

DOYOGA NEWSLETTER

August 12, 2010



The Launch of the Swatantrya Certification Standard Expanding Possibilities

August marks a last chance to rest, relax, take it slow and casual in the summer heat before stepping into the fresh start of fall. And the promise of fall is, as we all know from our school days, a time of new learning and the opportunity to try on a new way of being.

So now is a good time to set the foundations for something new in our own world of yoga. I've received a huge and encouraging response to the idea of the 'Swatantrya' school that I set forth in my March newsletter, and I'm ready to make good on the promise.

The purpose of what I'm calling the 'Swatantrya' (Swuh-TAAN-treeya) certification standard is to provide a new paradigm in yoga teacher certification, particularly with regard to the physical and therapeutic aspects of yoga practice.

Swatantrya is an **open** (as opposed to a 'closed') certification system. That is to say, it certifies excellence in learning and skills at practical application of knowledge in yoga, regardless of your affiliation with any (or even no) particular style of yoga. As such, it is open to practitioners of all styles of yoga.

The focus of the Swatantrya standard is upon the expansion of learning in the field of the therapeutic applications of yoga. When we step back to look at the big picture, we see that huge advances of understanding are being made in many health-related fields, such as different forms of massage therapy, kinesiology, and so on. Yoga certainly has something to offer, and by the same token would greatly benefit from this expanding pool of knowledge. The Swatantrya standard is meant to encourage learning and dialogue between yoga and these disciplines, as well as between styles of yoga.

A Swatantrya certification indicates that a teacher has completed a course of learning according to a set of standards designed specifically as a basis for a good therapeutics education. This standard is distinct from — and goes beyond — the basic requirements for certification as a yoga teacher, such as those set by the Yoga Alliance. The Swatantrya system is not about certifying you as a good yoga teacher, with the requisite basic knowledge of poses, sequencing, philosophy, basic anatomy, contraindications and so on. There are already plenty of good training and certification

Find out more and enroll at
www.Swatantrya.com

What Hours Qualify Toward Certification?

Hours with Doug Keller — including past workshops and trainings

- future workshops and trainings will be focused on meeting specific requirements

Hours with other teachers on therapy-related topics — including past workshops

- what is required is a short write-up of what was covered in the workshop or training

Independent Study

- independent study and research is encouraged, credit hours will be granted, and support will be provided for sharing your work

Other Yoga Therapeutics Certification Programs

- hours will be granted for the various levels of certification in programs with established teachers

Yoga Alliance Certification

- A baseline of 100 hours will be granted for a 200 hour Yoga Alliance certification. Additional hours for 500 hour Yoga Alliance certification will be granted according to the areas of study in the 500 hour program.

programs available for that level of education, and Swatantrya is not intended as a basic education program for new teachers.

Neither does Swatantrya set forth a new 'style.' Swatantrya assumes you've already found your own favored style, or are developing it. In any case, there are enough 'styles' already!

Swatantrya is not about style, but about substance. Swatantrya does not evaluate or seek to direct your style or manner of teaching. You are evaluated simply by whether you can demonstrate that you *know* the

material you have studied, and can utilize or teach it effectively.

And it allows room for personal expansion and specialization. Beyond satisfying the basic requirements for credit hours, you are free to define and develop your own field of study within the realm of yoga therapeutics. And Swatantrya will provide a forum through which you can come to be known by your efforts and contributions.

This approach to certification is actually quite unlike our current style-based standard for education and certification.

Why Swatantrya?

An Alternative to Style-Based Certification

At present, certification in the many 'styles' of yoga follow the paradigm of a business franchise: a teacher is trained in the methods, terminology and sequencing that are distinctive of that particular 'style' of yoga.

'Certification' essentially means that the teacher sufficiently represents that style, and is thus permitted to teach under the title of that style.

Path to Fulfillment

The Swatantrya Standard is modeled after the standards of a school or university, whose primary purpose is to provide a relevant and necessary education in the foundations for excellence in one's chosen field.

