



## ALL DAY YOGA: Living Your Yoga On and Off the Mat

### I. The Onion-skin Theory of Yoga

Two people walk into their first yoga class. One of them leaves with the most exhilarating experience of their life. The other leaves with a sore neck, and never comes back. Why the difference?

Our entire being is like the layers of an onion. The outermost layer is the gross physical body. The next layer down is what feeds this layer, the breath being our most important “food.” This breath layer is linked to a layer of subtle physical energy—the *prana*, or inner winds.

These winds flow throughout our body in the next layer, the *nadis*, a network of tiny tubes or channels more subtle than the finest light. Upon the winds in these channels ride our thoughts themselves, the innermost layer, like a rider atop a horse: the amazing frontier where mind and body meet.

These levels are all interconnected; events at one level always have repercussions at the other levels. Let’s go first from the inside out. If we have calm thoughts, then the *prana* flows peacefully. This makes the breath flow deeply and smoothly, and the gross outer body receives its food in a very deep and regular way. The body becomes strong and trim.

The magic of yoga is that we can also work from the outside in. We perform an asana with the gross body in the proper way; this causes the breath to move smoothly. This in turn makes the *prana* flow well and—since our thoughts ride on the *prana*—we come out of the yoga class feeling more happy.

But back to the main question: Why do two people have two entirely different experiences of the same yoga class? If we can’t answer this question, then we can’t help the students who come to our classes.



There is another layer of the onion that lies even below the thoughts, and this is karma: **how much we have taken care of others.** This karma consists of billions upon billions of tiny seeds stored deep within the heart chakra.

If we take care of other people, seeds are planted within us which open and make wonderful people and a beautiful world around us. These seeds decide how all the other levels work: whether we do our *asanas* and turn into light, or whether they simply leave us with a sore neck.

## II. The Six Perfections, From the Yoga Sutra

### Giving

अभ्यासवैराग्याभ्यां तन्निरोधः ॥ १२ ॥

*Abhasya vairagyabhyam tan nirodhah.*

I.12 STOPPING IT REQUIRES CONSTANT PRACTICE, AND  
GIVING UP YOUR ATTACHMENTS.

दृष्टानुश्रविकविषयवितृष्णस्य वशीकारसंज्ञा वैराग्यम् ॥ १५ ॥

*Dirshata-anushravika vishaya vitirshnasya  
vashikara sanjnya vairagyam.*

I.15 GIVING UP YOUR ATTACHMENTS  
CONSISTS OF THE DECISION TO GAIN CONTROL  
OVER YOUR CRAVING FOR EXPERIENCES,  
SEEN OR ONLY HEARD OF.



## Kindness or Ethics, 1: Self-Control

अहिंसासत्यास्तेयब्रह्मचर्यापरिग्रहा यमाः ॥ ३० ॥

*ahinsa satya-asteya brahmacharya-aparigraha yamah*

II.30 THE DIFFERENT FORMS OF SELF-CONTROL  
ARE AVOIDING HARM TO ANYONE,  
ALWAYS TELLING THE TRUTH,  
NEVER STEALING FROM ANOTHER,  
KEEPING SEXUAL PURITY,  
AND OVERCOMING POSSESSIVENESS.

## Kindness or Ethics, 2: Commitments

शौचसंतोषतपःस्वाध्यायेश्वरप्रणिधानानि नियमाः ॥ ३२ ॥

*shaucha santosha tapah svadhyayeshvara pranidhanani niyamah*

II.32 THE COMMITMENTS ARE TO BE CLEAN,  
TO BE CONTENTED WITH WHATEVER WE HAVE,  
TO EMBRACE HARDSHIPS FOR HIGHER GOALS,  
TO ENGAGE IN REGULAR STUDY,  
AND TO SEEK OUR MASTER'S BLESSINGS.



## Patience

हेयं दुःखम् अनागतम् ॥ १६ ॥

*heyam duhkham anagatam*

II.16 THE PAIN THAT WE  
ARE RIDDING OURSELVES OF  
IS ALL THE PAIN  
THAT WOULD HAVE COME TO US  
IN THE FUTURE.

