



Some Aspects of the Method of Realisation

Ujjayi breath

Ujjayi is a profound method of yogic practice used in Yoga, it is the upwardly victorious breath. Victory, being over the conditioned personality or commanding self, over the pathological, narcissistic, self-interested egoic structures created through survival oriented neurological function.

The breath has resonance from the throat, is soft and deep and acts as the key metric for the practitioner to feel the balance between Ha (sun, effort, yang) and Tha (moon, receptivity, yin). This wonderful sound of the breath is also the primary and universal mantra.

Ujjayi breath practiced effectively also acts as the integrating force of all the centers of the body, creating the appropriate internal environment for the awakening of sushumna nadi.

Sanskrit

Sanskrit, the ancient root language of all the Indo-European tongues is a complex contextual language not easily translatable into English. The sounds of the Sanskrit letters are understood to be the creative vibrations of the universe itself.

A good way to begin to understand Sanskrit terms is to seek the conceptual and contextual aspects of the words. Some Sanskrit terms are used (and always explained) in the practices of yoga.

Asana

Asana literally means sitting place. It is a seat from which one can sustain awareness into the nature of reality. Patanjali in the Yoga Sutras states asana as having two primary qualities, Sthiram and Sukkham. Sthiram means the asana is steady, sustained in its foundational qualities, rooted. Sukkham means serenely joyful and sustaining effortless being.

Asana is the place of inner adventure and inquiry. Asana is not gymnastics, exercise, hindu aerobics or pushing the body into pain and discomfort.

An asana in which we can be comfortable and begin the process of meditation sometimes has to be worked towards to get to this point of sthiram and sukkham, and this work must be a balance of breath, softness and effort. In time the steadiness and comfort of the asana arises indicating maturity in its development.

An asana in which we can remain comfortably and get up out of it and move with ease after twenty minutes of being in it is then 'established'. Being established in asana one can begin to appreciate

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yoga. The Hatha Yoga Pradipika, Gherandha Samhita and Patanjali and other traditions provide the rich base for understanding asana practice in yoga.

Ha-Tha Yoga

This is a primary influence behind yoga. The profound unification of the energies of the sun and the moon lead to the opening of the heart. The sun and the moon (like yin and yang) refer to the mind created experience of duality as opposites. Yoga is the process and the result of knowing these apparent opposites as the unified essence of reality.

Being comfortable with paradox and knowing the two as one we are free to see reality as it is. Somatic (of the body) practice and sitting practice that works with opening the mind and heart support each other. Without the sitting practices there is no real somatic practice, without somatic practice, sitting is mostly unfruitful.

Tantric Yogic Practice

From the energy meditations of the Vijnana Bhairava Tantra, the Sat-Chakra-Nirupana and other ancient teachings arises the energy practices of the yoga of Radikal Freedom.

Ashtanga

Ashta-anga literally means the eight limbs. Just as limbs in a living organism are joined to a body and help that body be mobile, so the limbs of yoga help the yoga become vital and real. The limbs are normally described as:

- Yama
- Niyamas
- Asana
- Pranyama
- Pratyahara
- Dharana
- Dhyana
- Samadhi

The Ashtanga system is one of the key influences to the philosophical integrity of the yoga of Radikal Freedom. Other influences are the non-dual traditions of Ha-Tha yoga, advaita vedanta and tantric buddhism.

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Vinyasa

Vinyasa composed of two Sanskrit derivatives Vi (as a prefix means special or in a special way) and Nyasa (means placement) so Vinyasa means 'special placement'. The breath is given primary position in the somatic practices of the yoga of Radikal Freedom.

The concept of Vinyasa Krama (krama meaning steps) is a key aspect of these somatic practices.

Krama is the special and appropriate individual steps taken as the process of exploring and mastering, that is becoming established in each asana. These steps though related for each person are also completely unique for each individual and their development.

The conscious and therefore special engagement of the full yogic breath is the root of movement.

Breath comes before movement, no breath and you are dead!

