

Awake & Ready!

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Level 2's New Look

That's right, as of January 2007 Ananda's Level 2 YTT has changed, due to changes in the Yoga Alliance standards. But relax, there's no problem for you, as I'll soon explain.

First, some background: While most teachers and schools seemed to follow the *letter* of the old standards, Yoga Alliance discovered that many were not at all following the *spirit* of those standards. So the Alliance adopted stricter standards for 200-hour and 500-hour YTTs. (Ananda's Level 1 is 200 hours, and Level 2 is 500 hours.)

The "fix" devised by the Standards Committee (on which I serve) involved trying to quantify some things that are inherently unquantifiable. That was scary for many of us, since it could easily lead to some very unyogic policies should Yoga Alliance become more about business or bureaucracy and less about yoga. I wish I could assure you that will never happen, but all I can say is, "We shall see."

For the most part, Ananda's Level 1 & 2 YTTs already satisfied the new standards, with room to spare; we needed merely to make a few minor adjustments.



Gyandev McCord
Director

Pre-Specified Hours

We must now specify *in advance* the number of credit hours given for every Level 2 course (Level 1, too). Credit hours for a Level 2 course used to be the core classroom hours, plus whatever hours of guided practice (sadhana) you decided to attend. Now, we must specify in advance the exact number of hours in the entire course, no matter how many sadhanas you attend. Don't worry—the number of required hours will be moderate, not a burden.

Student Electives

Ananda's original Level 2 YTT concept let you choose from a wide variety of Level 2 elective courses in addition to the required core curriculum. Ananda still offers just as many Level 2 elective courses, but now only 50 of those hours count toward Level 2. The reason: Yoga Alliance now requires that 450 of the 500 hours be part of a predefined "core curriculum."

Fortunately, this change affects only grads from 2007 and beyond, not those from 2006 and earlier. And it won't make much difference even for the later grads, because the old Level 2 core curriculum already constituted over 400 hours (in its late-2006 form, anyway).

Note: The change described above under "Pre-Specified Hours" will affect *everyone*, no matter when s/he graduated from Level 1. It would be a nightmare to keep track of pre-2007 Level 1 grads doing one thing, and 2007-and-beyond grads doing another, both in the same course. So every Level 2 course—whether it's a "core curriculum" course or an elective—will have the same requirements for everybody who wants Level 2 credit.

Other Changes

Well, there really aren't any other changes, at least not that affect Ananda, because Ananda's YTTs already met the stricter standards. For example, Yoga Alliance now requires that all faculty in 200-hour and 500-hour YTTs meet higher standards. Ananda's faculty already met those standards, however, so there's no impact—except that Brook and I must complete a humongous amount of paperwork to substantiate that Ananda's YTT meets the new standards.

So life goes on, Level 2 goes on, and it's all good. ♦

Questions: Contact me at gyandev@expandinglight.org.

IN THIS ISSUE

Level 2's New Look, by Gyandev McCord	1
An Ayurvedic Approach to Ananda Yoga, Part 1 by Mangala Loper-Powers	2
AYTA Member News	3
Transfer into Level 2	4
The Great Knee Quiz, by Nicole DeAvilla	6
The Magic of Ananda Yoga, by Teri Pancoast and Diane Calabria	7
Prenatal Yoga Tips on Meditation, by Nicole DeAvilla	10
Enjoyable Beyond Imagination of Expectancy, by Gyandev McCord	11
Level 2: Upcoming Level 2 Programs & Calendar ...	12
AYTA Contacts	12

An Ayurvedic Approach to Ananda Yoga

Part 1 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/lightbearer. She will lead a new Level 2 elective, *Ayurvedic Yoga Retreat for Balance and Harmony*, May 23–27 and August 1–5.

Question: Is it time for me to learn more about Ayurveda? How would it enhance my teaching of Ananda Yoga to do so?

Answer: Yes! By learning the basics of Ayurveda as it relates to the practice of hatha yoga and meditation, you can help yourself and your students achieve greater balance and harmony in your lives and asana practice, and to go deeper in meditation practice.

Question: I'm not convinced that it's worth the effort to study Ayurveda. My classes are going well without it. Besides, isn't Ayurveda really complicated?

Answer: Ayurveda is indeed a vast and complicated science of life and healing. (*Ayur* means "life" in Sanskrit; *veda* means "knowledge," or "science"; hence *Ayurveda* translates as "science of life.") However, as a yoga teacher, you need not study in the depth necessary to become an Ayurvedic practitioner. By learning just a few basic principles of Ayurveda, you can take your own practice to a deeper level—and help your students do the same. Plus, Ananda Yoga is already very much in tune with Ayurveda, given its deep spiritual base and emphasis on working with subtle energy in the body.

Does This Sound Familiar?

Most of us regularly see students exhibiting imbalances in their *doshas* (Vata, Pitta and Kapha—the three subtle psychological energies that constitute and animate each person) and constitutions (the specific mixture of doshas that characterize each individual). With a little knowledge of Ayurveda, you can help them bring their doshas into balance through simple adjustments in their practice. And you don't have to use any Ayurvedic terminology if you don't want to!

Let's look at a few examples that you might recognize:

Where's the Fire?!

Do you have some students who arrive early and then proceed to talk continually until class starts, despite your efforts to be providing a calm, quiet, sacred space for your class? Or, maybe you've had some students who habitually

arrive late, miss the warm ups, then move too quickly into a pose (before you finish explaining how to do it safely), and injure themselves. Or, do you have students who move quickly into a pose as soon as you say the name of the next

pose, and then come out of the pose just when you've led the rest of the class into the full pose and are concentrating on the affirmation? These same students may breathe quickly and shallowly, and the odds are that their minds are not focused (at least not longer than a few seconds) on the awareness of the subtle energy movement in their bodies. They are often bored with how slowly Ananda Yoga moves.

