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TOPIC OF THE MONTH **May 2015**

NOTES FROM ASHTANGA YOGA CONFERENCE BALI, INDONESIA APRIL 5-10, 2015 **Continued from April 2015**

Notes from David Swenson's Workshop

If you ever get the chance to take a workshop with David Swenson I highly recommend it. He is by far one of my favorite workshops to attend. He is a good speaker, heart felt, funny, and informational on the ashtanga practice.

David Swenson has an amazing story. After many years of ashtanga yoga with Pattabhi Jois, he feels less than enlightened . . . so he decides to become a Hari Krishna . . . after a few years of that he is standing on the street corner trying to sell those Hari Krishna books (all the money goes to some Hari Krishna monastery) . . . His mother walks up and says "oh sweetie, no one is going to buy one of those books, I will buy one". He stood there thinking, my mother just showed me unconditional love . . . this Hari Krishna stuff is not enlightenment either — and he was sick of trying to be a salesman for the Hari Krishnas. He heads off traveling all over the world . . . returns home, sick with dysentery, with scabies from sleeping in cheap places, and injured from surfing in India . . .

He hears Pattabhi Jois is coming to the states . . . after many years of a hiatus (I can't remember exactly maybe 5-6 or more) he decides to go see him. He gets there and realizes Pattabhi Jois does not recognize him, which leaves him feeling a bit sad. Toward the end of practice Pattabhi Jois walks up to drop him back and feels his spine — He says "David! you have come back". Pattabhi Jois remembered by his spine :) He and Pattabhi Jois reconnected and David has stayed with the practice ever since.

The moral of his story was . . . I went in search of enlightenment . . . it turns out the most the most enlightened people were his family, and the practice that was best for him was waiting for him all along. He toured the world in search of enlightenment and it happened to be right at home :)

And you know how the saying goes . . . before enlightenment up dog/down dog . . . after enlightenment . . . up dog/down dog . . .

Spirituality does not come from the practice . . . it comes from focus, intention, and action. Growth in Yoga is compassion for Self and for the world around you.

Some of his other quotes:

How many asanas are there? . . . As many as it takes!

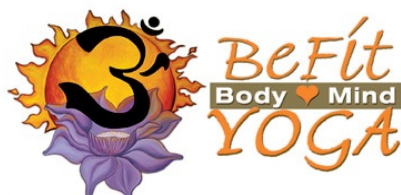
The most advanced asana picture is Pattabhi Jois standing in Samasthitih.

Mysore is just a place. Yoga is still yoga. You don't need to go to Mysore to learn Ashtanga.

It is very easy to make things difficult and very difficult to make things easy . . .

The most amazing teachers can take a complex idea and break it down and teach it simply.

Alignment is only important to the extent of avoiding injury. Yoga doesn't need to be perfect or pretty



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The practice is the Guru . . . the teacher is only the facilitator
Breath is universal . . . we don't breathe in Hindi, German, or Arabic . . . We all breathe the same language. One of the reasons us ashtangis form little families all over the world :)

The word question contains the word "quest." Questions contain the juice in life.

We are always one breath away from dying.

Yoga is like mental floss :)

On Emotional Releases

Granthis are blocks in our body (granthis is Sanskrit for knot) . . . for example, as a child or a young adult we might be faced with something we can't quite handle . . . so we subconsciously say to ourselves . . . I can't process this, I will just store it in my lower back . . . or my hamstrings . . . or my shoulder. At some point — if we want to mature, progress, grow up . . . we have to address these granthis. Yoga — and especially Ashtanga yoga — gives you the tools to do just that. Sometimes after a practice (or during!) you will feel emotional releases. This is normal and good!

Many people have the emotional release in the form of crying . . . but some in the form of laughing . . . Which ever form you experience it in — If it happens to you — Don't make a big deal of it, notice it, enjoy it. Eat some grounding foods, relax, don't pay too much attention to it . . . let it go. You might . . . for some unexplained reason start to feel better in your life :)

Excerpt from Bobbi

Even though we don't need science prove our yoga practice — I do enjoy sharing the science behind it as it comes available to us. And remember . . . Science is about 400 years old . . . The vedas and other yogic literature is about 7,000 years old . . .

We now have some science backing up "the issues are in the tissues": **Engrams** or (Dianetics) are the means that memory is stored in the brain and other neural tissues.

(Engrams are means by which memory traces are stored^[1] as biophysical or biochemical changes in the brain (and other neural tissue) in response to external stimuli.

They are also sometimes thought of as a biological neural network or fragment of memory, sometimes using a hologram analogy to describe its action in light of results showing that memory appears not to be localized in the brain. The existence of engrams is posited by some scientific theories to explain the persistence of memory and how memories are stored in the brain. The existence of neurologically defined engrams is not significantly disputed, though their exact mechanism and location has been a focus of persistent research for many decades.)

http://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Engram_%28neuropsychology%29

It does make sense, we know our muscles have s memory. A muscle can remember a repeated action without brain involvement -- hence the reason for some of the repetition of the Ashtanga practice. It allows you to get off the physical plane and in a meditative state.



