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Amrit Yoga: Explore, Expand and Experience a New Dimension of Yoga

By Deb Blish and Modini

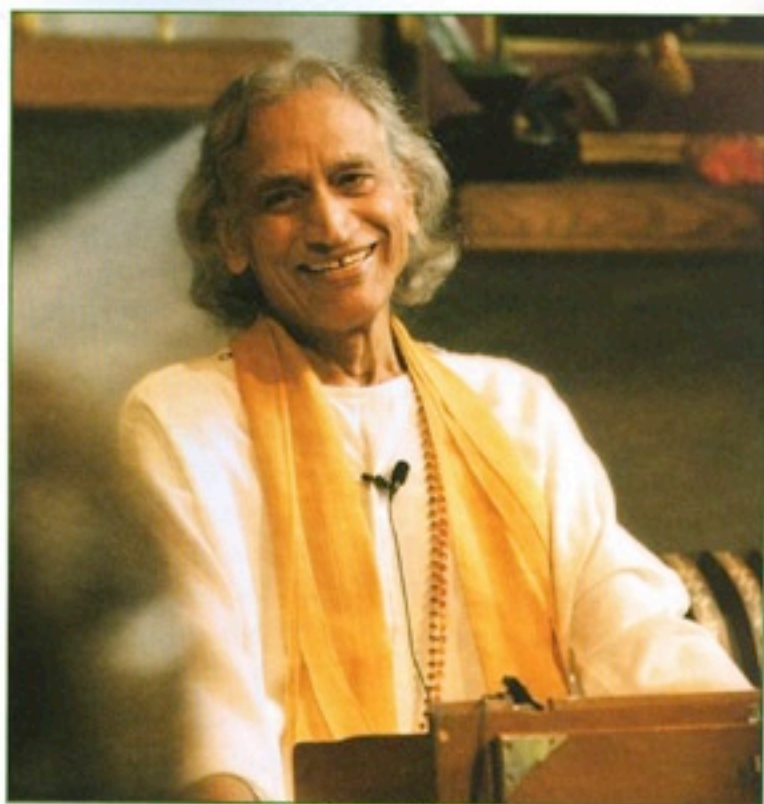
When most people think of yoga, they think of postures and deep breathing. However, the true essence of yoga has the potential to take us far beyond exercises on a yoga mat. The ultimate goal of authentic yoga is integration of internal conflicts that create havoc on our health, as well as our personal, professional and love lives.

In the authentic approach to yoga, the focus is on how to bring body, mind and emotions into balance and harmonious interaction. This allows the student to enter into a state of complete relaxation and one-pointed focus. When that happens, a whole new dimension of creative thinking and feeling begins to come into every aspect and expression of our life. This creative edge makes everything we do more efficient, effective and successful. We have the access to resolve deep-seated hidden blockages, either internal or external, release them and live fully, freely and joyfully.

As Yogi Amrit Desai (Gurudev) explains, basic yoga begins with asanas, which are very popular these days. But posture and flexibility are only a small part of yoga's depth and breadth. Gurudev has developed a system of yoga over the past 50 years that is significantly different from the yoga that is normally taught in the U.S. The purpose of Amrit Yoga (AY) is to resolve the mental and emotional imbalances that hold you back, so you may live in a state of equanimity and peace with everything you encounter and everyone you meet.

"Most yoga traditions today approach Hatha yoga as a physical form. However, the physical practice, separated from the mental and spiritual dimensions, remains incomplete," says Gurudev. Amrit Yoga provides powerful tools and techniques to use physical postures not only for flexibility and weight loss but as the foundation to explore, experience and release psychosomatic blocks that prevent you from tapping into the source of the infinite potential within. It creates new possibilities for widening the range of healing and self-discovery.

"In Amrit Yoga, the body is an entry point to the inner dimension," Gurudev explains. "Yoga is about uni-



Yogi Amrit Dasai

fyng all the fragmented physical, mental and emotional disturbances and bringing them into harmonious balance. Physical yoga without this focus is not really yoga," he emphasizes.

A Yoga Tradition Born in Mother India Gurudev was born and reared in India where he was introduced to yoga at the age of 16 under the foremost yoga master of India, Swami Kripalu. He moved to the U.S. in 1960 and remains one of the earliest pioneers to provide an authentic dimension and depth of yoga to the West. Within a decade, he had established the largest yoga society in the Philadelphia area and was conducting 150 yoga classes weekly and had trained 50 yoga teachers in this tradition. His total dedication to the study, practice and deep intuitive understanding of the power of yoga is rooted in this early training in his homeland and is demonstrated in his continued refinement that makes his methodology both spiritual and practical.

