



The Real Practice of Yoga

Swami Chetanananda

Most of us today understand yoga to be about moving your body and the many benefits that emerge from that— improving your range of motion and flexibility, better circulation, more energy, and less stress. Practicing yoga can do all of that.

The true benefits of yoga go much deeper. Asana practice is an important tool in developing a capacity to control your mind, be aware of your breath, dissolve your mind into your breath, and ultimately, to recognize the fundamental vitality that is present in the breath. I call this the breath of life, and this breath of life has the capacity to heal anything.

How does this happen? It starts with cultivating our awareness. When we practice with attention focused on our breath, we begin to experience the flow of subtle energy in our physical mechanism. This releases the accumulated toxicity and strain in our muscles so that we can become aware of this energy in us. Focused movement helps to circulate this energy so that we can actually feel it flowing. As the energy starts to move, we experience a change of state that feels really good. If we

consciously cultivate this good feeling by practicing regularly practicing, we feel happier, lighter and bring a brighter outlook to our life, releasing tensions and creating a positive flow. We experience an inner quiet and great peace that comes from simple movement.

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Having experienced the energy movement within your body, you'll understand that you are no longer a victim of whatever mental state it is that you fall into at any moment in time. You recognize that you can shift your mental state at any time by simply becoming aware of your breath. That recognition becomes the basis for a much different approach to life.

To experience the flow of creative energy within yourself, to experience the breath of life within you, manifesting your body and your mind is to experience the breath of life that permeates the

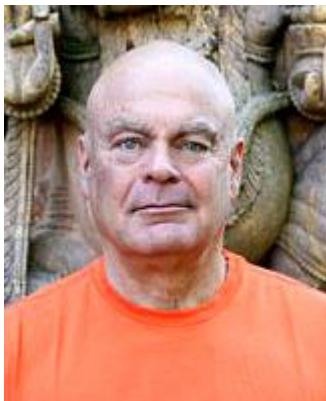
whole of the universe. It is to experience the breath of life that is the abundance that has expressed the entire universe. It is also to experience the fundamental richness that is present in your life each and every breath it is that you take.

The main thing you need to be able to do is to give your total undivided attention to your body and your breath and become settled and experience your own awareness. Awareness, vital energy, mind, breath and body are never separated; they don't exist separately. So giving your undivided attention to any aspect of your existence, if you do it with consistency, will reveal to you the total interconnectedness of the whole of your existence. You will become completely peaceful.

So, the practice of yoga can be summed up as connecting with that good feeling you experience as you practice (making contact); aligning with it with your whole being; and having it flow out to the world through you by letting it guide your words and your actions.



Swami Chetanananda



Swami Chetanananda ("Swamiji") is the abbot and spiritual director of the Movement Center. He encourages his students to discover the amazing possibility that resides within them, and to connect and live from it each day. A teacher in the lineage of Bhagavan Nityananda of Ganeshpuri, he is a powerful presence and a source of great nourishment for those who come in contact with him.