

Awake & Ready!

Newsletter of the Ananda Yoga® Teachers Association
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PERSPECTIVE

A Birthday Present —in Reverse (Part 2)

Last issue, I introduced six of the twelve new asana affirmations that Swami Kriyananda recently asked be incorporated into Ananda Yoga. (It was just after his 80th birthday; hence the title of this article.) In this issue I'll cover the other six. All twelve asanas fit wonderfully into Ananda Yoga's "inward and upward" approach. They range from easy to challenging, and from standing poses to seated/floor poses to inversions. They're wonderful additions to the Ananda Yoga family.



Gyandev McCord
Director

Rather than detailed instruction, I'm simply going to offer a few thoughts about the asanas, their inner aspects, and how they fit in Ananda

Yoga. I hope it will help you tune in to the asanas and their affirmations, which are so valuable in unlocking the essence of the poses and teaching them effectively.

Virabhadrasana I—Warrior I

We've long had an affirmation for Virabhadrasana II, but not for Virabhadrasana I, which is a wonderful pose—a cousin to (Standing) Backward Bend. But there's definitely a difference between these cousins: Whereas the Backward Bend is a vertical, upward-moving, aspirational pose, Virabhadrasana I is more a horizontal, drawing-from-above pose. (By the way, when you teach Backward Bend, do some students who are new to the pose step the feet far apart, as if doing Virabhadrasana I? Telling them to take one long walking step back usually avoids a wide stance.)

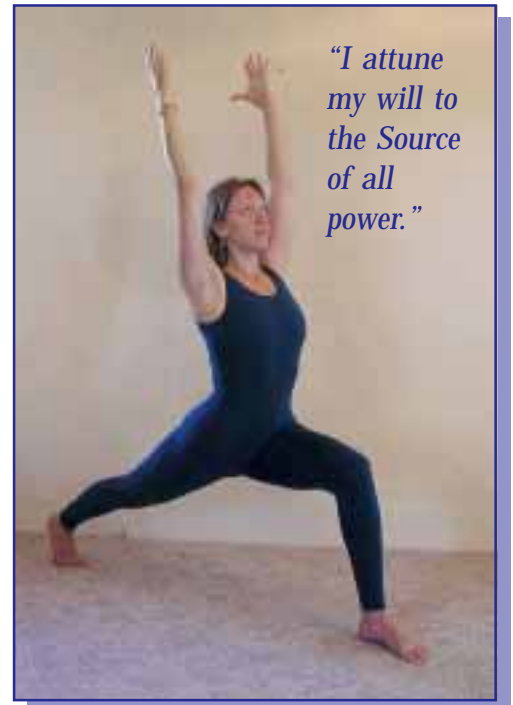
The position of the hands, for example, reminds me of a subtle aspect of the Festival of Light, when the minister says, "Raise your arms and, chanting AUM, ask that the power of God replenish you in body, mind and soul." Swami Kriyananda has told us to raise the arms, not with palms facing forward (as most people do), but with the palms facing each other (as in the photo at right). This is a more receptive, "drawing in" position; the palms-forward position

is the active, "sending out" position that we use for healing prayers.

At Diksha's and my 12-day intensive in Assisi last summer, I tried an experiment: With the entire class in Virabhadrasana I (palms facing), I asked them to focus on drawing divine power into their

bodies and minds, and rather than exerting their own wills, to attune their wills with God's will in order to stay in the pose as long as possible. I asked them to exit to Tadasana as

(continues on page 2)



IN THIS ISSUE

A Birthday Present—in Reverse (Part 2), by Gyandev McCord	4
AYTA Member News	2
Teaching Yoga in the Workplace, by Valerie Wint	4
Ayurvedic Healing & Yoga Retreat in Kerala, India, February 8–25, 2007	6
The Next Step: Teaching Meditation in Yoga Classes, by Lisa Macy	7
Expanding the Light of Ananda Yoga, by Gyandev McCord	8
My Beloved's Call, by Korelle Hendee	10
Level 2: Upcoming Level 2 Programs & Calendar ...	12
AYTA Contacts	12



A Birthday Present—in Reverse (Part 2) (continued from page 1)

soon as they began to struggle or shake with effort. Rather than using Tadasana as a neutral pose, however, I asked them to continue to try to draw divine power into themselves and, turning the palms forward, to send it out to others who were still in the pose. One by one, they exited the pose until there were only ten people left in the asana, then five, then two, and finally one. He stayed in the pose without apparent struggle for an extremely long time, as the others continued sending energy. (I didn't keep track of time, but it felt like forever. When he finally came out, it was to much applause.) Later I asked him whether he could feel energy from the other students helping him in the pose, and he answered, "Assolutamente!" ("Absolutely!") I wasn't surprised, as there were many experienced devotees in the class, people who are accustomed to sending energy this way. Everyone in the class seemed to enjoy the experience as much as he did. It really unified the group.

Try it with your own class: As they focus on drawing in with the upraised arms and upraised eyes (and not a jack-knifed neck) in Virabhadrasana I, have them focus on bringing divine power into their bodies, into their lives, and (don't forget this part!) on attuning their wills with God's will. Then invite them to affirm silently: "I attune my will to the Source of all power."

