internalizing, purifying and transforming breath. It is formed by placing the tip of the tongue lightly on the roof of the mouth or slightly further back if that is uncomfortable for you. The back of the throat is contracted gently and air is drawn through the nose across the contracted opening at back of the throat making a slight noise. The noise is similar to the soft snoring made by infants while they are sleeping. It is classified as a tranquilizing pranayama and it also has a heating effect on the body. This practice is used in yoga therapy to soothe the nervous system and calm the mind. It has a profoundly relaxing effect at the psychic level. It helps relieve insomnia and may be practiced in shavasana just before sleep. The basic form without breath retention or bandhas slows down the heart rate and is useful for people suffering from high blood pressure. Ujjayi also relieves fluid retention.

23. In prasarita padottanasana the elbows are placed over _____ once the hands are on the floor. How are the knee joints protected in the posture?

Elbows over our wrists and feet parallel or slightly pigeon toed, engage the thighs to protect the knees!

24. Define prasarita?

Extra spread.

25. Which element is strongly activated in utkatasana? What is the correct bhava for this asana?

One must remember to lift their ribs in this asana, it gives grace. The correct bhava is “fierce, courageous.” The fire element is strongly activated. Your gaze should burn a hole in whatever you are looking at.

26. Using the wall in trikonasana helps in what ways?

Using the wall helps our 3 centers stay aligned and also allows for our hips not to turn out.

27. To what degree is the back foot rotated in trikonasana?

Between 45 and 60 degrees. Slight inward rotation, never over 90 degrees.

28. Define nadi shodhana? How many nadi are there in the energy body?

There are 72,000 nadis in our body. Nadi means channel and shodhana means cleansing or opening. Nadi shodhana is a simple form of alternate nostril breathing.

29. How many of the pranayama techniques from module one are heating?

None.

30. To correctly feel the standing open gate posture and have the correct alignment in the posture what mental cues should you rotate through while holding the posture?

The three centers should be aligned, stacked on top of each other. Center of the forehead, chine and bhaga marma should be in a straight line. From the side you should also be lined up and to see if your energy has opened up check to see if there are purplish dots on your hands. You should not strain yourself but grow into the posture and tuck your sacrum under. There should be an open space between your lombar and sacrum. You should practice radial breathing.

31. Does pranayama mean control of breath?

Pranayama actually means the expansion of the life force. It refers to the hundreds of breath control practices used by various schools of hatha yoga.

32. Are there any contra-indications to the practice of the nadi shodhana pranayama?

Different things happen to different channels when we inhale and exhale. When you practice with breath incorrectly you are directly damaging the prana body. The inhale should be the same length as the exhale.

33. What are the 3 definitions of mudra?

(1) seal (mimic the greater cosmological experience) (2) gesture, (3) that which is beautiful or pleasing to the gods.

34. What does mudra accomplish in yoga?

In yoga mudras are used to activate and direct the flow or concentration of energy in the charkas and nadis.

35. Shambavi mudra creates concentration, kundalini awakening and rejuvenation of the pineal gland which is responsible for longevity.

The Pineal Gland is about the size of a pea, and is in the center of the brain in a tiny cave behind and above the pituitary gland which lies a little behind the root of the nose. It is located directly behind the eyes, attached to the third ventricle.

The true function of this mysterious gland has long been contemplated by philosophers and Spiritual Adepts. Ancient Greeks believed the pineal gland to be our connection to the Realms of Thought. Descartes called it the Seat of the Soul. This gland is activated by Light, and it controls the various biorhythms of the body. It works in harmony with the hypothalamus gland which directs the body's thirst, hunger, sexual desire and the biological clock that determines our aging process.

When the pineal gland awakens one feels a pressure at the base of the brain. This pressure will often be experienced when connecting to higher frequency. A head injury can also activate the Third Eye – Pineal Gland.

While the physiological function of the pineal gland has been unknown until recent times, mystical traditions and esoteric schools have long known this area in the middle of the brain to be the connecting link between the physical and spiritual worlds. Considered the most powerful and highest source of ethereal energy available to humans, the pineal gland has always been important in initiating supernatural powers. Development of psychic talents has been closely associated with this organ of higher vision.

36. Who are Ganesha and Sarasvati?

(From about Hindiusm.com)

Ganesha is the elephant-deity that rides a mouse. He is the son of Shiva and Parvati, Ganesha has an elephantine countenance with a curved trunk and big ears, and a huge pot-bellied body of a human being. He is the Lord of success and destroyer of evils and

obstacles. He is also worshipped as the god of education, knowledge, wisdom and wealth. Ganesha's head symbolizes the Atman or the soul, which is the ultimate supreme reality of human existence, and his human body signifies Maya or the earthly existence of human beings. The elephant head denotes wisdom and its trunk represents Om, the sound symbol of cosmic reality. In his upper right hand Ganesha holds a goad, which helps him propel mankind forward on the eternal path and remove obstacles from the way. The noose in Ganesha's left hand is a gentle implement to capture all difficulties. The broken tusk that Ganesha holds like a pen in his lower right hand is a symbol of sacrifice, which he broke for writing the Mahabharata. The rosary in his other hand suggests that the pursuit of knowledge should be continuous. The laddoo (sweet) he holds in his trunk indicates that one must discover the sweetness of the Atman. His fan-like ears convey that he is all ears to our petition. The snake that runs round his waist represents energy in all forms. And he is humble enough to ride the lowest of creatures, a mouse. The story of the birth of this zoomorphic deity, as depicted in the Shiva Purana, goes like this: Once goddess Parvati, while bathing, created a boy out of the dirt of her body and assigned him the task of guarding the entrance to her bathroom. When Shiva, her husband returned, he was surprised to find a stranger denying him access, and struck off the boy's head in rage. Parvati broke down in utter grief and to soothe her, Shiva sent out his squad (gana) to fetch the head of any sleeping being who was facing the north. The company found a sleeping elephant and brought back its severed head, which was then attached to the body of the boy. Shiva restored its life and made him the leader (pati) of his troops. Hence his name 'Ganapati'. Shiva also bestowed a boon that people would worship him and invoke his name before undertaking any venture.

However, there's another less popular story of his origin, found in the Brahma Vaivarta Purana: Shiva asked Parvati to observe the punyaka vrata for a year to appease Vishnu in order to have a son. When a son was born to her, all the gods and goddesses assembled to rejoice on its birth. Lord Shani, the son of Surya (Sun-God), was also present but he refused to look at the infant. Perturbed at this behaviour, Parvati asked him the reason, and Shani replied that his looking at baby would harm the newborn. However, on Parvati's insistence when Shani eyed the baby, the child's head was severed instantly. All the gods started to bemoan, whereupon Vishnu hurried to the bank of river Pushpabhadra and brought back the head of a young elephant, and joined it to the baby's body, thus reviving it.

Ganesha is also the destroyer of vanity, selfishness and pride. He is the personification of material universe in all its various magnificent manifestations. "All Hindus worship Ganesha regardless of their sectarian belief," says D N Singh in A Study of Hinduism. "He is both the beginning of the religion and the meeting ground for all Hindus."

