



## TOPIC OF THE MONTH

**August 2016**

### **Empowerment in your Yoga**

Self sufficiency = empowerment. There is something to be said for self reliance. Not in the aspect that we disconnect from loved ones, in the aspect that we disconnect from corrupt systems (mostly our food and medical systems) until they learn how to serve and not make money the most meaningful aspect of what they do. I am seeing a little of this sneak into the yoga community, so I am struggling a bit with the view that you need to go somewhere to do yoga because you will need adjustments, with the fact that many ashtangis are told they need to look a certain way in a pose, and they have to do intense practices 6 days per week.

However on the ashtanga path we do have a tool for building empowerment, it is our mysore way of learning. You can go to a mysore class sporadically to get advice, adjustments, and progressed, but you you don't need to do every practice in the studio.

In your yoga you build self-sufficiency learning in a Mysore style of teaching. In a group led class we have to serve what is best for the majority of the group -- that may or may not serve everyone in the group. When you learn Mysore style (in the OLD method of ashtanga) you learn an individual practice suited to you, at your pace, in a way that you remember it. You learn the reasons why we are doing this, how to do the postures for your body, and how to do it on your own so you have your yoga available to you at home, when you are traveling, or when you can not make it to a yoga studio.

Developing a home practice is a big part of the self sufficiency you learn in Mysore classes. A home practice is important because it makes you responsible for your yoga. It also gives you a time and space to have a few moments to yourself for breathing, connection to something bigger, release of tension and stress, and movement that feels good to you. It brings your yoga into your own heart where you can develop a practice that you love. Enjoying what you are doing is the best way to sustain a healthy behavior that you want to incorporate into your life.

This is where ashtanga is especially helpful — if you tune in and listen to your body. In other vinyasa flow types of classes, the order of postures is always different and you have to have some intelligence on how to sequence them -- known as vinyasa krama. It is harder to develop your own home practice without formal training in these practices, but Ashtanga does this for you. You learn the series and you can practice it anywhere, anytime. Just be careful not to fall into the trap of trying to make your body look like someone else's body in a pose -- many teachers now in ashtanga yoga are stuck in this trap. Allow your body to be your body in the pose and don't worry about how "good" you are at it. Just enjoy it :)

Tune-In



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Within the context of ashtanga yoga, this very intelligent framework may have some challenges for your body. In your home practice you can tune in to this easier, listen to how your body needs to do the postures, the vinyasas and how many of them do you really need, and the duration of your practice (if you need a shorter practice you can shorten the series in several different ways, the easiest option being just do your sun salutes and closing lotus flowers; or sun salutes, standing postures and closing; or half a series, etc.).

Keep in mind all this varies from day to day. Be aware not to get in to the mindset that you need to do the same practice in the same way each day. Allow your practice to fluctuate with your cycles, the moon cycles, your work load, stress load, and time. This is how we live our ashtanga in the real world.