## Joy or Joyful Effort

तीव्रसंवेगानाम् आसन्नः ॥ २१ ॥

*Tivra sanveganam asannah.*

I.21 THE GOAL IS REACHED BY THOSE  
WHO ACT WITH INTENSE  
DEDICATION AND URGENCY.

## Stillness or Meditative Concentration

समाधिभावनार्थः क्लेशतनूकरणार्थश्च ॥ २ ॥

*samadhi bhavana-arthah klesha tanu karana-arthash cha*

II.2 NOW THE WHOLE PURPOSE OF MEDITATION  
IS TO MAKE OUR NEGATIVE THOUGHTS  
DWINDLE AWAY.



## Wisdom

अनित्याशुचिदुःखानात्मसु नित्यशुचिसुखात्मख्यातिरविद्या ॥ ५ ॥

*anitya-ashuchi duhkha-anatmasu nitya shuchi sukha-atma khyatir avidya*

### II.5 IN IGNORANCE WE MISUNDERSTAND OUR WORLD:

THINGS THAT CANNOT LAST,  
THINGS WHICH ARE UNCLEAR, AND PAINFUL,  
AND WHICH ARE NOT THEMSELVES;  
SEEM TO US AS IF THEY WILL LAST,  
AND AS IF THEY ARE CLEAR,  
AND PLEASANT, AND VERY MUCH THEMSELVES.

## III. All-Day Yoga

If we do yoga *asanas* for an hour a day, there are still 23 other hours of the day when we could be mindfully improving our yoga, just by how we go through the activities of our normal day. In Tibet, this is called *Chulam Neljor*: All-Day Yoga.

We can do all-day yoga on all five levels of the onion we talked about. With our outside, physical body, the most important form of All-Day Yoga is simply sitting up straight, all day long, no matter what we're doing. This doesn't sound like any great yogic practice, but in Tibet it was considered one of the most important yoga practices of all. Keeping the spine from slumping keeps the central channel open and free of kinks; our body becomes stronger and healthier.

As we sit up straight, and even as we walk around, it's important that we stay mindful to keep our stomach slightly tucked in, slightly tightening the muscles of the abdomen. This is a mild form of *bandha* or lock that keeps *prana* concentrated where we want it, at the chakra of the navel. Later then when we need to apply this lock during our *asanas*, it's ready there for us.



Simply keeping a smile on our face is another form of All-Day Yoga. This loosens up the termination points of the two side channels, and keeps them from choking off the central channel at the spot just above the point between our eyebrows. *Prana* can then flow more freely in this channel; we have more good thoughts; and we set off an upward cycle in our lives.

On the next level down, try throughout the day to keep up reflex breathing: exhaling normally but fully until a spasm or reflex in the belly tells us that it's time to inhale, and then inhaling normally and fully until we get a similar spasm or reflex in our chest. This assures a calm, steady flow of oxygen-rich food to our body and brain, all day long. Steady, calm breath assures calm and steady *prana* within the inner channels.

Most importantly, remember to use your thoughts to reach this *prana* from the inside. Keep up your practice of giving and taking all day long: put your loving eyes on that tired businessman slumped across from you in the subway, glance at the person in your office who's obviously stressed out today. Look at your husband, or your wife, or your child—anyone we take for granted—having a difficult evening at home. And then just quietly, silently, anonymously take away their trouble, and give them happiness, all on your breath. This is the ultimate All-Day Yoga. Do it...all day.

## From the Yoga Sutra

स तु दीर्घकालनैरन्तर्यसत्कारासेवितो दृढभूमिः ॥ १४ ॥

*Sa tu dirgha kala nairantarya  
satkara-asevito dirdha bhumih.*

I.14 YOU MUST CULTIVATE YOUR PRACTICE  
OVER AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF TIME;  
IT MUST BE STEADY, WITHOUT GAPS,  
AND IT MUST BE DONE CORRECTLY –  
FOR THEN A FIRM FOUNDATION IS LAID.