



Svaroopa® Vidya Ashram

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Sadhana: Practice & Process #3

You Have a Body

By Gurudevi Nirmalananda

You need a body to be here in this world. This means your body is important.

The condition of your body affects your experience of life. You know this from having had a cold or the flu. Not able to do anything, you can't even think. Your body's condition affects your mind.

It works the other way around as well. Your body experiences your thoughts as real events. Thoughts, feelings, and beliefs create chemical and electrical activity in your brain, which directly affect your body. You can think yourself into a panic. You can think yourself into exhaustion.

Does this mean you can think yourself into bliss? And that you can heal your body by thinking different thoughts? Yes. Absolutely yes. This has been extensively researched in the last few decades, though yogis have been saying it for millennia.

The corollary is that you can use your body to change your thoughts. Every yoga class proves this. The changes in your body mean you have to adjust your rear-view mirror before driving home. Better yet, your attitude adjustment has already been accomplished. Your perspective on life is changed.

Exercise is proven to improve your body as well as your mental and emotional health. This is because breathing and moving is beneficial. It turns out that slow movement is better, proven in a recent Harvard Medical School study¹. Their focus on tai chi listed eight elements,² all of which apply to yoga:

Awareness	Active Relaxation	Social Support
Intention	Strengthening & Flexibility	Embodied Spirituality
Structural Integration	Natural, Freer Breathing	

While all this is happening in every class, my focus is on embodied spirituality, both as a personal focus and as a teacher. This is the tantric approach to yoga. Modern innovations offer an exercise approach, even aerobic and acrobatic versions of this ancient discipline. Yet the Sanskrit texts documenting the practice are clearly focused on spiritual attainment. It's all about getting enlightened while living in a body.

My Baba said, "If you do not have a healthy body, what spiritual discipline can you ever pursue?" It's true. A simple flu makes it hard to manage your day, so if you're not healthy, you will likely have trouble getting enlightened.

Fortunately, yoga poses and meditation accelerate your healing process, no matter what your diagnosis may be. And if you have no diagnoses (hooray!), your practice of the poses, yogic breathing and meditation will support your inward expansion into your own Self.

Enlightenment is an energetic process. Your energy is changed. You already know about energy, not only from your having get-up-and-go energy, but by your mood. It may be easier for you to assess someone else's energetic signature by whether or not you want to spend time with them. Do they drag you down or make you feel light and uplifted? And how does your energy affect others?

How wonderful that you can use your body to make a change in your energies. Especially in Svaroopa® yoga, with every pose focused on your spine, your energetic currents (nadis) are opened, enlivened and balanced.

Your body and mind function on energy. Medical science identifies the energy that runs through your nervous system, while acupuncture works with more subtle energy currents. Yogis cultivate the energies flowing through all 72,000,000 nadis for vibrant health and vitality, ultimately for enlightenment. Yes, you want enlightenment energy!

You must have a body to get enlightened. Once you leave your body, you cannot progress spiritually. You land in a subtle plane appropriate to your spiritual state, one of 35 possibilities. Wherever you

¹ <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-025-93979-2>

² <https://www.health.harvard.edu/staying-healthy/the-active-ingredients-of-tai-chi>

land, it's not for eternity. It is only until your karmas are balanced enough for you to return to this earthly realm, so you can work on yourself again.

You may think you're here to master the world. You maneuver through events and relationships. You do stuff and accomplish things. Yes, life is about having experiences — but it is so you can learn from them. Life is about learning, not about experiencing pleasure or acquiring possessions and people. You are here to learn about yourself, including your capacities, skills and talents. Most importantly, you are learning how to base yourself in the greater reality within, your own Self. You become a Master when you have mastered you.

Dealing with your body is part of this process. Bottom line, if you don't invest time and energy into optimizing your body's condition, you will spend lots of time dealing with diagnoses. How do you start optimizing? Begin with yogic breathing. We teach Ujjayi Pranayama in every yoga class. Why? Because it is important!

If you are going through physical, mental or emotional challenges, do Ujjayi Pranayama³ twice daily for 20 minutes or more each time. This practice is like watching your breath in slow motion. I always love the slo-mo replays of athletic moves, recently of ice skaters in the winter Olympics. Ujjayi Pranayama gives you that beauty and mastery of the body, all while lying in Shavasana, yoga's relaxation pose.

Every yoga pose is for your spine. This dictum was told to me in all five of the Yoga Teacher Trainings that I took. Unfortunately, none of them could tell me what any of the poses were doing for the spine. In *Svaroopa*[®] yoga, we tell you. Every pose targets specific spinal areas, to get your stuck spots moving. In dance-like yoga sequences, the emphasis is on what moves. In *Svaroopa*[®] yoga, our emphasis is on what doesn't move. In acupuncture, it's called stagnation. An area of stagnation is a diagnosis waiting to be made. With breath and movement reaching in there, the diagnosis never happens.

Yoga poses make your body light and energetic, supple like the body of a child. Vibrant health, vitality and enthusiasm follow, like when you were a child. Yet it is the energetics of the poses that is most important. By decompressing your spine, your life energy (prana) becomes available to every part of your body. We see yoga miracles every day.

The need for healing brings lots of people into yoga classes. We love to help, both in classes as well as in private yoga therapy sessions. Yet the ancient discipline emphasizes the energetics, especially the energy current in your spine. For this, you need to sit.

The word "asana," usually translated as "yoga pose," actually means "to sit." All the other poses are for the purpose of giving you the seated pose. When you sit in an easy motionlessness for a long time, with your spine upright, you will experience the bliss of your own Beingness. Mantra, and especially Shaktipat, make this happen faster and easier.

Set into context, asana is part of an eight-fold system that prepares you for breakthrough. When practiced sequentially, the yogic process gives you the yamas, ways to handle the world better. Then you practice the niyamas, how to handle yourself in the world. Next comes asana, where you take care of your body and learn how to sit.

Many people begin with yoga poses, skipping yamas and niyamas. It's OK. Once you get some spinal release, you will naturally begin reorganizing your life just as described in the yamas and niyamas. They happen organically.

The practices become progressively more internal: yogic breathing leads you to a profound inward orientation. Stages of meditation follow, using your mind to explore your own multidimensionality. Yet you can begin with meditation. Our modern times and communications make it easy to learn this ancient practice. It is meditation that opens the doorway to your own Self, the entry point into your enlightenment. For this, you need to do more yoga.

THIS IS AN ARTICLE IN A YEAR-LONG SERIES, "SADHANA: PRACTICE & PROCESS"

To reach our teachers or to learn more about *Svaroopa*[®] Yoga & Meditation, contact us at
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³ Instructions available on Gurudevi's audio: [Mystical Yogic Breathing](#)