



Stonebridge



MEDITATION DIPLOMA COURSE Sample Pages

MOVEMENT/ENERGY WORK

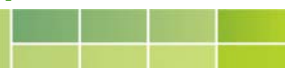
Movement and stillness are the two poles of energy manifestation.

Indeed, we can bridge the gap between these two by increasing the degree of our inner awareness, and this is the basis of ha-tha Yoga. When we tune into the sun-moon aspects of physical/mental energy, we follow the middle path of expressing both forces of our nature. All living species are subject to this subtle but inevitable pull of duality. Such natural interplay of polarities is one of the most dynamic, instinctive and fundamental laws that rule much of the biological world. Eastern philosophy puts it beautifully simply and concisely as the dance of the Yin and the Yang.

The whole material universe is under the influence of these two major forces; they are the background of all that exists. Each object resonates to the frequency of these two polarities that it contains in varying degrees. Therefore, the nature of any object is determined by the amount and interaction of these two underlying qualities. In Ayur-Veda, or the ancient natural health care system of India and in traditional Chinese medicine, health and harmony, whether physical, mental, emotional, social or spiritual, is in great measure dependent on the right and proper interaction and balance between these two polarities.

Most of the functions of nature have a cyclic rhythm, for example the diurnal/nocturnal cycle, ebb and flow of tides, and the seasonal and moon cycles.

Our own inner nature pulsates to the rhythms of such cycles: hormonal and menstrual cycles, heart beat and its corresponding influence on circulation of blood, lymph and cerebro-spinal fluid. When we follow the path of nature and live a life where there is balance between the cycles of activity and rest, we promote health and harmony in our internal biochemistry.



The father of modern physiology, Claude Bernard, explains that “the processes of the body subordinate themselves and succeed one another in a pattern, and according to a law which pre-exists; they repeat themselves with order, regularity, constancy, and they harmonize in such a manner as to bring about the organization and growth of the individual” .

According to Dr. Deepak Chopra, this order and growth, which Bernard found in all animals and plants, is a principle of intelligence found throughout nature.

One of the core teachings of the Vedas and other books of knowledge is that nature has intrinsic intelligence, and man is part of nature, so they are part of the same reality. When man lives in tune with nature his life is balanced and harmonious, but when he ignores these natural laws and patterns he experiences dis-ease and dysfunction. Now, how does this concept apply to our current lesson? Well, it relates to the harmonising of the polarised expressions of energy within our being.



TUTOR TALK: In this lesson then, we will be exploring the necessity of achieving a balance between the Yin and Yang forces by honouring the cycles of activity and rest. We will also explore some methods of meditation using movement and bodywork as a catalyst.

Movement as a form of, and a preparation to, the experience of meditation is very ancient. The Greeks had this motto: “Mens sana in corpore sano”¹ and the Egyptian culture at its peak of glory taught sacred temple dancing. The eastern teachings have martial arts, which although very physical acknowledge the inner energy system of spiritual origin (Chi/Ki). All these traditions, then, practice a form of movement/meditation, or a way of uniting all the forces of the body. Pacific islanders have an awareness and attunement ritual, the Kalana (these series of exercises are a worship of the natural elements and a celebration of healing energy).

The word YOGA means union – therefore to attain inner wisdom one needs to look after the physical vehicle. This is a philosophy that teaches that the different aspects of our being are intimately interconnected and are all influenced by each other. The yogic approach acknowledges that “the body is led by the mind and mind itself is guided by soul.”

Indeed, when bodies are at ease minds unwind, then the doors of perception are opened. Muscular relaxation creates serene mental vibrations, which leads to a better processing and acceptance of emotions. It is now a well-recognised fact, especially through bio-feedback, that physical relaxation results in a calm, clear mind, which is the first step towards spiritual understanding. The Rishis or seers of ancient India who perceived this link between matter and spirit were guided by higher forces to instruct humanity into these mysteries.

¹ A sane mind in a sane body.

THE BODY IN MOVEMENT IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO TOUCH A MOMENT OF PURE AWARENESS AND SERENITY

The main advantage of yoga asanas or postures is that one can sit with the body upright and still for a long time without strain or discomfort. Of course it takes time and effort to learn to sit in meditation postures like the lotus. However, one can also practice meditation in a comfortable chair, yet one still needs to prepare oneself. Indeed, it can be difficult to compose oneself in silence and stillness in the midst of the hurried, hectic pace of modern life. Yoga also recommends many pre-meditative practices. These can be used to release tensions in both body and mind, so that one can be open and receptive to the state of meditation.