Ganapatiasana—Ganesha's Pose

You may have heard this asana called Virabhadrasana 3 (or III) or Tola Dandasana (Balancing Staff Pose). Another name you may have seen, however, is Ganapatiasana. Ganapati is a name for Ganesha, the elephant-headed "god of good luck" in Hindu mythology. In fact, if you look at the asana for a moment, it might remind you a little bit of the



statues of Ganesha dancing: being on one leg suggests dancing—and if you have to hop to maintain your balance, it looks even more like dancing!—and extending your arms and hands (and perhaps your gaze as well, as pictured above) forward is like an elephant's trunk. (You might recall that we

AYTA MEMBER NEWS

Looking Ahead

Some great articles are coming your way in *Awake & Ready!*, including teaching Ananda Yoga at an Air Force base, and teaching children with special needs. We'd love to print your story as well. It doesn't have to be long or esoteric (e.g., see Lisa Macy's article on teaching meditation). It doesn't have to be serious; we love humor. And it need not be informational; who couldn't use some inspiration (e.g., see Korelle Hendee's poem on page 10)? For information, contact Gyandev (see page 12).

pass one such statue around in the AYTT sharing circles.)

Yet it doesn't feel at all warrior-like to me. And although it certainly requires some balance and leg strength, once that is achieved it feels more like flying than anything else. Of course, arrows fly, so one could get the warrior flavor that way, but arrows don't give me the sense of serenity that I get from doing this asana. Anyway, who cares about names? As the saying goes, "A rose by any name would smell as sweet." The important thing is the *experience* of the asana. So why not try to tune into that experience of gliding through the air, affirming: "I sail serenely through skies of inner freedom."

I "test flew" this one on Diksha's recently after our weekend retreat in Tennessee (see page 8), when we drove to Lookout Mountain, Georgia, reputed to be the world's leading hang gliding site. I had long dreamed of going hang gliding, so when we discovered that they offered tandem flights (an instructor takes you up—no training required), we went for it. It was fabulous! The freedom, the exhilaration, the joy were almost overwhelming. I couldn't wipe a smile off my face (not that I wanted to) as I "sailed serenely through skies of inner freedom."

(By the way, if you haven't tried hang gliding, I really recommend it. Yes, there can be an anxious moment or two, but once you realize that you're not going to plummet out of the sky and embed your head six feet into the ground, it's a wonderful experience.)

Vasishthasana—Vasishtha's Pose

Here's another pose that is widely known but, in my experience, not very widely practiced in personal sadhana outside of yoga classes. Why? Maybe because it takes a lot of effort: the shoulders and trunk muscles have to work quite a bit—not merely to hold you up, but to hold your body in a straight line (neither sagging nor arching upward). Maybe it's also because balance can be tricky, especially if you stack the feet (as in the photo) and turn your head to gaze upward. Then too, the pose puts some strain on the wrists if you're not careful—and perhaps even if you *are* careful. (That can be avoided with an "on the fist" or "on the forearm" variation.)

Still, none of that should discourage one from trying Vasishthasana. It's extremely invigorating for the entire body,



“The calm fire of my concentration burns all restlessness, all distraction.”

and it's very stimulating for the third chakra. Like so many of the poses that require a bit of strength, I'm convinced that most people already have enough strength to do it—for a short time, at least. And doing it for a longer time is more about concentration and calm, smooth breathing than strength. When done with full concentration, Vasishthasana also gives a feeling of purification; to me it feels just like a personal, physical version of the fire ceremony. I almost feel like chanting a fire ceremony mantra during the pose, but instead I affirm: “The calm fire of my concentration burns all restlessness, all distraction.”

Rajakapotasana—Royal Pigeon Pose

Many of you have been asking for a long time: “Why isn't there an affirmation for Pigeon Pose?” Well, now there is. There are many different versions of Rajakapotasana in



“I rise above all thought of past and future, into the Eternal Now.”

the hatha yoga world: some are dramatic (i.e., extremely difficult) backward bends, while others aren't backward bends at all. So there's not just one “correct” Rajakapotasana, but the backward-bending version pictured here is our benchmark for Ananda Yoga. It's easy, although it can become intense for many people with tight hip flexors.

One interesting experiment is to compare two different versions of the pose that don't look different at all: pressing actively into the floor with the outer thigh and knee of the front leg, versus not doing so. This pressing action gives a palpable lift to the pose. (It also intensifies the stretch in the front of the other hip.) When I do add that lift, I feel a dynamic rising out of the earth and lower body, and a spontaneous lifting through the heart. There's a strong sense of leaving behind all that is temporal, all that holds us back, that is unimportant to our highest happiness.

And what is that? Well, for one thing, it's anything that is not of the present moment. We can view the legs, pointing as they do in opposite directions, as metaphorically representing past and future. In this pose, the mind is not distracted into past or future by the horizontal, backward/forward directions of the legs. Instead, we're rising up out of that in a third direction, into the one and only reality: the present moment. Hence the affirmation: “I rise above all thought of past and future, into the Eternal Now.”



“I welcome every opportunity for further growth.”

Upavistha Konasana—Seated Angle Pose

This is an absolutely lovely asana if one has enough patience to work with it. Although it's a forward bend—it doesn't have to be, of course; less flexible students may have their hands full just trying to sit upright with a straight spine—Upavistha Konasana is a more active pose than most other forward bends (unless one is very, very flexible), because it asks for opening not only in the backs of the legs, but in the inner hip joints as well.

Stretching out the inner hips and hamstrings in this way can bring a feeling of vulnerability, with a resultant inclination to stop the opening process in order to protect ourselves.