A university is not organized around a single personality or set of teachings, nor does it require ongoing membership. It exists to set and maintain a standard for successful learning, and confirm your progress and achievement in your field of learning.

continued on page 3

The status of 'certified' usually lasts only for as long as the certified teacher adheres to its methods and teachings, as judged by its founder.

Usually a recurring fee is also required to maintain certification, as well as 'continuing education' specifically in that style to maintain uniformity of teaching.

While this approach is effective for maintaining consistency of the 'product,' it has its downside. All too often, certified teachers are actually discouraged from studying with

continued on page 3



An open mind is the foundation for an open-hearted and inclusive community. In the yoga community, our shared love of yoga, wisdom and of practice is the value that draws us together and is the foundation for mutual respect. Our highest wish is to deepen our understanding and practice of yoga with an open mind and open heart — free to practice and to teach yoga according to our own nature, interests and potential.

Expanding Possibilities continued from page 2

The primary focus of the Swatantrya standard will be upon the knowledge associated with the healing aspects of yoga — healing in body, mind and heart. It is a path of learning in which each member is evaluated (for certification) according to his or her understanding of the field of knowledge at hand (anatomy, kinesiology, therapeutic assessment, modification of asana practice, etc.) and ability to express, demonstrate or put that knowledge to use, rather than by his or her style of presentation or adherence to any particular or proprietary set of teachings.

A New Paradigm

To sum it up, the establishment of the Swatantrya Standard is not the establishment of

yet another 'style' of yoga. Nor does it stake a claim as to any proprietary set of teachings. As a foundation for certification, it welcomes all styles, and invites a softening of the boundaries of 'style' for the sake of the fulfillment of the promise of yoga.

I am offering the establishment of the Swatantrya Standard as a step toward that new paradigm. Whether it is realized and fulfilled depends upon all of us; and the validity of our standards will depend upon the quality of effort and contribution of all who participate. And so I invite you to join in this effort to fulfill the promise of yoga.

Doug Keller



'Why Swatantrya' continued from page 2

teachers of any other style, in the name of maintaining the 'purity' of the style. This inevitably *narrows* the experience of certified teachers.

It also tends to dictate how a certified teacher invests his or her time and money. Few yoga teachers have a surplus of either of these, and there is also a risk involved. A teacher may *choose* to invest his or her limited resources in expanding his or her horizons by studying with other teachers. But if that teacher is then judged to have stepped 'outside' of the methods and teachings of the style, certification can be revoked — or the teacher can be strongly encouraged or provoked to forego his certification in the style he or she originally invested so much in learning.

Because of the shortcomings of this paradigm for yoga training and certification, many teachers choose not to identify exclusively with any particular 'style' of yoga.

Such teachers put themselves at a disadvantage, since there is little official recognition of their open-mindedness and excellence in learning. Moreover, the current system of yoga styles fails to provide clear path of education for teachers who want to explore and expand their abilities and talents. Although the *teachings* of yoga are centered around goals of 'enlightenment' and 'liberation,' the *current system* of yoga education encourages dependence and gives little support to genuine independence.

The Swatantrya Standard exists to honor and validate that independence. By providing support and recognition for learning, the purpose of the Swatantrya standard is to encourage and reward the growth of knowledge in yoga through open learning and the sharing of ideas.

