

# David Frawley

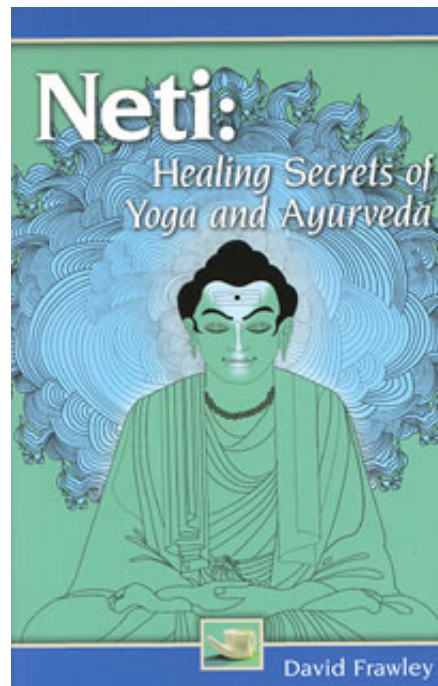
## Neti: Healing Secrets of Yoga and Ayurveda

Reading excerpt

[Neti: Healing Secrets of Yoga and Ayurveda](#)

of [David Frawley](#)

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## 2.

# An Introduction to Yoga

To understand the value of using a neti pot, let us first examine the ancient healing systems in which its usage first arose. The neti pot dates back hundreds, if not thousands of years in the history of India. Both the Yoga tradition and its related Ayurvedic healing approach possess a broad array of internal cleansing techniques for both body and mind. The neti pot is part of their overall emphasis on helping us purify ourselves in order to arrive at physical, mental and spiritual well-being in life.

Yoga originally arose as a complete system of human development, showing us how to balance and harmonize body, breath, speech and mind in order to not only reach our full individual potential, but also to take us beyond the body to a greater oneness with the entire universe. As such, the practice of Yoga begins with the body as the first step in an extended process of internal growth, which helps us discover our true Self that is cosmic in nature.

## The Greater System of Yoga

To this end, classical Yoga devised a comprehensive system of internal transformation in eight steps, taking us from the physical body to the highest consciousness.<sup>2</sup> These consist of:

1. Right life-style values (yama)
2. Right life-style observances (niyama)
3. Yoga postures (asana)
4. Yogic breathing (pranayama)
5. Control of the senses (pratyahara)

6. Concentration (dharana)
7. Meditation (dhyana)
8. Absorption (samadhi)

These eight aspects of Yoga begin with two related principles of right life-style values and right life-style observances (yama and niyama in Sanskrit). These consist of physical and mental purity, ethical living and a responsible interaction with both our human and natural environments. The yogic principles of right living include proper diet and purity of body, speech and mind. They provide the foundation for an awareness-promoting lifestyle that helps reduce suffering for all creatures.

The yamas or right life-style values consist of non-violence, truthfulness, responsible use of sexual energy, non-stealing and non-hoarding. The niyamas or right life-style observances consist of self-discipline, self-study, devotion to God, purity (including pure diet) and contentment. Yogic and Ayurvedic practices to cleanse and detoxify the body come in at this level, including the use of the neti pot and the general recommendation of a vegetarian diet.<sup>3</sup>

On the basis of a yogic life-style, Yoga developed a system of exercises or yoga postures (asanas) for harmonizing the physical body as its third step. Yoga postures aim at releasing stress and removing toxins from the joints, muscles and bones, at strengthening our digestive and circulatory capacities and increasing our overall adaptability and flexibility. To this end dozens of Yoga postures are taught in classes and adapted on an individual basis. For many people, Yoga asanas are their gateway to the world of Yoga and provide the foundation for physical health and ease of movement. Yoga asanas help cleanse all the organs and systems of the body and can be used along with various methods of physical detoxification.

