

Awake & Ready!

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The Yin and Yang of Yoga

Part 1 of a Series by Gyandev McCord

The greater the will, the greater the flow of energy." Paramhansa Yogananda emphasized will power as central to success in every aspect of life. "The dynamo of all our powers," he said, "consists in volition, or will power." Will power is the "yang" dimension of life: making things happen, whether inwardly or outwardly.

In my own life, I've seen that much can happen through various aspects of will power: energy, discipline, focus and perseverance. Even in the absence of skill or natural talent, I've been grateful that a good measure of will power can often carry the day!



Gyandev McCord
Director

Good, But Not Good Enough

Yet vital though it is, will power alone is not sufficient for higher levels of success in any arena of life—even in yoga techniques, as Swami Kriyananda points out:

"Many students of yoga make the mistake of thinking that by their will power alone, exerted through the daily practice of breathing exercises, physical postures, and meditation techniques, they will attain cosmic consciousness. Their approach to the spiritual life is almost as if God were a sort of divine mountain, to be conquered in a spirit of mountaineering bravado! That is hardly the spirit in which to approach yoga, that highest of spiritual sciences!"

What else is needed? Divine grace above all, of course, but to *receive* grace requires both will power *and* the "yin" dimension: feeling. In English, feeling and emotion are often synonymous, but in the language of yoga, they differ significantly. Feeling is soul intuition, i.e., our capacity to perceive truth directly, without the use of the senses, reason, or input from other people. Yogananda described it like this: "You know, and you *know* that you know." Neither reason nor external input can give such certainty.

Emotion, however, is agitated feeling; with its attendant likes and dislikes, it confuses our understanding.

Emotions are like ripples (or waves!) on a lake, which distort the moon's reflection. But when the lake is calm, we see the perfect reflection. Similarly, only when feeling is calm can we see reality as it is, and truly understand.

In this series of articles, I'll explore ways to develop will power and feeling through Ananda Yoga to support all our outward and inward efforts. I hope it will give you ideas for your classes.

How to Develop Will Power

Will power is like a muscle: simply using it develops it. This suggests a "brute force" approach to developing the will: strength, endurance, etc. Although that can indeed build will power, it can also become ego-centered, which ultimately limits our abilities. We'll gain much more if we work with Paramhansa Yogananda's definition of will power: "desire plus energy, directed toward fulfillment." All three components of this definition—desire, energy, and the ability to direct (control) energy—offer abundant possibilities for developing the will. In the next issue, I'll discuss the first component: desire, which is an aspect of feeling. For now, I'll focus on ways to increase both our energy and our ability to control it.

Energization is, of course, the ultimate training for will power, but asanas, too, can strengthen it. Here are a few of the many different ways you can do that:

Willingness and Enthusiasm

You already know about these two "energy gems." Why not invite students to practice willingness through
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An Ayurvedic Approach to Ananda Yoga

Part 2 of a 2-Part Series by Mangala (Sue) Loper-Powers

Mangala is an Ananda Yoga teacher, a Clinical Ayurvedic Specialist, a Nurse Practitioner, and an Ananda minister/light-bearer. She will lead a new Level 2 elective, Ayurvedic Yoga Retreat for Balance and Harmony, August 1–5 and October 31–November 4.

Part 1 of this article covered some of the basics of Ayurveda, including sketches of the three doshas, how they are related to the five elements, and how the doshas manifest in us. Now we will begin to explore the Ayurvedic constitution and the connections between Ayurveda and Ananda Yoga:

Prakruti (Constitution)

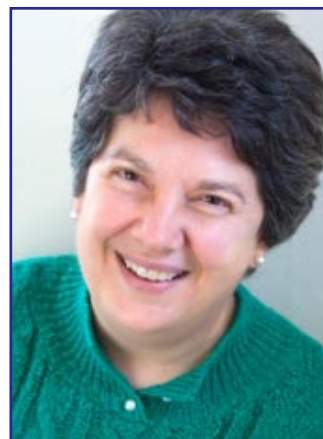
A person's Ayurvedic constitution may be dominated by one dosha, or more commonly, there are dual-dosha constitutions, which are referred to by naming the most dominant dosha first, followed by the second most dominant dosha. For example, two of the most common constitutions are Vata-Pitta and Pitta-Vata. It is very rare to be tri-doshic, which would mean that there is an equal amount of all three doshas in the person's constitution.

Although it is fairly easy to get a good idea of a person's two most dominant doshas, determining one's exact constitution (prakruti) is a rather complex process. One factor complicating the determination of prakruti is that as our guna-natures evolve into being more sattvic, it can seem as though our prakruti is changing. For example, when you consciously become more peaceful and calm (more sattvic), that doesn't mean that you are becoming more Kapha. It means that you've become a more sattvic version of your own constitution.

Another Ayurvedic principle to learn is the main location of each dosha (see illustration on page 5 of the previous issue of *Awake & Ready!*). Again, I'll offer a simplified approach that is nevertheless helpful. Vata's main home is in the large intestine; other important sites include the abdomen, low back, spine and joints. Pitta's main home is the small intestine; also lower stomach, liver, spleen and

eyes. Kapha's main home is the upper stomach and the chest; also, all connective tissue, and the synovial fluid in the joints. According to Ayurveda, whenever we squeeze or open one of these main dosha areas in our asana practice, we help to balance the corresponding dosha. The same holds true of bringing awareness to the location.

