

Yoga: The Spirit and Practice of Moving into Stillness **by Erich Schiffmann**

There are times when I hear or read something that 'strikes a chord' with me. I know this saying is cliché, but that's exactly what it's like. When I hear those 'bells of truth' there is a harmony; it creates an overtone, an energetic resonance. It's not an audible sound, but I can feel it. It's a feeling of familiarity and joy, a bursting in my heart, like coming home to those I love dearly.

Erich Schiffmann teaches us to 'strike a chord' within ourselves, through yoga. He teaches us three interwoven dimensions of self-realization: to be still and find the peace within, to connect with the source of knowledge and listen to the voice of truth and dare to be guided from that truth in our actions, and then to recognize and resonate with that same truth in others.

In Zen-like paradox, the physical movement, or asana, helps us to experience the stillness or peace within us and come to know our true spiritual essence. He likens it to a spinning top saying, "Stillness is dynamic. It is unconflicted movement, life in harmony with itself, skill in action." Though asana can often seem outwardly static, Schiffmann skillfully describes the dynamic movement within the pose – how to run energy lines through the shapes the body creates. These lines always originate from the centre of the body, in the abdomen, and flow outwards through our legs, arms and spine. This energy dynamic creates intensity in the poses without interjecting tension. The breath lifts the intensity and carries away the stress. We gain balance, strength and flexibility, and learn sensitivity and self-trust. Yoga becomes a balance between doing and non-doing, which brings us to that point of dynamic stillness in the centre of being. We become accustomed to this feeling, and learn that peace feels better than chaos.

Once in that stillness, when our mind is "at its most focused, energetic, present, alive, relaxed, and wholehearted", we come to a place of meditation or communion, where we touch the wholeness of who we are, the Infinite Mind, and hear our inner voice, or the voice of God. It was obvious to me very early in the book that Schiffmann is a student of a Course in Miracles, although he doesn't mention its influence. He understands "the primary and most important theme of yoga: learning to love and be loved. You will gladly allow the energy of love to circulate freely through you once you start feeling it." And it is through forgiveness that we learn to feel love. By deliberately withdrawing the preconceptions, judgments and restrictions of the ego and allowing this feeling of love, we come to see this love as our true nature, and yoga becomes an offering of love and forgiveness to both ourselves and to the world around us. We learn that love feels better than judgment. "Yoga will make you sensitive to the stillness, the presence, the hush, the peace of God. This deep inner stillness is at the core of your being. It is the ground, the joy of your being. The radiant peace you'll experience is what happens naturally when the creative energy of God is allowed to flow through you unobstructed."

Once we become familiar with the "creative God Force" in us, we begin to recognize it in others. We come to see the truth in others, despite the facades their egos present us. When we see the reflection of our true Self in those around us, we come to know that love is at the centre of all being. We understand that we are connected through the most powerful force in the Universe, the power of love; our being in essence. We become fearless, knowing that all we see is love manifesting in diversity. We lose all defensiveness and aggression. We know that all deserve forgiveness for past transgressions, and become filled with hope and faith and trust in the future. The world transforms in the moment as our perception of it changes. We begin to see the light. We begin to perceive the miracle.

Erich Schiffmann shows us how we can come to know miracles through yoga. Through strength, flexibility and balance we create a state of inner equilibrium, a dynamic stillness through which we can see the reality of love through the illusions of fear and ego. As we learn to forgive we learn to love and be loved; to live the truth that we are. We connect with the source of wisdom, hear the voice of truth within, and act on our own inner guidance. Fear becomes powerless as our perceptions change, and we come to see light all around us. The world transforms into a harmony of like souls, and a resonance of peace is created. As our hearts meld together we sing a song of truth and love, and we come home to where joy resides.