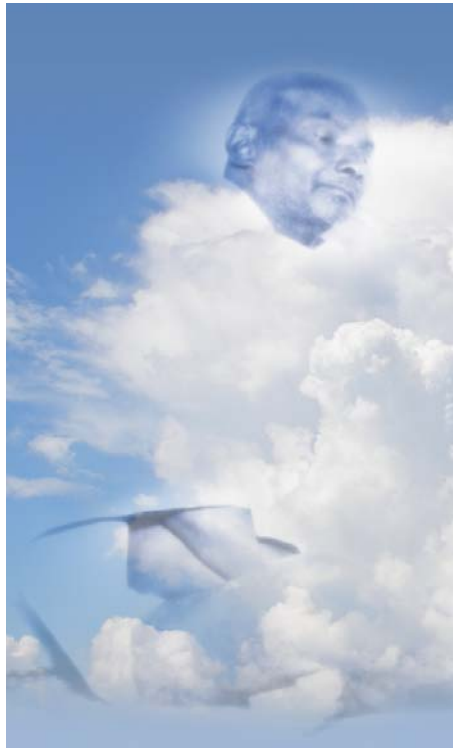


The Meaning of Swatantrya

Swatantrya is a philosophical term that is rich with meaning. The meaning of the Sanskrit word 'Swatantrya' is 'independent freedom:' it affirms the independent freedom and potential of the self ('swa') to expand ('tan') in awareness and knowledge.

This is a 'tantric' insight into the nature of freedom. The tantric teachings of yoga are based upon the understanding that the universe — its order, beauty and evolutionary wisdom — arises out of the expansion of Consciousness, the creative energy of the universe itself, which is fully self-aware and unlimited in its potential for manifestation and self-expression. Moreover, tantric philosophy affirms that the entire universe is a community of this evolving energy, and thus affirms the role of community in yoga as well.

Each individual is a manifestation of that same creative consciousness. Thus the happiness and well-being of each individual depends upon how



each fulfills the possibilities for the growth and expansion inherent within them as forms of consciousness, with the support of the community.

Swatantrya — the tantric term for this independent freedom which is our own essential nature — is at the foundation of the tantric understanding of 'yoga.' In other words, the blueprint for success and fulfillment exists equally and uniquely

Citi Swatantra Vishwa Siddhi Hetuhu.

Pratyabhijnahridayam

Consciousness
in her freedom
brings about
all wonders
all attainments

Citi (Consciousness) is

Prakasha — illumination, the light in which all forms appear
Vimarsha — to touch, to feel and reflect upon the experience, to understand

Swatantrya is your freedom to shine your own light, to feel, to understand, and to succeed.

within each one of us, and yoga provides the path to that fulfillment.

Yoga: Freedom in Community

An open mind is the foundation for an open-hearted and inclusive community. In the yoga community, our shared love of yoga, wisdom and of practice is the value that draws us together and is the foundation for mutual respect. When our focus is primarily upon yoga, more than upon

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Summer Reading

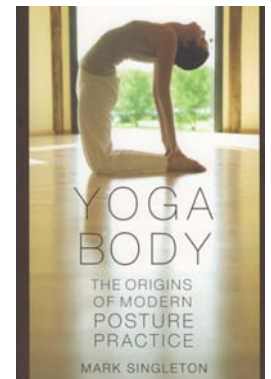
Rethinking Old Assumptions

A number of books have come out in the past year that finally shed light on important aspects of the evolution of yoga — aspects which have largely been inhabited by assumptions and hazy myths.

The immediate effect of some of these works has been rather unsettling for many — particularly those which, perhaps for the first time, look really closely at the evolution of what we know as 'hatha yoga' in just the last century.

Yoga Body by Mark Singleton

Yoga Body has caused the biggest splash, and rightfully so, with a well-documented look at all of the influences which fed into the evolution of 'postural yoga' as we know it today. Influences include the 'bodybuilding' movement of the early 20th century. For example, Surya Namaskar was originally part of a body-building routine taught by KV Iyer (a 'physical culture' celebrity) and his student, the Indian



continued on page 5

championing a particular style of yoga, the community as a whole benefits from that genuine and unconditional open-heartedness.

Yoga deserves a system of certification which encourages and supports that kind of community.

The Swatantrya Standard establishes and inclusive community of independent yogis who, while fully committed to their own style or form

of practice, are like-minded in their love and respect for yoga and the fields of knowledge related to yoga.