Such people are exhibiting symptoms of Vata imbalance. They are often thin, very tall or short, and usually are very flexible.

Where's the Peace?

Other students arrive promptly and become impatient or irritated if the class starts late or if others arrive late. They may have intense eyes, and you notice that they look around at others in the class to see if anyone is doing the posture "better" than they are. These people hate it when they can't do a pose "perfectly" themselves. They tend to push themselves to hold a pose too long or too intensely, perhaps visibly shaking from strain while the sweat drips down their faces.

These are symptoms of imbalanced Pitta, and you'll often see them in people who are of medium height and build who also have good muscular development.

Where's the Coffee?

Then you may have some students who like to get ready for your class by lying in Savasana, and then are slow to move into the poses. These are the same folks who typically come out of a pose even before you mention the option of coming out early. If you lead an energetic or physically challenging pose, these students may literally sit and watch you do it rather than attempting the posture themselves.

These students are demonstrating imbalances in Kapha dosha, and they are typically of a somewhat stocky build and are not very flexible.

Ayurveda has suggestions to help all these people move closer to their highest potential in a balanced and harmonious way. Before going into the details of this, let's briefly go over the basics of Ayurveda and how it relates to Yoga.



Mangala lives at Ananda Village, where along with her continuing practice of Ayurveda and nursing, she serves on the faculty of Ananda University. In the autumn, she will help give The Expanding Light an added dimension: consultations and individualized programs for health on all levels: physical, mental and spiritual.



The Yoga-Ayurveda Connection

Ayurveda and Yoga are sister sciences, with their roots coming from the vedic sciences of thousands of years ago in India. Ayurveda has as its goals the achievement of optimal levels of health in body, mind and spirit, and then to use this level of health to achieve Self-realization. You could say that Ayurveda's primary focus is wellness and healing of the body and mind, while Yoga is primarily focused on spiritual healing. To achieve Yoga's goal of union with the higher Self, it helps to practice Ayurveda's prescriptions for health of body and mind; and to achieve optimal health, it helps to practice Yoga. Both Yoga and Ayurveda prescribe a life based on the precepts of the *Yoga Sutras* of Patanjali. The two sciences are intimately interrelated and share a focus on the development of *sattva guna* and elevated consciousness in order to achieve both health and Self-realization.

Sattva is one of the three gunas—the subtle, underlying qualities of nature, of life, and of our minds. Sattva is balance, clarity, harmony, peace, love, unity. As a state of consciousness, it represents an inner focus, an inward and upward movement of energy that is involved in soul awakening. Sattva is the point of balance between the other two gunas, *rajas* and *tamas*. Rajas is activity, change, agitation, stimulation, passion. It is an outward movement that is involved in goal-seeking and eventually leads to distress, pain and suffering. Tamas is the energy of inertia, dullness, darkness; it is heavy and obstructing. It is a downward motion that leads to decay, disintegration, ignorance, delusion and decreased awareness.

The three gunas are important expressions of our mental and spiritual natures, of our level of consciousness. They influence our doshas (Vata, Pitta, and Kapha), which are more the psycho-physical aspects of our natures. (The doshas will be explained in more detail shortly.)

Yoga and Ayurveda both view the mind as being naturally sattvic (i.e., filled with the energy and consciousness of sattva), and both focus on ways to help return the mind to this state of balanced, pure awareness, even amidst daily activity. Ayurveda gives us insights into how sattva and the other gunas express through each of the doshas. Also, according to Ayurveda, when we are more sattvic (filled with the energy and consciousness of sattva) we help all of our doshas to be balanced.

The Gunas in Brief

Guna	Qualities
Sattva	Clarity, balance/harmony, peace, love, light (luminosity), unity; inward and upward movement
Rajas	Activity, change, agitation, stimulation, passion; outward movement
Tamas	Inertia, dullness, darkness, heaviness, obstructing; downward movement

AYTA MEMBER NEWS

When Do We Learn the New Poses????!!

Many of you have been asking this question, referring to the twelve asanas that Swami Kriyananda incorporated into Ananda Yoga last year, with an asana affirmation for each. The main course for exploring those poses is the *Advanced Yoga Intensive*, with Gyandev & Brook, June 17–23. The exploration will be less detail-oriented than in Level 1 (unless your questions lead to that), as the course is a practice intensive, but most of those poses will definitely be there. We hope you will be, too!

Vedic/Ayurvedic scholar Dr. David Frawley, in his book, *Ayurveda and the Mind*, beautifully explains the importance of sattva in our lives and our yoga practices:

When pure sattva prevails in our consciousness, we transcend time and space and discover our eternal Self. The soul regains its basic purity and unites with God. ... Sattva as the state of balance is responsible for all true health and healing. Health is maintained by sattvic living, which is living in harmony with nature and our inner Self, cultivating purity, clarity, and peace. Rajas and tamas are the factors that cause disease ... To have sattva predominant in our nature is the key to health, creativity and spirituality. (pp. 33–34)

It is this emphasis on sattva that makes Ananda Yoga so easily compatible with Ayurveda. In Ananda Yoga, we are practicing sattva when we focus our attention on being “actively calm and calmly active,” with full awareness of our physical bodies, our thoughts, and the flow of prana/energy within us. Ayurveda says that healing occurs in the pauses between the inhalations and exhalations; Yoga says that this is where spiritual growth occurs. In Ananda Yoga, the focus on the asana affirmations and on tuning into our inner energy flow during the pauses between active poses are both means of increasing sattva. Paramhansa Yogananda said that the ultimate healing is spiritual, where we actually remember and experience that we are one with God. So, whether we are practicing enjoying the pauses between the breath in the practice of Hong-Sau meditation, or the pauses in neutral poses between active asanas, we are developing sattva and are moving closer to both optimal health of body and mind and true spiritual healing, union with the Divine. And we are practicing both Yoga and Ayurveda.

