

Yoga as Therapy

Enlightened Anatomy and the Therapeutic Benefits of Yoga

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PREFACE

UNDERSTANDING OUR APPROACH

To understand the approach to structural therapy taken in this book, ‘Yoga As Therapy,’ it’s important to understand what the book sets out to do.

When we look at the body, trying to understand what has gone ‘wrong’ when it suffers injury, pain, inflammation or progressive deterioration in the joints, we have to look beyond the immediate problem and ask, how are we to understand not just the most obvious problem (e.g. knee pain), but its relationship to what is going on in the rest of the body? Quite often the cause is not nearly as obvious as the effect, and when there are imbalances in the body, other troubles may be brewing that have not yet manifested. We might ‘fix’ one problem, only to find that another pops up. Why?

What this book presents is a **template for envisioning relationships in the body** so that we might see the ‘big picture’ and understand both the roads that lead ‘to’ the injury or problem, as well as all the roads that lead ‘from’ it. These are very real, empirically established connections and continuities between muscles that ‘communicate’ both the good qualities of muscle tone as well as the bad qualities of stress throughout the body along very specific lines. We will call these lines by the name of ‘**sutras**’ (meaning both ‘thread’ of connection, as well as a statement pregnant with information — something you can ‘read’ to better understand the whole).

This can be initially confusing for yoga practitioners, since we are used to thinking in terms of principles for what to ‘do.’ The ‘sutras’ provide a **description** of important aspects of the functional anatomy of the body; they are **not ‘prescriptions’** for what to do. But once we ‘read’ the sutras and better understand what is going on in the fabric of the whole of the body, it becomes all the more clear what to ‘do’ to correct the imbalances. When we understand and picture for ourselves these relationships between ‘sutras,’ it becomes quite clear that the fundamental principles we follow in hatha yoga for **actions** or what to ‘do’ in the asanas are **inherently therapeutic**, and that specific poses and classes of poses that are the bread and butter of hatha yoga work with almost surgical precision in correcting these imbalances.

Thus we are first attempting to understand the body and what goes wrong with it, in a very integrated, visual and even kinesthetic way. This makes it possible to approach yoga as therapy fruitfully from many different styles of yoga.

So **the ‘sutras’ don’t so much tell you what to ‘do,’ but rather how to ‘see.’** And having seen the problem clearly, it is all the more easy to intuit or ‘know’ what to do. Then yoga as therapy sheds at least some of its mystery and begins in earnest.