(continues on page 10)

Teaching Yoga in the Workplace

by Valerie Wint

Many of us live in a fast-paced world of high stress, and nowhere is this more apparent than in the workplace. Our bodies tighten, our breath becomes shallow, and our internal systems go into adrenalin overload. We often turn to equally fast-paced activities in our leisure time. While these can be fun, and have a valuable place in our lives, our bodies need to release the chronic “fight or flight,” high-adrenalin response we live with daily. Hatha Yoga allows us to get away from that fast pace for a while, and to bring balance and harmony into our lives.

I have been teaching Ananda-style Hatha Yoga in the workplace for a few years now. Most of my classes are at lunchtime or after work, though a couple of clients have opted for before-work classes.

Benefits All Around

There are a number of benefits of workplace yoga for the students, in addition to all the benefits anyone would gain from a regular yoga practice. In the workplace we find that those who practice regularly are better able to handle stressful situations, and tend not to overreact. They are able to relax and become more calm and centered. Yoga helps relieve back problems, headaches, high blood pressure, RSIs (repetitive strain injuries) and insomnia, and improves practitioners’ general physical and mental flexibility. It also helps them be better listeners and see others’ points of view. I have students who have come to class with a raging migraine, but who leave pain-free after an hour. Others have had shoulder injuries, but now have almost complete range of motion. Many students who have complained of back pain are now much more comfortable and mostly pain-free.

For the instructor, there are several benefits. First of all, you have a cohesive group who already know each other, and are comfortable in the location. This allows you to tailor your teaching more easily than in a studio or gym that has drop-in classes, in which you never know who will be in your class or what their experience with yoga has been. Granted, in the workplace, you may get new students in each new session, but as the group as a whole isn’t constantly

fluctuating, it’s possible to move forward with them.

Secondly, you feel as though you are truly helping people deal better with the realities of their day-to-day lives.

Finally, there are financial benefits. You can set a flat rate for your classes, which means that you have an assured income, unlike studio teaching, which pays per student present. For the students it means that the more people in the class, the lower the cost per person. I try to set a lower limit of 10 students, so that the cost per student is reasonable and not onerous. Most often, I charge \$120 for a one-hour corporate class. (I chose that figure because that’s what one of the studios where I teach charges for their corporate classes.) In one case, I reduced my flat rate and the lower limit, because of restructuring and uncertainty in the company.

Of course, there has to be an upper limit as well: you know what number you can handle, and often the size of the available room may determine how big the class can be. I find that an enrolment of 15–25 is good, because in any given week, there will be absentees. I’ve also found that having my in-house contact person be the collector of

fees works really well. Some companies will subsidize the classes, while some companies’ benefits will reimburse students (in which case you have to provide receipts). Other companies allow their employees to use the room but that’s all the support they offer.

Unique Features of Corporate Yoga

In terms of what you will teach, just as with public classes, you have to assess the level and ability of the majority of the group. I tend to teach a relatively gentle class, partly because

most of my students are fairly new to yoga or have some physical issues, and partly because they don’t want to be sweating before having to go back to work! That said, however, one of my groups has two classes a week, and they asked that one class be a more challenging one. So any new

people who join that class know ahead of time that on Wednesdays they will have to work harder than on Mondays.



Valerie lives in Toronto, Ontario, where she teaches Ananda Yoga both in yoga studios and in corporate settings. The testimonials accompanying this article are by students from her corporate classes.

“Yoga brings my stress levels down, not just after class but I feel the effects through the week. The breathing techniques we learned have helped me stay calm through some tough meetings (using them discreetly of course).”

— Lisa D.



When teaching in the corporate world, I try to bring some spiritual component into the mix. I don't "Om," but I do use the affirmations in every class. One student liked the affirmation for Garudasana so much that she had me write it down so she could put it on her computer. Sometimes we do the Energization Exercises as well. We always start with a short, guided meditation, focusing on the breath, inhaling peace and exhaling any stress. We then move into warm-ups, concentrating on necks, arms, shoulders, legs and spine. After some standing asanas and some floor work, we come to everyone's favorite posture, Savasana.

As with any class, you also have to assess where the students are at on any given day. But in a corporate setting, some other possibilities can arise that you won't find in regular studio or community center classes.

Recently, for example, one of my client companies experienced a hostile takeover, which is when one company attempts to buy out another, whether the management of the target company likes it or not. The takeover was anticipated, but our class happened on the very day that the announcement had been made to the company personnel. Needless to say, the students were all somewhat hyper and chatty, feeling a little scared for their jobs but also somewhat excited about the possibilities. So we talked for a few minutes about what changes might happen, and then I had them settle into a more meditative class than usual. We opened with a 20-minute guided centering meditation, focusing mainly on the breath, followed by only a couple of asanas, held for long periods, measured breathing for several minutes, and closed with a 15-minute Savasana. Everyone felt a lot calmer when they left. Unfortunately, we lost a few participants because they were let go as a result of restructuring following this takeover. (A couple of them have since shown up in my studio classes, however.) This restructuring has meant that fewer people are committing to yoga, so I reduced the flat fee and lowered the minimum number of participants. We have also instituted a pay-as-you-go option for those who don't want to commit at this time.

“Corporate yoga provides an hour retreat away from the chaos. This hour in the middle of the days helps center, de-stress, and revitalize you for the remainder of your workday. I have found on the days that we have yoga I am more productive in the afternoon than the non-yoga days.”