TUTOR TALK: So, in the first part of this lesson we will concentrate on some practical methods, as PARAMAHAMSA SATYANANDA explains that “Yoga is more concerned with practice than with theory.” Having said that, I still consider the preliminary preface to our action session as an important part of helping you understand the process of how the balance of polarity forces is part of energy management.

PRELIMINARY YOGIC MEDITATION PRACTICES

Select one or two of the following exercises prior to your meditation session

Taking some time to stretch, relax, and breathe will prepare your body, mind and spirit for the experience of meditation. They are also good stress-release and loosening movements to help you unwind when needed.

RAGGEDY ANN

Stand with your feet widely separated, about 4 to 6 feet, stretch your arms upwards – parallel to each other, the fingers open. As you breathe in stretch fully, right up with fingers pointing to the ceiling. Hold the stretch with the breath inside, until you are ready to breathe out. Then breathe out forcefully through the mouth. Exhale the air out in loud, gasping sounds – “ha, ha, ha” - while stretching forward and downwards. Bend just as far as the body will naturally allow and bend your knees if you need to – Pause and relax.

Ready to breathe in again, stretch up to start anew. Repeat this movement a few times, and on the last one hold the body in a downward position for a while and visualise the body as a rag doll, feeling yourself becoming soft as jelly. There may be a tendency for the body to sway - please allow yourself to freely give in to this process.

While hanging loose, use natural moaning, groaning, sighing sounds to let out any unprocessed negative emotions and repeat to yourself, out loud or mentally, the following affirmation:

I LET GO OF TIGHTNESS AND TENSION
I SIGH MY FRUSTRATIONS OUT
I EXPRESS MY EMOTIONS THROUGH SOUND

ELEPHANT WALKING

Stretch your arms above your head as you breathe in, hold the breath and the stretch, then breathe out through the mouth while bending the body forward, and keeping the body hanging loose as in the Raggedy Ann position, visualise yourself as an elephant. Your legs are heavy and strong. Feel their solid support for the torso, which can now hang limp and loose as the trunk of an elephant.

Start making slow, conscious steps around the room. Let the torso sway and move freely, becoming more and more relaxed. Sense the visualisation and have a strong mental image of yourself as possessing the qualities of an elephant. Use this repetition to help you feel that: “heaviness and lightness are both qualities of my physical being”.

After a few minutes this posture will loosen and limber the shoulder joints, head and neck muscles. Repeat the affirmation below to confirm in your heart this awareness.

“I MOVE CLOSER TO THE EARTH ELEMENT FOR RENEWING MY ENERGY SYSTEM”

SWAYING TREE POSE

From the standing position have your feet slightly apart, a few inches, now stretch your arms upwards and parallel to each other, then lean the upper body and torso first to the right, next to the left. Breathe in as you stretch upwards, breathe out as you relax to the side. Let the movement be continuous and smooth. Use the affirmation below, either out loud or repeat it to yourself mentally.

“I AM A TREE
SWAYING IN THE BREEZE
I AM FREE
MY LIMBS MOVE WITH EASE”

PRAYER POSITION

Attunement - Stand with feet together, palms touching and at the level of the heart centre. Allow yourself to become comfortable. Feel your breath along the spine. Adjust your posture by following this movement of the natural breath. Visualise it flowing up and down the spinal column, from the nape of the neck down to the tailbone. Tune in to the beat of your heart. Relax and connect with your inner Self. Start with calling a higher power to move through you (whatever you perceive that to be).

Invite the **magical** into the **mundane**.

Acknowledge that body is led by mind and mind itself is guided by soul. Remember who you are:

Just pure energy; burst the bubble.

POSITION OF POWER

From the standing position, have your arms outstretched upwards, fingers spread apart. The feet are separated widely as if you were spread-eagled in the air. Breathe in deeply and slowly, affirming:

“ENERGY AND JOY FLOOD MY BODY CELLS”

This posture helps you feel the dynamic balance of both the material and spiritual energy. Its symbolical aspect represents:

- HEAD IN HEAVEN (Harmony)
- FEET ON THE EARTH (Expression/Activity)

Although we are not always tuned in to sense the powerful cosmic rays and subtle pranic currents, these are always circulating in the ether. By increasing our conscious awareness of these powerful energies, we become more open to receive them in our auric field. Awareness is the key to replenishing our vital essence by simply uniting with them.