The interplay between the physical and subtle bodies, between body, mind and consciousness, is another shared foundation of both Yoga and Ayurveda. Prana, or life-force, is another important link. The three doshas (Vata, Pitta and Kapha) are considered to be manifestations of prana at the gross level, evolving from the five elements (ether, air, fire, water and earth). Each of the doshas has five sub-doshas; the five sub-doshas of Vata are also called the five Vayus or pranas

(continues on page 4)



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

(prana, apana, vyana, samana, udana—see Section 4 of the AYT manual). Ayurveda works consciously with the healing powers inherent in the five pranas of the subtle body and their influence on the physical body. Yoga teaches us to tune in to the intelligence of prana, especially via meditation, as a vehicle for spiritual evolution, and transformation and expansion of our consciousness. And of course, in Ananda Yoga we directly work with prana as we consciously direct it into our center and up to the spiritual eye, especially during the pauses between active asanas. Ananda Yoga's use of affirmations is another aspect that encourages us to actively integrate body, mind and spirit as part of a holistic healing.

Dr. Frawley says that Ayurveda and Yoga together form a complete discipline for maintaining or restoring wholeness in body, mind, and spirit, and for transforming our existence from the physical to the deepest spiritual level of our being. In *Yoga & Ayurveda: Self-Healing & Self-Realization*, he also says, "The foundation of Yoga should be Ayurveda, and the fruit of Ayurveda should be Yoga." (p. 64)

Understanding the Doshas

The cosmic life force, Prana, is seen as manifesting in the physical and energetic worlds as three different energies or *doshas*, which are in turn manifestations of combinations of

Transfer into Level 2

For years, non-Ananda yoga teachers have expressed interest in learning to teach Ananda Yoga and in gaining Ananda's Level 2 certification. Ananda used to offer a one-week "bridge program" that added Ananda-specific training to the training they already had. It turned out that one week, however, just wasn't long enough for most people to "get it," so that option was ended. The only route was to take the entire Level 1 YTT in order to enter the Level 2 track.

Some teachers did that, and many didn't—especially those who were supporting themselves entirely by their teaching. Taking four weeks off with no income is a leap!

Lately, however, it has seemed that a bridge is needed more than ever, so there's now a better option: *Bridge to Ananda Yoga*, and it's available to any Registered Yoga Teacher (RYT 200 or RYT 500).

Bridge is a customized version of the first two weeks of Level 1 AYT. Depending on their prior training, the non-Ananda YTT grads might receive certain customized classes (in place of selected Level 1 AYT classes) to get them up to speed.

If you know of any RYTs who might be interested, please have them visit www.expandinglight.org/yoga/aytt/level_2.htm for more details. Or they can contact Gyandev or Brook (see page 12).

the five elements: ether, air, fire, water and earth*. The doshas are called Vata, Pitta, and Kapha, and they are present in all of creation. They manifest in you in a unique combination that determines your *prakruti* (constitution), your nature, your body-mind type, at conception. Because the nature of doshas is to change—and specifically to increase—the doshas of your constitution are in a constant state of flux and are influenced by your internal and external environments. Thus your *vikruti* (the current state of your doshas) often represents an imbalance from our constitution.

We experience maximal vitality and balanced health when our doshas are balanced according to your unique constitution. When Ayurveda speaks of *balanced* doshas, it refers to this unique combination of doshas that is your individual constitution. (It does *not* mean that you should try to get an equal amount of each dosha.) Similarly, the path to health will be different for each person, according to your constitution. And depending on our *prakruti* and *vikruti*, there are different approaches to hatha yoga practice that uniquely help you to maintain your ideal balance. In order to know which choices are best for you, you need to understand more about the doshas, your constitution, and your specific tendencies toward imbalance.

Vata Dosha

Being a combination of the elements ether and air, Vata dosha manifests as movement, like the wind. It is fast, cold, light, dry and mobile. It is also inspiration, intuition, enthusiasm, creativity and flexibility. But if Vata dosha increases—i.e., goes out of balance—these qualities can become distorted, resulting in imbalances such as fear, worry, anxiety, insecurity, nervousness, restlessness, insomnia, constipation, pain, tremors, being spacey or confused, etc.

When any of these symptoms begin to occur, balance can be restored by the application of opposite qualities. In other words, imbalances indicating that there is too much Vata means that there is too much of its qualities of cold, light, dry and mobile, etc. The way to bring the Vata dosha back into balance is to apply warmth, heaviness, moistness, and stability—qualities opposite to Vata's nature. (Please keep in mind that this "balance via opposites" approach is an overly simplistic "prescription." I'm using it to help you begin to understand the concepts of "like stimulates like" and "opposites balance" as they are used in Ayurvedic treatment of imbalances.)

* Don't be deceived by the simplistic, primitive-sounding names given to the five elements; they are not things, but stages of divine manifestation. In Section VII of Step 7 of *The Art and Science of Raja Yoga*, Swami Kriyananda explains: "On a universal level, we may say that each of these 'elements' represents an elemental stage of creation. The consciousness of Spirit, when it becomes condensed grossly enough to enter into material manifestation, becomes the cosmic energy, or 'ether,' out of which the physical universe appears. This energy condenses into cosmic gases (the 'air element'), which in turn condense to form the fiery stars. As fiery matter cools, it becomes molten (the 'water' stage of cosmic manifestation). As it cools still further, it becomes solid; thus it reaches its fifth, and final, elemental stage of material manifestation, known as the 'earth' stage."



The Doshas — A Visual Overview

Vata dosha is said to be located in the large intestine. Physically, Vata-dominant people are usually very tall or short, thin, have long necks, small eyes, thin, dry and cold skin, and have variable metabolism. “Variable” and “extremes” are key words in describing Vata dosha.