Ayurveda uses a vast array of treatment modalities to restore balance to imbalanced doshas. The basic dosha qualities that have been introduced here are just a taste of the qualities and characteristics that Ayurveda assigns to the doshas. Also, the application of opposite qualities to balance doshas is valid only with minor imbalances. Once imbalances have evolved into actual diseases, applying opposite qualities will not be adequate for a cure. Still, understanding these simple approaches will help us keep our doshas balanced and learn how to recognize signs of imbalance. Ayurvedic treatments include diet, lifestyle, herbs, purification and rejuvenation, aromatherapy, colors, gems, mantras, as well as yoga postures, pranayama and meditation. (Most of these are addressed in Ananda's annual *Ayurvedic Healing and Yoga Retreat* in Kerala, India—www.expandinglight.org/kerala.) Here I am addressing only a beginning, simplistic approach to balancing doshas through the practice of yoga postures, pranayama and meditation.



*Mangala lives at Ananda Village, where along with her practice of Ayurveda and nursing, she teaches at the Ananda Institute. Next year, she will help give *The Expanding Light* an added dimension: consultations and individualized programs for health on all levels: physical, mental and spiritual.*

Review: Qualities of the Doshas

Dosha	Qualities
Vata	Movement, cold, very light, variable, extreme
Pitta	Transformation, hot, light, sharp, competitive
Kapha ..	Cohesion, cool, heavy, stable, slow stomach

Applying Ayurveda to Ananda Yoga

Because sattva balances all doshas, we can start by reviewing how to approach our asana practice in a sattvic way. When we are in sattva, we are closely identified with our aspiration to be in attunement with the Divine. Thus, sattvic qualities to bring to our asana practice also include clarity, harmony, purity, love, light, peace, receptivity, truthfulness and compassion. Bringing the vibration of these qualities to our every movement will go a long way toward helping us balance the doshas as well as move toward attunement with the Divine.

The following is a brief overview of how asanas can help pacify/balance each of the doshas. Of course, all of us are combinations of all three doshas, and determining your particular constitution is beyond the scope of this article. But even if you don't know your constitution or that of your students, there are some general guidelines to assist you.

Ayurveda starts "treatment" by addressing the dosha that is most out of balance. Since Vata is the lightest dosha, it tends to go out of balance most easily in everyone. So if you didn't get any clarity on your primary dosha constitution from the above sketches of the doshas, focus on the Vata-pacifying routine, assuming that for most people, there's always at least some Vata imbalance. If you know which dosha is your primary constitution (or which two doshas), practice the routines that best keep those doshas balanced. If you have a dual-dosha constitution, pay attention to keeping both of the doshas balanced, giving priority to whichever of these two doshas is currently imbalanced or has the greater tendency to become imbalanced.

Another concept that you'll hear in Ayurveda is, "Balance your primary dosha without imbalancing your secondary dosha." But remember, even if Vata is not a significant part of your constitution, it's important for you to pay attention to balancing Vata, because of its instability and tendency to go out of balance. As Ayurveda would say, balance your Pitta but be sure *not* to simultaneously imbalance Vata. This means learning what's important for balancing both Pitta and Vata. (We explore strategies for doing this in the *Ayurveda and Yoga* courses that I teach at The Expanding Light)

Pacifying the Doshas

Dosha	General Approach to Pacifying
Vata	Keep warm. Stay calm. Avoid overstimulation. Be quiet (don't talk too much). Develop a regular schedule for your life. Get sufficient rest. Do daily self-massage with warm sesame oil. Affirm strength, courage, groundedness. Meditate daily. Become more sattvic.
Pitta	Practice moderation. Avoid intensity and pressure. Balance activity & work with recreation & rest. Stay cool (physically and mentally/emotionally). Cultivate serenity, emotional calmness, compassion, forgiveness. Meditate daily. Become more sattvic.
Kapha ..	Get plenty of physical exercise daily. Stay warm and dry. Enjoy a variety of experiences and a varied routine. Welcome excitement, challenge & change into your life. Practice non-attachment. Keep your weight under control. Meditate daily. Become more sattvic.

Another way to get a good idea of your current state of balance or imbalance (vikruti) is to review the above brief descriptions of characteristics of imbalanced doshas. We tend to go out of balance most easily in either our primary dosha or in Vata. So if, for example, you find that you tend to have several of the characteristics of imbalanced Pitta, it would be good for you to follow the Pitta pacifying routine.

Balancing the Doshas through Asana

Since this article is or Ananda Yoga teachers, I haven't included any specific asanas for each dosha because I think that you can figure those out if you follow the general guidelines given here. Also, it's important to avoid rigidly thinking that a certain pose is good for, or bad for, any dosha. In Ayurveda, the typical answer to a question such as, "Which yoga postures are good for Vata?" would be, "It depends." There are so many factors to be considered that it's impossible to cover them in an article. For you Pittas, who like to read reference materials, there is an excellent reference for the doshic effects of different asanas: *Yoga for Your Type: An Ayurvedic Approach to Your Asana Practice* by Dr. David Frawley and Sandra Kozak. And for you Vatas, well, you'll likely be content to figure it all out intuitively.

However, you will find that there are a variety of interpretations among Ayurvedic Yoga Teachers as to how to classify the asanas for the doshas. For example, Dr. Vasant Lad in his *Ayur*Yoga Teacher Training* classifies some postures quite differently than do Dr. Frawley and Ms. Kozak. Is one right and the other wrong? No. That's the beauty or frustration (depending on your constitution) of Ayurveda.

