



P₂M Yoga

“Bamboo News”

A Yoga Newsletter from Peter Marnocha

January 2010

YOGA IS NOT ONLY ABOUT PHYSICAL POSTURES - Part I

Yoga in Western culture is predominantly thought of as a physical practice. In fact, there are certain lineages or schools of Yoga where *asanas* are not practiced at all. Some of these practices may consist of mainly meditation or devotion to God (however defined). Therefore, they are very spiritual in nature. From here comes the unfortunate assumption that yoga is a religion. Herein lies the beauty of YOGA: you as a yoga practitioner have the power and freedom to make it whatever you want it to be! Since I am a bit of a perfectionist I capitalize the ‘y’ in yoga when I refer to it as an all encompassing practice and lower case when we are only speaking of the physical practice (*yogasana*).

I would like to share with you one lineage as it is the one I try to practice in my daily life. *Hatha Yoga* is a very old practice that dates back over 2,000 years. It was borne out of two seminal texts; *The Hatha Yoga Pradipika* and Patanjali’s *Yoga Sutras*. Patanjali’s Yoga is now often referred to as *Raja Yoga* (The King’s Yoga or Royal Yoga). With this definition I bet you want to start to practice it immediately! The practice of *Raja Yoga* consists of eight limbs (*ashtanga*). This is not to be confused with *Ashtanga Yoga* that is a very rigorous physical practice founded by K. Pattabhi Jois that was brought to the West.

The eight limbs or stages are *Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, and Samadhi*. For the purpose of time and mental exhaustion I will only focus on the first two limbs; the *Yamas* and how they relate to your physical practice. Yes, I will be addressing spirituality and ethics here a bit but I think it’s kinda fun to attempt to marry the two***.

Yamas: Abstentions in one’s life; These can be violated personally (*kruta*), by proxy (*karita*), and by encouraging the action (*anumodit*).

Ahimsa: Non-violence in thought, word and deed. In an *asana* practice, do not abuse yourself with frustration or impatience because you cannot “do” a certain posture.

Satya: Truth in word and thought; In an *asana* practice be true to yourself with honesty and a clear understanding (truth) of the intention of your practice.

Asetya: Non-stealing and non-covetousness; In an *asana* practice do not look at another practitioner with jealousy or covet their ability to accomplish certain postures.

Brahmacharya: Traditionally this means celibacy and abstaining from sexual relations unless married. I prefer a more contemporary definition being not to abuse or misuse sexual energy. Also, not to practice misguided passions or obsessions. Let’s say one is passionate or obsessed with backbends. Although this may lead to emotional gratification and physical aptitude, it could have negative effects (insomnia).

Aparigraha: Non-attachment; A practitioner should develop a home practice and not rely on a teacher and/or classes. The Yogi should not become so accustomed to using props (that may not be necessary) that they do not attempt to wean themselves from them when appropriate.

Niyamas: Activities or observances one should do.

Shaucha: Cleanliness of body and mind; The full exhale during an *asana* practice can rid/clean the body of toxins. Focusing on the breath can clean and clear the mind.

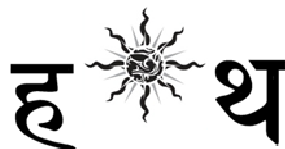
Santosha: Satisfaction (with one’s current situation) or contentment; In an *asana* practice be comfortable with the fact that there may be limited time to practice...just practice. In a posture, be happy with its current depth and form...be patient.

Tapas: Austerity and associated practices that discipline the body and mind. One must accept suffering as a part of life. The Yogi should accept the fact that the practice of *asana* may produce sensations or discomfort (preferably non-injurious) in order to understand how the body and mind communicate. One must be able to invite this slight discomfort to move from the body into the mind.

Svadhya: Follow and work on your chosen path, keep busy, introspection; While practicing postures, constantly be aware of your emotions and mental state and adjust accordingly. If a practitioner has chosen a certain style of yoga, do it mindfully with dedication and understanding.

Ishvarapranidhana: Letting go, surrender to (or the worship of) the Divine, however defined; In my personal *asana* practice I attempt to surrender or ground the sternum in prone mountain pose and the sitting bones in seated postures to the earth. Also, probably one of the postures that really requires letting go is corpse pose (*savasana*). My *asana* and other Yogic practices will hopefully, someday acquaint me with pure awareness (*purusha*) and something that is greater than me (the Divine).

Namaste,
Peter



Yoga Pose of the Month

Cobra (*Bhujangasana*)

Bhujangasana is another pose that is done in many yoga classes as a stand-alone posture. I would like to take the time to help you understand and practice the posture.



“Acceptable” Variations of Bhujangasana:



Sorry about the dirty camera lens!



Tips to help you practice this posture.

- Start in prone mountain pose with hands at the sides with elbows bent (or out in front of you) with fingers slightly spread (first two pictures).
- The tops of the feet are flat on the floor with the big toes touching if possible.
- I like to roll the heels out (roll the thighs in) to broaden the lower back.
- Ground with the hands, feet, hips, and pubic bone. Don't squeeze the buttocks.
- Keep the back broad and shoulder blades flat to the back like in downward-facing dog (see Bamboo News Dec. 2009).
- On the inhale, lengthen the body out the top of the head and out through the toes.
- On the exhale, lift the chest off the floor.
- To deepen the pose, repeat the inhale and exhale actions. Try to stay in the pose for at least 10 breaths.

Benefits:

- Strengthens the spine
- Stretches chest and lungs, shoulders, and abdomen
- Firms the buttocks
- Stimulates abdominal organs
- Helps relieve stress and fatigue
- Opens the heart and lungs
- Soothes sciatica
- Therapeutic for asthma
- Traditional texts say that Bhujangasana increases body heat, destroys disease, and awakens *kundalini*.

Cautions:

- Back injury
- Carpal Tunnel Syndrome
- Headache
- Pregnancy

Class Schedule:

Mondays - Hatha Yoga from 6:00-7:15pm at Body in Balance
Thursdays - YinFusion Yoga from 7:00-8:00pm at Body in Balance

Check my website for details!

Hatha Yoga & Karma Monday

Every first Monday of the month is Karma Yoga at Body in Balance for my Hatha Yoga classes! In lieu of a drop-in fee or the use of a class pass, your class is free if you bring three (3) non-perishable food items which will be donated to Second Harvest food pantry. Practice Yoga and give back to the community.

HAPPY NEW YEAR