Our highest wish is to deepen our understanding and practice of yoga with an open mind and open heart — free to practice and to teach yoga according to our own nature, interests and potential.

Swatantrya affirms a community that allows that same freedom to everyone

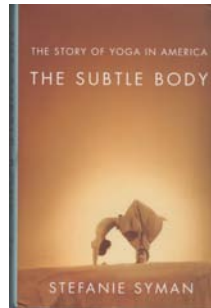
who wishes to join in it, welcoming and encouraging the independence and growth of practitioners and teachers, asking only that they learn, enquire, and fully develop their abilities to express and share their knowledge of yoga.



bodybuilding champion Anant Rao at the Mysore Palace. It was adopted and adapted by Krishnamacharya and of course became a mainstay of vinyasa yoga. Other influences include the harmonial gymnastics of Great Britain practiced by women (which, although it was not considered ‘yoga’ at the time, contained the same ‘poses’ or ‘suppleness’ routines that we find in yoga — which helps to explain why and how hatha yoga practice in the West came to be so overwhelmingly populated by women), as well as ‘esoteric dance’ and the general ‘physical culture’ movement in India. The book also explores the perceptions of the ‘yogi’ that shaped the attitudes of popularizers of yoga such as Vivekananda.

I found the overall effect of the book to be liberating, showing that the physical practice as we know it today did indeed evolve with an eye to improving physical health and well-being, and was a *transnational* phenomenon. This truth about postural yoga grants us permission to explore and develop the practice for the purpose of health. Moreover, the book provides an antidote to inflexible dogmas about the nature of the practice. In the end, the

spiritual traditions and teachings of India indeed belong to India; at the same time, the book makes it clear that ‘hatha yoga,’ as it is practiced throughout the world today, belongs to the world.



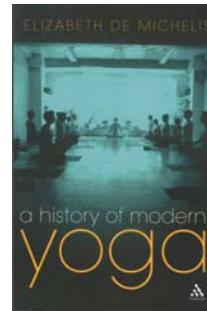
The Subtle Body by Stefanie Syman specifically traces how yoga found its way into american culture — the teachers, thinkers and,

yes, celebrities who helped adapt and make yoga acceptable to american tastes. This book is also written for more popular tastes, whereas ‘Yoga Body’ is a bit more scholarly.

On the downside, Syman’s book tells you more about ‘America the Melting Pot’ and the genius of yoga’s adapters and interpreters, than about yoga itself. There are also so many threads to the dispersion of yoga in the US that it’s challenging — for the writer as well as the reader — to keep up with them all.

A History of Modern Yoga by

Elizabeth de Michelis is harder (and far more expensive) to find. But it is worthwhile as a look at the *spirituality* of yoga philosophy and how it was received by the west, rather than being centered on the physical practice itself.



It handles both the western esoteric movement, with roots back to the Plato Academy of the 15th century and up to the American Transcendentalist movement, and the concurrent reinterpretation and transformation wrought by Vivekananda’s ‘neo-Vedantic’ version of yoga philosophy, which Vivekananda described as ‘Raja Yoga.’ His updated version of yoga philosophy made yoga intellectually and spiritually acceptable to the west.

Whereas ‘Yoga Body’ focuses on the influences behind Ashtanga Vinyasa Yoga, ‘A History of Modern Yoga’ ends with a consideration of these influences upon the ‘Theory and

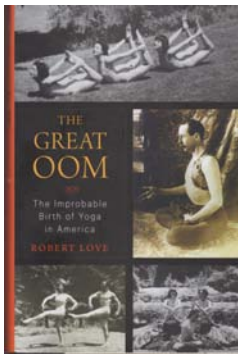
Practice of Iyengar Yoga’ — culminating in what she calls ‘Neo-Hatha Yoga.’

This is a bit more densely written than either of the two preceding books, largely because of the nature of the subject matter it takes up. But it is far more satisfying as a look into the nature of the ‘spirituality’ of yoga that found its way to our shores.

