

## Chapter 1

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*“Yoga is EQUANIMITY ABIDING within the flux and flow of the perceived opposites.”*

*Yoga Sutras of Patanjali I.I*

# WHAT IS YOGA?

Like the proverbial Buddha under the Bodhi tree, I gave up. Nearly 15 years of intense practice, *tapas*, focused burning discipline, striving for *samadhi* and I found myself in the same place as I had started. From the outside, my practice looked perfect and whole. On the inside, it was full of holes and maybes. I fell flat off my meditation cushion, relinquished all my zealous yet earnest practicing of another man’s form . . . and I gave up. My dried-up pretzel body gave up, my over-mantra’d mind gave up, I couldn’t do anything but just lay there on my mat and look at the sky.

I lay there for several months. Given up and in deep disappointment of broken promises I had chosen to invest in, I could do nothing more.

And then something happened. . .

*Nearly by chance, I found myself dwelling, for the first time that I could recall, truly resting, in an indefinable moment-less moment, right in the very heart of all the movements, the rhythms, flows and changes happening inside of my body. I felt a primordial movement ooze its way in the slowest of pulsings from my once too-busy head, all the way down my spine. I felt the lightness, vastness and grandness of something not possible to name flowing under my skin. The most uncanny thing of all was that these “new” sensations felt completely normal and so very human.*

*It was nothing special yet it was a moment of awakening. It had been happening all the time, I just didn’t know how to feel it. My “trying hard” had hardened me, too hard to feel the soft little flutterings of the every-day miracle of life inside of me.*

*For the first time in my life, that I could remember, I really FELT love. I felt undivided. I felt love. I felt at rest. I felt love. I felt yoga, union. I felt love . . . under my skin.*

*It was nothing of my doing, yet it was all of my being. It was nothing acquired. It was all of what I had always had within. It was nothing given to me. It was already mine. It wasn't mine. It wasn't not mine. It had no limits. It was vast . . . and wonderful and subtle and easeful and overwhelming and so so silent. A silence that encompassed every sound I ever knew, folded back into silence. I was at ease.*

*And it lasted and lasted and deepened and lasted. I feel it still today. I feel LOVE under my skin.*

All definitions of “yoga” are worthy indicators pointing towards that which cannot be defined. What CAN be explored and written and spoken about is the PRACTICE of yoga. And that is what this book is about: practicing, experiencing, living in an expanded web of sensory perception and opening to feel all of life’s moments and movements. It has been said that Yoga is the holy union of the sacred opposites. All in the practice is holy and all is sacred. There is nothing in life that is not leading to the experience of yoga. All of life can become a practice of yoga. To embark upon a practice of yoga is quite courageous, because you make yourself the experiment. Yogis have “been the experiment” for thousands of years. You, like the ancient ones, launch yourself into the flow of organic energy within your own living system and become curious about what happens in every curve, turn, rush and still-point of the flow. The more you remain in “having no idea” of the outcome, the more you discover. There have been worthy guides before you who may point to one path or another, but essentially none are the same as you . . . you are so very unique. What you experience on the path of your practice will always be a deeply personal experience. You, great yogic explorer, are the witness, the participant and the laboratory all at once.

Welcome to the life laboratory of Yoga. My approach to yoga is a regenerative, creative and healing tantric path. Others may have explored this path before you, yet your personal experience will be fresh and unique to you every time. Each practice is a somatic invitation to feel WHO YOU ARE in relationship to the flux and flow of the polarities that up to this moment have defined and perpetuated life on our planet.

The yoga explored in this book is a practice of possibilities. Trying to remain as free as possible from doctrine or dogma, it is an approach, rather than a method, or

a technique, or a school. We seek to be free from rigid sequences. It is an approach to Life, rooted in tantric and earth wisdom that gives us a spherical opportunity to learn from and contribute to our immediate environment. The body-based practices are always exploratory, changing, growing, inspired by the moment, evolving and often very spontaneous. Asana and pranayama are explored with curiosity and openness evoking our inherent creativity. The “natural intelligence” of your Sensing-Body-Breath-Being guides you to unfold, expand, flow, dwell and fold back in again, in bio-movements like pulses, waves and spirals, movements inherent to all living organisms.

We explore *asana* (yogic postures) as organic full-body gestures where life energy has space to express and evolve through you. Breath becomes your most intimate and faithful companion on the path. Sacred sound reveals your nature as a vibratory being. Contact and touch bring you to know yourself through another. In intuitive, limitless inner inquiries, you will come to know, live, breathe and deeply appreciate your very own unique experience of being human.

As we begin to embrace more of our own human experience through this practice, we open wider to the experiences of all living beings around us. Other humans, animals, insects, plant-life, water, earth, mineral and even forms unseeable exchange with us inside of our explorations. During a practice, you may feel the slow pulse of Gaia, our mother planet flowing under and through you as you rest in awareness after a movement inquiry. Feel this pulse. It is you. While you may not physically encounter a Siberian Tiger on the mat, your inner process may reveal that tiger energy that lives inside of you. Roar this roar. This is you. You may be practicing in a land-locked yoga studio, yet experience the depth and currents of an ancient sea inside of your cells. Melt into the sea! This too, is you. Archetypes and animal energies, myths and memories of migration thrive as part of your human experience. These recollections live in your cells. The open-inquiries that we invite in our yoga practice awaken the modern, ancient, collective and even cosmic vibrations that live inside of and through us. We embrace what arises and fold it back into the practice. Like this, we come to know ourselves as an integral part of the vast web of life. Our words, thoughts, actions and deeds flow forward from a deep awareness that we are truly connected. We are part of a system of support and interdependence. Awareness of this connection is deeply healing.

Our practices explore movement, stillness, vibration and healing from many different perspectives. In defining this approach, I am inspired by nature, by science,

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