According to the ancient system of Patanjali

yoga, yoga represents the integrated practice of eight (8) limbs of yoga that is meant to be a holistic practice of physical, mental and spiritual disciplines. Amrit Yoga is designed to cultivate not just the superficial application of a profound system of yoga that restricts it to the physical level, but to take it to the body, mind and beyond. Inward focus and meditative awareness are the master keys to unfold the experiential inner depth of yoga. This internal focus is the single most powerful tool to prevent chronic, unconscious and unproductive mental dialogues, images and emotional reactions that are often ignored by those who adopt yoga only as a form of physical discipline. These unconscious internal mental and emotional activities not only accompany us through every activity all day long, but also continue even while we perform our yoga postures.

Often the hard work involved in vigorous physical disciplines can silence your mind during your practice but it has no power to transcend or alter the mental and emotional conflicts that are held securely in the unconscious. In the Amrit Method®, the particular inward meditative focus helps you to work through your unconscious reactive habit patterns of which we are a victim all day long and all our life long. Physical practice combined with internal focus significantly expands the scope and multiplies the therapeutic and spiritual impact yoga.

Through the practice of AY the powerful techniques easily engage even new practitioners into deeply integrative space where they experience a sense of inner peace, harmony and joy. "This is the experience of an alpha brain wave state where you naturally feel fully engaged, totally, absorbed and completely integrated in your body, mind, heart and soul," says Gurudev. "It empowers you to enter the experience of unity and ecstasy, which is integral to the experience of yoga."

"Yoga Nidra is simple to practice yet profound in impact"

Stress—the number one problem facing us today. According to Gurudev, almost all illnesses are stress related and occur on mental and emotional levels. Amrit Yoga can be most beneficial because it goes to the seed "cause" of the problem, not just the symptoms or "the effect," which are only the tip of the iceberg. If you only treat what is obvious and ignore the hidden cause, even a Titanic will be destroyed.

"A stress related illness is created in the mind and stored in the body," Gurudev explains. "Eighty percent

of physical, mental and emotional ailments are rooted in stress. Our mind causes the problems, and that is where stress takes up residence. You cannot solve a problem with the same consciousness that created it. It is like hiring a thief as a policeman."

Yoga Nidra Gurudev has refined his methodology to guide practitioners away from stress and into the yoga zone one step further with the development of The Amrit Method® of Yoga Nidra—a technique that takes you to deepest part of your subconscious, into alpha and theta brain waves, where we find spontaneous healing and intuitive insights into the complex challenges and situations we face in life. Unlike regular sleep, which only rejuvenates the body, Yoga Nidra (yogic sleep technique) takes you to the deepest levels of meditative relaxation



Students begin the journey within at an Amrit Yoga session.

while remaining conscious. "Yoga Nidra is simple to practice yet profound in impact," says Gurudev. When you enter these deeper integrative states, your prayers and affirmations are actualized easily.

Yoga Nidra can be used to change old stubborn, self destructive habits. Anyone can practice it and the results are often astounding. Once you enter this inner most state of peaceful relaxation you gain a direct access into the extraordinary self healing power of your own inborn wisdom- the innate intelligence of your body and being.

Gurudev founded the Kripalu Center for Yoga and Health and recently the Amrit Yoga Institute in Salt Springs Florida, situated in a serene natural environment located on Lake Kerr in the Ocala National Forest. The Institute is a training facility for yoga instructors and a retreat center for seekers of any level. The Yoga Teacher Training curriculum is approved by the Yoga Alliance of America. The Institute also offers training in Yoga Nidra

for anyone seeking to use this powerful force personally or professionally.

"Begin every practice with integrative intention," Gurudev advises. "Intention acts as a seed to be nurtured all along the way. This means that what you want in the end you must practice it as a seed intention from the very beginning."

In the practice of Amrit Yoga postures, the focus is not on forcing the body to increase flexibility. Instead, your attention and awareness are focused on the point where your body is resisting and the mind is reacting. Ordinarily at this point, in a body-centered practice, most people unconsciously resist with a fight or flight reaction. At this point, you learn how to replace an unconscious



The picturesque Amrit Yoga Institute in Salt Springs, FL.

reaction with a deliberate, conscious and integrative action. This is a central part of the practice of Amrit Yoga which helps dismantle reactions conditioned by the habitual past.

This is how Amrit Yoga differs from other traditions of yoga. Here you learn the unique skill of replacing unconscious reactions when faced with blockage in your physical, mental and emotional bodies on the yoga mat. This skill developed on a yoga mat can be taken into every awkward posture in life and gives you the skill to replace reaction with a conscious response that can change your entire life.

Amrit Yoga is a metaphor for life. The skills of mindful attention and meditative awareness you develop on the yoga mat extend to challenges you encounter in life. Painful transition periods, relationships and crises can become opportunities and openings for personal transformation. ●

For more information on weekend programs, intensive trainings or Gurudev's, teachings, visit the website at www.amrityoga.org or call 352/685-3001.



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