Sarasvati is the goddess of knowledge, wisdom, science, speech, and all arts— music, painting, dance and literature. In India today, Hindus still revere Sarasvati as a goddess who is a reflection of the greater Mother, or Devi, and female dynamic energy, or Shakti. Since she is the goddess of knowledge, students often present her their books and supplies before they begin classes and her image sometimes appears on school gates. She is also the central deity of Indian Classical Musicians. Her consort is Brahma.

Sarasvatī can be found in Vedic texts, such as Rig Veda, and in Puranic texts, such as Ramayana. She likely originated as a Vedic river goddess; the river which once shared her name no longer exists, but where the banks of these rivers are believed to have once been, the earliest writing in India has been found. As a water goddess, she symbolises fertility, and prosperity. In the Rig-Veda(6,61,7) Sarasvati is credited with killing the asura (demon) Vritra, who represents drought, darkness, and chaos. She is often seen as equivalent to the other Vedic goddesses like Vāk (divine word, also romanised as Vac), Savitri (Illumination) and Gayatri. In the Shakta tradition (worship of Shakti or Devī, the female aspect of the divinity), Sarasvati represents intelligence, consciousness and cosmic knowledge. In later Puranic literature Sarasvati (Brahmī) becomes the consort of the creator god Brahma. Some texts place her as a foil to Lakshmi, Goddess of wealth.

In India today, Hindus still revere Sarasvati as the Goddess of Knowledge. On special days in the Hindu calendar special pujas are arranged for, and she is present in representation in many educational centers. In Indian Classical Music Sarasvati is the patron Goddess, Mother of Music, of some of the world's greatest instrumentalists, Hindu or Muslim, among them Ravi Shankar and Ustad Bismillah Khan. She is the consort of Brahma.

She is traditionally depicted in art as a beautiful woman with four arms in which she plays an ancient Indian stringed-instrument called a veena. She holds prayer beads and the Vedas and often a water pot, symbolizing plenitude. Generally she is shown wearing a white sari. Sometimes Sarasvati is seated on a lotus blossom, other times she is seated on or accompanied by a swan or a peacock.

The lotus represents Purity. The hands playing the Veena represent Talent and Dedication. Her other hands offer Knowledge (the book or scroll) and Wisdom (the pearls). She is accompanied by Beauty (the peacock) and Grace (the swan). Her book is usually shown as a scroll, or as a stack of rectangular sheets of old-type Indian writing paper cut from dried palm leaves.

37. What is the gist of the teacher student prayer chanted at the start of class?

Om. May He protect us both. May He help us both to enjoy the fruits of scriptural study. May we both exert together to find the true meaning of the sacred text. May our studies be fruitful. May we never quarrel with each other. Om Peace! Peace! Peace!

Krishna Yajur Vedataittiriya Upanishad 2.2.2

38. Is chanting part of the yoga tradition? If so why should it be included at the beginning and end of yoga class?

Chanting is a part of the yoga tradition. Sound is a form of vibration and it was known as such to the yogins of both ancient and medieval India. According to the dominant theory of the science of sacred sound, mantra-vidya, mantra-shastra the universe is in a state of vibration. You also chant to purify the space, it is the first pranayama. If you do not chant

then you are not activating all of the energies. It is also a way of sharing the benefit of the practice and setting your mind for the practice and sealing it with an expression of gratitude.

39. What is a cakra?

The word cakra literally means wheel or circle but in the yogic context a better translation is vortex.

40. What is its function?

The cakras are vortices of pranic energy at specific areas in the body that control circulation of prana permeating the entire human structure. Each cakra is a switch which turns on or opens up specific parts of the brain. In most people these psychic centers lie dormant and inactive. Concentration on the cakras while performing yogic practices stimulates the flow of energy through the cakras and helps to activate them. This in turn awakens the dormant areas in the brain and the corresponding faculties in the psychic and mental bodies, allowing one to experience higher levels of consciousness which are normally inaccessible.

41. How many cakras are there in the energy body? How many main ones?

There are 7 major cakras.

42. Can people (healers, sorcerers, etc. open, close, balance, purify, align, increase or decrease the energy of your cakras?

No.

43. What is the relationship between our thought and feelings and the cakras?

Each cakra corresponds to something different:

Cakra Seven (Sahasrara):

Thought, Universal identity, oriented to self-knowledge

This is the crown cakra that relates to consciousness as pure awareness. It is our connection to the greater world beyond, to a timeless, spaceless place of all-knowing. When developed, this cakra brings us knowledge, wisdom, understanding, spiritual connection, and bliss.

Cakra Six (Ajna):

Light, Archetypal identity, oriented to self-reflection

This cakra is known as the brow cakra or third eye center. It is related to the act of seeing, both physically and intuitively. As such it opens our psychic faculties and our understanding of archetypal levels. When healthy it allows us to see clearly, in effect, letting us "see the big picture."

Cakra Five (Vishuddhi):

Sound, Creative identity, oriented to self-expression

This is the chakra located in the throat and is thus related to communication and creativity. Here we experience the world symbolically through vibration, such as the vibration of sound representing language.

Cakra Four (Anahata):

Air, Social identity, oriented to self-acceptance

This chakra is called the heart chakra and is the middle chakra in a system of seven. It is related to love and is the integrator of opposites in the psyche: mind and body, male and female, persona and shadow, ego and unity. A healthy fourth chakra allows us to love deeply, feel compassion, have a deep sense of peace and centeredness

Cakra Three (Manipura):

Fire, Ego identity, oriented to self-definition

This chakra is known as the power chakra, located in the solar plexus. It rules our personal power, will, and autonomy, as well as our metabolism. When healthy, this chakra brings us energy, effectiveness, spontaneity, and non-dominating power.

Cakra Two (Swadhisthana):

Water, Emotional identity, oriented to self-gratification

The second chakra, located in the abdomen, lower back, and sexual organs, is related to the element water, and to emotions and sexuality. It connects us to others through feeling, desire, sensation, and movement. Ideally this chakra brings us fluidity and grace, depth of feeling, sexual fulfillment, and the ability to accept change.

Cakra One (Mooladhara):

Earth, Physical identity, oriented to self-preservation

Located at the base of the spine, this chakra forms our foundation. It represents the element earth, and is therefore related to our survival instincts, and to our sense of grounding and connection to our bodies and the physical plane. Ideally this chakra brings us health, prosperity, security, and dynamic presence.

44. What is sushumna nadi?

The spiritual channel located at the center of the spinal cord. It originates from the mooladhara at the perineum and terminates at the sahasrara at the crown of the head.

45. Describe pingala nadi?

Pingala nadi is the right nadi/channel: solar, warm, extroverted, dynamic, physical activity, masculine, pitta.

46. Describe ida nadi?

Ida nadi is the left nadi: lunar, cool, introverted, mental intuitive, feminine. Nostrils are gateways into the nadis.

47. As we begin our hatha yoga practice for the day, which nadi should predominate? How do we check? How do we change it?

Our right nadi should predominate. We can use nadi shodhana to check it and change it.

