

From the Inside-Out

by Swami Nirmalananda Saraswati & Vidyadevi Stillman

Complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) has never been more popular. Nearly 40% of adults report using CAM, with doctors blending it into mainstream medical therapies, spawning the term "integrative medicine." Near the top of the list of CAM therapies, right after supplements, are chiropractic care and yoga. Chiropractic medicine emphasizes the spine and that many disorders are caused by the nervous system. Osteopathy is similar yet different, emphasizing that your well-being depends on your bones, muscles, ligaments and connective tissue functioning smoothly together, again with a focus on your spine. *Svaroopa*® yoga focuses on your spine, for all these reasons and for more.

Both chiropractic and osteopathy began in the 1800's as very radical ways to heal the body, so radical that Daniel David Palmer, the founder of chiropractic medicine, went to jail for practicing medicine without a license! Research has so thoroughly proved its efficacy that western medicine now accepts it. For example, one study of 183 patients with neck pain showed that spinal manipulation provided faster recovery than physiotherapy or general medical care.¹ Moreover, costs were about one-third. Consider, what if they had been in *Svaroopa*® yoga classes instead?

This is probably why students sometimes ask us to do research on *Svaroopa*® yoga, but such research takes millions of dollars. Yet all the research proving the value of spinal alignment applies to *Svaroopa*® yoga. Miracle stories happen every day.

Vidyadevi says, "*Svaroopa*® yoga was a miracle cure for me. I had pain from a neck injury that had been treated by a medical doctor and two physical therapists. None of them were able to help me with the pain. For 9 years I took the maximum amount of Advil daily (16 pills), and it wasn't until I found *Svaroopa*® yoga that my neck pain went away. It only took 1.5 years and it was gone!"

Another teacher shares that her student, now in her fifties, reported the migraine headaches she'd suffered from since she was in her teens, had lessened in frequency, length and intensity after one year of *Svaroopa*® Yoga classes. Three years later — no more migraines! Contrast this with what doctors say: migraines cannot be cured, only managed.

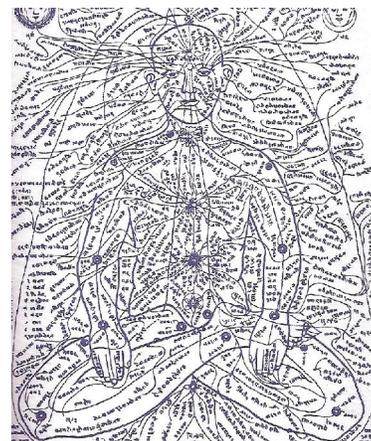
Recently a student arrived at one of our 10-day trainings wearing a hand brace. Her doctor was planning surgery for her debilitating pain, caused by ulnar nerve entrapment; the band of nerves were compressed at her elbow, set improperly after a break thirty years ago, with arthritis also impinging on the nerves. She says, "In a few days I didn't need my hand brace — tangible evidence of the opening I was feeling, first in my tailbone and then into shoulders, neck and down my arm. Now, I experience pain occasionally, but my practice takes care of it." She also reports that the doctor now says there is no reason to have the surgery.

All these changes came from the inside-out. *Svaroopa*® yoga provides these types of physical benefits because decompressing your spine helps your bones, muscles, joints, nerves and even your internal organs. Your internal organs don't function well when they are being compressed, as if "squeezed in a vise," even for 20, 30 or 40 years. Worse, spinal compression impinges on the nerves leading from your spinal cord to your organs, so your organs can't function properly. Every chiropractor and osteopath will explain how this can affect your digestion, respiration, glands, your heart, etc.

When your teacher talks about core opening, she or he means the poses are decompressing your spine, yet it is your spinal cord and nervous system that are of primary importance, not just your vertebrae. This is completely consistent with yoga's ancient teachings. Thousands of years ago, the sages mapped it all, but at a deeper level than medical science currently explores.

The atomic energy that becomes the physical matter of your own body moves in predictable patterns, with the primary ones shown in this diagram. Your body is made up of 720 million naa.dis (energy channels), all of them branching out from the core flow in your spine. Thus the most important naa.di is the central one: your spine.

