

It's All In The Blankets!

“Everything started changing for you when you started doing that yoga you do.” It was remarkable that my best friend of 30 years (we met in the crib) could pinpoint the moment when things started shifting for me – about a year and a half ago.

I was too afraid to fully pursue my passion for writing, hadn't had a long-term relationship in 12 years and wasn't even sure where I was going to live. My stuff was living in San Francisco; my body was lodging in Atlanta.

I stumbled upon “that yoga” my friend was referring to when another friend invited me to go with her to a class. “It's really relaxing,” she said. And I thought, “Yeah I've done restorative yoga before. That's cool.” My friend didn't know that I had been living with unrelenting pain in my shoulder blade for over a year. I had come to think of it as an unpleasant, noisy squatter. Harmless enough, it created enough havoc to make it impossible for me to sleep through the night. I was just happy that the

intensity of the noise had eased over time—even though it did refuse to stop. And I had tried everything: a sadistic chiropractor, acupuncture needles, homeopathic remedies, physical therapy sessions, all types of yoga and the very unknown Bowen technique. They all seemed to get rid of the pain for about a minute before it returned to its comfortable lodging place.

When I walked into class for the first time, I saw plaid blankets everywhere. No yoga mats, just blankets. Blankets to lie on, rolled-up blankets, blankets folded into thirds, blankets folded into halves. Oh yeah, and a couple of blocks. I had been doing Iyengar, Vinyasa, Hatha and other types of yoga for years and I'd never seen anything like this. “OK,” I thought, “why not?”

Jody, the instructor, helped me settle in on the floor, propping my legs up on several folded and rolled-up blankets. We started with shavasana, a relaxation pose I was used to doing at the end of class. So I knew right away that this was going to be different. And it was. Each pose was a gentler variation of the traditional yoga pose I was so familiar with. Each used a blanket or blocks so that I could actually relax into the pose without any effort at all. We didn't even get to downward dog. I felt new spaces in my body I didn't know existed, my muscles let tension slide away, my



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Svaroopa Yoga

Svaroopa® yoga, one of the primary styles of yoga in America, is known for its compassionate approach to profoundly transformative work with the body, mind and emotions.

It is widely recognised as a powerful tool for promoting healing and personal transformation, as well as opening inner levels of transcendent experience. In the Yoga Sutras, Patanjali uses the word svaroopo to name the inner experience of consciousness that is the goal of yoga.

Svaroopa means “the Bliss of your own Being.” In Sutra 1.3 he says, “Tadaa drashtuh svaroope ‘vasthanam,” promising that the moment your mind becomes quiet, you will abide in the bliss of your own being.

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mind fell into a meditative stupor:

After class, I spoke with Jody. When I told her about my pain and how I had been giving up on yoga little by little, she smiled. “You've stumbled into the right place and you don't even know it. Svaroopa yoga focuses on opening the spine,” she explained. Jody used to be a personal trainer. Then she developed herniated discs. “Going from weight training to Svaroopa was quite a switch for me. But you'll see the change is remarkable. My discs healed.”

I was sceptical. I'd gotten my hopes up so many times before. But after a few classes and a couple of individual yoga therapy sessions, the change was miraculous. The squatter was not only evicted, but I felt better than I had ever felt before.

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re. I felt like I was experiencing my body for the first time. My shoulders, usually uneven due to scoliosis, now looked even in the mirror. I felt happier than ever; giddy. And the pain never returned.

But there was more. Something had shifted internally as well. I'd been on an emotional and spiritual growth path for a long time, but Svaroopaa got me to new levels much faster. By helping me reach deep inside of myself and let go.

I now know that those crazy Svaroopaa blankets provide external support so we can discover the internal strength that exists inside of each one of us—physically, mentally, and spiritually. And as we release the tensions in the muscles wrapped around our spine, we also release the stories that live in our bodies and

colour our perceptions. Those old stories from our past that make us react in a very certain way to brand-new situations. Those pesky illusions that keep us stuck in the same behaviour we're so sick of even when we don't realise we're doing it and even when we don't know we're sick of doing it. By releasing all of that, Svaroopaa yoga brings us closer to our true essence, to who we really are.

That's what happened to me. In retrospect, I can now see how stuck I'd been. Just as stuck as that pain had been in my shoulder. I had reached a certain level of happiness and success. And my life had taken up residence on that mesa for so long, that I couldn't find my way to the higher mesas around me. Internal release gave me the gentle boost I needed to

move upward.

Soon after I started Svaroopaa, I began working towards realising my greatest desires. I applied to an MFA programme in creative writing, I began visualising the love of my life, and decided that I would pursue a creative career despite nearly-immobilising fears around money. And I finally moved my things to Atlanta. Those were just a few steps in a journey I never could have imagined at the time. One that's brought me more joy and growth than I could have ever conceived. Now I'm a writer, artist and creativity coach with the love of my life by my side. And I continue to practice Svaroopaa every day. To make sure no squatters ever return. But how could they? There's too much power in a bunch of Svaroopaa blankets.