48. At the end of a complete practice session of hatha yoga (which includes asana, pranayama, bandha, mudra, meditation) which nadi should be flowing freely?

The Sushumna nadi.

49. What in your consciousness and emotions would confirm this? What in your breath?

When ida and pingala nadis are purified and balanced and the mind is controlled then sushumna the most important nadi begins to flow. Sushumna must be flowing for success in meditation. If pingala flows the body will be restless; if ida flows then the mind will be overactive. When sushumna flows, kundalini awakens and rises through the charkas.

50. Define dualism.

51. Define non dualism.

52. Are there yoga traditions related to each?

53. Are Sankhya yoga and Patanjali yoga dualistic or non dualistic in View.

(Adapted from Dualism and Non-Dualism by Swami Jnaneshvara Bharati and Linda Johnsen's article about Tantra and Classical Yoga)

When we want food or sex, or feel threatened, we automatically respond from Dualism, not Non-Dualism. If we watch a person die, or look at a corpse, are we not all struck by the mystery of apparent matter and consciousness? The higher truth quickly goes out the window in such moments and we find we are faced squarely with the Dualistic, conditioned response of the stuff of our mind.

There is something between us and Truth, the Absolute Reality, and that is called the mind. Training the mind is the starting point for Patanjali, in the Yoga Sutras. For example, one of the first things he talks about is observing which of our thoughts are useful or not useful, positive or negative. Then he directs us to learn to make choices in life on the basis of what is positive and helpful in our growth, choosing to do that which we know leads towards a stable, inner state of tranquility. Such self-observation, self-examination, and self-training are necessary in preparation for the deeper practices.

The Dualism of the Yoga Sutra gives us detailed instructions on how to clear away the clutter so we can find the door. Non-Dualistic Vedanta philosophy gives us a sound contemplative base for deeper understanding of the nature of the door and that which is beyond. Tantra shows us how to open the door, as well as how and where to knock.

To view these as contradictory leads to confusion. To view them as complementary leads to freedom. We can apply the Dualistic and Non-Dualistic philosophies as different aspects of the same one journey within, which eventually leads to the direct experience of the center of consciousness, wherein all these questions are resolved and dissolved.

In sum: Sankhya and Patanjali yoga are dualistic and Vedanta and Tantra are non dualistic.

54. In Patanjali's yoga is the ultimate goal to merge with the One universal consciousness?

No! The last line asserts that in the liberated state the soul abides in its own unique essence not in union with any supreme being beyond one's own Self. What remains is the purusha.

55. In the Hatha yoga tradition passed down by the Tantrik Mahasiddhas is the goal to realize our non-dual Nature?

Yes but supreme reality can be characterized not only by satchitananda but also by will, knowledge and action.

56. Is Patanjali's yoga the original root philosophy of Hatha yoga? If not what is?

No! According to Dr. Jonn Mumford (Swami Anandakapila Saraswati) Hatha Yoga has absolutely no place, as understood in contemporary practice, within the context of Patanjali's Yoga Sutras. Patanjali only comments on four sitting postures and the sole purpose of these asanas is to provide steadiness for the body, so that the mind is not disturbed by imbalances. Yoga Sutras are the quintessence of Raja Yoga and really have no connection with body culture as exemplified by contemporary practices and Western attitudes to Hatha Yoga. One of the difficulties is to understand that an immense time span, in terms of cultural development, exists between the Yoga Sutras and Gherand Samhita. Patanjali wrote his terse commentary sometime between two hundred BCE and 200 CE while Gherand Samhita is a late 17th Century text. The origins of Hatha Yoga probably begin with early Tantric Texts and the characteristic pragmatic approach of Tantrics to graspable and palpable methods for piercing the veil of body and mind.

Gherand Samhita (along with the Hatha Yoga Pradapika and the Shiva Samhita texts) represent an evolution of approach through the body in contrast to Patanjali's purely mental 'Raja Yoga'. Both systems are equally valid and it is a matter of temperament as to which doctrine an individual pursues.

The aim of ultimate Moksha or Jivan Moksha (freedom while incarnated) is a common goal for both schools. Much of Patanjali's vocabulary is still to be found in the classical Hatha Yoga texts as 8-limbed delineation of Yoga Sutras has withstood the test of time as a foundation for all Yoga.

He believes that Gherand Samhita eliminates the Yamas and Niyamas because they are so intrinsic that they do not require mention and are implied in Stanza nine by his 7 preliminary requirements for the practice of Ghatastha Yoga:

1: Body Purification (Shodanum)

- 2: Strength of Mind (Dridhata)
- 3: Steadfastness (Sthairyam)
- 4: Patience (Dhairyam)
- 5: Lightness of body (Laghawam)
- 6: Direct perception (Pratyaksham)
- 7: Unaffectedness (Nirliptam)

Also be aware that the approach of Gherand Samhita focuses upon the Shat Kriyas or internal body cleansing (Ghatastha Yoga).

“Ghatastha” carries the implication of ‘a cooking pot’ suggesting that just as cooking utensils must be scoured after use, so the human body must be strongly internally scoured. These practices are remarkable and I have studied them intensely.

You will notice by the end of the Gherand Samhita that the closing stanzas deal with Samadhi and although the methods taught are different the theme replicates Patanjali’s final branch, that is, Samadhi.

The Hatha Yoga Pradipika is cc 14th century C.E. while the Shiva Samhita was an early 17th century C.E. product so, along with Gherand Samhita, these three texts form a triad of the first consolidation of what we now call Hatha Yoga and which is the most popular form of Yoga amongst Westerners.

Hatha Yoga is now based upon the body culture of South Indian starting in the 19th century so that by the end of the 20th century the most well know schools came out of the Madras center of Krishnamacharya. His son, Desikachar, and his disciples B.K.S. Iyengar and Pattabhi Jois (‘Ashtanga Yoga) have all stamped their own influence and developed the most prominent schools in contemporary society.

The famous Surya Namaskar, and the variations out of the South Indian Schools of Hatha, never existed before the 20th century. In 1937 the Raja of Aundh was studying Law in London and attracted much attention by teaching a family system of exercises. This resulted in a London Journalist publishing articles and ultimately a book. From this the rapid spread of Surya Namaskar throughout the world and India so that many, East and West, believe this to be a traditional practice – it is not – no Brahman Hindu, reciting the sacred Gayatri, while facing the sun, has ever been taught to do Surya Namaskar. Surya Namaskar is a very modern innovation or invention in a long history of evolving Yoga practices.

57. Is yoga teaching a lucrative profession?

If an individual approaches teaching yoga with the idea that it is a lucrative profession than they have it COMPLETELY wrong. I don't intend to become a yoga teacher. This course is for me to deepen my practice. Those who think yoga is a lucrative profession are not teaching yoga, they might as well teach pilates in a gym.

58. Do you believe it is possible to have your spiritual path be your profession/career without causing you to compromise any of the values of guiding principles of the path?

Yes. I am a school teacher and this career path really complements my spiritual/life path. I just go through all of my daily duties with complete understanding that I am not the doer, trying my best to detach from the fruits of my actions

Why are you doing this training program?

