



POWER YOGA™

Objective of Practice

This is a topic very much worth considering. We tend to be so habitual when it comes to most everything, especially when it comes to something we consider ourselves familiar with, like exercise. For example, it is pretty easy to imagine someone desiring to be healthy and immediately planning out his or her exercise routine. “Let’s see, first, I will go on a diet and while dieting I will begin running or get on a weight lifting routine and complement it all with yoga. Or I’ll skip the running and weight lifting and do Ashtanga or Power Yoga class which offers up all the benefits of most exercise in one class. “Why? Because I want to lose excess weight, build tone, and get flexible while de-stressing all at once and that is what I get from a vinyasa or flowing yoga class.” All this may be true, yet there is something seriously missing here. Not that there is anything wrong with the above-mentioned benefits, but this mentality about fitness has little consideration about what I really need and how to achieve this.

Ultimately, a fitness practice is meant to facilitate wellness and healing. It is not only supposed to make us feel stronger, supple and energized, but is supposed to eradicate the things that are facilitating any imbalance; that is, if the practice has

any intelligence. For example, we feel really stressed out and tense so we go running, or to the gym, or maybe a yoga class, or get a massage, and afterward we feel so relaxed and calm. The stress seems to not be such an issue and some, most or all of the tension is gone. We now are on our way home feeling dandy and all of a sudden we are confronted with something very stressful, maybe a car accident, or we receive some very bad news. Whatever it might be, we react so strongly, get so stressed, and our musculature goes into spasm, and the tension is now back, this time even worse. We just totally nullified the stress reducing affects that the fitness practice we just finished had given us. We finally make it back to the gym or yoga, and the whole process begins again: releasing the tension from our mind and body, but never getting at its source or alleviating its effects on our mind and all our body's more subtle systems, like our immune system; simply removing it from our musculature and our awareness, but not its more subtle effects on us that play a big role in our health.

The constant feelings of anxiety, worry, apprehension, frustration, anger, jealousy, fear, hate, competitiveness, etc., will wear us down, break us down, and promote disease, regardless of any temporary fix of some exercise routine. Not only that, but these things may promote the use of drugs, prescription or not, tobacco, alcohol, all kinds of vices, addiction, and habits that may be detrimental to our balance and harmony. Also, these qualities of mind can easily pollute our

relations with others at work, at home, everywhere. All this can become a cycle that is hard to break free from.

So, when we talk about a yoga practice we are talking about something much deeper than a fitness routine. We are talking about heightening the quality of our life. After all, there is no real health benefit to being skinnier, looser, or having big muscles. The objective of yoga is true wellness, and for that we need to go deeper and be more thorough. We need to examine our mental state. Yes, the stress in my life may be the largest factor in my health, so what are the causes of this stress? Am I competitive, critical, judgmental? Am I reactive, distracted, non-accepting? Am I lacking gratitude, compassion, and gentleness? Am I vain? Is my vanity dictating my exercise routine and habits? Is my competitiveness dictating my exercise routine and habits? Am I too hard on myself? Is my lack of gratitude preventing me from seeing how abundant and fortunate I really am? Is my lack of compassion preventing me from truly experiencing harmony? What is flexibility, strength, and outer beauty really going to help us achieve? Have we ever known any truly great human being to have said, “You need to stick your legs behind your head, or do a handstand, or be pretty, young, or sexy”?

What have these great ones said? Let’s explore that, instead of buying into society’s programming that has most people acting completely irrational, especially when it comes to exercise! What did Jesus say? What did Buddha say?

Mother Teresa? Yogananda, Gandhi, Moses, all the great saints and sages of old and new? Were not these greatest of great ones interested in our wellness? Is it possible that they knew that ultimately this wellness, balance, and harmony of body and mind comes from cultivating a certain state of mind? That's why Jesus said Love, and Buddha said Observe, Mother Teresa said Serve, Gandhi said Truth, Moses gave us the Ten Commandments. None of them even made much fuss over the body, knowing full well the body would be incredibly healthy if one could understand the concepts of love, truth, compassion, gratitude, moderation, observation, non-violence, etc. I'm not saying we should follow these people. I'm saying we should consider their messages. We should be practical and rational when it comes to our yoga practice and lifestyle. We should look a little deeper into things. We should know what we really need, not just want, but *need*, and see if we can start moving in that direction - the direction that leads to real strength, suppleness, and peace.

I would like to share with you my feeling on this topic of fitness, after being in this practice and business most all my life. I really do believe our society makes way too big a deal about physical health. I feel that due to our high level of vanity and competitiveness, fitness has been distorted. It's become more about aesthetics than balance and harmony. It's become more about quantity than quality. This obsession with the physique has even distorted our perspective on yoga. You know, after being involved with yoga for most of my life and having lived

in India, I can confidently say probably 1% or less of all the yoga practices I have encountered are physical, yet we in the West have taken that 1% and have made it 100% of our practice because we are so obsessed with our bodies. And of that 100%, 90% of that is Ashtanga, Bikram, Vinyasa Flow, etc., which are basically yoga practices that feed our vain desires to achieve a certain physique by going through some form of killer workout. To me, it definitely seems to still need some refining.

There needs to be more balance in our approach to yoga and exercise in general (not to mention our whole life). I'm actually at a point now where I'm wondering how much is enough? How much exercise is really necessary? I'm at a point where I believe all we really need physically (of course, to be modified to each individual) is a 45 minute to 1 hour asana routine (to release, open, enliven, and strengthen the body), a long walk (to get the heart going and breathe some fresh air), a moderate and organic diet (so there is no need to burn excess calories, we don't ingest needless toxins and we don't overburden our systems), and of course some time set aside for meditation (so we can truly find peace). So then, you are probably wondering why I'm making this training so intense physically? Well that's a whole other story.

Ok, just a little recap. So our objective in yoga practice is wellness, peace, harmony, contentment, balance, and health. The largest factor in achieving this is

our mental state. So in order for the physical practice to be potent or in other words to help us achieve the above mentioned qualities, it needs to be infused with the qualities of meditation or mental techniques that facilitate this. Otherwise, the physical practice is very superficial or even counterproductive and certainly will not help us achieve our objective.

Welcome to PowerYoga.