For example, the question of whether an asana will aggravate or pacify a dosha may depend on where your awareness is, how long you hold the pose, your prakruti, and your vikruti. In addition, the time of day, season, weather, and other environmental factors can be significant influences. So use books as references, but rely also on experience—your personal experience as well as your students' experiences. And you might consider attending one of our Level 2 Ayurveda and Yoga courses at The Expanding Light to learn more details than are possible in this article.

I'd like to end this discussion by sharing my belief that you can make almost any posture good (balancing) for almost any dosha by *how* you practice the pose and *where* your attention/awareness is.

One example is Bhujangasana (Cobra). Some say that it is aggravating to Vata. That could be the case if it is done in too extreme a fashion (pushing way up and bending the spine backward too much), or if it is held too long, but if you focus your attention on grounding the legs and pelvis into the floor, and the gentle flexibility of the spine, it can be very good for a Vata who needs grounding while also wanting to be creative and uplifting. It can actually teach a

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An Ayurvedic Approach to Ananda Yoga
(continued from page 3)

Vata how to accomplish both of these qualities simultaneously. Similarly, if the focus is on the chest and lower rib area being expanded, this makes it more focused on the Kapha and Pitta areas and shouldn't be so aggravating to Vata.

Another example is Surya Namaskar. If done quickly it can be aggravating to Vata (overstimulating and too much quick movement). If one feels more agitated or aggressive after doing an intense practice of Surya Namaskar, that's an indication that Pitta has been aggravated. If done slowly and with awareness of the body, feeling grounded and/or in tune with earth energy and the movement of prana through the body, it can be balancing, or at least not aggravating, for both Vata and Pitta. Obviously it is naturally most balancing for Kapha because of its inherent intensity and movement.

Let's Get Back to Your Students

Remember the examples of students in the beginning of the article? The first group of students were exhibiting signs of Vata imbalance, the second group were Pitta aggravated, and the third group had imbalanced Kapha. I said that you could help them even without using any Ayurvedic terminology, and you can. However, I've found that it can be very helpful to use the language of Ayurveda as a means of depersonalizing feedback to students.

For example, if your Vata were out of balance and you were speeding through the asanas, to which of the following would you respond better?

Option A: "Please slow down! Your rajasic restlessness is driving the rest of us nuts."

Option B: "Oh, it looks like we have some aggravated Vata energy that needs some balancing. Let's all tune into

our breath and see how slowly and deeply we can breathe for a few minutes. And while we're doing this, let's sit and be very aware of how grounded we feel."

I think you can guess which I would recommend.

And I promise you that the overly intense Pitta is not going to respond well to any direct attempts to quit pushing so hard. But Pitta has a great sense of humor, so if you can gently help them see the humor of the situation—they're busy being overachievers in a class that they're taking to help them learn to relax!—then they might actually hear you and change their ways. It's usually an issue of awareness.

Your Kapha students are to be congratulated for even being willing to come to class and move their bodies. It helps to encourage them to use their natural physical strength and endurance by holding poses for a relatively long time (rather than telling them that it's good for them to do a more stimulating, dynamic practice.) Also, they may need encouragement to find adaptations that their bodies can do when a pose is very challenging for them physically. Help them feel that it's okay to do their own version of the pose, rather than thinking that they have to do it like their Vata-Pitta teacher. This is especially important if a person is Kapha-Pitta or Pitta-Kapha, as their perfectionist, competitive Pitta nature may get easily discouraged if their Kapha dosha "holds them back" from an "ideally" held pose.

Unless we learn *how* our doshas tend to get aggravated/imbalanced and make us behave in ways that fail to promote health and spiritual growth, we'll never notice *when* that happens. By learning the language of Ayurveda, we can learn to be better observers of our behavior, our thoughts, our emotions. And as a result of that increased awareness, we can learn to choose alternate ways of being and behaving. By understanding and honoring our individual constitution (prakruti), we can focus our yoga

Hatha Yoga Approaches to Pacifying the Doshas

Dosha	Qualities to Focus on During Practice	Sites to Focus on During Practice	Pacifying Asanas	Pacifying Pranayama
Vata	Slow, calming, warming, stable, strengthening	Large intestine, abdomen, low back, spine, hips, joints	Standing poses, forward bends, compression of the abdomen, hip-openers, seated poses	Ujjayi, Nadi Shodhanam (alternate nostril breathing), Surya Bheda (right nostril), Bhramari
Pitta	Calming, cooling, softening (especially practice "soft eyes"), receptive, without strain	Small intestine, lower stomach, liver, spleen, eyes	Twists, pressure on solar plexus, sitting forward bends	Sitali & Sitkari (cooling breaths), Chandra Bheda (left nostril), Nadi Shodhanam, Bhramari
Kapha	Stimulating, dynamic, vigorous, heating, uplifting energy	Upper stomach, chest, lungs, heart, connective tissue, synovial fluid in joints	Standing poses, inverted poses, chest-openers, backward bends	Ujjayi, Kapalabhati, Bhastrika, Surya Bheda (right nostril), Bhramari

practice in ways that will help restore the balance and harmony of a sattvic version of our constitution. Thus we can become healthier and happier physically, mentally and spiritually.