Yoga is my passion. I really want to deepen my practice and make it not just an integral part of my life but my life. It is the only thing that intuitively makes sense to me. Yoga has changed my life and I want to spread and share that love and this life changing experience with others. I believe that I will eventually dedicate my life to yoga.

I want to learn everything I possibly can. I know that what I put into it is what I will get out of it and I intend to put my all into it. Deep down I know this is my destiny, it is what feels right in my heart. Yoga is about strengthening my relationship with the source. It is not just asana but a way of living. It is my life. It shows me how I can be truly compassionate, giving and always loving. I am willing to give EVERYTHING to this training program. I want to transform my life. I will be incredibly disciplined. This is it for me. Yoga is my calling. Yoga is the answer.

Class Notes

*Before class always ask about injuries

Yoga is everywhere, hatha yoga maintained in India probably because there were no invading cultures. Yoga seeded to planet by various celestial beings, maha siddhas, great deities. Ancient India consisted of Iran, Tajikistan, Kashmir, Tibet, all of the current Subcontinent, SE Asia, Southern China. Shamans used nature for healing. Cycles in nature are energetic patterns. Animate world, fire and water have consciousness. Yogis contact with cycles/patterns of energy. Asanas express cyclic energies of nature.

Movement reflects nature's energy, this is how yoga developed. The body was used by shamans as an antenna. Body harmonizes itself with nature through the postures. Oral tradition, certain postures activates certain energies, a blueprint for cosmology.

Bhimpā → pratibimba = source → reflection, positions were refined over thousands of years. Consciousness changes when you change positions. Yogis show we are one consciousness duped by the senses. Shiva is the progenitor of yoga, represents forces of nature. Siddha = complete and accomplished

Siva = human being, compassionate benefactor

Sun salutation – align ourselves with the energy of the sun, 12 positions, 12 months, revolving around the sun

Enlightenment = unity with heaven and earth

The purpose of yoga is to realize your true nature. When yoga deviates from principles it is not yoga. If yoga is not to help you realize your true nature then it is not yoga. Yoga must be adaptable but retain its purpose.

In the 1800s it was exported to the UK and USA and Europe. Rama Krishna Paramahansa aka Swami Vivekandana, world congress of religions. Yogananda Paramahansa, Self Realization Fellowship (self realization attributed to Ramana Maharshi). Walter Baptiste 50's and 60's. Swami Satchinanda, Yogaville, Virginia

All beings get it when you get it

Krishnamacarya lived for 7 years near Mt. Kailasa. He was the guru of BKS Iyengar and Pattabi Jois.

It is about deepening our experience of the self. Advanced asanas not goal! Excellent practitioners who they are as yogis. Rishis = poor materially, rich spiritually. Realize your true self beyond body, beyond mind. No one has been successful with planting enlightenment based yoga in the west.

Tantra – expand or liberate energy
Kriya – meditation w/breathe and inner channels

4/6/05 – Dharmaniddhi's Class Observation Notes

traditional mantras playing, smell of incense. Some students are meditating. D lowers music. Some students have placards with chants. D talks about blocks and says he will be in the middle so everyone can see him. Tells students to center themselves before they start chanting. Visualize white blue and red tear drops of essence. Chant 3 om;s ganapathy chant, d tells significance, sarasvati chant and then guru shakti call and response teacher student prayer om sahana...after chants silence. Erath mudra. D talks about history of yoga before asana and talks disparagingly about gym yoga. Impt of home practice, get into a mentality. Education based studio, take it home, take it with you. Sequencing normal, class emphasis on neck. Fierce posture – uttkatasana. Feet parallel judging by inside line much more than squat, asana for the whole body. D breaks down the pose, core channels straight, reminds students about alignment, talks while demonstrating, pull up ribs while you breathe deeply. D makes adjustments, reminds students to watch their knees and feet. Anjali mudra, breaks down meaning of dhristi, external and internal eye. Uttkatasan is fierce because it is a concentration so powerful it cuts through everything and brings the mind into one pointedness. Tadasana – side chans, talks intricacies about posture. Press with right foot talks as he goes through the posture. Tirayaka tadasana. Sounds of Sanskrit relate to charkas and nadis. Change grip. Fwd bend, extending and reaching to the wall, deep breathing. D makes adjustments. Chaturanga – using blocks. Yoga from wrestling pits. Engage legs and back. D talks about our disrelationship with time. We are frustrated with always pushing the clock. Animal asanas – drain our frustration from our 3rd eye in child's pose. Breathe and hold. Alignment.

Yoga is about what you can feel not what you can do.

Adi yoga, primordial yoga. Neck strengthening exercises, talks about danger of doing asanas before you have the proper strength ready to do the asana. Use corner of blanket for support, after neck exercises backbends. Savasana – zero effort, no effort whatsoever, breathe, lips should be slightly parted if you are really relaxed. Facial features should unwind. D checks attendance, let eyes unwind, prana harmonize. Surrender, reset is very imp. He chants while students are in savasana with mudras. Shantipat mantra chanted as a class.

Sanskrit Class 4/6/05 – Notes

Devanagiri – abode of gods, city of gods

Deva = gods, shining ones

Nagiri = city

Sanskrit was consciously developed, refined by human seers, magical language

Ritual Class 4/6/05 – Notes

Two ways to perform ritual – 1. Water (compassion, passive) 2. Fire (powerful, masculine it is the element not just an expression of it)

Using elements – express water element in ritual

Connections – be one of a connector and harmonizer, balance between nature and unseen forces.

Shift our understanding – refining and harmonizing our relationships, we have lost our role as communicators between heaven and earth

Ritual – understanding time, proper relationship to time, body rejuvenates

Express our unity of body, speech and mind, ritual is not about us, it is about how we fit in.

Yoga is a body prayer synchronizing yourself with the universe. Invoking your inner feeling that connects to animals and nature. The practice is not about you, it is a universal experience.

For a good ritual there should be at least 3 priests fulfilling body, speech and mind, each function of BMS

Body – Activity. Samskara – psychic impression, deep impression. Alignment, motive, impeccability, concentration and focus, 3 centers aligned each movement, efficient.

Sisposition = bhava

Speech – mantra = seal, protect mind, expand energy man means mind. State of energy, patterning biophysical name and form go together, how the energy body forms at every moment.

Mind – imagining, visualizing not in disorganized fantasy. Svasti = welfare

sanatanasharma = ever the way, was to harmonize ourself with the essence of things. We are nothing but time itself. Manifestation itself is time, sunya – sakti maya = to measure and understand it correctly, understand the illusion through ritual we harmonize with time, time experienced directly cannot be controlled or understood.

When you want nothing you gain everything.

