

INDIA

NO. 3



Monday, February 11, 2019 . . . why do you practice

There is no way to sustain a yoga practice, or a practice of any kind, without asking the question, "why do I practice?" And even other questions: why is it important to me; how important is it to me; how do I feel when I don't practice; how do I feel when I do practice; how can with I go deeper; how do I go deeper?" These questions into the self, with compassion and love, are part of the journey of Ashtanga Yoga. The answers are right there inside of us.

When we take our hands together in front of the heart and chant the opening prayer that begins "Vande gurunam ..." we begin asking the divine to connect us to those answers that are



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found inside. True happiness is inside. The happiness that the external world and people and things bring us is temporary. True contentment, *santosha* (one of the five *niyamas*), comes from the inside. If we cannot find it inside ourselves, we will forever be chasing that thing or person or experience to bring us joy. And ultimately that thing or person will disappoint us.

This same internal looking is how we need to explore our practice, from the inside. We can not change anything but ourselves. No one but us, can get us to the mat and take our arms over our heads. We have to seek it out and want it. We can ALL benefit from yoga practice, but we only get the benefits, ***if we practice***. Thinking about practicing, will not give us the benefits.

Here I am in Mysore and I find myself asking all of these questions as I sweat and breathe and move into and out of the asanas. Why do I practice? I practice for devotion. I practice for purification. I practice for wellness. I practice for deeper meaning and discipline. I practice for curiosity. I practice for

connection to my humanity. But honestly, the reason I keep coming back to my yoga practice over and over again, is for all of the things that can't be seen. I practice to quiet my mind, so that I do not get confused and think I am my thoughts. It amazes me how the practice of yoga creates calm and peace in my internal world, without fail. The asana practice is the doorway that most of us enter through. And yet, only doing the asanas will not keep us around.

Since being in Mysore, I've had the chance to study with Indian scholars steeped in yoga, Indian philosophy, Sanskrit, the Yoga Sutras, chanting, pranayama, Ayurveda, and the lineage of Krishnamacharya. In their own ways, they have commented on the globalization of yoga as a good thing. They have expressed joy that countries like America are delving into yoga and the healing that yoga has to offer. Yoga is one of the six philosophies that comes directly from India.

It is said that yoga is more than 5000 years old. Until 1700 or so years ago, the

transmission of yoga asana and the yoga sutras were communicated orally: from generation to generation, from teacher to teacher. It wasn't until after 400 BC when Devanagari script was created, that The Yoga Sutras were written down.

When we practice yoga, we dip our toes into this ancient system of healing that billions of people have done before us. We've been given a gift that works on many levels. Ashtanga Yoga is meant to be integrated into daily life, on and off the mat. It is meant to adjust to the person at any given time. So, what gets in the way of your practice?

Om Shanti