Pitta Dosha

Pitta dosha is composed of the fire and water elements, and manifests as transformation or digestion. It is moderately quick, hot, light, oily and fluid (moveable). It is also clear perception, focus and concentration of attention and thought, articulate, organized, efficient, precise, etc.

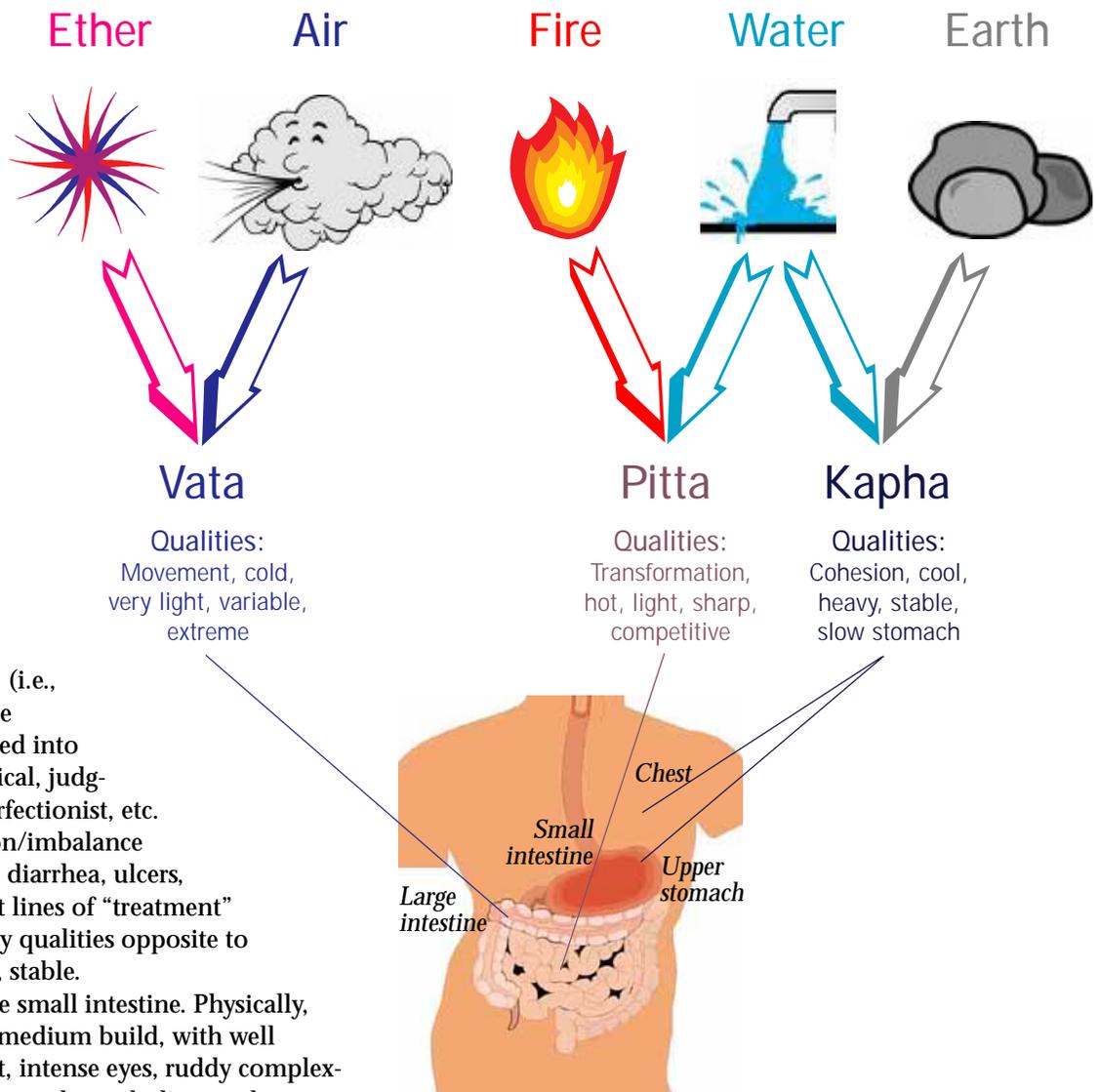
But if Pitta dosha increases (i.e., becomes out of balance), these qualities can become aggravated into being impatient, irritated, critical, judgmental, angry, controlling, perfectionist, etc. Other signs of Pitta aggravation/imbalance include rashes, inflammation, diarrhea, ulcers, heartburn, etc. One of the first lines of “treatment” for Pitta imbalances is to apply qualities opposite to Pitta’s nature: cool, heavy, dry, stable.

Pitta dosha is located in the small intestine. Physically, Pitta-dominant people are of medium build, with well developed musculature, bright, intense eyes, ruddy complexion, warm, oily skin, and have good metabolism and strong appetite. They tend to be competitive.

Kapha Dosha

Kapha dosha is a combination of water and earth, which, like mud, brings stability, cohesion, lubrication, etc. It is slow, cool, heavy, moist and stable. It is also patient, compassionate, unconditionally loving, forgiving, loyal, enduring, etc. But when Kapha dosha accumulates (becomes imbalanced), it can manifest as stubbornness, attachment, procrastination, lethargy, congestion, excess mucus, obesity, hypertension, high cholesterol, edema, excessive sleeping, etc. A general approach to relieving Kapha imbalances uses qualities opposite to Kapha: warm, light, dry, mobile/active.

Kapha dosha is located in the chest and upper stomach. Physically, Kapha-dominant people are heavier built with a tendency to hold excess water and weight. They are strong, with good endurance, large eyes, thick, pale, cool skin, and have low metabolism. ♦



In Part 2 of this article, Mangala builds on this foundation as she writes about working with prakruti (Ayurvedic constitution), the Ayurveda/Ananda Yoga interface, and the use of individual techniques such as asana and pranayama to balance the doshas.