Week One Asana Review

- Open Gate, Tadasana, Samasthiti: feet should be grounded, 3 centers aligned, shrug shoulders up and then down to get correct alignment, breathe deep, focus

- Tiryaka Tadasana (swaying palm tree pose) – subtle rotation of the hip and torso allows you to go further. Do not arch back, stance varies depending on balance and stability. “fix gaze on a point directly in front. Interlock fingers and turn palms outward. Inhale and raise the arms over the head. While exhaling bend to the left side from the waist. Do not bend forward or backward or twist the trunk. Hold the position for a few seconds while retaining the breathe outside. Inhale and slowly come to an upright position. Repeat on the right side. From the upright position exhale while bringing the arms down to the sides. AWARENESS in this pose should be on the breathe synchronized with the movement, the stretch along the side of the body, keeping balance, and keeping the head and body facing forward without twisting. BENEFITS of this pose massages and loosens and exercises sides of the waist. It balances the left and right groups of postural muscles. VARIATION can include balancing on the toes in this practice. The fingers may be interlocked with the palms facing downward or turned upward.

-Virabhadrasana II (auspicious hero pose, vira means hero and bhadra means auspicious) – concentrated and directed gaze. Sensation from hand to hand through the heart. Gaze over fingers, knee should not turn in our out, back leg pushes into the earth. Core straight up and down. Sink pelvis toward the floor and let the knee glide forward to accommodate. Pull like feet will tear apart the mat, about a legs length apart. Roll hip to shorten stance. Notes from LOY: Stand in Tadasana, take a deep inhalation, and with a jump spread the legs apart sideways in line with the shoulders, palms facing down. Turn the right foot sideways 90 degrees to the right and the left foot slightly to the right keeping the left leg stretched out and tightened at the knee. Stretch the hamstring muscles of the left leg. Exhale and bend the right knee till the right thigh is parallel to the floor keeping the right shin perpendicular to the floor, thus forming a right angle between the right thigh and the right calf. The bent knee should not extend beyond the ankle, but should be in line with the heel. Stretch out the hands sideways as though two persons are pulling you from opposite ends. Turn the face to the right and gaze at the right inner palm. Stretch the back muscles of the left leg fully. The back of the legs, the dorsal region and the hips should be in one line. Stay in this pose from 20 seconds to half a minute with deep breathing. Turn the left foot sideways 90 degrees to the left and the right foot slightly to the left, flex the left knee and continue on the left, reverse process. EFFECTS: though this pose the leg muscles become shapely and stronger. It relieves cramps in the calf and thigh muscles, brings elasticity to the leg and back muscles and also tones the abdominal organs. Mastery of the standing poses prepares the pupil for the advanced poses in forward bending which can be acquired with ease.

- Virabhadrasana I – notes from LOY: stand in tadasana. Raise both arms above the head; stretch up and join the palms. Take a deep inhalation and with a jump spread the legs apart. Exhale and turn to the right, simultaneously turn the right foot 90 degrees to the right and the left foot slightly to the right. Flex the right knee till the right thigh is parallel to the floor and the right shin is perpendicular to the floor, forming a right angle between

the right thigh and the right calf. The bent knee should not extend beyond the ankle, but should be in line with the heel. Stretch out the left leg and tighten at the knee. The face, chest and right knee should face the same way as the right foot. Throw the head up, stretch the spine from the coccyx and gaze at the joined palms. Hold pose for 20 seconds to half a minute with normal breathing. Repeat on left side reversing all processes. EFFECTS: In this pose the chest is fully expanded and this helps deep breathing. It relieves stiffness in the shoulders and back, tones up the ankles and knees and cures stiffness of the neck. It also reduces fat around the hips.

- Uttanasana (Deliberate intense stretch, lengthening in pose) – LOY notes: Ut is a particle indicating deliberation, intensity. Ther verb tan means to stretch, extend, lengthen out. In this asana the spine is given a deliberate and intense stretch. Stand in tadasana, keeping the knees tight. Exhale, bend fwd and place the fingers on the floor. Then place the palms on the floor by the side of the feet, behind the heels. Do not bend the legs at the knees. Try to hold the head up and stretch the spine. Move the hips a little forward towards the head so as to bring the legs perpendicular to the floor. Remain in this position and take two breathes. Exhale move the trunk closer to the legs and rest the head on the knees. Do not slacken the grip at the knees but pull the knee-caps well up. Hold this position for a minute with deep and even breathing. Inhale and raise the head from the knees but without lifting palms from the floor. After two breathes take a deep inhalation, lift hands from the floor and come back to Tadasana. EFFECTS: This asana cures stomach pains and tones the liver, the spleen and the kidneys. It also relives stomach pain during menstrual periods. The heart beats are slowed down and the spinal nerves rejuvenated. Any depression felt in the mind is removed if one holds this pose for more than two minutes. The posture is a boon to people who get excited quickly as it soothes the brain cells. After finishing the asana one feels calm and cool, the eyes start to glow and the mind feels at peace.

- Ardha Uttanasana (arda means half) similar to Samokasana (same angle pose/right angle pose) – stand with the feet together and the arms by the sides. Raise the arms straight above the head. Bend the wrists so that the fingers are pointing fwd. allow the hands to hang limp. Arch the back slightly pushing the buttocks out a little. Slowly bend fwd at the hips, keeping the legs straight until the back is horizontal and forms a right angle with the legs. Keep the head, neck and spine in a straight line. Look fwd. hold the final position up to five seconds. Slowly return to upright position with the arms, head and back in a straight line. Lower the arms. BREATHING: Inhale while raising the arms above the head. Exhale while bending forward. Hold the breathe in the final position. Inhale while raising the trunk. Exhale while lowering the arms. AWARENESS: Physical, on the movement, keeping the spine straight and maintaining balance. Spiritual on anahata chakra. BENEFITS: This asana works specifically on the upper back directly behind the chest. It rectifies spinal curvature tension and poor posture. come fwd and hold to make sure thighs and but are engaged. To experience the asana place your hand underneath their forehead. Don't kick elbows out, elongate check. Head should be lifted up a bit.

4/9/05 Class Notes

- Uttihita Trikonasana (Uttihita means extended, stretched. Trikona, tri = three; kona =

angle) Stand in Tadasana. Inhale deeply with a jump spread apart the legs sideways 3-3 ½ feet. Raise arms sideways in line with the shoulders, palms facing down. Keep the arms parallel to the floor. Turn the right foot sideways 90 degrees to the right, turn the left foot slightly to the right keeping the left leg stretched from the inside and tightened at the knee. Exhale and bend the trunk sideways to the right, bringing the right palm near the right ankle. If possible the right palm should rest completely on the floor. Stretch the left arm bringing it in line with the right shoulder and extend the trunk. The back of the legs, the back of the chest and the hips should be in a line. Gaze at the thumb of the outstretched left hand. Keep the right knee locked tight by pulling up the knee cap and keep the right knee facing the toes. Remain in this position from half a minute to a minute breathing deeply and evenly. Then lift the right palm from the floor. Inhale and return to original position and repeat on left. EFFECTS: This asana tones up the leg muscles, removed stiffness in the legs and hips, and corrects any minor deformity in the legs and allows them to develop evenly. It relieves backaches and neck sprains strengthens the ankles and develops the chest.

