



# P<sub>2</sub>M Yoga

## “Bamboo News”

A Yoga Newsletter from Peter Marnocha

December 2009

### Yoga and the Cold Winter Months Ahead: An Introduction to Ayurveda

In this very short article, an introduction to Ayurveda and how it relates to your Yoga practice will be explored. This is by no means comprehensive as we simply skim the surface of this very interesting and complex subject.

*Ayurveda*, translated literally from Sanskrit means “science of life” is India’s traditional, natural system of medicine that has been practiced for more than 5,000 years. This system emphasizes prevention of disease, rejuvenation of our body systems, and increased life span. Since this approach to philosophy and medicine is vast and deep, only the concept of *Doshas* will be discussed as it relates to you and your Yoga practice.

A *Dosha* is simply defined as an individual’s mind-body constitution. You will find many quizzes on the internet to help you determine your dominant *dosha(s)*, but many believe that it is determined by an experienced person examining your pulse. A very brief, non-comprehensive list of the characteristics of each *dosha* is as follows.

VATA DOSHA: Creative, highly imaginative, mentally quick, slender, talk & walk quickly, lively, moody, prefers warm climates, excitable, fun to be around, variable appetite, often have cold hands & feet, does not like routine, high energy in bursts, anxious, overly joyful, impulsive, disjointed thoughts

PITTA DOSHA: Athletic physique, sharp mind with good concentration, focused, organized, assertive, competitive, a leader, irritable, strong appetite, fair-skinned, freckled, prefers a cooler or mild climate, stubborn, good public speakers, organized, impatient

KAPHA DOSHA: Easy-going, heavier build, gains weight easily, excellent long-term memory, slow moving, slow & deliberate speech, steady and enduring, affectionate & loving, relaxed, large soft eyes, soft voice, deliberate thought process

So, how is this related to the imminent winter months and your Yoga practice? Unfortunately, not all of us are “tri-doshic” (an equal balance of all three doshas). Therefore most of us are “imbalanced” periodically (a generalization, of course). An example of this is that many of us tend to become sedentary in the cold winter months. This would be considered a “Kapha imbalance”.

#### Tip #1

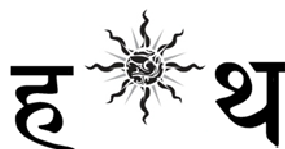
With the example above, as the cold months arrive many of us tend to gravitate toward the “comfort foods”. Although these often warm and heavy foods are satisfying, they are feeding (pun intended) a potential kapha imbalance. Instead of eating heavy hot foods, experiment with LIGHT warm/hot foods like steamed veggies. In your Yoga, practice a more Yang style such as Hatha (my Monday evening class!), enjoy a dry sauna, get some fresh air with a walk, sleep less, wear bright colors and of course, practice MORE Yoga!

#### Tip #2

The end of November and December can be very stressful for many of us. Whether it be the holiday frenzy and/or the end-of-year deadlines at work, take the time to SLOW DOWN. People that have more Vata and Pitta in their constitution are too stimulated in these situations and your Yoga practice should be more Yin-like (my Thursday night class!). Get enough rest, eat satisfying foods, reduce the consumption of light, cold salads and iced drinks and have a cup of herbal tea by the fire with a book instead.

#### Tip #3

Yoga: Practice, practice...and MORE practice!



Prana • Purusha • Moksha

# Yoga Pose of the Month

## Standing Forward Bend (*Uttanasana*)

Uttanasana is another pose that is done in many yoga classes as a stand-alone posture or a part of sun salutations. Unfortunately, given the “easy looking” nature of the pose, there is often little instruction given by the teacher. I would like to take the time to help you understand the posture. If you have lower back problems or pain, you should bend the knees. If you cannot touch the floor with fingers or hands I recommend you bend the knees so the fingertips can touch the floor. There are variations of *Uttanasana* where the hands are no where near the floor but if you are doing it as part of a sun salutation you want the hands grounded in order to initiate the next posture.

### “Acceptable” Variations of Uttanasana:



If you are practicing this as a stand-alone pose, here is a tip for those of you with tight hamstrings that will help lengthen and strengthen them.

- Standing in mountain pose place the hands on hips and with a straight back fold into the pose.
- Bend the knees and bring the hands to the floor so that at least the fingertips can touch the floor.
- Engage, flex or activate the quadriceps, hamstrings, and calves.
- On the inhaled, with legs active gently raise the hips to feel a slight stretch in the hamstrings.
- On the exhaled, with legs still active fold deeper into the pose. Repeat this and the previous bullet point and try to stay in the pose for at least 10 breaths. Having the legs active has many benefits: with practice the hamstrings will lengthen AND strengthen due to the isometric nature of “flexing” these muscles without causing injury.

### Benefits:

- Calms the brain and helps relieve stress and mild depression
- Stimulates the liver and kidneys
- Stretches the hamstrings, calves, and hips
- Strengthens the thighs and knees
- Improves digestion
- Helps relieve the symptoms of menopause
- Reduces fatigue and anxiety
- Relieves headache and insomnia
- Therapeutic for asthma, high blood pressure, infertility, osteoporosis, and sinusitis

### Caution:

- Back injury: Do this pose with bent knees, or perform half standing bend (*Ardha Uttanasana*) with your hands on the wall, legs perpendicular to your torso, and arms parallel to the floor (last photo above).

## Hatha Yoga & Karma Monday: December 7<sup>th</sup>

Every first Monday of the month is Karma Yoga at Body in Balance for my Hatha Yoga classes! In lieu of a drop-in fee or the use of a class pass, your class is free if you bring three (3) non-perishable food items which will be donated to Second Harvest food pantry. Practice Yoga and give back to the community.

*Wishing all a happy,  
healthy, loving, giving,  
peaceful and WARM  
Holiday Season!*

Namaste,  
Peter



**No classes on December 24<sup>th</sup> & 31<sup>st</sup>**

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