— Rayna V.



Valerie in Adho Mukha Shvanasana, showing off one of the gorgeous Toronto yoga studios in which she teaches.

Words to the Wise

It's important to dress appropriately when teaching in this environment, particularly if you have to walk through the workplace. I have yoga pants and tops that are comfortable but smart, and that work in both the corporate and studio environments. Of course, I'm usually a lot more casually dressed than most of the clients!

Also, it's important to have liability insurance when working in someone else's workplace. Many clients require you to have insurance so that they are not liable for any mishaps or injury when teaching on their property. I have insurance through my certification with the Federation of Ontario Yoga Teachers. Because it is a group rate, it's considerably less expensive than if I were to get insurance privately. Look into group insurance policies in your area. I also ask students to fill out a waiver: this includes their personal information, a health questionnaire, and a liability waiver. A couple of my clients also have the students fill out a separate waiver to satisfy the insurance requirements of either their company or the owner of the property.

Over the years, I've experienced a few drawbacks to corporate teaching. The biggest hurdle—aside from getting the teaching engagement in the first place—is the room. If you want to teach in a corporate setting, make sure you go and look at the space before committing to the class. Usually the space is a boardroom, and you may have to move furniture. If the furniture is pushed to the side or back, will it accommodate all the participants? What's the floor like? How private is the area, and how far from the washrooms? In one location we used the lunchroom for an after-work class—not the most comfortable, with linoleum floors and the possibility of workers coming in for a late coffee. In another location, the room is a training room that is not always left in the cleanest or tidiest of conditions. But we

battle through, joking that moving furniture is the warm-up to our class.

Another thing I've learned is to make sure that your in-house contact person books the room for the full series of

(continues on page 6)



Teaching Yoga in the Workplace
(continued from page 5)

classes and that you have an alternate contact person on hand. At one of my workplaces, my contact booked the room through their computer software program until 2010, but when she left the company, her computer permissions were withdrawn and we lost the booking. It was two months before we could have a class there again!

Getting Your Foot in the Corporate Door

Marketing your classes can be a challenge. I've tried cold-calling and letter-writing, and only got one short-lived class from that means. I contacted hospitals and companies in my neighborhood by researching them on the Internet. In some cases, the Human Resources person was listed, so I wrote or called them. In other cases I called and asked for that information. I found the whole thing time-consuming and not particularly lucrative.

All my other corporate classes have come from word of mouth. In two cases, students in studio or community centre classes approached me. In another, the husband of a friend is a vice president of a large company, and he made the introduction within his company. This has been the best way to get classes—just talk it up, tell your friends, don't be shy asking them for referrals. You can also list "corporate classes" as a possibility on your business cards, e-mail signature, and other marketing materials. And of course, put the thought out into the universe when you meditate.

"Yoga at work is a fantastic way to 'unwind' from the work day. I leave here with a much clearer head and more relaxed disposition. I also find it rejuvenates me in that I have more energy in the evening."

— Lisa C.

You will lose clients from time to time, usually due to attrition—interest wanes or work calls people away. Getting new gigs never really gets easier, as you have to go through the whole process all over again with a potential client. One of the means that is useful is the "Lunch 'n' Learn" program that some corporations have. Employees bring their lunch to a central location, perhaps a boardroom or lunchroom. You give them a little talk about yoga, and then do a few simple

asanas with them, maybe Ardha Chandrasana or some neck and shoulder loosening exercises—"Desk Yoga." This gives them a little taste of yoga and what it can do for them.

At the time of writing this article, I teach eight corporate classes a week, plus a class each weekday morning at a studio. I don't teach on weekends—I sub for other teachers if need be, but I have no regular classes booked from Friday after noon through the weekend (that's my family time).

I don't make oodles of money, but I'm quite happy. ♦

Valerie's story: Following a back injury in the early 1990s, Valerie started practicing yoga regularly, and that was the beginning. She fell in love with yoga and hasn't looked back. After practicing for a few years, she began studying to be a Hatha Yoga teacher, left her PR consulting business, and has been teaching steadily since summer 1999.

Valerie teaches mainly in the Ananda style. She is a certified Ananda Yoga® teacher (AYTT Fall 2001), and has also trained with teachers from other traditions. She is a Registered Yoga Teacher (RYT) with the Yoga Alliance (USA), and is certified with the Federation of Ontario Yoga Teachers.



Ayurvedic Healing & Yoga Retreat

with Ananda in Kerala, India

February 8–25, 2007 ✦ Led by Gyandev & Diksha McCord

"The best vacation I've ever had!" — AYTT grad Lan Gluckman

Last chance! We had a cancellation and can still take another person to Kerala—also to the optional add-on of Yogananda's Mahasamadhi Celebration at Ananda Delhi. Rates from \$4150. For info contact The Expanding Light at 800-346-5350 (530-478-7518) or www.expandinglight.org/kerala. Or write diksha@expandinglight.org.



Taking the Next Step: Teaching Meditation in Yoga Classes

by Lisa Macy

I had been teaching yoga for four years, ever since graduating from AYT Spring 2002. I was running my own yoga business, and instructing 5-10 classes a week. Even with that experience under my belt, I felt like (and still do feel like) a teacher-in-training. There is such depth to yoga—always more to learn. Still, I was getting restless. Was I giving my students enough? I felt stagnant and a little bored, and wondered if my students did too. What more could I give them?