- Utkatasana (Fierce Pose) – stand in tadasana, stretch the arms straight over the head and join the palms. Exhale, bend the knees and lower the trunk till the thighs are parallel to the floor. Do not stoop fwd but keep the chest as far back as possible and breathe normally. Stay in the pose for a few seconds. EFFECTS: The pose removes stiffness in the shoulders and corrects any minor deformities in the legs. The ankles become strong and the leg muscles develop evenly. The diaphragm is lifted up and this gives a gentle massage to the heart. The abdominal organs and the back are toned and the chest is developed by being fully expanded.

- Padagusthasana (pada means foot, angustha is the big toe) Stand in tadasana . spread legs a foot apart. Exhale, bend fwd and hold the big toes in between the thumbs and the first two fingers so that the palms face each other. Hold them tight. Keep the head up, stretch the diaphragm towards the chest and make the back as concave as possible. Instead of stretching down from the shoulders bend fwd from the pelvic region to get the concave shape of the back from the coccyx. Keep the legs stiff and do not slacken the grip at the knees and toes. Stretch the shoulder-blades also. Take one or two breathes in this position. Now exhale and bring the head in between the knees by tightening the knees and pulling the toes without lifting them off the floor. EFFECTS: abdominal organs are toned and digestive juices increase while the liver and spleen are activated. Persons suffering from a bloating sensation in the abdomen or from gastric troubles will benefit by practicing these two asanas. (padahasthasana, hand variation)

- Prasarita Padottanasana (Prasarita means expanded, spread, extended. Pada means foot) inhale, place hands on waist and spread the legs apart. Tighten the legs by drawing up the knee caps, exhale and place the palms on the floor in line with the shoulders between the feet. Inhale and raise the head up, keeping the back concave. Exhale, bend the elbows and rest the crown of the head on the floor keeping the weight of the body on the legs. Do not throw the body weight on the head. Both feet, both palms should be in a straight line. Stay in pose for half a minute breathing deeply and evenly. Inhale, raise the head from

the floor and straighten the arms at the elbows. Keep the head well up by making the back concave.

Notes 4/9/05 (Abhimanyu)

Vritis (mind) dictate how we breathe. Breathe pattern dictated by mental and emotional bodies. Benefits of breathing: increased oxygen, rehydrates tissue, detoxes other bodies, inhalation is only as good as your exhalation. Balancing left and right channels. Build better digestive systems through breathing practices. Re-patterning helps with respiratory illness. Prana is found everywhere.

Notes 4/16/05 (Dharmanidhi)

1. sravana – listening
2. mananan – think on it, why?
3. niddhyasana – apply it to life?
4. prasna – questions

if you follow the first 3 steps you should have questions

bhija (seed) pithy, condensed. One syllable reps something greater (bhija mantras) male reproductive cell, retas – male sexual potency

You should first teach natural breathing, then yogic breathing, (whole body breathes), then nadi shodhana, finally ujayi. You should make an effort to inhale but never to exhale. Pranayama uses a different part of the brain. We are always infused with prana. Other beings live on our excretory prana, you must be attuned to the energy prana carries. Conscious involvement in breathe to awaken pranic body (ananda kaya).

**IF YOU PRACTICE YOGA BUT FAIL TO AWAKEN THE ENERGY BODY
YOU'VE MISSED THE BOAT!!!**

Between asanas you must check energy and mechanics. To awaken the energy body you first must teach the proper mechanics.

Krishnamacarya, used ujai to remember to breathe. Ujayi over activates the right nadi. Ujai should be used for cleansing the body and should not be heard by the neighbor. Tongue should be on the roof of mouth and it should be very subtle. Yoga should only heal.

Pingala nadi is the right nadi/channel: solar, warm, extroverted, dynamic, physical activity, masculine, pitta. Ida nadi is the left nadi: lunar, cool, introverted, mental intuitive, feminine. Nostrils are gateways into the nadis.

Dhara – to fix in one place. Prana from the universe, emanates from the muladhara chakra which is the root chakra. Ajna is the commander, controller, inner guru.

Whole game changes when you initiate awareness. When the frontal cortex takes over from the medulla oblongata and makes you aware.

Diff things happen to diff channels when we inhale and exhale. The lengths of our inhale and exhale must correspond. Prana runs our body and mind. When you practice incorrectly with breathe you are directly damaging the prana body. Dangerous forms of exercise we call yoga damage the body.

No duality with breathe.

Five elements: earth, water, fire, space, wind. Modern from classical. No props pre-yengar. If you don't get into a pose then it doesn't matter. Anywhere you are in the posture is the posture, speaks to our western nature of rushing to try and get into a posture before we are ready.

Rather than you getting into the asana, the asana opens you up.

MUST ROTATE THROUGH METAL CUES WHILE KEEPING BREATH CONSTANT

Standing postures create an up and down energy where all nadis are used and savasana uses all the nadis through total relaxation.

In open gate you must line up all of your centers and be relaxed, energy should flow and create blissfulness. Think of planting a nadi when you plant your foot. In open gate you are marrying heaven and earth with your heart. Form of concentration when we lose our balance it has to deal with fear. If you breathe deeply then you lessen your fear and get better balance.

ADJUSTMENTS

Your student will miss subtleties if you adjust them, they need to gain self knowledge. And have intelligence in each posture, you could potentially take away their intelligence. The difference between yoga and exercise is MOTIVE. First postures are the most impt, revealed system of knowledge, heart is the real mind.

Medulla oblongata is the instinctive part of the brain that controls breathing, shifts to frontal cortex when we practice awareness.

CUING –

OPEN GATE, TADASANA, SAMASTHITI: 3 centers are in line stacked on top of each other. Center of forehead and chin are in a straight line with your treasure chest, bhaga marma. From the side you are lined up. Opens energy. Don't strain yourself, grow into the posture. Tuck your sacrum under so there is a bit of open space between the lombar and sacrum. Remember to breathe fully through your lips and practice radial breathing.

TIRAYAKA TADASANA – in open gate clasp your hands and breathe in as you raise your hands. Breathe as you raise up and reach from your bhaga marma. Exhale whichever way you go and turn your palm outward at your eye level. This is an elongation exercise.

Reach to the wall, not down, do not collapse on your right side. Move consciously bending forward through your backside until you reach the wall. Push up, place your legs apart if you need to develop balance. Make sure your shoulders do not pinch back. Stay in one place as if you are placed between two panes of glass.

VIRA II – breathe up as you raise your hands, exhale as you turn your head. 3 centers, involve pulling together legs, be active! Exhale knee stretching out towards feet, use hamstrings to come up. Pick up foot, roll open and place it down. Now your hip is open. Keep things in engaged and spiral in. ALWAYS keep 3 centers aligned.

UTTKATASANA – lift ribs, gives grace.

PADAGUSTASANA – Bring upper body down, crown towards floor sacrum towards ceiling. Shoulders away from ears, elbows spun out.

BHAVASAN – evokes a feeling in the asana.

Mudras and bandhas redirect the flow of energy through the body through subtle means.

