



TAKE YOUR TIME

THE PRACTICE OF SELF-INQUIRY

TEXT: UWE VAMDEV FRANZ © 2002

The tradition of yoga is ancient and comes to us through many millenniums, inspired by people who did take the time to ask what they called life's essential questions:

Who am I, why am I here and what am I supposed to do here?

These sages conceived a method of asking these questions and offered multiple techniques to penetrate these questions so deeply that life itself became the answer to all of them.

In our modern, ego-centered world the main attraction of yoga is its extremist tradition of physical exercises, all taken out of context, turned into a fitness routine with a relaxing touch. When our body is our main source of identification it is not surprising that we would undertake any effort to sustain it, to keep it fresh and healthy. We dampen the restlessness of the mind with drugs and work out to have a good looking body. Yoga has become a part of the mainstream search for younger looks.

This is unfortunate. The physical aspect of yoga was integrated naturally into life in ancient India. People lived on the ground, which automatically makes our lower backs strong, our hip joints more flexible, our thigh muscles less tight. Their circulation was less challenged. Yoga philosophy and yoga psychology were in the center of all yogic traditions. There is such a wealth of insight and understanding of life laid down in thousands of texts. I do not think that any other culture in the world was able to create this kind of storehouse of wisdom still available today.

THE PRACTICE OF SELF-INQUIRY

What happens to us when we ask ourselves: »Who am I?« What comes up first?
There is a great, ancient method of working with this question.

First, you ask »Who am I?« and you think about the answer for you. What is it about you that is you? Is it your body? Your social status, your profession? Or is it your religious denomination, your spiritual path? Is it the person looking back at you when you look in the mirror? Is there something typically »you« about you and if there is, what is it?

Secondly, you try a different approach. Sit down in a chair or on the floor. Make sure you are comfortable, warm (hey, it's winter here and cold!), and have about 5 minutes of time for this exercise. Close your eyes and watch your breath flow in and out. Focus on it completely, don't let your mind wander. Count your breaths, when you have reached ten, ask the question: »Who am I?« Listen intently what comes up from inside of you. Write it down, and please do not judge what you heard. Once you have written it down, read it again, three times.

There is a third level to this great endeavor of asking »Who am I?« The great Indian mystic of the last century, Ramana Maharshi used this constantly in his teachings, and my master taught it to us as well: When you come up with an answer, either during the first step or after the second step, ask yourself: Who gives this answer? Where does it come from? Then see what happens. Write it down.



This text is a publication of Uwe Vamdev Franz. He practices and teaches yoga since 1977.
He offers talks and workshops in the USA and in Europe. If you want to know more about the work of Uwe Vamdev Franz
or want to read more of his texts, please visit www.svayoga.com.
svayoga | Uwe Vamdev Franz | 240 Tice Hill Road | Ghent, NY 12075 | phone 1-888-669-6691 | www.svayoga.com