Aha!

Then I began to think, “Wait a minute. I usually meditate after practicing hatha yoga because it FEELS SO GOOD then! Wouldn’t it feel good for my students as well?” Then too, I remembered that, according to *Yoga International* magazine, Swami Rama (guru of the Himalayan Institute) refused to teach hatha yoga unless it included seated meditation. I had enjoyed Meditation Teacher Training at The Expanding Light, so it seems an obvious revelation to me now, but at the time it was an “AHA!” moment.

Now all my classes (each one is 75 minutes long) end with five minutes of seated meditation. Initially, no one was enthusiastic about meditating at the end of yoga class (except me). Some students groaned, the rest seemed nervous and wary. They didn’t want to mess up their relaxing Savasana, and five minutes seemed like an awfully long time to sit with “nothing to do.” (What has our culture come to?!) But they agreed to try it.

To their amazement, many people enjoyed it right from the start. They discovered how much easier it is to sit tall and relaxed after a physical yoga practice. They like the quiet, the “permission” to be still, and the smooth transition from Savasana to meditation to their “outside” life.

What I Do in My Classes

I don’t give much meditation instruction, just a little each class due to time restrictions, but the effect is cumulative. Sometimes I offer different techniques (Hong-Sau, watching the thoughts rise and fall, narrowing the attention to the breath, etc.). Most students sit cross-legged on the floor, a few sit against a wall, and those with knee issues sit on

chairs. I open with a quote that gets to the heart of meditation from diverse sources such as Yogananda, Alice Walker, Jon Kabat-Zinn, the Tao te Ching, the Torah, Zen Buddhism, and the New Testament. This inclusiveness helps my diverse student population feel accepted and appreciated. (I’ve often wondered if it will get me into hot water with students from fundamentalist traditions, especially since I live in the Deep South, but so far no complaints.)

When I taught at LA Fitness, the students wanted only “a good workout” in their hour class, but I felt antsy afterward. I announced that I would stay after class to meditate, and anyone could join me. (I never asked permission of the club, but I knew the classroom was empty and I wasn’t asking to be paid for the time.) Sometimes I was the only one who stayed, sometimes a student or two would join me. Very quickly, more people made time to meditate. It was informal—a smidgen of instruction (encouragement to just try, really)—and quite wonderful!

I make an exception to my five-minute meditation policy for a 50-minute lunchtime class. Because time is so short, I originally dropped meditation, but the class felt incomplete. Now we start with pranayama (Full Yogic Breath) and end with one minute of seated meditation after Savasana. That teeny bit is better than nothing. As the *Bhagavad Gita* says, “Even a little practice of meditation will free you from dire fears and colossal sufferings.”

And It Works

I love hearing how students have used meditation and pranayama to cope with difficulties in their lives: surgery, teacher conferences, unemployment, relationships, etc. It tickles me when they say their doctors ask: “How did you stay so calm? You’re the most relaxed patient we’ve seen.”

“It’s from my yoga,” they answer. “You should try it!”

I’ve seen very few yoga teachers follow the asanas with meditation in my area, but I really suggest that you try it. My next plan is to see if LA Fitness will let me offer a half-hour lunchtime meditation program.



Lisa lives in Atlanta, Georgia, where she has been running her own yoga business since AYT. She currently teaches seven yoga classes a week (group and private instruction) in rented classrooms.

(continues on page 11)

THE ROAD REPORT

Expanding the Light of Ananda Yoga

by Gyandev McCord

More AYTT grads and an increased number of asana affirmations are not the only ways in which Ananda Yoga is expanding. Another important way is through the road trips that Diksha and I have been making in recent years. Many of you have been asking about these trips, so I thought it would be fun and informative—and inspiring, I hope—to tell you what has been happening, and how Ananda Yoga is growing.

Why Take to the Road?

We have three goals for these trips. First, to “spread the word” about Ananda Yoga and Yogananda’s teachings, taking it both into areas where it’s known (and people want to go deeper) and into areas where it’s less known—or even totally unknown. We’ve seen that most yoga students have little or no idea of what yoga really is, and we feel a lot of inspiration in being able to help fill that void.

Second, we hope to draw people to The Expanding Light, so they can have an even deeper experience. That not only benefits The Expanding Light, but gives them inspiration that they can take back home to share with others. It can be wonderfully magnetizing for the local yoga teachers when their students come here for a visit.

Finally, we want to support local Ananda Yoga teachers (i.e., you): through their participation in the retreats (which we hope inspires them and their teaching), through *satsang* (“spiritual fellowship”) with them, and through magnetizing other retreat participants to attend their ongoing classes.

Assisi, Italy

As many of you know, our longest-running “road show” is a twelve-day Ananda Yoga Intensive at Ananda’s center in Assisi, Italy. But you might not know what we do there, and why it’s so special, so ...

We’ve been teaching this program for seven years, and it always draws at least 40 participants (there were 55 in 2005). Almost all of them are yoga teachers or Kriyabans (Kriya Yoga initiates)—and many are both. This makes it extremely rewarding



Tempio della Luce (Temple of Light) at Ananda Assisi—from outside (here) and inside (above in next column)

for us, as everyone wants to go deep and knows how to do it. For the same reason, it’s one of our biggest challenges: giving new insights to perspectives to experienced people. Well, that’s how our growth happens!