If you'd like to dive deeper into integrating Ayurveda and Ananda Yoga, please join me for an *Ayurvedic Yoga Retreat for Balance and Harmony* at The Expanding Light in August and at the end of October. We'll go into much more depth on a number of topics such as:

- A deeper understanding of doshas and how they signal that they are out of balance

- More details on factors that influence dosha balance
- Specific ways to modify asanas to balance different doshas
- Designing Ananda Yoga routines with Ayurvedic considerations in mind
- How to know which dosha needs balancing
- How to work with dual-dosha constitutions
- Understanding the interplay between gunas & doshas ♦

I hope to see you in August or October. ♦



Ayurvedic Healing & Yoga Retreat

Kerala, India • February 10-27, 2008

Led by Diksha & Gyandev McCord

IMAGINE ...

Two deeply relaxing, healing, rejuvenating weeks of Ayurvedic treatments and Ananda Yoga in the seaside tropical paradise of Kerala's finest Ayurvedic resort—with Level 2 AYTT credit, and an optional nine-day add-on to Ananda Delhi for the International Kriya Yoga Retreat, a visit to the Taj Mahal, and much more. It's a very affordable, once-in-a-lifetime experience, with all-inclusive rates from \$4200. Register by October 20 for best housing selection. For info contact The Expanding Light at 800-346-5350 (530-478-7518) or www.expandinglight.org/kerala. Or write diksha@expandinglight.org.



It was the best vacation I have ever had. — AYTT grad Lan Gluckman



There aren't enough superlatives to describe this trip. I vacation a lot, and have been to many places in the world, and this was without a doubt the best vacation experience I have ever had. I want to go again!

— AYTT grad Charlene Gier

Where There's a Will, There's a Way

by Priya Rogers and Diane Calabria

It's said that the elephant-headed Ganesha is the god of new beginnings and the remover of obstacles. Priya Rogers, who won the traditional drawing for the small Ganesha figure in the final sharing circle of her AYTT, has certainly had both a *new beginning* and quite a few *obstacles* since that day several years ago—obstacles that might have stopped her, but haven't.

Formerly the owner and operator of an international-cuisine restaurant (including Indian food—Priya was born in Delhi and has lived in the U.S. since 1980), Priya now teaches fifteen yoga classes each week to a variety of clients at various locations in the Greater Los Angeles area, plus privates in her home studio for people with special needs or who prefer privacy in their practice.

The Unexpected Teacher

Priya sold her restaurant due to her parents' poor health, and because the stress and long hours were having a negative effect on her own health as well. After the sale, she was not sure what to do next. She took a part-time retail sales position and began taking yoga classes, even though she was then recovering from major surgery. Before long, she was taking classes four to five days a week.

Priya was inspired to consider teaching by her yoga teacher, the late Fran Zabica (*see sidebar at right*). At first, Priya wasn't quite comfortable with the idea. "When my Ananda YTT began (in October 2004), I was very shy and nervous about leading a class and being in front of so many people. I hoped I would remember what to say—or even be able to say anything at all. Gyandev and Diksha had faith and confidence in me. They both told me to devote my practice to God and make it a service. That outlook changed the way I thought about being a teacher. By the end of the training, I felt very confident in my skills."

"After a month at The Expanding Light, I returned home feeling purified and totally cleansed," Priya says. "My father had been ill with Parkinson's Disease for a very



Priya lives in San Pedro, California and teaches fifteen classes each week in various parts of the Greater Los Angeles area.

long time. He worsened after I got back from training, and he went into hospice. I was torn between looking for a job and taking care of my dad. My priority was my father, and I was by his side until he passed away in February 2005."

Priya began teaching shortly thereafter. "I was hired right away by the YMCA and a private studio in Rolling Hills, near my hometown of San Pedro. Fran was really proud of me. Soon after that, she found out she had cancer. She was quite sick during this time. I saw her during the last few days before she passed away. She told me I was a good teacher, and the love that I have for this profession and my students would take me a long way in life. She was proud of me and what I had done as her student. Fran will always be a big part of me as a teacher."

Gifts from Fran

Fran Zabica began teaching Ananda Yoga in 1999, having opened her studio, Inner Harmony Yoga, in San Pedro, Calif., immediately after graduating from AYTT. Starting Priya on her way to teaching was not Fran's only contribution to the Ananda Yoga movement: Other AYTT grads "sent" by Fran include Jeff Moore (founder/director of Ananda South Bay in Torrance, Calif.), Kari Burgos (who now owns and teaches at Inner Harmony Yoga), and Demetria Newman (who happened onto Fran's classes while visiting L.A. from her home in Las Vegas).

Fran also wrote some excellent articles for *Awake & Ready!*—we invite you to check them out:

Spring 2001: "Relax and Feel"—Fran shared thoughts on how to help students get the "feel" of Ananda Yoga practice.

Spring 2002: "Burn Bright, Not Out"—Gyandev interviewed several overachieving Ananda Yoga teachers (including Fran, who had been teaching 22—that's right, twenty-two—classes per week!) on how to avoid yoga teacher burnout.

Spring 2005: "What? Fortune Cookies without Cookies?"—Fran shared her innovative (and entertaining) idea for helping your students as well as your yoga-teaching business

Autumn 2005: "Inspired to Teach"—Written from her hospital bed, to be shared after her passing (Sept. 30, 2005), Fran gives a touching farewell and an inspiring call to action for Ananda Yoga teachers.



On a Mission

The loss of two such important people in her life has only made Priya more determined to make a difference. With encouragement from her husband and family (“my support system and biggest blessing”) she has inspired many people to try yoga—a good number of whom would probably never walk through the door of a yoga studio. She has a knack for seeing places where yoga is needed before the people who are there realize they need the yoga! Maybe it is due partly to the business acumen she gained during her restaurant days, partly to intuitive guidance, and partly to a big-hearted desire to be of service. Whatever the explanation, it works!