Movement is thus completely synchronized with breath. The inhale naturally works with upwards and outwards movements, the exhale naturally works with downward or ventral closure movements. Thus the movement and breath are placed in synchrony and in a special, conscious way.

Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga

Ashtanga-vinyasa as a method of practice was created by Krishnamacharya and Sri K Pattabhi Jois based on palm leaf document they found in Kolkatta library, so the story goes.

Once the series were deciphered the document is said to have crumbled to dust.

Krishnamacharya was however also taught yogic practice on the borders of Tibet.

The ashtanga-vinyasa sun salutations are on the walls of the potala palace in Tibet and the 'series' of the ashtanga system are reputed to be a synergy of this Tibetan-oriented practice along with British army gymnastics that were created to keep young boys out of sexual mischief and in vibrant good health.

The Primary Series of the ashtanga-vinyasa system is actually called yoga chikitsa. This term means yoga therapy and it gives a clue as to the function of the practice. Yoga chikitsa is a way to heal, focus and clear the body-mind. The practice aligns, opens and strengthens on all levels from the skeletal, through the muscular, to the organs and also begins the process of clearing the flow of the life-energy system.

Yoga chikitsa consists of the flow through sun salutations, 16 standing postures and 28 sitting postures with their variations and transitions, followed by 19 postures of the finishing sequence completing with savasana where one takes rest.

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This practice has serious limitations for many western bodies and many thousands of western practitioners have seriously damaged their knees and backs as a result of aggressive, unintelligent practice of yoga chikitsa. A practice intended for healing has destroyed bodies due to unintelligent teaching and aggressive practice.

The yoga of Radikal Freedom takes the principles of this method and liberates them into intelligent and compassionate awakened practice that serves practitioners of all body types and from all demographic contexts.

The Second Series is called Nadi shodana and this work also influences Yoga. Nadi shodhana, which translates as 'life-energy channel purification' can also be translated as 'nervous system purification'.

Nadi shodana continues the work begun in Yoga chikitsa taking clarity and strength deeper into the core of the body. This practice is begun upon a reasonable level of free flowing Yoga chikitsa practice.

Nadi shodana consists again of sun salutes and standing postures followed by the 27 postures variations and transitions and completing with the finishing sequence and savasana. The yoga of Radikal Freedom utilises this sequencing to cultivate a vocabulary of practice and again frees this practice for intelligent non-orthodox appraisal and inquiry.

The serious limitations of the symmetrical second series are removed through the applied intelligence of Radikal Freedom.

The advanced series of asanas in the Ashtanga Vinyasa system are also used from some in the vocabulary of practice of Radikal Freedom.

Originally two in number, these series, now divided into four by Sri K Pattabhi Jois's school, are collectively known as Sthira Baga (poise and grace). Most people call these the advanced series, they certainly can be fun, but advancement is always deepening in love, kindness and awareness as outlined in the document 'deeper reasons for practice'.

Bandha

Bandha, is the concept of locking and unlocking to harness flow of prana as life-energy within the body. Specific muscles within the pelvic floor, the abdomen and the neck are used isometrically to create the bandhas. The bandhas within the practice create core stability around the centre of gravity, which is the source and origin of movement. This area is also the source and origin of the movement of the breath, it is where the in-breath rises from and where the out-breath returns.

Moola bandha, the root lock, is the connection to gravity, the earth and earth energies, moola means the root. Uddiyana, meaning upward-flying, is the connection to the upward energies, anti-gravity, out to the cosmos. Jalandhara bandha, the chin lock seals the upper end of the energy vessel of the body. All three bandhas operate on the diaphragmatic divisions between areas of the body

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where energy and tension are often negatively held.

There is a positive charge up in the atmosphere and a negative charge on the earth, this leads to a flow of bio-electro-magnetic force, prana, or chi as life energy through our bodies. How we manage our energies in the energy play of each asana and through the transitions of the practice is deeply connected to how we work with Bandha. Poor use of Bandha can lead to energy dissipation and fatigue. Bandha allows the rerouting of this life energy to move in a new direction thus unlocking the life-energy potential of the body-mind.

