

Beyond Power Yoga: 8 Levels of Practice for Body and Soul

By Beryl Bender Birch

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Beyond Power Yoga presents and explores the *complete* journey of the classical *astanga yoga* system, from power yoga to meditation and liberation. Bender Birch's first book, the groundbreaking *Power Yoga*, introduced one level of *astanga yoga* to mainstream America—a high-heat, high-energy mind/body workout. Now, *Beyond Power Yoga* presents all eight levels, or limbs, of this ancient method—a total practice for body and soul.

Drawing a parallel between *astanga yoga's* eight limbs and the mind/body energy centers (*chakras*) of Eastern philosophy, Bender Birch shows us how we can balance and heal our body, focus and relax our mind, amplify and direct our energy (*prana*), and ultimately reclaim our spiritual connection to Universal Consciousness. Each chapter offers specific practices to help the reader uncover and experience the insights of the *astanga yoga* journey.

1. The YAMAS: Exploring the Fundamentals
2. The NIYAMAS: Doing the Work
3. ASANA: Practicing the Postures
4. PRANAYAMA: Breathing Mindfully
5. PRATYAHARA: Turning Inward
6. DHARANA: Developing Concentration
7. DHYANA: Experiencing Meditation
8. SAMADHI: Living Joyfully

Presented in the down-to-earth illuminating style and inspiring voice of the author, illustrated with easy-to-follow photos, plus a special *wall* chart of the *asana* sequences, *Beyond Power Yoga* offers a short form of the dynamic mind/body power yoga method, then journeys through the deeper levels of spiritual practice.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Yoga poses, or *asanas*, are just part of a traditional yoga practice, although this fact has largely been overlooked by the masses who've taken up yoga in the past several years. In *astanga* yoga, for example, there are eight branches, or "limbs," of yoga that each correspond to a body *chakra*, or energy center, which combine physical and spiritual activities to balance the energy of the body and mind. (The third limb encompasses the asanas familiar to most yoga students; the other limbs include *pranayama*, or mindful breathing; *dharana*, or concentration; *dhyana*, meditation; and *samadhi*, living joyfully.)

Learning about the eight limbs in *Beyond Power Yoga*, Beryl Bender Birch's follow-up to her 1995 bestseller, *Power Yoga*, could have been a dry and almost scholarly project, but rather is thankfully as rejuvenating as a Hawaiian yoga retreat. Birch's writing style is at once confident and soothing, and often humorous. A prime example is her explanation of the yoga concept of dharma (if you follow your dharma, you're following your universal path, or calling). Birch was newly married and mourning the passing of her dog. She was "just looking" at the pound for a Siberian husky and saw "in the flesh, the very dog I had been 'seeing' and searching for--thoroughly gorgeous, completely show quality, perfect markings, fit, strong, outgoing and very friendly, but totally wild. The dog came bounding over to me and jumped into my arms, all fifty pounds of him. There was no question God wanted me to have this dog." There was also an older, matted, underweight, crabby husky there too, which she couldn't bear to leave. So she bought both of them from the pound for \$17.43, but then spent \$400 at the veterinarian to have them dewormed and immunized. She and her husband needed that money for rent, and he lambasted her for her irresponsibility. The day their rent was due, they received a \$400 gift from a former student, thanking the Birches for ridding him of his back pain. Birch says that the thought never occurred to her that the rent money would be a problem: "If I had been plugged into the perception that it was going to take a long time to get that \$400 back, then it would have taken a long time to get the \$400 back, and I could never have had those dogs."

Beyond Power Yoga includes dozens of photographs of Birch demonstrating basic asanas, including the Sun Salutation series, but for the reader looking for a full "power yoga" workout to get you good and sweaty, her first book will still be a necessity. But beginning- through advanced-yoga practitioners serious about using yoga as a path to self-fulfillment should find the information in *Beyond Power Yoga* to be positively life altering. --*Erica Jorgensen*

Review

The New York Times Yoga that mixes sweat with serenity.

From the Back Cover

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Users Review

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Antoinette Holdren:

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Brent Abramson:

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