

Hatha Yoga

or

The Yogi Philosophy
of
Physical Well-Being

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Publisher`s Notice

Our original intention, when we arranged for the publication of this book, and, in fact almost up until it went to press, was that it should be, in a measure, supplementary to our little book, "*Science of Breath*," by the same author—that is to say, it should take up the subject of "Hatha Yoga" with the exception of that phase of the subject (breathing, etc.) which has been covered in that book. But at the last moment we decided that it would be a mistake to publish a book on "Hatha Yoga" with such an important part of the subject as Yogi Breathing omitted, even though that subject had been covered in another book. To omit that important phase of the subject would be working an injustice to those who purchased the new book, as many of such purchasers would never have read the first book, and would be justified in expecting that the present book would treat of all phases of the general subject. So, we decided to incorporate in the present volume those parts of "*Science of Breath*" which belonged strictly to the subject of "Hatha Yoga," omitting such portions as belonged rather to the other branch of the Yogi Philosophy, *i. e.*, Raja Yoga. We mention these facts that the purchasers of this book, who have also read our former book, might not accuse us of filling a new book with parts of an old one. We advertised this book, intending to give only the supplemental parts, as above stated, and the portions of "*Science of Breath*," which have been added thereto, have been inserted at our own expense, and in the nature of "good measure," or the "baker's dozen."

It is probable that, at some future time, we will make arrangements with the same author to take up the "Raja Yoga" portions of "*Science of Breath*," and to amplify and enlarge upon same, adding to the foundation already built, just as he has done in the present book upon the "Hatha Yoga" foundation contained in the little book first published by us. If this course is followed, the present book, "Hatha Yoga," will be the first of a series of "Yogi Books," taking up, in succession, the different phases of the great Yogi Philosophy, the little book "*Science of Breath*" serving as an introduction to the series, and as a handy little book for beginners, or those just becoming interested in the subject.

"Hatha Yoga," the present book, deals altogether with the physical. The psychical, mental and spiritual phases of the subject belong to the other branches of the work. "Hatha Yoga," however, will be a splendid foundation upon which the student may build, as a sound, strong, healthy body is necessary for one to do his best work and study, as the author of this book has so well explained in the text.

We have asked the author to write a preface to this book, but this he declines to do, as he feels that the book should speak for itself, and he does not like the idea of (as he expresses it) "intruding his personality" upon his readers, holding that truth should be self-evident and needing no personal touch to make it truth. This notice, therefore, will take the place of a preface in this case. Yogi
Publication Society.

Chicago, Ill., August, 1904.

To the healthy man and woman this book is respectfully dedicated.

They have done certain things (consciously or subconsciously) in order to bring themselves from infancy to healthy, normal maturity. And if you (who may not be so healthy and normal) will do just these same things, there is no reason why you, too, should not be just as are they. And this little book is our attempt to tell you just what this healthy man and woman did in order to be just what they are.

Read it, and then go and do likewise, so far as you are able.

If you doubt the truth of our statements, find some healthy man or woman, and watch him, or her, closely, and see whether he, or she, does not do the things we have pointed out to you to do in this book - and whether he, or she, does not leave undone the things we have asked you to avoid. We are willing to submit our teachings to this severe test - apply it.

Chapter I

What is “Hatha Yoga”

The science of Yoga is divided into several branches. Among the best known and leading divisions are (1) Hatha Yoga; (2) Raja Yoga; (3) Karma Yoga; (4) Gnani Yoga. This book is devoted only to the first named, and we will not attempt to describe the others at this time, although we will have something to say upon all of these great branches of Yoga, in future writings.