The Great Oom by Robert Love is a lot more fun as a tale of Pierre Bernard, America’s first and most original yoga celebrity, rock star, chameleon, and popularizer of

‘tantra’ and ‘yoga.’

“Bernard’s hatha yoga thrived on the changing tides of a nation constantly reinventing its pursuit of well-being. Through the Third Great



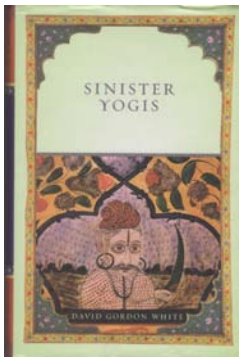
Awakening movements of Theosophy and spiritualism, the health fads of John “Corn Flakes” Kellogg...and the self-help psychology of Emile Coue, Bernard tapped into the metaphysical zeitgeist — not to mention many a well-heeled lady’s heart — to keep seekers coming to him to learn the cobra pose.”

In other words, we’ve been here before, and it’s both interesting and fun to read about how it went the first time around.

It’s a very human story of the shifting fortunes of a self-reinvented (and flawed) man-on-a-mission who found himself dealing with the forces of celebrity while working hard to stay on top — coming up with tricks and

hooks to maintain his own celebrity. His influence upon American yoga is considerable, though largely forgotten. And his story doesn’t exactly end well. It’s an absorbing read, and perhaps a cautionary tale, given the resurgence of the kind of yoga celebrity status that he originated.

Sinister Yogis by David Gordon White explores the original meaning



of the word ‘yoga,’ with its root in ‘yuj’ — to unite — and the evolution of the meaning and forms of ‘yoga’ from the earliest times to the present.

What emerges is a portrait of two distinct traditions of yoga: the first is rooted in the tradition of the warrior, the ‘Yogayukta,’ who ‘hitches’ or unites with the forces at work in the universe (ultimately the Prana) in order to master his destiny through the powers he achieves.

The second is the tradition of the Vedantic sage or seer, who by becoming *still* comes to know (and thus realize and fully ‘become’) his nature as Brahman.

The traditions were originally distinct — even opposites of one another — it might be described as the difference between ‘moving’ or ‘going’ places through yoga on the one hand, and ‘staying put’ or sitting still in meditation to attain knowledge on the other. Yet both came to be known as ‘yoga,’ with the model of the meditator or seer being treated as the fullest or truest sense of yoga, particularly by Patanjali. The Bhagavad-Gita represents an effort to

reconcile these senses of yoga by treating them as various ‘paths’ of yoga, all of which lead to the same goal, while recommending devotion or bhakti as the ‘best’ yoga.

Yet it becomes clear that the warrior tradition of the ‘Yogayukta’ is a path of power, through which yogis exercise their mastery to do good, to manipulate, and even to punish or use others to their own ends. The tradition of the seer is the path of knowledge, the more familiar path of wisdom and enlightenment which at the same time suggests detachment and disengagement from the world and from action.

The dichotomy helps us to understand the otherwise confusing or mixed messages contained within yoga teachings today. On the one hand, yoga is presented as a discipline by which we develop our abilities to overcome the obstacles presented to us in life — a path of mastery by which we advance in our practice. On the other hand, we are told that we are already perfect, and the very idea of advancement is an illusion; we have only to become still to know our innate perfection and beauty as spirit.

The two senses of ‘yoga’ perhaps represent the two realities of the human condition; that we are on the one hand imperfect beings faced with many challenges, who must develop our abilities or powers in conjunction with the universe to face and overcome these challenges. On the other hand, we sense that there is a part of us that is ‘in’ the body but not ‘of’ it; a perfection and beauty within us that we can only know by becoming still, and by being open to what grace has to reveal of that Self.

These two ‘sides’ of our life walk hand in hand, though perhaps they

can never fully be reconciled. The dichotomy lies at the heart of the whole debate as to whether ‘jivan mukti’ or ‘liberation while in the body’ is even possible — and what that state would be.