Meanwhile, here are some of the topics that she will cover in the Ayurvedic Yoga Retreat for Balance and Harmony at The Expanding Light in May and August (the course will go well beyond what she can offer in this two-part article):

- A deeper understanding of doshas and how they signal that they are out of balance
- More details on factors that influence dosha balance
- How to know which dosha needs balancing
- How to work with dual-dosha constitutions
- Understanding more of the interplay between gunas and doshas
- Specific ways to modify asanas to balance different doshas

The Great Knee Quiz

by Nicole DeAvilla

Here's an appetizer for Nicole's Therapeutic Yoga course (June 24–29 at *The Expanding Light*), which also addresses knee rehabilitation—and a whole lot more. Quiz answers are at the bottom of this page.

Hyperextension

When the leg is straight, the knee is said to be in extension. When the leg bends at the knee it is said to be in flexion. When the knee goes backward beyond its straight position, it is said to be in hyperextension. Extension and flexion are part of normal, healthy range of motion, but hyperextension can potentially destabilize the knee joint by stressing many of the joint's ligaments and tendons, especially the anterior cruciate ligament in the front. A destabilized knee joint is more susceptible to an "acute" injury. Chronically hyperextending the knee can lead to an "overuse" injury, or prevent a knee injury of any kind from fully healing. For these reasons hyperextension should be avoided. Even slight hyperextension can continue to aggravate an injury.

All yoga teachers should be able to see and correct excessive hyperextension. Can you detect more-subtle hyperextension? If you can, you will be doing your students a great service to help them prevent hyperextension of their knees. Which one of photos 1 and 2 below shows hyperextension, and in which leg? .



Medial and Lateral Stress

The weight placement and/or position of the foot can either be neutral or stressful to the knee joint. When the weight is too far to the outside of the foot, or the foot is turned in too far relative to the position of the knee the outer (lateral) ligaments of the knee will be stressed. When the weight of the foot is too far to the inside and/or the foot is turned out too far relative to the position of the knee, the inside (medial) ligaments of the knee will be stressed. When ligaments are stressed, joints become less stable and, as with hyperextension, injuries are more likely to occur, and recovery can be hampered or even totally prevented.

In photos 3–5 below, which knee is in a neutral position, which one is being laterally stressed, and which one is being medially stressed?



In *Therapeutic Yoga*, I teach participants how to detect subtle hyperextension from all viewing angles (such as from the front, not just the side), and even through loose clothing. You'll also learn to see medial and lateral stresses—and how to teach your students to avoid these stresses in a variety of positions, such as standing poses, bridge pose, forward bends and more.

Getting the alignment right not only makes your students safer and more physically fit (misalignment often occurs from not engaging the appropriate muscles), but also helps them enjoy their practice more, because good alignment feels good. And when you feel good in your yoga practice, the energy goes inward and upward—naturally and joyfully!



The Magic of Ananda Yoga

by Teri Pancoast and Diane Calabria

“I am calm, I am poised. I am calm, I am poised. Poised means staying at your center, keeping your balance, no matter what circumstance you find yourself in.” The voice of the teacher weaves in gentle counterpoint to Swami Kriyananda’s soothing, uplifting music playing softly in the background. On any given school morning, these sounds can be heard coming from the high school classroom for students with special needs in Thief River Falls, a small town (population 8,400) in northwestern Minnesota.

Teri Pancoast, who leads the Ananda Yoga sadhanas there, is an aide in a classroom of special needs kids. The students’ disabilities include autism, cerebral palsy, mental health disorders, attention-deficit disorder, and learning disabilities. These students face many challenges, including difficulties in social interactions. Some students have occasionally resorted to physical violence to settle their differences. Their classroom teacher believes that yoga and meditation gives these students effective tools to control their energy and behavior, as well as improve their focus and concentration.



Teri lives in Thief River Falls, MN, where she continues to expand her teaching arena, now into teaching meditation in the schools. She plans to take AYT in July.

Jump Right In

Teri, a certified Ananda meditation teacher, is new to teaching students with special needs and new to teaching yoga. That’s right: Teri hasn’t yet taken AYT, although she definitely intends to do so. She does have a long-standing connection with Ananda, however. She’s a Kriyaban, and her mother, Peggy Grady, was a core staff member at The Expanding Light for many years. (Now Peggy works in the main Ananda Sangha office.) This latest adventure began last winter, when Teri was asked by the special education teacher in the elementary school to try doing some yoga with the kids with special needs. The special education teacher hoped to find a strategy that could help her students improve their concentration, focus and attention span.

Teri became an aide for the school system in January 2006, helping out at the elementary, middle school and high

school levels. Not all of this work was with special needs kids. It just depended what the need at the school might be – e.g., grading papers, assisting students, or helping teachers.

Teri’s initial reaction to the special ed teacher’s request was that she wasn’t qualified. But the special ed teacher wasn’t concerned about that, and said that Teri had more experience with yoga than any of them so would she try it? Teri consulted Ananda Yoga instructors and searched her heart to see if this was the right thing to do. She decided to say yes and take it one step at a time to see how it would go.

But when the teacher asked Teri to conduct a trial that would be only two 10–15 minute sessions during one week last June, Teri was leery, wondering if the very short experiment was a recipe for failure. Still, she decided to go ahead and give it a try. She had a group of ten children ranging in age from five to eleven years, and assistance from four teachers. Teri designed a mini-sadhana that began with quiet sitting and alternate nostril breathing, and concluded with Savasana and watching-the-breath meditation. That first day, the energy shift was immediate, uplifting and palpable.