This yogic harmonization of the body in turn is the basis for expanding the energy of the breath and the vital force within us through yogic breathing practices called pranayama, which is the fourth step or phase of Yoga practice. Pranayama not only gives us a better lung capacity and strengthens the heart; it also helps us to release disturbed emotions, agitating impressions and negative thoughts from the mind. Through it we can link our own life-energy with the universal life force and its healing powers on all levels. The neti pot is a key

tool for preparing the body for the practice of pranayama, as we will discuss later in the sixth chapter of the book.

The yogic harmonization of the vital force provides the basis for harmonizing and controlling our senses through yogic sensory exercises and disciplines called pratyahara, the fifth aspect of eightfold Yoga. Pratyahara consists of relaxing the motor organs, refraining from unnecessary expression, avoiding excessive stimulation to the senses and replacing our agitated mental field of impressions with a pattern of harmony and compassion. It is particularly important for healing the mind, particularly in the modern world in which we suffer from stress and sensory overload.

This yogic harmonization of the senses enables us to control and develop our minds through a threefold practice of concentration (dharana), meditation (dhyana) and absorption (samadhi), the last three and most important of the eight limbs of Yoga.

Yogic concentration methods (dharana), like focusing on a mantra or geometrical design (yantra), help us develop our power of attention and one-pointedness of mind so that we can use our mental instrument, our mental muscle as it were, with as much skill as any other muscle of the body. Through yogic concentration we can give our full attention to whatever issue in life we need to deal with, which creates the internal space for solutions to our problems to come from within.

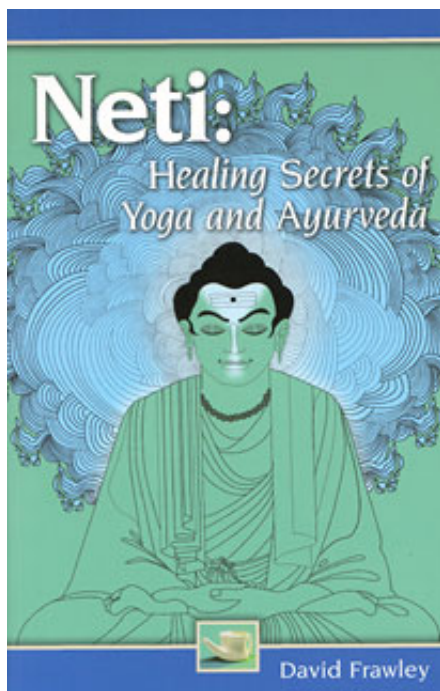
Yogic meditation exercises (dhyana), focusing on God or the higher Self, direct this concentrated awareness internally to change the very nature of our consciousness from limited to unlimited. They help us release deep-seated traumas, negative karmic patterns and egoistic fixations from our subconscious mind so that we can function in the world with full awareness, considerate of all beings.

Yoga leads us finally to a state of absorption or oneness (samadhi) in which we can empathize with, understand and find the truth of whatever we come into contact with, starting with our own deeper Self and Being. Through this yogic state of oneness we can experience all people and all of nature as different facets of our own deeper reality. Such a state of unity is the most powerful factor of both self-healing and self-transformation.

While modern Yoga usually emphasizes the asana or posture component of the system, one should remember that this is just one step or phase of a longer movement. It is but one rung of a greater ascent into consciousness, a creation of well-being on all levels of our existence in this magical universe of matter, energy, information and consciousness!

Traditional yoga generally regards Prana, breath or vital energy as its primary component, which is dealt with in great detail in various yogic texts.<sup>4</sup> This is because Prana is the prime force for healing the body, for controlling the senses and for concentrating the mind. It is the very power, or Shakti, of Yoga.<sup>5</sup> Pranayama is the most central aspect of Yoga and mediates between outer physical and life-style factors and inner meditation practices, providing us the energy necessary for both.

This yogic science of Prana is particularly stressed in *Hatha Yoga*, which is the main yogic approach for dealing with the physical body, while the yogic science of meditation is more the basis of *Raja Yoga* or higher yoga practices. We will examine the concept of Prana and Pranic healing in detail in the next chapter of this book.



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