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Notes from Nancy's session

Nancy's main focus was on using alignment to "help the bandhas automatically come". She also taught us Baba Hari Dass's Tri Bandha exercise to assist us in finding our bandhas (see below).

Nancy spoke about how alignment helps us connect with our bandhas and how traditional yoga alignment (ex. Iyengar style alignments) are not conducive to the ashtanga practice. In ashtanga we pull into our abdomen, slightly rounding our backs as we forward bend (vs. Iyengar style with hyper-extend the spine in forward bending postures), this rounding and pulling in of our abdomen automatically helps you connect to the important inner lift of the abdominals. Many cultures and traditions point to the importance of the digestive fire, the core of our body, the "powerhouse" in our abdomen — and truly it is important, learning to stay connected to this inner lift most of your day improves:

- ॐ digestion
- ॐ absorption of nutrients
- ॐ burning of toxins
- ॐ movement of the lymphatic system (helping our immune system)
- ॐ deepening of our breath
- ॐ and it gives us lightness in our movements throughout the day making movement easier.

Quotes from Nancy:

Mula bandha all the time . . . Jalandhara bandha on inhale holds only.

Alignment refers to the external lines of the body, not the internal flow of energy. Ashtanga works with the inner flow of energy.

In Ashtanga, we don't use the mind — the body is the intelligence for your practice.

To practice Ashtanga, you don't need to know anything. You just have to breathe. There are no hard + fast rules in Ashtanga; just do what is comfortable and what works for you.

Pranayama quiets the ego. It allows you to learn to let the energy flow through you without being attached to it.

Keep your yoga practice as something that you love to do, not just another tool to abuse the body. Yoga is here to break our mental picture of ourselves, but not to break US.

She commented on David Swenson's quote "We're all one breath away from dying". The breath takes us through the postures and holds the key on how to get through our fear.

Nancy and David did not learn urdhva dhanurasana until they learned all of second series. There was NO urdhva dhanurasana in primary!

If you don't feel like practicing your energy is stuck . . . blare your favorite rock and roll music, and at least go and do 3 surya namaskar a's and finishing postures . . . sometimes just the sun salutes is enough to move the stuck energy and you actually end up doing more practice :)

Below is a copy of page 21 & 22 from Baba Hari Dass's book "Ashtanga Yoga Primer" — this is what Nancy taught us in her workshop.

TRI BANDHA (Three Locks)

Three *bandhas* (body locks) are used in the practice of *pranayama*, which help to control the flow of *prana*. Mastery of the *bandhas* insures correct *prana-*

yama, so these three methods should be practiced carefully for three months before beginning *pranayama*.

Mula Bandha

(Anal Lock)

Sit in any meditation posture. (*Siddhasana* is best for this method.) Inhale slowly and completely, contracting and lifting the anal sphincter muscle. Exhale slowly and release. Start with ten rounds, gradually increasing to twenty.

When the technique is perfected and used with *pranayama*, contract slowly with inhalation, hold the contraction during retention, and release slowly with exhalation.

Mula bandha causes *apana vayu*, which normally flows downward, to rise and unite with *prana vayu* at the navel center, which then awakens *kundalini*. *Mula bandha* increases concentration, strengthens the reproductive glands, and stimulates the gastric fire.

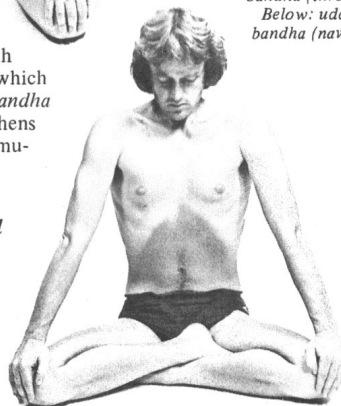
Jalandhara Bandha

(Throat Lock)

Sit in a meditation posture. Inhale slowly; then bend the head forward and press the chin tightly into the hollow of the neck, keeping the spine straight. This stops the



Top: *Jalandhara bandha* (throat lock)
Below: *uddiyana bandha* (navel lock)



breath. Hold as long as possible without strain. Raise the chin; then exhale slowly. Begin with ten rounds and increase gradually to twenty rounds.

According to Yoga physiology a subtle nectar flows from *sahasrara chakra*, falls to *manipura chakra*, and is consumed by the gastric fire. *Jalandhara bandha* prevents the nectar from falling, which brings calmness, long life, and good health. Thus the name *jalandhara*, which means "cloud-holding, receptacle of vital fluid".

Jalandhara bandha presses on *vishuddha chakra* where there is a network of subtle nerves. By pressing the chin tightly against this center, the movement of energy in sixteen centers is stopped, which brings infinite peace.

Uddiyana Bandha

(Navel Lock)

Place hands, fingers pointing inward, on thighs just above the knees. Exhale slowly and completely. With breath held out, pull the abdomen up and in as far as possible toward the spine. Hold as long as comfortable. Relax and inhale slowly. Exhale and do another round. Start with ten rounds, gradually increasing to twenty rounds.