At the YMCA in San Pedro, Priya started a Yoga for Seniors class. “I was trying something totally new: The YMCA was looking for a teacher with the patience to teach yoga to seniors with special needs. (Seniors make up 50% of the YMCA’s membership.) I came with the right proposal at the right time. Now I have no space in the class: It’s full of seniors with all sorts of disabilities such as Parkinson’s Disease, MS, spinal injuries. They all appreciate this, because they can feel that it’s benefiting their bodies. The gentle style and affirmations relax them. My mom (who has six screws in her spine after a major injury) is able to do the class and feel good, and my dad suffered from Parkinson’s for twenty years, so when people come up to me and say, ‘That felt so good,’ or ‘I feel better after the class,’ that is my reward and a blessing. I feel gratified if I am able to help anyone with a disability.”

The U.S. Air Force Soars Upward on Wings of Joy

Priya also teaches at Fort McArthur Air Force Base in San Pedro. “Two years ago, I just happened to be near the base fitness center, not too far from my home, and the thought came to me, ‘I think I’ll just leave my resume with the guard out in front of the base’ [since only military personnel are allowed to enter]. I did that, and lo and behold, two weeks later I got a call: The base didn’t have a fitness program, and they had outsourced to a company that would provide teachers for fitness classes such as cycling—and yoga, which I had suggested to them.

One reason Ananda Yoga works so well with the military is that it has discipline, and the military is very disciplined. They like the purposeful sequencing—from breathing to warm-ups to postures, deep relaxation and meditation—and the fact that mental as well as physical discipline is involved.

It was luck and a blessing for me.”

The Air Force embraced Ananda Yoga with open arms. “I was the first yoga teacher on base. They fell in love with it. One reason Ananda Yoga works so well with the military is that it has discipline, and the military is very disciplined. They like the purposeful sequencing—from breathing to warm-ups to postures, deep relaxation and meditation—and the fact that mental as well as physical discipline is involved. They feel comfortable and healthy

with this style. It’s a real honor to teach at the base.”

Classes at the base are only for the military and their families. Priya teaches singles, couples, retired officers, and sometimes entire families. “I get a variety of people in my class, not just men. I even get couples who like doing yoga together as a healthy activity that helps them feel close in a positive way.”

“All officers except those who are retired can be called to Iraq at any time. A few from my class have gone and have not returned. Bless their souls. The average day for a personnel officer entails being at a desk in front of a computer. They are ready to work out and stretch at the end of the day. All my classes are in the evening at 5:00 or later so they can make it to the classes.”

Priya says the idea that men are typically not into yoga simply does not apply to military men. “Military men are not vain and shallow. They are deep and very centered. The meditation helps their inner self, and asanas their outer self, to bring the ultimate balance and harmony into their very stressful lives. They feel relaxed after class, and they often mention to me that this class is an escape to tranquility and serenity.”

Priya says that using the asana affirmations at the base classes is easy. “My students love the affirmations and the technique. I fell in love with the affirmations the very first time, and that love continues to get stronger with each class. I feel confident and positive about the affirmation, so I project that energy outwardly to my students. They get it.” Priya started teaching one class per week at the base, now teaches three, and the Air Force would like her to do even more.



Priya (front right) teaching at Fort McArthur Air Force base

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Where There's a Will, There's a Way (continued from page 7)

Last year, the chief director of *India Post* (a national Indian periodical with a wide circulation in the U.S.) was visiting Los Angeles and happened to see Priya's business card posted in a local India store. He found it interesting that an Indian was teaching yoga locally, so he contacted her and asked where she was teaching. "He found it very amusing that I teach yoga to the U.S. military. That interview led to a front-page article in *India Post*, with the headline 'Ananda Yoga helping top US forces'" (see right)

The article quoted Priya as follows: "It helps [American military officers] to relax in this fast-paced world of stress. This is a tool to manage stress and anxiety that overwhelms most military men for obvious reasons. Most officials said the yoga course helped them with getting better sleep and getting in tune with their bodies. It improved their lifestyle so that they could manage their stress levels at their own pace without the help of medical doctors and medication."

Jim, one of her students at the base, told *India Post* that his only form of exercise in the last year had been yoga three times a week with Priya. The article went on to say that "he encourages everyone to try the Ananda Yoga style and also brings his wife to the classes. The couple feels that this yoga has enhanced their lifestyle and health. In fact, Jim insists that yoga should be a part of life."

The article concluded with this quote from Priya: "After taking this style of yoga, I truly felt cleansed and peaceful within myself. I was born in New Delhi, India, so I was exposed to yoga since childhood. However this style of yoga is unique. It led me to become more serious in learning how to teach and help others. It's designed to incorporate the mind-body-spirit as one unit for higher awareness of oneself."

Practicing the Law—of Karma

Another of Priya's unusual yoga venues is Sullivan, Workman & Dee, a downtown Los Angeles law firm. Priya describes her husband, an attorney with the firm, as being "soaked in stress." Ananda Yoga helps him to release stress and sleep better, so Priya thought the other attorneys could benefit from Ananda Yoga as well. She now teaches a stress management class there once per week.

Priya uses the law library as the yoga room. Due to the limited space, she can have only about six students in her classes there. "I have lawyers, secretaries and law clerks in the classes, and sometimes other office staff as well. The affirmations are what make this yoga style so unique for them; they embrace it with peace."