Madhya vikaasaac cidaananda laabha.h
— Pratyabhijnahridayam sutra 17



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¹ Korthals-de Bos et al (2003), British Medical Journal

By development of the middle channel (your spine),
you attain the bliss of consciousness.²

Through core opening, not only will you get amazing healings, but yoga promises more: the bliss of consciousness. This bliss arises from its source, which is your own svarooopa — your own Self. Medicine doesn't talk about this much, yet acknowledges that your "spiritual beliefs" can affect your body's ability to heal as well as your mental and emotional state.³

This is perfectly mapped in your naa.dis and cakras (energy centers, pronounced 'chakras'), which are familiar from so many drawings. To the right, you see the central channel (su"sumnaa naa.di) and two side channels (ida naa.di and pingala naa.di). They crisscross at periodic intervals along their pathway from tail to top, creating major cakras (energy spirals) wherever they cross. Each level relates to a specific capacity in life:



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Muulaadhaara — below the tip of your tailbone; creates a clear sense of individual identity and freedom from fear; blockages create anxiety and fear.

Svaadi.s.thaana — at the juncture of your tailbone and sacrum; creates a capacity for genuine intimacy (sexual and non-sexual); blockages create sexual neediness and codependency.

Ma.nipuura — at the top of your sacrum; creates a capacity for decision and action in the world; blockages create a need for power and control.

Anaahata — at the level of your heart; creates a capacity to love and serve all; blockages create conditional love and clinging.

Vi"suddha — at the level of your Adam's apple; creates a capacity to express the light of consciousness through your words and actions; blockages create manipulative words and actions.

Aaj~naa — in the center of your skull; creates a capacity to see the Divine in the mundane; blockages create doubt and mistrust.

Cakras are not as important as the media would make you think. There are many people who would love to balance your cakras for you, but your cakras don't need the work. A chakra is a swirl of energy that comes from two or more naa.dis meeting at that point. If one of the naa.dis is not flowing properly, the energy doesn't swirl properly. Even if someone opens or balances your chakra for you, without a consistent energy supply from the naa.dis, it will simply shut down again.

Every *Svarooopa*[®] yoga class gives you a full naa.di treatment, thus balancing all your cakras! From tail-to-top, you open your spine so your life energy is flowing smoothly. Your cakras will stay open and balanced for as long as your naa.dis stay open. Of course, relapse happens – but at least you know the poses to open up your naa.dis and cakras for yourself; you don't have to rely on someone else to do it for you.

Different yoga styles take different approaches to working with your body, which Swamiji honors when she says, "All yoga is good yoga!" Some are athletic; some are gymnastic; some are aerobic; some are slower paced and self-directed; some have a more methodical approach. *Svarooopa*[®] yoga is "laser beam yoga." We use poses to target your spine, specifically su"sumnaa naa.di, and clear the blockages. Your results come from the inside-out.

Even the bliss comes from the inside-out. Contrast the bliss you experience after exercise or a fast paced yoga class; that bliss is the bliss of exhaustion, or maybe the bliss of finally relaxing from all the effort you were putting forth, or it could even be the bliss of endorphins. These are wonderful things, but the bliss you experience at the end of a *Svarooopa*[®] yoga class is the bliss of Consciousness, an entirely different thing. An extraordinary thing!

We call this "core opening." Grace turns it into a process of inner revelation. *Svarooopa*[®] yoga is "revelation yoga:" revealing your own Divinity within yourself. This has always been the purpose of *Svarooopa*[®] yoga. Core opening does this for every single person who gives it a try — it provides the experience of the bliss of your own Self. This makes change come from the inside-out. Do more yoga.

THIS IS AN ARTICLE IN A YEAR-LONG SERIES ON "BODY, MIND & MORE," OUR CONTEMPLATION THEME FOR 2014, CO-AUTHORED BY SWAMI NIRMALANANDA SARASWATI AND VIDYADEVI STILLMAN OR RUKMINI ABBRUZZI.

To reach our teachers or to learn more about *Svarooopa*[®] Yoga & Meditation, contact: *Svarooopa*[®] Vidya Ashram:

www.svarooopa.org ♦ Email: info@svaroopayoga.org

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² Rendered by Swami Nirmalananda

³ D. Aldridge, "Spirituality, healing and medicine," *British Journal of General Practice*, <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1371827/> (July 8 2014)