Hatha Yoga is that branch of the Yoga Philosophy which deals with the physical body - its care - its well-being- its health - its strength - and all that tends to keep it in its natural and normal state of health. It teaches a natural mode of living and voices the cry which has been taken up by many of the Western world: “Let us get back to Nature,” excepting that the Yogi does not have to *get* back for he is already there, for he has always clung close to nature and her ways, and has not been dazzled and befooled by the mad rush toward externals which has caused the modern civilized races to forget that such a thing as nature existed. Fashions and social ambitions have not reached the Yogi’s consciousness—he smiles at these things, and regards them as he does the pretenses of childish games—he has not been lured from nature’s arms, but continues to cuddle close up to the bosom of his good mother who has always given him nourishment, warmth and protection. Hatha Yoga is first, nature; second, *nature*, and last, nature. When confronted with a choice of methods, plans, theories, etc., apply to them the touchstone: “Which is the natural way,” and always choose that which seems to conform the nearest to nature. This plan will be a good one for our students to follow when their attention is directed to the many theories; “fads”; methods; plans and ideas, along health lines, with which the Western world is being flooded. For instance if they are asked to believe that they are in danger of losing their “magnetism”, by coming in contact with the earth, and are advised to wear rubber soles and heels upon their shoes, and to sleep in beds “insulated” with glass feet, to prevent nature (mother Earth) from sucking and drawing out of them the magnetism which she has just given them, let the students ask themselves “What does Nature say about this?” Then, in order to find out what nature says, let them see whether nature’s plans could have contemplated the manufacture and wearing of rubber soles, and glass feet for beds. Let them see whether the strong magnetic men, full of vitality, do these things—let them see whether the most vigorous races in the world have done these things—let them see whether they feel debilitated from lying down on the grassy sward, or whether the natural impulse of man is not to fling reclining on the bosom of their good mother earth, and whether the natural, impulse of man is not to fling himself upon the grassy bank—let them see whether the natural impulse of childhood is not to run barefoot; whether it does not refresh the feet to take off the shoes (rubber soles and all) and walk around barefooted; whether rubber boots are particularly conducive to “magnetism” and vitality, and so on. We give this merely as an illustration, not that we wish to waste time in discussing the merits or demerits of rubber soles, and glass bed feet as a preservative of magnetism. A little observation will teach the man that all of nature’s answers show him that he gets much of his magnetism from the earth, and that the earth is a battery charged with it, and is always willing and anxious to give forth its strength to man, instead of being devoid of it and to be dreaded as being anxious and likely to “draw” the magnetism from man, its child. Some of these latter day prophets will next be teaching that the air draws Prana from people, instead of giving it to them.

So, by all means, apply the nature test to all theories of this kind—our own included—and if they do not square with nature, discard them—the rule is a safe one. Nature knows what it is about—she is your friend and not your enemy.

There have been many and most valuable works written on the other branches of the Yogi Philosophy, but the subject of Hatha Yoga has been dismissed with a brief reference by most of the

writers upon Yoga. This is largely due to the fact that in India there exists a horde of ignorant mendicants of the lower fakir class, who pose as Hatha Yogis, but who have not the slightest conception of the underlying principles of that branch of Yoga. These people content themselves with obtaining control over some of the involuntary muscles of the body (a thing possible to anyone who will devote to it the time and trouble necessary for its accomplishment), thereby acquiring the ability to perform certain abnormal “tricks” which they exhibit to amuse and entertain (or disgust) Western travelers. Some of their feats are quite wonderful, when regarded from the standpoint of curiosity, and the performers would be worthy applicants for paying positions in the “dime museums” of America, indeed their feats being very similar to some performed by some of the Western “freaks.” We hear of these people exhibiting with pride such tricks and acquired habits as, for instance the ability to reverse the peristaltic action of the bowels and intestines, and the swallowing movements of the gullet, so as to give a disgusting exhibition of a complete reversal of the normal processes of those parts of the body, so that articles introduced into the colon may be carried upward and ejected from the gullet, by this reversed movement of the involuntary muscles, etc. This, from a physician’s point of view, is most interesting, but to the layman is a most disgusting thing, and one utterly unworthy of a man. Other feats of these so-called Hatha Yogis are about on a par with the instance which we have reluctantly given, and we know of nothing that they perform which is of the slightest interest or benefit to the man or woman seeking to maintain a healthy, normal, natural body. These mendicants are akin to the class of fanatics in India who assume the title “Yogi”, and who refuse to wash the body, for religious reasons; or who sit with uplifted arm until it is withered; or who allow their finger nails to grow until they pierce their hands; or who sit so still that their birds build nests in their hair; or who perform other ridiculous feats, in order to pose as “holy men” before the ignorant multitude, and, incidentally, to be fed by the ignorant classes who consider that they are earning a future reward by the act. These people are either rank frauds, or self-deluded fanatics, and as a class are on a par with a certain class of beggars in American and European large cities who exhibit their self-inflicted wounds, and bogus deformities, in order to wring pennies from the passer-by, who turns his head and drops the coppers in order to get the thing out of his sight.

The people whom we have just mentioned are regarded with pity by the real Yogis who regard Hatha Yoga as an important branch of their philosophy, because it gives man a healthy body—a good instrument with which to work—a fitting temple for the Spirit.