Uddiyana bandha pushes *prana* into *sushumna*, forcing *kundalini* upward. Thus the name *uddiyana*, which means "flying up". *Uddiyana bandha* increases gastric fire; strengthens the lungs; and alleviates indigestion, abdominal diseases, and menstrual disorders.



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Notes from Jeffrey Armstrong (the guy who MC'd the Panel discussion)

<http://www.jeffreyarmstrong.com>

He is a vedic scholar and a friend of the host of the conference. He had great information and I enjoyed listening to him, but he tried to steal the show a few times from who we were all there to see . . .

The Universe is your University . . . school goes K through University

Darshan meaning "to see" comes from the word drishti which means to perceive:

So we have six blind men and one elephant . . . each blind man is touching the elephant :

First one says oh I feel a wall (he's touching its side)

Second one says I feel a brush (he's touching the tail)

Third one says No I feel a pillar (he's touching the leg)

Fourth one says no its a snake of some kind (he's touching the trunk)

Fifth one says umm I think you are all wrong I feel a nice silky piece of material (he was touching the ear) and the

Sixth one says — you are all wrong I am feeling a smooth vessel (tusk) . . .

So were they all wrong? Or perhaps they were all right! Each one perceived a different piece of truth of the elephant . . . Each perceived a different piece of the whole. Same thing with some of the varieties of ashtanga . . . maybe they are all a different piece of truth!

Your body is your "room" or house . . . your mind is your attic . . . and it happened to be decorated by your Grandma ... Or if it is not a decorated attic . . . it is filled with a bunch of stuff you collected over the years that you are too attached to . . .

Meaning yoga can install new things in your attic (mind) to crowd out the old stuff, generally comprised of junk you collected or stuff that was put there by your grandma . . .

on Vedic astrology:

Women are ruled by the moon . . . there are 27 zodiacs in Vedic astrology . . . the moon cycles through all of them -- so each zodiac imposes a different mood on the the woman. SOOO when a man asks what turns you on . . . you say: When?

Men are ruled by the sun which is constant. Like the Shiva Lingham.

Prem and Radha

Fun Da Mental = Fun before the mental

When yoga came west it had to divorce Ayurveda . . . Let's get them in counseling and put Yoga and Ayurveda back together. They are complimentary.

We're Tubular . . . We are made of a bunch of tubes.

Radha: don't forget to keep your femininity and your softness. Be kinder to yourself in the practice.

AMA = American Medical Association = ama in sanskrit . . . TOXIC SLUDGE. AMA is toxic sludge . . . can't help but to laugh at that aphorism . . . The American medical association is akin to toxic sludge !



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Danny Paradise Notes

<http://www.dannyparadise.com>

Danny is a friend of mine :) and fellow Hawaii lover. He lives on Molokai which is a small neighboring island in the County of Maui. He is also a musician and came to ashtanga yoga all hunched over from playing guitar (in David Swenson's words) . . . Danny learned ashtanga yoga from Nancy and David Williams and after practicing the ashtanga method for at least 10 years, he started to mix up the series and have fun with it. His workshops are this type of practice, his practices usually last an hour or less and are fun :) . He also practices and teaches pranayama and meditation and is a big believer in these practices as well. His workshops also include his love of Shamanism and Nature including the Shamanic traditions of Native North and South Americans, from indigenous cultures of the Pacific, Tibet, Africa and South East Asia. Some of these traditions also include Mayan, Egyptian, Hawaiian...

How yoga saved his life:

Breathing story

Danny got stung by a jellyfish swimming in Goa while swimming alone. He managed to swim to the beach and collapse. He laid on the beach in anaphylactic shock for 2 hours! Most people die in 4 minutes (your lungs collapse in anaphylactic shock). He said as he lay there . . . He realized he was not breathing! It took all his might to gather up the lung strength to take one deep inspiration about each minute. He did that for 2 hours before someone found him. Then they had to carry him one mile to the road, and throw him in a car. At the hospital he got an anti - histamine shot and was breathing normally in 2 minutes . . . If it was not for the strength of his lungs he would be dead.

On daily practice: You do what is appropriate for the day.

New Ashtanga is setting you up for RSI (repetitive stress injuries) injuries.

Kirtan means "crossing over" - the ordinary world meets the extraordinary world.

Alpha/beta/theta states of brain. Delta state is the kundalini state. Fusing of mortal mind w/ the divine mind.

Healing is a lifetime practice.

Origins of yoga = a meditative communication with nature.

If you need to change circumstances, change them as quickly as possible. Or you can choose to hold onto old patterns and problems . . .

Rules for life:

Am I happy with what I am doing?

Does it add to the confusion on Earth, or does it contribute toward peace and contentment?

How will I be known when I die?



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Eileen Hall notes:

She teaches in Australia, seems to be a wonderful teacher, and she has an amazing story. She studied with both Pattabhi Jois and Sharath and does not seem to have any issues with the “new” ashtanga. I think she also had some Iyengar training, much of her alignment seemed to have some Iyengar influences. I did not connect with her so much, but I do have one quote she shared from Pattabhi Jois that I like:

Pattabhi Jois said to Eileen when she asked about what books to read on yoga:
“Practice, Practice, and every day will turn another page in your book.”