YTT – Module #3 Study Questions

1. List the contraindications for the surya namaskar series:

The practice of Surya Namaskar should be immediately discontinued if a fever, acute inflammation, boils or rashes occur. These may develop due to excess toxins in the body. When toxins have been eliminated, the practice should be resumed. Surya namaskara should not be practiced by people suffering from high blood pressure, coronary artery diseases, or by those having a stroke, as it may over stimulate or damage a weak heart or blood vessel system. It should be avoided in cases of hernia or intestinal tuberculosis. People with back conditions should consult a medical expert before commencing this practice. Although some back conditions may be alleviated by this practice, conditions such as slipped disc and sciatica will be better managed through an alternative asana program. During the onset of menstruation, this practice should be avoided. If there are no adverse effects, the practice may be resumed after the initial flow or towards the end of the period. During pregnancy it may be practiced with care until the beginning of the twelfth week. Following childbirth, it may be commenced approximately forty days after delivery for re-toning the uterine muscles.

2. List the specific contraindications for:

- a. Shashankasana – Should not be performed by people with high blood pressure, slipped disc or those who suffer from vertigo
- b. Supta Vajrasana – Should not be performed by people suffering from sciatica, slipped disc, sacral ailments, or knee complaints.
- c. Baddha Konasana –
- d. Tiriyaka Bhujangasana – People suffering from peptic ulcer, hernia, intestinal tuberculosis or hyper thyroidism should not practice this asana without expert guidance.

e. Dhanurasana – weak heart, high blood pressure, hernia, colitis, peptic ulcers, do not do this asana at night because it stimulates adrenal glands

3. List 3 methods of sapeksha dhyanam:

Meditation with form and attribute.

- Trataka, meditate on any object

4. When we perform the opening chants to Ganesha, Sarasvati and the Gurus, are we worshipping them? Yes or No

Yes and No, we are invoking their energies and also paying our respect.

5. What does “sida sadanam” from the Ganesha chant mean?

Do listen to our prayers, come with your blessings and assurances of protection into our home, and be seated.

6. Why do we always perform the teacher-student prayer before class?

To set the tone for our practice, to harmonize relationship between student and teacher and provide a good space. “Om. May He protect us both. May He help us both to enjoy the fruits of scriptural study. May we both exert together to find the true meaning of the sacred text. May our studies be fruitful. May we never quarrel with each other. Om Peace! Peace! Peace!”

7. Why do we chant the Shanti Path mantras after class?

To share the fruits of our practice with all beings.

8. What does “shanti” mean, and what is the significance of chanting it 3 times at the end of the teacher-student prayer and Shanti Path mantras?

Shanti means peace, we chant it 3 times to invoke peace in all of the 3 realms.

9. In general, how do twisting asana affect us:

a. Physically: The twist imposed on the spine and the whole trunk exercises the muscles, makes the spinal column more flexible and stimulates the spinal nerves. It also has a strong influence on the abdominal muscles, alternately stretching and compressing them as the body twists from one direction to the other. Beginners must be careful not to twist the trunk more than flexibility will allow. Most of the spinal twist Asanas enhance the Pranic flow in the Samana region, around the navel. This nourishes organs such as the pancreas, kidneys, stomach, small intestines, liver and gall bladder and also relieves associated disorders and rejuvenates the tissues generally. These Asanas, therefore, have a strong effect on total health and vitality.

b. Energetically: On the emotional and psychic levels, controlled twisting represents a

means of managing the knots and problems of life. For many people, life seems complicated and their problems appear too difficult to solve. These Asanas give an insight and inspire a systematic approach to untying the tangled knots of life.

10. What does the phrase “nishesha jadya paha” from the sarasvati chant mean?

Remove the heaviness and dullness from my consciousness

11. What muscle groups can limit back bending postures via their shortness?

Abdominals

12. Which hip flexor muscle crosses both the knee joint and the hip joint?

Sartorius

13. If you are in deep hip flexion such as in ashwa sanchalanasana and you attempt to raise the back foot to your buttocks, (flexion of the knee joint) without lifting the pelvis or bending the torso forwards:

a. Which muscle group is being stretched directly via the bending of the knee?

Quadriceps

b. Which muscle group is being stretched indirectly? And how?

Hamstrings, buttocks

14. In ashwa sanchalanasana with the left foot forward, what happens if I allow myself to use poor form letting my right hip go backwards (no longer square with the shoulders) and my right knee and leg rotate externally? (circle one)

a. The gupta nadi becomes more active than the nadi running over the front of the thigh which helps regulate metabolism and the descent of celestial energy down the front of the body.

b. The stretch of the hip flexors is relaxed and the adductors (muscles that move the femur toward the mid-line of the body) are stretched.

c. The tensor fascia late (ITB) does not receive stretch

d. All of the above

15. The two main functions of testosterone are to increase libido and aggression. What practice is important for the transition from boys to men to regulate and integrate increased levels of testosterone and sexual differentiation? Why?

Surya Namaskara influences the pineal gland and the hypothalamus to prevent pineal degeneration and calcification. This balances the transition period between childhood and adolescence in growing children.

16. What practice should girls practice on the cusp of becoming women? Why?

17. Hatha Yoga can be practiced either as a normal part of daily health and hygiene cultivator or as an enlightenment path.

18. Enlightenment in non-dual Tantra is not achieved but expressed. Following the path of Hatha Yoga to express our enlightenment results in a bodily transformation known as the VAJRA DEHA which means immutable or adamant body.

19. The Prakasha kaya is the end result of alchemical Hatha and Kriya Yoga. All the mahasiddhas attained the Prakasha kaya via their inner alchemy of charkas, channels and kundalini. What is the Prakasha Kaya? What occurs during its expression?

Prakasha Kaya occurs when one light bodies and attains immortality. Rainbows, smell changes, only initiates hear this sound.

20. The Hatha Yoga practitioner is on the Path of “Embodying Enlightenment” what does this mean?

They seek to represent in bodily form enlightenment through all aspects of their self and their actions, releasing their true nature by activating ones energy body.

21. What does “ashwa sanchalanasana” mean, what is it, and where is it used? How would you use “ashwa sanchalanasana” to stimulate ida nadi?

It means “equestrian pose” and is used in surya namaskar, pose number four. If you start on your left side then you stimulate the ida nadi.

22. List the types of props or assistance used with the following asanas, then describe the benefits that the use of props or assistance created:

- a. Sarpasana: use a bolster under ankles to help engage our thighs
- b. Dhanurasana: bolster under chest to help focus on the lower body muscles
- c. Navasana: someone can kneel between a students leg and student squeezes the inner thighs and try to lift the heart at the same time
- d. Baddha Konasana: use a block in between soles of feet and the wall
- e. Parvatasana: strap can be wrapped around the sit bones and the thighs to open the sit bones up and rotate the thighs

23. What is the difference between the full mantras of Surya Namaskar and the bija mantras?

As an alternative to the 12 names of the sun there is a series of beeja mantras or seed syllables. Beeja mantras do not have any literal meaning but set up powerful vibrations of energy within the mind and body. The beeja mantras are six in number and are repeated consecutively four times in a round of surya namaskara. The full mantras have meaning.