In this little book, we have endeavored to give in a plain, simple form, the underlying principles of Hatha Yoga—giving the Yogi plan of physical life. And we have tried to give you the reason for each plan. We have found it necessary to first explain to you in the terms of Western physiology the various functions of the body, and then to indicate Nature’s plans and methods, which one should adhere to as far as possible. It is not a “doctor book”, and contains nothing about medicine, and practically nothing about the cure of diseases, except where we indicate what one should do in order to get back to a natural state. Its keynote is the Healthy Man—its main purpose to help people to conform to the standard of the normal man. But we believe that that which keeps a healthy man healthy will make an unhealthy man healthy, if he follows it. Hatha Yoga preaches a sane, natural, normal manner of living and life, which, if followed will benefit any one. It keeps close to nature and advocates a return to natural methods in preference to those which have grown up around us in our artificial habits of living.

This book is simple—very simple—so simple, in fact, that many will most likely throw it aside because it contains nothing new or startling. They have probably hoped for some wonderful recital of the far famed freak tricks of the mendicant Yogis (?) and plans whereby these feats could be duplicated by those who would read it. We must tell such people that this book is not that kind of book. We do not tell you how to assume seventy-four kinds of postures, nor how to draw linen through the

It must not be forgotten, however, that as man advances along the scale and the Spiritual Mind begins to unfold, man acquires a something akin to instinct - we call it Intuition - and this leads him back to nature. We can see the influence of this dawning consciousness, in the marked movement back toward natural living and the simple life, which is growing so rapidly the last few years. We are beginning to laugh at the absurd forms, conventions and fashions which have grown up around our civilization and which, unless we get rid of them, will pull down that civilization beneath its growing weight.

The man and woman in whom the Spiritual Mind is unfolding, will become dissatisfied with the artificial life and customs, and will find a strong inclination to return to simpler and more natural principles of living, thinking and acting, and will grow impatient under the restraint and artificial coverings and bandages with which man has bound himself during the ages. He will feel the homing instinct—"after long ages we are coming home." And the Intellect will respond, and seeing the follies it has perpetrated, will endeavor to "let go" and return to nature, doing its own work all the better by reason of having allowed the Instinctive Mind to attend to its own work without meddling.

The whole theory and practice of Hatha Yoga is based upon this idea of return to nature—the belief that the Instinctive Mind of man contains that which will maintain health under normal conditions. And accordingly those who practice its teachings learn first to "let go," and then to live as closely to natural conditions as is possible in this age of artificiality. And this little book has been devoted to pointing out nature's ways and methods, in order that we may return to them. We have not taught a new doctrine, but have merely cried out to you to come with us to the good old way from which we have strayed.

We are not unmindful of the fact that it is much harder for the man and woman of the West to adopt natural methods of living, when all their surroundings impel them the other way, but still each may do a little each day for himself and the race, in this direction, and it is surprising how the old artificial habits will drop from a person—one by one.

In this our concluding chapter, we wish to impress upon you the fact that one may be led by the Spirit in the physical life, as well as in the mental. One may implicitly trust the Spirit to guide him in the right way in the matter of everyday living as well as in the more complicated matters of life. If one will trust in the spirit, he will find that his old appetites will drop away from him—his abnormal tastes will disappear—and he will find a joy and pleasure in the simpler living which will make life seem like a different thing to him.

One should not attempt to divorce his belief in the Spirit leadings from his physical life—for Spirit pervades everything, and manifests in the physical (or rather *through* it) as well as in the highest mental states. One may eat with the Spirit and drink with it, as well as think with it. It will not do to say "*this* is spiritual, and that is not," for all is spiritual, in the highest sense.

And finally, if one wishes to make the most of his physical life—to have as perfect an instrument as may be for the expression of the Spirit—let him live his life all the way through in that trust and confidence in the spiritual part of his nature. Let him realize that the Spirit within him is a spark from the Divine Flame—a drop from the Ocean of Spirit—a ray from the Central Sun. Let him realize that he is an eternal being—always growing, developing and unfolding. Always moving toward the great goal, the exact nature of which man, in his present state, is unable to grasp with his imperfect mental vision. The urge is always onward and upward. We are all a part of that great Life which is manifesting itself in an infinitude of infinitude of forms and shapes. We are all a part of it. If we can but grasp the faintest idea of what this means, we will open ourselves up to such an influx of Life and vitality that our bodies will be practically made over and will manifest perfectly. Let each of us form an idea of a Perfect

Body, and endeavor to so live that we will grow into its physical form—and we can do this.

We have tried to tell you the laws governing the physical body, that you may conform to them as near as may be—interposing as little friction as possible to the inflow of that great life and energy which is anxious to flow through us.

Let us return to nature, dear students, and allow this great life to flow through us freely,
and all will be well with us.

Let us stop trying to do the whole thing ourselves
let us just let the thing do its own work for us. It only asks confidence and non-resistance
let us give it a chance.