



## SHAKTI BECKONS THE GODDESS...

### Beyond *Downward Dog*

By Julie K. Halevan

Every week, I sat on that gymnasium floor stifling giggles as that room full of people uttered long “Shhh sounds” followed by a deep in-breath. I’d look around and think, “what is going on here?”. Regardless, I intuitively knew something profound was happening individually and within the group dynamic. I was intrigued and hooked. When I was a child in the mid-seventies, I would attend yoga class with my ‘hip mother’ who, on occasion, substituted for her yogic muse, Gus. I continually observed what was happening to individuals and myself, both physically and energetically. Many, many years later, after the birth of my last two boys-twins, I decided to attend yoga school. I knew there was more to this ancient practice than just ‘posing’.

The word “yoga” comes from the root word, “yoke”, meaning “union”. As we practice yoga on a regular basis, interesting things begin to happen. We are ‘yoking’/integrating our whole four-bodied system, coming to a greater experience of our higher Self that has always dwelled within – that place of deep peace, contentment and wisdom. Reality, too, often shifts, whereby experiences of life take on a whole new perspective. A healthy detachment is fostered, as if now, we become the observers of the “picture show”. How does all this transpire?

The reason we practice the poses, called asanas, is to eventually arrive at oneness, in all its glory. This is how it works: the asana leads to greater health and flexibility of body and mind. This agile vibrancy makes it easier and more pleasurable to sit in meditation. The practice of meditation, in turn, aids in relinquishing the hold the mind has on the organism. Through such liberation, knowledge of Self occurs, and one experiences the infinite. Where there is no mind, there is no limitation, and the unconditional Self begins to shine as *Sat-Chit-Ananda* – existence, knowledge and bliss in oneness.

So where does the body end and the mind begin? Where does the mind end and the spirit begin? These aspects of Self are intimately related and can never be divided. Yogi B.K.S. Iyengar contends that the yogi never neglects the body or emotions and mind, but cherishes them all, as one stimulates the life-force within and honors all aspects of Self.

We practice yoga to realize our true, perfect and divine nature. We then dedicate this spirit to the service of humanity for which it is intended. So, the next time you are in yoga class, realize the profundity of what you are manifesting for yourself and for others. And please don’t leave at the most important part – the end...Sivasana meditation. This is where we integrate it all.

“Namaste”- I honor the light in you.