Mr. White’s account also contains a warning: not every yogi is a saint or sage, and many practice their powers for sinister purposes (he gives many entertaining and disturbing examples of this from Indian folklore). He also suggests that, possibly out of guilt for having worked hard to outlaw and repress the rather scruffy and even militant ‘yogis’ of India, the British compensated by creating an image of the saintly and pure yogi, the benevolent Guru.

“In the latter half of the 19th century the British in India began to romanticize the yogis whose lifestyles and livelihoods their policies had largely contributed to wiping out. In urban middle-class society in particular, the bogey of the wild, naked, drug-crazed warrior ascetic was gradually airbrushed into the far more congenial image of a forest-

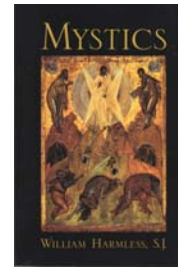
dwelling meditative, spiritual renouncer, something far closer to the ideal of the sages of vedic lore.”

In doing so, they only doubled our misunderstanding of the nature of the yogi. Mr. White’s book, completes the story by bringing us up into the present with a better perspective on the roles played by Vivekananda, Yogananda, Krishnamacharya and his students.

This makes the book a nice fit with the other books: here Mr. White’s account feathers neatly into history of modern yoga presented in the books we have already mentioned — notably ‘Yoga Body.’

What Mr White *adds* to the conversation is a deeper appreciation of who the ‘yogi’ is and was, prior to this century — and how little a resemblance he bears to both the modern ‘yogi’ and to idealized myth.

This is worth knowing and understanding, particularly as so many of us seek to rediscover, lay claim to, or even redefine what ‘yoga’ is.



Mystics by William Harmless, S.J. is not a new book, but a nice discovery for me. Not only does it nicely put the work of the major christian mystics (up

to and including Thomas Merton) into perspective, but it is also a helpful and accessible contemplation on the very meaning of ‘mysticism,’ especially from a christian standpoint.

I find this important and helpful because ‘mysticism’ and ‘mystical’ are some of the most misused (and vague to the point of meaninglessness) terms in our New Age Yoga lexicon. Fr. Harmless gives useful insights into the assumptions about the ‘mystical’ we inherited from William James, as well as the original meaning of the word (which has christian roots).

There is great beauty and wisdom in the work of these mystics, set against the context of their very real lives, and also very little fluff. It provides a refreshing balance to all the ‘yoga’ reading, and food for contemplation.

Workshops with Doug

Future workshop descriptions will specify the hours credit toward Swatantrya certification. Different types of workshops will contain different components of therapy training:

- **Weekend Workshops with a therapeutic session:** the therapeutic session of the workshop is generally open to all, and focuses upon a specific therapeutic topic or set of topics. The level of instruction, which includes basic anatomical detail and description as well as description of common problems, basic stretches and asana modifications, is appropriate to reasonably experienced yoga students. The sessions are usually 3 hours long and carry 3 hours credit.
- **Weekend Workshops with a Teacher Training session:** this session is generally separate from the workshop sessions and is often longer, such as 4 hours. Illustrated notes are usually provided for the session, and the level of instruction, which included greater anatomical detail and description as well as hands-on assessment and adjustment techniques, is aimed toward teachers and experienced practitioners for whom working directly with others is understood to be part of the learning experience. These sessions also carry full credit: e.g. 4 hours credit for a 4 hour session.
- **Teacher Trainings** are extended over several days and focus entirely on therapeutic topics. Rather than identify these trainings by ‘levels,’ there will be a *basics* training that covers an introduction to the framework laid out in Doug’s book ‘Yoga As Therapy.’ Beyond that, *other* trainings will be identified according to the topics being covered, rather than in terms of ‘Modules’ or Levels. The hours of credit will be specified in the descriptions for the trainings.