During the next session, the result was also an immediate and strong shift in energy. With just these two short sessions, the special education teachers were convinced, and they asked Teri to teach yoga to their students on an everyday basis during a two-week period in July. She designed a general sequence for the sadhanas (see sidebar on p. 8), choosing elements to include or not depending on the energy and focus of the group.

If the kids became restless between standing poses, Teri asked them to stand in Tadasana and breathe deeply, get centered, and then continue. The younger children would sit next to Teri and imitate her actions. The teachers noted that, whereas some of these kids would not try anything throughout the school day, they willingly participated in these sessions. The older kids anticipated their sessions with Teri

(continues on page 8)



The Magic of Ananda Yoga (continued from page 7)



by waiting for her with lights off, sitting quietly.

The breathing exercises at the beginning of the sequence were very valuable in bringing the kids' energy in and enabling them to calm down and focus. This group was able to do the alternate nostril breathing, but interestingly enough, the high school students she's teaching now have found it too difficult. Teri found it important to move through the asanas at a quick pace to keep the students' attention. If she had had more time to develop a deeper relationship, she would have liked to expand the sadhanas and take the asanas to a deeper level.

Teri's Mini-Sadhana

Teri consulted Sonia Sumar's book *Yoga for the Special Child* for initial guidance on working with kids with special needs. She then incorporated Ananda Yoga's theme of bringing energy inward and upward to develop the sequence below. Items with a star (*) were always done to some degree; other items were sometimes omitted.

- * Sitting quietly, watching the breath
- * Alternate Nostril Breathing
- * Full Yogic Breath ("Scoop up happy thoughts and raise them up to the sky!")
- * Tree Pose
- Half-Moon Pose
- * Knee-to-Chest Lift (balancing pose)
- * Firm Pose
- Half Spinal Twist
- Circle of Joy (seated)
- * Child Pose
- * Savasana (with Swami Kriyananda's music)
- * Sitting quietly, watching the breath

From Summer into the School Year

Teri's position shifted from the elementary school to a class for special needs kids at the high school for the academic year 2006-2007. Teri began using this sequence for the students in the high school, always making adjustments as necessary, depending upon the students' energy. She uses measured breathing—inhale 8, hold 8, exhale 8—for 5-6 rounds rather than alternate nostril breathing, and has gradually lengthened the sadhanas for the high school kids from 20 minutes to 45 minutes. Teri is also trying to extend the time the students meditate. One student recently commented, "This is hard." And yet, there he sits, trying to meditate, and each day he is able to sit just a little bit longer, eyes closed, watching the breath. As these kids are learning body awareness and growing in their trust toward Teri, they are able to do more poses. Some of their favorites are Triangle Pose and Warrior Pose. The students are able to hold the poses longer, with more purpose and attention.

Teri usually holds a sadhana for three students for 45 minutes at noon and a 20-minute sadhana for three other students early in the morning, depending upon time constraints (i.e., tests that need to be taken, homework that is due, etc.). In addition to these two sadhanas, Teri works with two students individually for about 40 minutes each in a separate classroom. Teri stresses to the students that yoga is a gift, one that will help them face their circumstances from a more balanced perspective, a gift that no one can ever take away from them.

Teri adjusts her approach for the students she works with individually. For example, when she works with a student with cerebral palsy, she helps her stretch her legs, arms and relax other parts of her body with deep breathing exercises, and sending light to the areas that need relaxing and softening. During the more difficult stretches, this student is able to breathe deeply while trying to open the tightly contracted muscles. For a short period of time during the day, this student is able to open and relax her limbs, and it seems to make the rest of her day easier. During the group sadhanas, Teri asks her to visualize the postures and to breathe deeply and relax while the others go through the sequence.

Keys to working with students with special needs are soft lighting, Swami Kriyananda's music playing in the background, and soft voices between students and teachers. The music plays all day; it helps keep the classroom serene.

Swami Kriyananda's inspiring and uplifting music reaches beyond the physical realm and touches a person deeply. Many times other teachers have commented on how uplifting and relaxed the room feels. Most often the CD of choice is *Relax, for Flute and Cello*, which they have used regularly for Savasana since the beginning of September. The piece these kids love the most is "Inner Peace": just the other day the boys requested Teri to play it three times through while they laid there listening. Teri and the students will also listen to the CD at other times during the day. Some of these students will sit down next to the CD player, shut their eyes, and just listen to the music. One day, Teri overheard one boy say to



another, “Do you really like this music?” in a tone of voice of trying to get something going. The other boy, without opening his eyes, responded, “Yes, this relaxes me.”

On occasion, the sadhanas have had to take a back seat to other pressing matters such as required testing, homework that is due, meetings, and general school requirements, and the students usually become edgy. When this happens, the teacher stops all activity, and requests that yoga and meditation be done immediately. The energy then shifts from restlessness and agitation to a quiet, centered and again, uplifted atmosphere. There have also been occasions when the sadhana has been late. The students frequently ask, “When are we going to do that yoga stuff?”

After several months of yoga in the classroom, Teri sees the students beginning to make yoga and meditation their own. One day when she was delayed for the beginning of the sadhana, the students still went ahead with the special ed teacher and were helping each other work through the routine as best they understood it. When Teri came into the room, all of the students were in Savasana, playing Swami’s music—lights off, eyes closed.

The day before Thanksgiving, the students gave an African drum performance in front of the whole school at a recognition assembly (700 kids!). They had never had an experience like this before, and one never knew from one minute to the next if they would pull it off, but they did—and beautifully, too. They received a standing ovation and acknowledgment from other students in the hallway after the program. These students came back to class saying things like “Someone just said ‘Hi’ to me,” and “Someone just said ‘Good job’ to me.” These kids were acknowledged in meaningful ways that had never occurred for them in the past. Teri attributes much of their success to yoga, meditation and learning to live from their center. They had asked to do yoga and meditation before the performance. They said it relaxes them. Teri sees such goodness coming through and sees the students striving to stay in their center during trying circumstances.