We choose a different topic every year: We’ve had the Yoga Sutras, Bhagavad Gita, and Advanced Pranayama (which makes



Level 2 certification more feasible for European AYTT grads). The exploration, even of philosophical topics, always centers around the practice of asana, pranayama, energization and meditation.

This year’s topic was “Yogic Insights into Christianity.” It was quite a challenge: imagine teaching Italians about Christianity via asanas! But with the help of Swami Kriyananda’s remarkable book, *The Promise of Immortality*, it worked out great. Some participants said that this year’s program was the deepest ever.

Participants came from Italy, Austria, Russia, Croatia, Slovenia, Poland, Turkey, Romania, Germany, even Texas. Yes, Deborah Warlick from Rio Frio, Texas flew over—and to her surprise and delight, so did AnnaMaria Nocilla, one of her July 2005 AYTT classmates from Italy. Other AYTT grads included Carlotta Guillaume (Italy), Norbu Oberdorfer (Austria), Süheyla Kanca (Turkey), Bhajana MacDow (Austria/Italy), Alida and Zvonko Karamarko (Croatia), Urska Zmavc (Slovenia) and our incomparable translators, Jayadev and Sahaja Joerschke of Ananda Assisi. (I hope I didn’t forget anyone!) It was a lovely reunion!





One of our favorite aspects of the program is that it has created its own Ananda mini-family: people who come back year after year from several of the above countries, especially Italy, Croatia, and Russia. And what a wonderful family it is—a beautiful combination of personal warmth, fun, and spiritual depth. The photo at the bottom of the preceding page shows us with a few of the Italian “regulars.” What’s the magic word they said to make them all smile so much for the camera? (Europeans don’t always like to smile for photos, we’ve learned.) No, it wasn’t “Cheese,” nor was it “Formaggio” (Italian for “cheese”). It was “Diksha!”

Toronto, Ontario

Diksha and I hadn’t taught in Canada since the Federation of Ontario Yoga Teachers invited us to lead their 2001 annual retreat at Niagara Falls. We were eager to return, because we so enjoy the Canadian people.



On the ferry to Centre Island (in Lake Ontario), with the Toronto skyline behind us.

This trip brought us back to beautiful Ontario in late September. Twenty-two bright souls came to the Ecology Retreat Centre (about an hour north of Toronto) for “Yoga for Health and Healing.” Most of the participants had no experience with Ananda Yoga, and a few had no experience with *any* style of hatha yoga. But they were open, and many of them quickly tuned in to what it was all about and had excellent, even life-transforming, experiences. Here’s a sample of the feedback we received:

It was truly an inspirational experience, deepening my practice and my understanding, and helping me to be more confident in some aspects of my teaching.

MTT grad Ed Fritz did a wonderful job making it all happen while being an extraordinarily gracious host, with able assistance from AYT grad Valerie Wint (see page 4). AYT grads Heather Barnes and Jillian Cook also attended the weekend retreat; it was great to see them again. During

the week after the retreat, while we were still in Toronto, Valerie invited us to attend one of her regular classes, which was quite a treat for us. She’s an excellent teacher, and her class has a lovely vibration. (See page 5 for a photo of one of the studios where she teaches.)

Nashville, Tennessee

The first weekend of October found us leading Yoga Society of Nashville’s semiannual retreat at an Episcopal retreat center in Monteagle, TN. The invitation came about through the efforts of AYT grad Robbie Short Campbell, who serves on the YSN board of directors.

This was a huge opportunity for Ananda Yoga (thank you, Robbie!), as we were able to reach so many people who had no awareness of Ananda Yoga at all. We maxed out the retreat center with 55 participants, and had a hugely successful program, again with the topic “Yoga for Health and Healing.” We’ve seldom seen such an enthusiastic response. In what has become a familiar refrain, many participants (including experienced yoga teachers from much better-known traditions) said, “Now I begin to see what yoga is all about!” Here a sample of the feedback we received, this time from one of the yoga teachers (not Ananda Yoga) who participated:

It’s been over a week since I returned from the October 6–8 retreat at Monteagle. I can’t stop thinking about the experience. It definitely changed my life. Yoga is not a part of my life anymore; Yoga is my life. Thank you for creating a wonderful retreat. Your hard work is appreciated.

Well, that’s why we go on the road. It’s all too easy to forget how different Ananda Yoga is from so much of what is available in the yoga world. Truly, we are blessed.

In addition to the delight of connecting with Southerners—whom we enjoy hugely and feel a wonderful connection with—Robbie drove us down to northern Georgia for a special treat on the day after the retreat: our first-ever hang-gliding experience. You can see the evidence in the photo below.

(continues on page 11)



Gyandev sailing serenely through skies of inner freedom, 2000 feet over northern Georgia—with no hands, as you can see!

