



September 2006 Contemplation Theme

Do More Yoga

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When you do more yoga, what do you do? There are so many wonderful things to choose from! “Do more yoga” is an informal translation of one of Patanjali’s Yoga Sutras:

Mrdu-madhya-adhimaatratvaat tato'pi visheshah. (1.22)

The rate of your progress differs depending on the means employed: mild, medium or intense.

When you choose how much yoga you want to do, you are choosing both how you will feel in the moment, as well as your rate of progress on the yogic path. There are three basic levels; “Do more yoga” means something different at each level.

Repair Yoga

At this level, you use yoga for repair. The wonderful thing about *Svaroopa*® yoga is that the core opening gives you rapid recovery from an amazing variety of aches and ills. You may have started yoga for this reason. Many students even stop coming to classes once they feel better, but when they go back to doing the things that caused the problems, the pains or problems return.

At this level, doing yoga means that you simply take a yoga class or get a private session when you hurt — it fixes you right up. You are probably practicing at this level if you say, “Yoga takes care of me when I need help.” If you decide to do more yoga, you would actually do yoga when you don’t need it, in order to avoid future pain.

Maintenance Yoga

While most yogis begin with repair yoga, many graduate to this next level. This happens when you realize that yoga improves your golf game or makes it easier for you to concentrate at work or school. You use yoga to prepare for other more challenging things. This level is less reactive and more proactive. Instead of using yoga to help you recover from things, you use yoga to prepare for them. You are probably at this level when you say, “My life works so much better with yoga.”

One man asked me, in his first class, to keep his name confidential. He was the owner of a local business. He came because his employees were complaining that his stress was affecting them, but he didn’t want anyone to know that he was taking the class. Of course I agreed to his request — confidentiality is one of the ethical standards for a yoga teacher. At his next class he said that everyone at work was very supportive, which surprised me. I asked, “Didn’t you say you were keeping it a secret?” He responded, “I was treating everyone so differently, they insisted on knowing what I was doing to make the difference.”

Whether you are doing repair yoga or maintenance yoga, you have figured out that yoga excels as a coping mechanism. You can take a class and feel fully repaired and recovered from the day (or week). Or you may have discovered that the 90-minute class protects you from three days of life’s craziness. For those with little free time, this equation is fantastic.

Yoga helps you handle your life by changing your behavior and your perspective. When you realize this is what’s happening, you have gone far beyond mere coping mechanism. Peace and clarity of mind come from the inner core of your own being, which is why *Svaroopa*® yoga’s core opening makes such a difference. When yoga begins affecting your mind, your mood, and even your decision-making process, it is on the verge of becoming a lifestyle.

Yoga-As-A-Lifestyle

Yoga as a lifestyle will undermine your self-destructive behaviors and free you from your familiar negativities. You will get so used to feeling good that you become unwilling to do things you used to do. Then you don't need yoga to recover from them because you simply didn't do them.

It can sneak up on you. You might take an extra yoga class one week. Or you begin doing Ujjayi Pranayama before you fall asleep at night. Your food preferences begin to gravitate toward healthier fare and even toward a vegetarian diet — yoga is surfacing in another area of your life. You need shoes with flat heels because they don't make your spine tighten, which means you have to go shoe shopping. Your old shoes didn't fit anyway because your feet are getting bigger.

It can be hard to define where the line is between yoga as a coping mechanism and yoga as a lifestyle. It is a fuzzy boundary. When you realize that Shavasana is not just nap-time, something more is happening. During the poses, your teacher describes the internal release that is happening and you begin to actually feel the core muscles as they unravel their tensions. You have had a glimpse of how good your body can feel because of the Marker Pose in each class and now you want to feel this way all the time.

The quotes or sutras that your teacher includes in each class are intended to plant seeds — seeds that will sprout into an interest in the deeper teachings of yoga. These theme articles also help you explore the ancient teachings to see how they apply to your life. As teachers, our goal is to convert you from approaching yoga as a coping mechanism to embracing yoga as a lifestyle. The world needs more yogis!

Do more yoga

If you have been doing repair yoga, what you do is more poses. You do them even though you don't hurt. You do them because they will keep you from hurting later — and now you are, by definition, doing maintenance yoga. You have moved up a level. In Patanjali's terms, you have gone from *mrdu* (mild) practice to *madhya* (medium) practice.

When you have been doing maintenance yoga and you do more yoga, you can also do more poses. Yet you might go farther — you might take a yoga weekend or a Deeper Studies or Foundations course. When you dip into a longer program and then go back to your regular routine, you get more out of your regular routine. Maybe you read a yoga book or take a meditation course. Now yoga is not limited to the poses. Most significantly, you're finding that yoga itself is so enjoyable that you do it for its own sake.

Your choices in music, clothing and décor begin to change. The ancient teachings touch you deeply and you decide to try incorporating yoga into your daily life: you practice generosity for a few days (or longer), you realize that you can find happiness by looking inward to its source, or you remember to remind yourself that there is a deeper reality within — you are Shiva! Yoga is turning into a lifestyle.

Now when you decide do more yoga, it still can be more poses. But it is more likely to be a process of actively changing your lifestyle; you are choosing to see your life differently and to see yourself differently. This is the main point of yoga's teachings. The goal is to see yourself revealed in svarooopa, your true form, to see yourself and everyone else as individualized forms of the one divine reality.

You get to choose. At any level, yoga serves you in the way you want or need. You can take as much or as little as you like — but yoga always offers you everything.

Do more yoga.

Namaste,



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