24. What does Yoga Nidra mean?

Many people in the East and the West are attracted to Yoga Practices, for they think they can find solution to every problem therein; be it physical, mental, emotional or spiritual! Much importance is attached to relaxation techniques that one thinks might help a person in easing the tension caused due to chronic stressful life style. Yoga Nidra is one such wonderful technique, not only for physical or mental relaxation but also for preparing the mind for spiritual discipline. It concerns mainly with pratyahara (withdrawing senses from sense-objects) and dharana (concentration).

It is to be understood that ordinary sleep is not relaxation, for tensions cannot always be resolved completely in ordinary sleep. Yoga Nidra is qualitatively different relaxation. It is a 'sleep' where all the burdens are thrown off to attain more blissful state of awareness, a relaxation much more intense than ordinary sleep.

As Swami Satyananda Saraswati (Preface to "Yoga Nidra", 1982, Bihar School of Yoga, Monghyr, Bihar, India) says:

'When awareness is separate and distinct from vrittis – mental modifications, when waking, dream, and deep sleep pass like clouds, yet awareness of Atman remains, that is the experience of total relaxation. That is why, in Tantra, Yoga Nidra is said to be the doorway to samadhi!'

Neuro-physiologic Basis

There is no question about the close relation between the body and the brain. Various centers in the brain control, modify, and affect our bodily functions. In fact, there is a center in the brain for every act, whether willful or reflex, physical or mental. Experimental data have identified many such specific centers. Stimulation of these centers leads to appropriate actions, be they motor or sensory, secretary or emotive, affective or cognitive. Thus we have a holographic representation of the body on the brain.

To put the thing more concretely, it is proved that the left half of the body is represented in right half of the brain and vice-a-versa. As far as the muscular actions are concerned, the representation is in an 'upside down manner' in motor area of pre-central gurus. Thus, at the top of this part of brain the lowest portion of our body -foot- is represented. Then comes ankle, leg (calf), knee, thigh, hip, trunk, shoulder, arm, elbow, wrist, palm, fingers, thumb, then neck, jaw, face, eyes, ears, tongue, taste, swallowing, etc. The same thing is applicable for sensations. Stimulation of brain centers of sensory cortex evokes sensations on the opposite half of the body.

Yoga Nidra Practice

In Yoga Nidra exactly opposite process is used to make the brain centers active by focusing awareness on the parts of the body in a definite sequence. Thus, the person tries to stimulate various parts of the brain by focusing the awareness on the corresponding

parts of the body. By awareness is meant 'attitude of witness' towards physical or mental actions of the body.

The Technique:

Usually it takes from twenty to forty minutes to complete one Yoga Nidra session. The procedure is carried out by first doing a few asanas -practicing a few postures. Then the person lies on his or her back in totally relaxed posture (shavasana -posture simulating dead body). Eyes are lightly closed, arms are kept with palms facing upwards and fingers are half lifted from the ground, breathing is natural and quiet.

Resolve or sankalpa

Before the rotation of awareness the aspirant should make a positive resolve about the aim in life. The wordings should be clear and precise. It is not expected that the sadhaka makes minor resolves like, 'I will give up smoking, or alcohol, or tobacco, but he or she should think something higher. A few resolves can be:

- a) I will awaken my spiritual potential,
- b) I will be successful in my all undertakings,
- c) I will achieve total health, or
- d) I will be a positive help in spiritual progress of others, etc.

1. Rotation of Awareness

Then the rotation of awareness begins. The person has to just visualize the part of the body mentioned by the instructor; it can be a teacher or a tape-recorder. The student must not move any part of his body. Quickly corresponding with the instructions, he or she has to shift his or her awareness from one part to the next. The aspirant should not imagine the next part before the instructor mentions it. The whole process should be a pleasure and not a burden. There should not be any anxiety or expectation.

The usual pattern is to start focusing awareness in the following sequence:

First on the right side:

The thumb, fingers (one by one), palm of the hand, then the wrist, the forearm, the elbow, arm, shoulder, right side of the back, hip, thigh, knee, leg, ankle, foot, great toe, other toes of the right foot.

The same sequence is repeated for the left side.

Then awareness is focused on the proximity of the body with the carpet (ground). Back of the head, shoulders, back and spine, thighs, heel. Next the front of the body-surface is brought in to awareness. Face, brow, eyes, nose, lips, mouth, ears, chin, neck, chest, abdomen.

2. Awareness of the breath

After rotation of the consciousness in such a sequence, focusing the attention on the act of breathing completes physical relaxation. One simply maintains awareness of breath, either at the nostril or of its passage through the navel and throat. It is claimed that the process, in addition to concentration of mind, assists in “pratyahara” – withdrawing the sense centers from their objects of sensations.

3. Feelings and Emotions

Next comes relaxation at the level of feelings and emotions. Attempt is made to bring to memory the intense physical and emotional feelings; they are re-experienced or re-lived and then effaced. Usually this is practiced with pairs of two opposite feelings like hot and cold, lightness and heaviness, pain and pleasure, joy and sorrow, etc. Relaxation at the emotional level and building up of strong will-power are the two major outcome of this procedure.

4. Visualization

The final stage of yoga nidra relates to mental relaxation. The aspirant tries to visualize the objects as described by the instructor. Usually such images and symbols are chosen that have universal significance. To quote a few: the mountain, river, ocean, temple, church, cross, saint, flower etc.

The practice helps to develop self-awareness and helps in concentration – dharana. Rarely, even meditation -dhyana- may be the natural outcome.

5. Ending the practice

Once again the resolve or sankalpa is intently thought of or even visualized. Thus, consciously one tries to direct the unconscious mind about the goal in life. This time the unconscious is very receptive and therefore may accept the suggestion from the conscious mind with more intensity. It is claimed that in due course of time, depending upon the sincerity and regularity of the sadhana, the resolve bears fruit in sadhaka’s life.

Utility

Yoga nidra helps in restoring mental, emotional, and physical health by way of relaxation, and makes the mind more conducive to pratyahara -withdrawing senses from their objects, dharana -concentration, and meditation. Such a practice helps harmonize two hemispheres of the brain and the two aspects of autonomous nervous system viz. sympathetic and parasympathetic. The impressions in the subconscious are brought to surface, experienced and removed. Thus, the fixation of awareness to the body is replaced with the awareness linked to subtler aspects of prana and spiritual dimensions.

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C S Shah

25. What are the 3 types of Sankalpas used during Yoga Nidra?

See above.

ASANAS Module 3

If you warm up the neck everything gets warmed up. We have 33 marmas (marmas open up our channels) in our neck and the nerves on the back of our neck tell us where we are in time and space (ligamentum nuchae).

Types of Pranayama

Apana – keeps you on earth, keeps you grounded. Makes you poop, pee, orgasm and it goes down

Samana – middle of the body, allows us to assimilate our food and all of our experiences. Movement of food through system. Maintains equilibrium

Udana – upward rising, carries kundalini to sahasra, controls speech and memory

Prana – (chest and head)

Stages of Yoga

1. Hatha

2. Marma

3. Kriya – sit in yogic postures and conduct conscious energy of visualization through nadis

4. Nadi – put it all together in vigorous movement and integrate with the world