A Birthday Present—in Reverse (Part 2)
(continued from page 3)

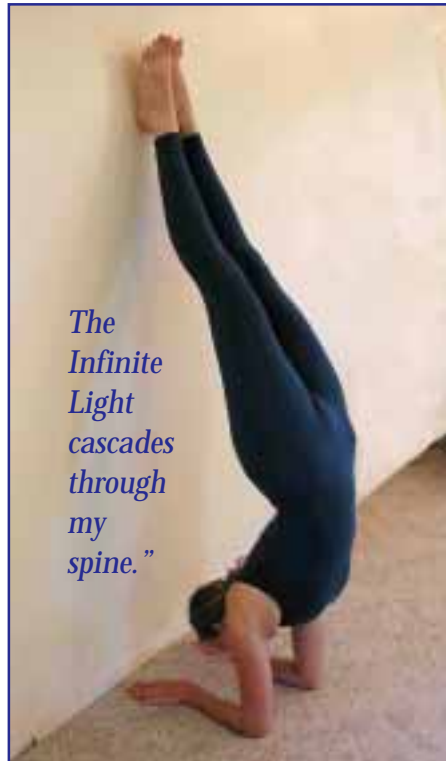
But if we stay with the process, we can move to a deeper level, where the pose leads us, not merely to accept, but to embrace whatever is, and to offer ourselves fully into the opening that the pose creates. In this way it can be a metaphor for life: We can choose to pull back and protect ourselves, or we can choose to give ourselves fully into every circumstance of our lives. It's our choice, and clearly the latter option is more conducive to spiritual growth and happiness. The affirmation for Upavistha Konasana reinforces this attitude: "I welcome every opportunity for further growth."

Pincha Mayurasana—Peacock Feather Pose

This is the most physically challenging of the twelve poses for which there are new affirmations. (Most people need to start with an assist from wall, as pictured here.) It has many rewards, however, because it fills a special niche in Ananda Yoga: It's a full inversion combined with a backward bend. And unlike the other two full inversions in Ananda Yoga—Sarangasana and Sirshasana—Pincha Mayurasana puts no strain whatsoever on the neck. (The shoulders, of course, are another story; it may take time for students to build the shoulder strength, flexibility and awareness to do this pose.)

Another interesting feature of Pincha Mayurasana is that the spiritual eye is more "in line" than usual with the rest of

the spine, and one can easily see how the "straight shot" through the spine makes it easier for energy to flow to the spiritual eye—it becomes like a catch basin for life-force. So in addition to being very energizing, this asana brings lots of energy to the spiritual eye, through *both* the backward bending aspect and the inversion aspect. Once a person can get comfortable in the pose, it's easy and natural to



The Infinite Light cascades through my spine."

feel a waterfall of energy pouring into the spiritual eye, and the affirmation helps it along: "The Infinite Light cascades through my spine."

Let the Fun Begin!

Some of you have asked, "Where in the Level 2 curriculum will we explore these asanas?" The primary place is in the Advanced Yoga Intensive (June 17–23, 2007). As always, there are variations of these asanas for just about everyone, so take heart if any of them seem too difficult. Come and enjoy these new additions to the "Ananda Yoga family."

Also, you can now download a pdf file with all 56 asanas of Ananda Yoga—Sanskrit name, English name, and affirmation—in the member section of AnandaYoga.org. It's a handy reference for both practice and teaching.

How about artwork for the new asanas? It's coming in the new version of the flashcard deck. Ask for it in early 2007.

Ananda Yoga just keeps on expanding! ♦

My Beloved's Call

by Korelle Hendee

(written after walking back from Gyandev's and Diksha's house after an evening satsang)

Thousands of suns and moons from Thy body do shine!
Descending scents from arching boughs

Amid ascending timbers.

Do I know the way?

Following footsteps and wind chimes,

Thy whispers in wafts of wind,

Open palms from pockets.

Sunburnt grasses lay flat in the meandering paths.

Wandering souls in countless ages

Echoing my footsteps, my questions,

A drone of a million Sanskrit chants

Forever reply with the frogs of Lotus Lake.

In each offering breath a lighter step.

If I clicked my heels three times

Would I feel more at home?

The devotee hears more than she sees.

Ripening berries announce the sweet season!

Night noises accompany recollections of the day.

Morning sadhana, bare feet tickled by dewy grass,

Silence peppered by drifting thoughts,

Stillness expanding in *smritti*, sacred remembrance.

Returning to my tent, I am not the same.

I am never the same.

Crawling into bed covers,

Surrendering to cricket choruses,

Oak leaves from the star-freckled sky,

Buoyant with prayers and gratitude,

I have finally heard my Beloved's call

Forever calling me with unfaltering sweetness.

Stumbling into inevitable sleep amid the whispers:

Awaken! Awaken!





Taking the Next Step: Teaching Meditation in Yoga Classes) (continued from page 7)

Don't get intimidated by the amount or lack of time, or how much meditation instruction you can offer. As someone once said to me when I was fussing about how to work meditation into my life, "Just sit down and shut up."

Honestly, once you get over the mental resistance, it's simple to add meditation to your yoga class—and a little bit of meditation will make a world of difference to your students. ♦

You can reach Lisa at yogaLisa@earthlink.net or 770-395-7166.

Expanding the Light of Ananda Yoga (continued from page 9)

The Yoga Society of Nashville very much wants to invite us back for another weekend retreat, and we look forward to returning. It's a beautiful area with beautiful people.

Dallas, Texas

The last stop on our fall tour was October 13–15, where Ananda Dallas sponsored a weekend retreat—once again "Yoga for Health and Healing," and once again at an Episcopal retreat center, this time in the city of Flower Mound, Texas. This retreat's 27 participants included the highest percentage of Ananda-experienced people on this trip. That fact helped us a lot, because we were feeling a bit road-weary when we arrived. Their support, enthusiasm and attunement made all the weariness disappear, and we felt very buoyed up, as though we had a head start on the weekend. The entire retreat experience turned out to be a delight.