Joe Dizeida, a business lawyer, says: "Yoga helps my lower back pain and my sleep at night. It helps my stress level as well." Sherry Tanabat, a probate lawyer, adds: "It helps me with my tensed shoulders and the stress my work gives me. The affirmations help my mind to ease. I affirm them whenever I tense up." Priya's husband, stress-soaked Robert, enthuses: "I love the affirmations. They allow me to focus on a positive point and disregard all the mindless chatter. Ananda Yoga has changed my view of yoga.

It's not just physical; it's all about finding peace within."

Priya is not interested in opening a studio, which she feels would limit her. She wants to teach in different environments all across Los Angeles. In all her classes, Priya brings passion and commit-

ment. She says, "If you love something so much, you don't see it as work anymore. You see it as a service—a service to my students who need me and this style of yoga in their life in order to be healthier and happier. I devote my practice to God before starting the class and pray for my students, that they may benefit from the class physically and mentally. My students feel the passion I have for my work. I truly love the energy in my classes, and it helps me to be even more positive about my work."

"I Rise Joyfully to Meet Each New Opportunity"

In May 2006, Priya was lifting some things in her home and herniated the L5/S1 disc in her lower back. This might have been disastrous for some yoga teachers, but Priya just kept going. It wasn't easy for her to teach three classes a day, being prohibited from doing both backwards bends and forward bends. Instead of demonstrating the poses, as she was accustomed to doing, she taught while walking through the class area and adjusting students. She says, "I'm very slowly healing, but yoga is my passion and God blessed me with the Ananda Yoga style because it is the only style that feels good and pure. I just love this style of yoga. It's cleansing for the soul. I'm grateful to God I'm able to work like this with my back injury."



In fact, Priya turned her injury into a teaching opportunity: Soon after she began taking treatments for her herniated disc at Harbor Health Spa in Palos Verdes, California, which offers chiropractic, massage and acupuncture, she saw their ad in the local paper, saying that they were looking for a yoga teacher. "It occurred to me that a chiropractic office and spa would be ideal for yoga classes," recalls Priya. "So I answered the ad, and now I lead a yoga therapy program there. There's a beautiful studio in the facility, and this style really compliments what goes on at Harbor Health. It's great to be able to work at a place and get treated there too. I customize my classes to the needs of the students, and they feel good about the results. The affirmations work like a soothing salve to their minds, and the emphasis on the breath keeps them relaxed throughout the class."

She teaches four classes per week, and the doctors who run the center recommend that their patients attend her classes before their treatments so they'll be more relaxed. The acupuncturist feels that yoga is very therapeutic for the body, especially the Ananda style, because it has a lot to offer for both physical and mental well being. Priya says, "His patients really feel good after class, and it enables them to go in for their treatments afterwards feeling stretched and relaxed."

"My own injury has gotten much better," adds Priya, "although I have to keep my knees bent and engage my abdominal muscles at all times during the bends so I don't re-injure myself."

Priya also has another challenge ... er ... opportunity: macular degeneration in both eyes, which makes it difficult for her to focus. This condition, which she has had since age 21, is extremely rare for someone so young as she. (Her condition is very stable, and she monitors it closely.) She doesn't generally tell her students about her condition, and they generally don't notice, but it makes it difficult for Priya to see her students from a distance. "The way I overcome this disability is to walk around to see my students whom I can't see from a distance, and adjust according to my class size. I do the best I can. Ananda Yoga gives us a different perspective on what yoga truly means. Yoga is about what you *can* do, not what you *can't* do. I am grateful to God that I can see what I can." Priya believes the disability in her eyes and back have made her a more effective yoga teacher, giving her a keen sensitivity to her students' needs.

There is an African proverb: "Smooth sailing does not make for skillful sailors." If that's true, then Priya can truly be described as a skillful sailor—and a very determined one. Her approach to teaching can be summed up by the philosophy her parents taught her: "We must supply the will, and the power will come from God." Amen. She hopes that through her teaching, she will inspire others as she has been inspired to make a difference—and never, ever give up. ♦

The Yin and Yang of Yoga (continued from page 1)

an entire class, trying never to allow strain or attitudinal resistance to intrude? Include poses that students often resist, so they can "enjoy" a good attitudinal challenge. For example, doing Dhanurasana or Vasishthasana multiple times could provide a nice attitudinal challenge!

Then ask them to go beyond mere absence of strain and attitudinal resistance, into active cooperation with the pose. Ask them not simply to *do* the poses, but to *listen to* and *work with* the poses. And take it still farther, beyond *active* cooperation into *enthusiastic* cooperation.

Make a game of this, so students can laugh at their all-too-human reactions. They'll not only have fun, but also end up with more energy, and begin to see how willingness and enthusiasm help bring about more success and enjoyment in all aspects of life. The "game" might seem artificial at first, but when the energy starts flowing abundantly, they'll know it's real.

Such seemingly small shifts of emphasis can make a huge difference—and the subtler the practices (e.g., meditation, affirmation), the more important such shifts become. It's amazing how easy it is to have more energy!

Relaxation Adds to Will Power

With willingness comes another quality that increases will power: relaxation. Far from being its opposite, relaxation is invaluable to will power, because strain commits some of our energy to tension rather than to accomplishment. It actually makes us work against ourselves.