When a yoga teacher looks beyond the outward limitations a student may have and touches the soul abiding within, the “playing field” is leveled, so to speak. What amazes Teri is that even when Ananda Yoga is offered in a very simplified way, still the students are being reached at

such subtle levels. On the surface, she says, the offering doesn’t look sophisticated, but the results are tangible and profound.



Keys to Teaching Special Needs Children

Julie Williams agrees. Julie is another Kriyaban and certified Ananda meditation teacher who lives in Pennsylvania. She is also the mother of two special needs children. She says, “Being able to see the soul in a person is essential. I believe people who incarnate with disabilities are here to teach others something important. Love and respect for such souls is essential.”

It’s important to note that there is a very broad spectrum in special education students’ needs. Some students’ disability is physical, and some students’ disability is psychological. Teri finds it important to tune into the student right where they are, whether the disability is obvious or not. Teri is also learning about the various disabilities to understand how she may teach from a more meaningful level. It has taken time to build trust and understanding with some of the students. In the beginning, some of the students felt threatened by closing their eyes or lying in Savasana (a very vulnerable pose for some), and now they look forward to this.

Ananda Yoga teachers who would like to learn to work with special needs students can consult Sonia Sumar’s resources for guidance. (Her book, *Yoga for the Special Child*, was mentioned earlier.) Julie recently attended a seminar given by Ms. Sumar at the Satchidananda Ashram in Virginia. Julie noticed that while Ms. Sumar does not emphasize the spiritual aspect of teaching special needs students in her book, she did at the seminar. It was very evident in the way that Ms. Sumar worked with her students, giving her whole self to the person and the process. Visit www.specialyoga.com for more information.

Yet, while this training is available, both Teri and Julie agree that to teach students with special needs, one must have a calling. It’s not a matter of simply being a teacher of a



(continues on page 10)

Prenatal Yoga Tips on Meditation

by Nicole DeAvilla

Nicole teaches Prenatal YTT (July 15–20) and Postpartum YTT (July 20–22) at *The Expanding Light*. She also teaches Therapeutic Yoga (June 24–29). All three are Level 2 elective courses.

Anyone can receive many benefits from meditation during pregnancy, and all of those benefits—calmness, communion, centeredness and more—are especially important at this special time in life. Meditation practice can help you get through, not only the challenges of pregnancy, but also those of delivery.

However, meditating while pregnant can have its challenges. Here are some tips on how to work with them.

Challenge: Sitting Upright Comfortably

Solution: Do some prenatal yoga postures to make your body more comfortable. (See Nicole's articles on teaching prenatal yoga in the two preceding issues of *Awake & Ready!* for info.) Experiment with different positions. Try supporting your back with cushions. Although sitting upright is considered the ideal way to meditate, it may be necessary to recline in the Princess Pose (see below) to be comfortable. It's better to be comfortable than to meditate on discomfort!



The Magic of Ananda Yoga
(continued from page 9)

subject. To teach this population, a teacher must be able to see the higher potential in the students and help them rise to that level. It requires patience and compassion; however, in Teri's experience, the rewards are great. These students respond to the sadhanas in a very positive way. They have experienced virtually nothing like this, and that's where Teri sees the magic. The responses are pure, from the heart. Some of these students are sensitive about being in a "special ed" class, yet they still want these sadhanas for their own—even if it doesn't look "cool" to the other kids in the outside world.

Teri finds sharing Ananda Yoga and meditation with students with special needs to be filled with sweetness and

Challenge: Staying Awake

Solution: During pregnancy, you tend not to have as much energy as usual. Prenatal yoga asanas can help with keeping your energy levels up. Take naps too. You may also need to shorten your meditation time temporarily.

Challenge: Feeling Nauseated

Solution: Sometimes prenatal yoga asanas will lessen the anytime-of-the-day "morning sickness." If it's severe enough, of course, you will not be able to meditate until you feel better. Focus on being comfortable (see "Sitting Upright Comfortably" above) and simply practice the AUM technique if you know it. Otherwise choose the easiest technique for you to practice and just do it—nothing fancy!

Challenge: Difficulty Taking a Full Breath

Solution: Both the size and the position of the baby can make taking a deep breath difficult. Once again, prenatal yoga asanas can often help to create the feeling of more space and aid in getting a deeper breath. Sitting with good posture also helps. Above all relax. Being tense constricts the very areas that need to loosen up to give you the fullest breath possible. When practicing, feel okay about the breath being shorter: e.g., Even-Count Breathing may need to be 3-3-3 instead of your usual 8-8-8 (or longer). If you practice Kriya, your Kriya breaths may need to be shorter too.

This Too Shall Pass

Remember: all of these challenges are temporary. Your meditation experience can be different day by day throughout the pregnancy. If you go with the flow and are content with doing just what you're able to do, your meditation practice can be very rewarding throughout pregnancy. ♦

simplicity. She attributes much of the success of this program to the teachers who are willing to think "outside the box" and stretch their comfort zones to give their students the tools they need that will help them in life.

Every day brings a new discovery for Teri, the students, and the teachers. While Ananda Yoga is a new addition to this classroom, its magic has already touched many at a deep level. Teri's future plans are to continue to assist in the school district as well as expand her knowledge and skills in teaching yoga and meditation. ♦

Our thanks to Julie Williams, who also contributed to this article. If you would like to ask Teri about her experiences teaching special needs children, you can e-mail her at teripan@mncable.net.