Drishti

Drishti can translate as gaze, however it may be useful to view it conceptually as conscious attention or even more usefully as recognising your nature as pure awareness. Drishti is thus a function of awareness and attention. This attention has three prime qualities; the first is focus, the second is vast awareness, the third is softness.

These qualities are used to activate the mirror of drishti which both looks outward to the external gaze reference point and inward to the inner realms of cognition, emotion, body sensation and proprioception. The outer gaze reference points connect with different energy centres. The effective use of drishti allows the awareness of the connection between all the aspects of the inner and outer worlds.

Pranayama

Pranayama, or literally pranic extension. Prana and mind function are considered to be completely related so pranayama worked directly on thinking and feeling too. Pranayama is the careful development of the control of prana by use of breath and breath retention. The breath is the vehicle for the prana and so use of breath allows deeper awareness of the pranic aspects of the body-mind.

These practices are traditionally only taught once one has a good established asana practice. In a body that is not strong enough these practices are considered to be dangerous.

Pratyahara

Pratyahara is a change in the relationship between awareness, mind as a function of awareness, senses and sense objects.

Dharana

Dharana is concentration practice, the focus of ones awareness as mind through the sense of self as subject onto a perceived separate object. Within Yoga practice this is being powerfully developed by the use of drishti, the sound of the breath and the kinesthetic and mindful awareness of movement as well as specific practices of Dharana appropriate for each individual.

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Dhyana

Arising from the practice of dharana. Dhyana is the beginnings of meditative absorption. This is a step beyond concentration that involves cessation of the subject-object referencing of dualistic conceptual mind. Within Yoga this is touched on in somatic practice by the state of meditative absorption created by the unification of breath, bandha and drishti and somatic awareness. Dhyana also naturally arises through the sitting practices of presence and the four fields.

Samadhi

Samadhi is pure yoga. Samadhi as outlined by Patanjali has different levels, from Samprajnata Samadhi which itself can be subdivided into different progressive steps to Asamprajnata Samadhi: realisation of ones identity as the source of consciousness. The final stage of Samadhi according to Patanjali is Kaivalya or the station of complete and permanent awareness of ultimate reality.

Mantra

Meaning mind expansion and mind protection. Breath is the original mantra of life-force, it is common to almost all life (anaerobic bacteria etc, are the exclusion). The in-breath receives and is inspiration, it opens and lifts. The out-breath descends and closes the body, it is expiration. We begin life with inspiration and sound and we end life with expiration and sound. The beginning and the end, the receiving and the letting go. It is all there in every breath.

This is the sound we listen to as we practice. The sound of the balance of Ha and Tha, of Siva and Sakti, the yang and the yin. The nature of the breath through the practice informs us of our state. How smooth and soft and full and balanced is our breath? What is ragged or fast or anxious breath telling us? Listening to the breath is our main mantra.

To take the practices of the yoga of Radikal Freedom of the mat and connect outward to all of life we often begin and end the practice with chanting and intention. The beginning chant will remind us to connect to all the principles of intelligence in the universe, to remember the reasons for practice and to connect to the lineage, the stream of practitioners through space and time. The finishing chant helps us to collect all the wonderful energy we have cultivated and offer it out for the greatest good of one and all beings.

Chakras

The life-energy centres, mind as body, called chakras are seen as connecting the five sheaths or koshas of the body. In the physical body these chakras are reflected by the presence of glands and centres of nervous tissue. The chakras are cleared and energised as one progresses through the methods of practice of the yoga of Radikal Freedom.

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Devotion

Whose heart cannot be prised open by love and devotion? Which of us does not in some way fall into a reverie of devotion at the sight of great beauty. Which of us does not have the capacity for awe and wonder sitting beating in our chests? The winged heart of love and the messages its messengers have sung inspire us all. Be inspired.

The Path

The way that has no name, the recognition of path, the remembrance of energy fields and the nourishing of these fields through appropriate thinking, feeling and behaviour are all influences amongst many from the teachings of the great teachers of old.

Christopher Gladwell