Here's an experiment: Choose an asana that demands some strength and endurance, like Virabhadrasana I or II. Do side 1 with full-body tension, even in the face, mouth and eyes—not maximum tension, just engagement. In side 2, contrast that experience with conscious relaxation in every muscle that doesn't need to be engaged, and notice how much easier (and more pleasant!) it is. Then do side 1 again, relaxing not only muscles, but the breath and the mind (i.e., letting go of any mental strain or attitudinal resistance). Notice that, even though the muscles may grow tired, something about the asana gets lighter, easier. Finally, do side 2 again, not only relaxing as much as possible, but consciously, willingly, enthusiastically drawing in energy from all around to help you do the pose. Then ask your students to compare their experiences.

Practice Fearlessness

"One of the greatest enemies of will power is fear," said Yogananda. "The life force that is flowing steadily through your nerves is squeezed out when the nerves become paralyzed by fear, and thus the whole vitality of the body is lowered." But Sri Yukteswar said, "Look fear in the face, and it will cease to trouble you." Try it in class: Ask each student to choose a pose that he or she fears, and help each one find a way to do the pose via props and variations. Of course, this can become challenging and chaotic

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Postpartum Meditation: Does It Exist?

Part 1 of a Series by Nicole DeAvilla

Well-meaning friends, acquaintances and even strangers are quick to give all kinds of advice to a new mother. Before she knows it, a new mother is likely to be given the following advice from a variety of people. "When the baby sleeps ... meditate, do yoga, clean the house, pay the bills, make your phone calls, take a bath, take a nap..." The list goes on. It's enough to paralyze one into inaction trying to decide what to do—and by the time you get started, the baby wakes up.

So, when it comes to finding time to meditation, what is realistic to expect? The answer depends upon a variety of circumstances and what your definitions of meditation, yoga and spiritual practices are.

Considerations

First of all there are many factors that will determine the initial energy levels of the mother: a long, drawn out-labor (and it is labor in every sense of the word), medications, stitches from an episiotomy, Cesarean delivery, the health of the mother before delivery, etc. Even the easiest of labors requires energy for the body to heal. Then too, is there an older sibling who needs attention right away? Does the newborn sleep for very long? How often at night does the baby wake up?

Other factors to consider are how much help a new mother has. Does her husband work long hours? Can a friend or family member be around to help, especially during those first important weeks? If there are other children, how old are they? What other responsibilities does the new mother need to take on right away (taking care of the family pets, cooking all of the meals etc.)?



You can begin to see that feeling rested enough to not fall asleep while trying to meditate is a challenge, to say the least, and that is not to mention that it might be uncomfortable even to be in an upright, seated position due to stitches or other complications.

Should we throw up our hands and say "Oh well, so much for meditation. Maybe next year ..."?

General Tips

Not at all! There are a lot of possibilities in-between "all" and "nothing." First of all, do not expect your meditation practice—or much of the rest of your life, either—to be like it was before having a baby. The sooner you accept that, the better. If you can get help, ask for it, and accept any offers of help. Now, just because your meditation practice is going to be different, does it mean that it will be less fulfilling? No, in fact you might just discover it to be *more* fulfilling, and that on top of you have the joy of having your new baby!

Next, do not be stuck on trying to meditate for any particular amount of time. Any time meditating, however short, is worthwhile. You may not be able to sit upright on the floor or on a meditation bench right away. It's okay to prop yourself up with pillows in a comfortable chair (or the bed), having your spine as upright as it can be for the time being. Intention and a desire to meditate will carry you a long way as a mother with a baby. The "rules" change in these circumstances, so do not be hard or rigid with yourself.

Enjoy your baby. Let your baby make you smile. That joy can carry you farther than a frustrated attempt to meditate when your baby wants to see your smiling face.

These are a few general tips on postpartum meditation. In the next issue of *Awake & Ready!*, I will give some more-specific ones. Also see *Clarity* magazine (Autumn 2004, a free download at www.ananda.org) on more details of how I discovered my new way of meditating with my first child. ♦



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The Yin and Yang of Yoga

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for you, with different people doing different poses. But hey, look fear in the face, and it will cease to trouble you. Besides, this can be lots of fun.

For some people, Ustrasana, or Sarvangasana away from the wall, is scary. Others need a bigger challenge. For example, many people fear arm balances like Bakasana (Crane Pose, *right*) or Pincha Mayurasana (Peacock Feather Pose), but creative variations and propping can help them feel quite safe. And when they're able to do a pose they've feared, even a radically modified version, it's a big boost to both willpower and self-esteem.



Break a Habit, Remove a Block

Habits save time and effort, but sometimes they weaken us. A while ago, I noticed that I always pushed up into Pincha Mayurasana (*right*) with my right leg. That's okay, but it bothered me that it felt unnatural—and harder—when I instead used my left leg. I could sense that, somehow, that “harmless” habit was blocking my energy.

So I began using my left leg, and I continued until it felt equally natural both ways. It took weeks, due to the depth of the habit, but when I got there, I felt that energy had been freed, and my will power (and coordination) had grown stronger.



You can help your students increase their will power by finding and breaking habits. You needn't use poses as challenging as Pincha Mayurasana; it can be as simple as which hand comes back first in Ustrasana (for those who touch their heels). Or which knee touches down first when coming to the floor from Tadasana. Or if they always do the basic Trikonasana from AYT, try the version in *The Art and Science of Raja Yoga*.

And the habits need not be physical. For example, where do they habitually gaze during balance poses? Where is their awareness while entering forward bends?