AYTT grads Theodora Wilner, Mary Joe Bowling, Barbara Guilmette, Marianne Lampi, and Premdas Ghirla

Enjoyable Beyond Imagination of Expectancy

by Gyandev McCord

Paramhansa Yogananda's description of samadhi (above) also describes Ananda's annual *Ayurvedic Healing and Yoga Retreat* in Kerala, India, which, although not quite samadhi, is certainly a grand outing. Here are a few highlights of the 2007 trip. For a full-length article about 2006, see "Finding Bliss Beneath a Coconut Canopy" in the Winter 2006 issue of *Awake & Ready!* (see members section of www.anandayoga.org).

Purification Pleasantries

This year, Diksha and I did Purification Therapy, a treatment regime to remove a lot of toxins from your body. (One can instead choose Rejuvenation Therapy, which is all about relaxation and, yes, rejuvenation.) I had heard that Purification can be intense, and I do feel that it removed toxins, but it wasn't unpleasant in the least. In fact, one part of it—the oil bath—was absolutely



Some days, we meditate on the beach of the Arabian Sea as the sun rises behind us.

blissful: copious amounts of warm, medicated coconut oil poured all over you, then massaged into your body by two highly skilled therapists, then poured again, massaged again, etc. It helps remove toxins, no doubt, but it makes you feel so good that you really don't care much about the toxins.

And then there's *shirodhara*: a steady stream of warm,

medicated oil poured onto your forehead for 15–20 minutes. It's beyond description, but unfortunately, it's so relaxing that it's difficult to stay awake to enjoy it. I also had special treatments for my knees, which now feel better than they've felt in years. I brought home some of the medicated oil.

What *Is* a Vacation?

Americans often think of vacation as a time for stimulation: see, do, see, do, huff, puff. Most guests at the Kerala Ayurvedic resort are Europeans, and it's clear that they place a higher priority on relaxing and recharging. So it's no wonder that Americans often return exhausted from their vacations, while Europeans are more likely to return rejuvenated.



Cheryl gets a warm greeting from our welcoming committee! (Er ... Cheryl is the one with the purse.)

But on the Kerala trip, the Americans often say, "Hey, this relax and recharge stuff is *really* the ticket! Why didn't I ever think of this before?" Imagine going home from a vacation completely relaxed, healthier (tanned, if you like), having seen and done many fascinating things, with new, custom-tailored Indian outfits, and having learned a bunch as well.

And then there's the incredibly good food ...

The Perfect Answer

I want to share one more highlight of the trip, a tiny thing that really touched me. One evening I went with Diksha to look at elegant scarves—silk, cashmere, pashmina, etc.—in a shop next to the resort. Jeelani, the owner, is the consummate salesman, a true artist in commerce. But I was struck even more by his graciousness. My father would have bought something from him, even though he didn't have the slightest need for it, simply out of admiration for quality merchandise, great salesmanship, and genuine graciousness.

Jeelani became even friendlier as we talked and he learned that Diksha was a tour group leader. (As I said, he's the consummate salesman.) At one point, Diksha happened to ask, "Are you a Muslim?" I could feel his thoughts: "Maybe they think I'm an Islamic fundamentalist." With a smile and a slight bow, he made the perfect reply: "Yes, madam, I am a Muslim, but," and he straightened up and pointed a forefinger upward, "I do not think that *God* is a Muslim."

Diksha sent him a lot of business from our group. ♦

The 2008 Ayurvedic Healing and Yoga Retreat with Diksha and Gyandev is February 10–27, with an add-on to the International Kriyaban Retreat at Ananda Delhi. (There is a full program for non-Kriyabans, too.) For info: diksha@expandinglight.org.

**LEVEL 2 NEWS***2007 Preview***★The Essence of the Yoga Sutras (May 13–19)**

This Level 2 program returns under the guidance of longtime teachers Pranaba (Bent) and Parvati Hansen. It's your chance to build on what you learned in Level 1 AYTT 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 and Brook will guide you in exploring the practice and teaching of some more-advanced asanas.

Advanced Yoga Intensive (June 17–23)

Take your practice to a new level of concentration, stillness, energy control, spiritual power, and above all, bliss. It's a deeper-than-ever experience of Ananda Yoga. You'll explore the "new" asanas (*see p. 3*) along with the old, using them to dive into subtler aspects of the Yoga teachings. Long practice sessions every day (usually twice a day)—focusing not only on asana, but pranayama, bandha, meditation and other techniques—will guide you to the heart of Yoga. Led by Gyandev and Brook.

Therapeutic Yoga (June 24–29)

Take your understanding—and practical application—of asana alignment to a new level. Join Nicole DeAvilla (*see pages 6 and 10*) to explore not only asana safety and comfort, but a variety of easy therapeutic asanas and other exercises for rehabilitating joint injuries. It's a painless—*hey, it's enjoyable!*—way to deepen your knowledge of anatomy and physiology, as well as a valuable service to your students.

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,
gyandev@expandinglight.org

The Expanding Light
800-346-5350, 530-478-7518
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 AYTT certification.

2007

- 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** (*see p. 2*)
- 6/17–23 **Advanced Yoga Intensive**
- 6/22–7/1 ... ★**Meditation Teacher Training**
- 6/24–29 **Therapeutic Yoga** (*see p. 6*)
- 7/1–14 ★**AYTT Assistantship**
- 7/15–21 **Meditation TT 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**
- 8/1–5 **Ayurvedic Yoga Retreat for Balance & Harmony** (*see p. 2*)
- 8/5–12 ★**Advanced Pranayama**
- 8/30–9/2 **Restorative YTT**
- 10/19–28 ... ★**Meditation Teacher Training**
- 10/28–11/10 ★**AYTT Assistantship**

Early 2008

- 2/10–27 **Ayurvedic Healing and Yoga in Kerala, India** (*see p. 11*)

The Expanding Light

14618 Tyler Foote Road
Nevada City CA 95959
www.expandinglight.org