



Yoga: The Practice of Myth and Sacred Geometry

By Rama Jyoti Vernon

Twin Lakes, Wisconsin: Lotus Press (2015)

Review by Ann Friedenheim

The experience of reading *Yoga: The Practice of Myth and Sacred Geometry* by Rama Jyoti Vernon is like attending a long yoga retreat where the kindness, technical information, philosophy, enthusiasm, experience, and transmission of wisdom flow from the teacher in every interaction. Drawing from a lifetime dedicated to the study, practice, teaching, and living of yoga, Vernon, a respected and accomplished yoga pioneer, offers us a reading experience that bursts from the pages with history, philosophy, theory, and practice.

The beginning of this text is divided into several chapters, leading with in-depth discussion about the meaning of yoga, the symbolism and significance of the spine, the deeper meaning of asana, the importance and approach to pranayama, and the importance of honoring one's own practice (*svadharma*). Although these initial chapters are only thirty-two pages, it is not an easy read. Vernon imbues each paragraph with an integration of ancient texts, quotes from her own teachers, Sanskrit scholarship, and wisdom garnered from a life of committed practice. Her love of yoga lifestyle and her dedication to her students shine through her writing. Simultaneously, she meets the mark as an intellectual scholar who has taken the time to integrate multiple forms of information. This enables Vernon to distill complex ideas with many levels of meaning and to communicate them clearly to the average reader. It's as though she were piercing through the *koshas* (sheaths) of illusion through her writing, taking the reader deeper and deeper to the ultimate understanding of Self.

In the second part of the text, Vernon provides a thorough discussion of fifty-seven asanas. For each asana she discusses a philosophical introduction, preparation for the orientation of the posture, very clear steps of execution, and psycho-physiological benefits. This chapter also includes information about *koshas*, pranayama, *mudras*, and chakras as these elements manifest within each asana.

Vernon introduces postures from a symbolic point of view so that the deeper representation of the posture is made clear. She then helps the reader understand the process of creating the posture, the key points on which to focus, and the way to breath into the posture to make it a doorway into the Self. She instructs in a way that allows the student to understand that yoga is a personal process that will express itself differently from person to person and even practice to practice. She does, however, pay particular attention to the key teaching/guidance points to provide a safe and self-aware practice. Her explanations and guidance of the asanas are a wonderful balance of technical instruction, philosophical background, understanding of benefits, and spiritual process.

To complete the teaching, Vernon provides appendices that include short chapters on topics such as creative sequencing and how it affects the nervous and endocrine systems; the ethical precepts

of *yama* and *niyama*; understanding the five koshas, the five pranas, and the bhandas. Again Vernon provides clear discussion about complex ideas in a way that is informative and thought provoking.

Yoga: The Practice of Myth and Sacred Geometry is the kind of book that yoga students and teachers will refer to again and again as a source of knowledge, creativity, and inspiration. If it is possible to transmit subtle energy teachings through the written word, then this book is certainly an example. This text is a seminal work and a must-have for any student or teacher serious about their study and practice.

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