Simple though these habits can be, breaking them may free up substantial energy and build will power.

Meet a Challenge, Get a Boost

In a similar vein, consider Virabhadrasana I or II. Most people find a “comfortable” depth of lunge—i.e., scant

effort is required—and cling to it forever. Occasionally, with prodding, they may reluctantly lunge a bit deeper. It's too bad, because these poses can give much more energy than they require, if only we'll rise ... er, descend ... to the occasion!

So within the limits of knee and hip safety, encourage students into a deeper lunge. If they see it, not as “torture by teacher,” but as an interesting experiment in energy, they'll “get down”—and they'll get the energy boost that always comes from rising to a challenge (successfully or not), and thus a will power boost. (See the *Awake & Ready!* Vol. 8 [Nos. 2 and 3] and Vol. 9 [No. 1] for more ways to challenge students in an Ananda Yoga way.)

Sharpen Concentration for Energy Control

We've explored ways to increase energy. Now for control, so we can “direct it toward fulfillment.” Control begins with concentration, which both Energization and meditation help us develop. Asanas, too, can build the depth and duration of our concentration. Here's one way: Enter and exit the asanas in *ultraslow* motion, making every movement with full awareness. Feel every muscle as it engages or relaxes, notice what's happening in the joints, be aware of the breath, the mind. Take six, eight or even more *slow* breaths just to enter and exit the poses. You can do the same thing in Surya Namaskar, taking multiple slow breaths while moving from one position to the next.

You can take it a step farther with experienced students who can concentrate *from* the spiritual eye on each movement. Because both concentration and will power are centered at the spiritual eye, concentrating from that point will strengthen both faculties.

Take It Step Farther

These simple experiments are both fun and informative. If you try them, be sure to give students time to discuss their experiences; it can be very fruitful. The entire process will stimulate everyone while expanding the Ananda Yoga experience beyond the classroom.

In fact, why not dedicate an entire class series to developing and using will power? Each week you could speak about some aspect of will power, and its role in our lives and in our efforts toward success. (See “Resources” below.) Then you could explore individual exercises like the ones above. You could encourage students to try similar *non-hatha* approaches to building will power outside of class (e.g., break a habit, concentrate from the spiritual eye, do something they're afraid to do), then discuss their experiences in the following week's class. It's a great way to vitalize your classes and stimulate your creativity—which, by the way, is another way to build *your own* will power! ♦

RESOURCES

Paramhansa Yogananda's *How to Be a Success* will be released by Crystal Clarity in Spring 2008. See also *The Art and Science of Raja Yoga*, *Awaken to Superconsciousness*, and *Money Magnetism* by Swami Kriyananda, and several excellent lectures on will power and initiative by Yogananda in the book, *Man's Eternal Quest*.

LEVEL 2 NEWS

Upcoming Highlights

★The Essence of the Bhagavad Gita (July 29–Aug 4)

Immerse yourself in the timeless power of the Gita under the insightful guidance of Jyotish and Devi Novak (Ananda’s spiritual directors). You’ll explore Yogananda’s profound commentaries on the Gita, learn how to apply this wisdom to your daily life, enjoy daily Gita-oriented meditations in which you’ll explore the Gita in the traditional way of passage by passage, and even get ideas for presenting Gita concepts to your own students in ways that work. Also, Gyandev McCord and Brook Dunwoody will guide you in exploring the practice and teaching of some more-advanced asanas.

★Advanced Pranayama (Aug 5–12)

Take your students’—and your own—asana and meditation practice to the next level with a focused practice of pranayama techniques, including bandhas and mudras. It’s a powerful and fun week of exploration, discussion and application. You’ll also gain a deeper understanding of the anatomy and physiology of the breath—physical and subtle—plus take an in-depth look at Energization (including, for those who seek Level 2 certification, how to teach Energization).

Restorative Yoga Teacher Training (Aug 30–Sept 2)

Every yoga teacher has opportunities to use restorative techniques—e.g., when a student has an injury, a deep emotional release, or is simply too stressed out for normal asanas. Sometimes, too, an entire restorative class is a wonderful change of pace. In this short training, Lisa Mallery shows you how to provide students with this deeply relaxing and nurturing adjunct to Ananda Yoga practice.

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Level 2 Calendar

Please remember that AYTA Members receive a **15% discount** on all Level 2 programs. If you need financial aid, please contact The Expanding Light for an application. All of the following programs earn Level 2 credit; those with “★” are required for Level 2 AYTT certification.

2007

- 7/1–14 ★AYTT Assistantship
- 7/15–21.....Meditation Teacher Training—Level 2
- 7/15–20 Prenatal YTT (*see p. 10*)
- 7/20–22 Postpartum YTT (*see p. 10*)
- 7/29–8/4.... ★Essence of Bhagavad Gita
- 8/1–5Ayurvedic Yoga Retreat for Balance & Harmony (*see p. 2*)
- 8/5–12 ★Advanced Pranayama
- 8/30–9/2.... Restorative YTT
- 10/10–14.... Kriya Yoga Preparation
- 10/19–28.... ★Meditation Teacher Training
- 10/28–11/10 ★AYTT Assistantship
- 10/31–11/4 .Ayurvedic Yoga Retreat for Balance & Harmony (*see p. 2*)

Early 2008

- 2/10–27.....Ayurvedic Healing and Yoga in Kerala, India (*see p. 11*)
- 3/23–4/5..... ★AYTT Assistantship

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