Ananda Dallas Center Leader Sue Chadwick selflessly organized it all, supported by a terrific group of Ananda devotees who set up and decorated the facility beautifully (see the group photo below for a small sampling), and even supplied some of the food (dishes that we had requested



The great souls—and great decorations!—at the Flower Mound, Texas retreat

from Diksha's cookbooks, but that the retreat's caterer couldn't provide). Thank you so much, great souls!

In addition to Sue, participating AYT graduates included Cheryll Barsic (who brought five of her students—thanks for your support, Cheryll!), Eric Biskamp, Catherine Lightner Ginger Sklavos, and Liz Lauterbach, all of whom we greatly enjoyed reconnecting with.

Looking Ahead

A number of AYT graduates are helping expand Ananda Yoga by facilitating programs with Gyandev and Diksha in 2007. If you live near any of these events—or know someone who does—please support this outreach by attending or recommending the event. For information, contact Gyandev (see page 12).

- Jan 5–7, 2007 Los Angeles, CA—"Yoga's Keys to Magnetism for Success"
- Jan 18–21 Los Angeles, CA—Gyandev will present at the Symposium on Yoga Therapy & Research (*sponsored by the International Association of Yoga Therapists*).
- Jan 27 Fresno, CA—"Exploring the Bhagavad Gita through Asana" and "The Mahabharata Comes Alive!"
- Feb 8–25 Kerala, India—"Ayurvedic Healing and Yoga Retreat" (*see page 6*)
- March 17 Boulder Creek, CA—topic TBA
- May 3–6 Sedona, AZ—"Yoga's Keys to Magnetism for Success"
- May 11–13 Nazareth, KY—"Yoga's Keys to Magnetism for Success"
- May 25–27 Willard, WI—"Yoga's Keys to Magnetism for Success"
- Aug 26–Sep 7 Assisi, Italy—"The Hindu Way of Awakening"

Will You Help Expand the Light?

Would you like to be a part of this important outreach effort? Are you willing to facilitate (or help facilitate, or help promote) an Ananda program near you? It's a wonderful way to stay connected as well as magnetize your own classes—and get re-inspired in the process. Plus it's a whole lot of fun. It could be a weekend retreat, a day-long workshop, even a half-day workshop—if you're interested, please contact me. As I've always observed, the people who dive in and make things happen are the ones who grow the most. ♦

**LEVEL 2 NEWS***2007 Preview***★Meditation Teacher Training (March 16–25, June 22–July 1, Oct 19–28)**

Intrigued by Lisa Macy's article on page 7? Maybe it's time to add a refreshing new dimension to your teaching—and develop new teaching opportunities. You'll explore teaching a variety of meditative techniques under the expert guidance of Savitri Simpson and Diksha McCord. Your students will love the greater depth that only meditation can offer, and the program will deepen your own practice, too.

★The Essence of the Yoga Sutras (May 13–19)

This Level 2 program returns under the guidance of teachers Pranaba (Bent) and Parvati Hansen. It's your chance to build on what you learned in Level 1 AYT as you dive deep into the Sutras to find the pearls of insight that Patanjali offers. You'll explore many of Yogananda's unique and penetrating insights into the Sutras, with important applications to your practice and teaching. Also, Gyandev McCord and Brook Dunwoody will guide you in exploring the practice and teaching of some more-advanced asanas.

Ayurvedic Yoga Retreat for Balance & Harmony (May 23–27, Aug 1–5)

Many of you have asked for training in the Yoga/Ayurveda connection.

Mangala (Sue) Loper-Powers will show you how to know your Ayurvedic constitution, how to work with the *doshas* (biological energies so central to Ayurveda), how to craft Ananda Yoga routines specific to one's constitution (what to do, what to avoid), and more.

AYTA CONTACTS

Level 2 Questions • Membership • AYSutra
Brook Dunwoody, 530-478-7518 ext. 7088,
brook@expandinglight.org

Articles for *Awake & Ready!*
Gyandev McCord, 530-478-7518 ext. 7081,
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The Expanding Light
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info@expandinglight.org

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. Programs with "★" are required for Level 2 AYT certification. Autumn will offer additional Level 2 programs.

2007

- 1/10–14 **Kriya Yoga Preparation**
- 2/8–25 **Ayurvedic Healing and Yoga in Kerala, India** (see p. 6)
- 3/16–25 **★Meditation Teacher Training**
- 3/25–4/7 ... **★AYTT Assistantship**
- 3/28–4/1 ... **Kriya Yoga Preparation**
- 5/2–12 **Yoga of the Heart**
- 5/9–13 **Kriya Yoga Preparation**
- 5/13–19 **★Essence of Yoga Sutras**
- 5/23–27 **Ayurvedic Yoga Retreat for Balance & Harmony**
- 6/17–23 **Advanced Yoga Intensive**
- 6/22–7/1 ... **★Meditation Teacher Training**
- 6/24–29 **Therapeutic Yoga**
- 7/1–14 **★AYTT Assistantship**
- 7/15–21 **Meditation TT Level 2**
- 7/15–20 **Prenatal YTT**
- 7/20–22 **Postpartum YTT**
- 7/29–8/4 ... **★Essence of Bhagavad Gita**
- 8/1–5 **Ayurvedic Yoga Retreat for Balance & Harmony**
- 8/5–12 **★Advanced Pranayama**
- 8/30–9/2 **Restorative YTT**

The Expanding Light

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