

Dharma Yoga

new york center

The Holy Trinity of Dharma Yoga by Sri Dharma Mittra New York Yoga Magazine, January 2010

The divine practices of Yoga were revealed to the great saints of Yogic lore in deep states of meditation for the perfection of all mankind. *Asana* is the Third Limb of *Maharishi* Patanjali's Eight-Limbed system and its steady application bestows radiant health upon the practitioner. On a subtle level, each posture allows one to explore a complete state-of-consciousness when one achieves and inhabits the full pose. Take for example the Plow-Pose or "*Halasana*." When practiced with the proper intention, one begins to understand "plow" on a universal level. Then the *Asana* becomes not just a tool for strengthening, toning and stretching the physical container, but a gateway to super-consciousness.

Most traditional systems of Yoga view Headstand, Shoulderstand and Fish-Pose as the main postures. Add on seven rounds of *Surya Namaskara Vinyasa* as a warm-up and follow them with a forward bend, back-bend and spinal-twist and you have a complete practice as regards *Asana*. Headstand, Shoulderstand and Fish are unique among postures in that one may taste meditation right in the *Asana* practice if they are executed correctly, with faith and the correct, inner focus. The most efficient place to focus the inner gaze in many of the serious postures for meditation is the space between the eyebrows also known as the "Third-Eye" or "Seat of Wisdom". As I have learned from my Guru Swami Kailasahanda, as well as thru experience; where the attention goes, the blood goes and where the blood goes, the *Prana* or "vital life-force" follows. Fixing the attention at the space between the eyebrows stimulates the Pituitary gland deep in the base of the brain. In Yoga, the Pituitary gland is seen as the true sixth-sense so stimulating this gland is of great importance on your journey. To gain the maximum benefit from these or any postures, remember that *Asana* practice is little more than exercise without a firm foundation in *Yama* and *Niyama*, the ethical precepts and observances of Yoga. A good teacher can help one advance as they know from experience what to do and what not to do and can guide the student accordingly. Lastly, let it be known that if one offers the fruit of all action to the Supreme Self or God, everything mysteriously takes care of itself. So bury your mind deep in your heart and watch the body move by itself.

Headstand, Shoulderstand and Fish-Pose are a close-knit family and in Dharma Yoga practices we know in that they always like to be together. Headstand is the father and husband, Shoulderstand is the wife and mother and Fish-Pose is their son. Headstand or "*Sirshasana*" is the king of poses, the best of them all. It requires no flexibility and is accessible to almost everyone. If one can do Lotus, it is good to combine Lotus with Headstand as it greatly accelerates the effects of this inversion. If you are new to the



Dharma Yoga

new york center

Pose, stay a little more toward the forehead on top of the head and only stay in your version of the posture for twenty or thirty seconds. Over time, work-up to three minutes and try to be on the very top of the head (never the back of the head!) with ninety-nine percent of the weight on top of the head and only one percent on the hands or arms depending on which variation you are practicing. Once you have assumed your complete pose, try and remain without motion and remember to close the eyes and bring the full attention and concentration to the space between the eyebrows. If you forget this part, you miss the most important part of the pose! Try and come out of *Sirshasana* slowly and remain with your head on the ground for a few long breaths in Child's Pose after concluding your hold to allow the blood to return to the legs before advancing to Shoulderstand.

Shoulderstand or "*Sarvangasana*" is the second-best pose; the queen of the postures. Like in Headstand, Lotus greatly enhances its effects and having assumed whichever variation you are practicing, one should close the eyes and bring the full attention to the space between the eyebrows. If new to the pose, one can do half shoulderstand, and keep a bend at the waist, resting some weight against the hands, elbows and forearms. As one gains experience over time, it is good to be more and more on the actual shoulders so that the arms become superfluous. If practicing Lotus, place the chest against the chin and shift the hands to the knees. Unbend at the waist while sliding the hands down the thighs to the hips. Eventually, the arms are not needed at all. Like *Sirshasana*, *Sarvangasana* can and should be held for a long time to attain the maximum benefit. One can always seamlessly transition into Plow-Pose for some time after holding Shoulderstand or *Pindhasana* if practicing *Padma-Sarvangasana*. Remember to keep the inner gaze at the space between the eyebrows. Unfurl the body out of the pose gracefully and either transition directly into Fish or take a few long breaths in *Savasana* (relaxation), before proceeding to relieve all fatigue.

Matsyasana or "Fish-Pose" should always follow Shoulderstand and can be done with Lotus, as well. Again, be sure to keep the inner gaze pinned to the space between the eyebrows and try to remain steady without pain or strain in the variation you've chosen for the duration of the time you are holding the pose. If you are new to Fish-Pose, more weight can rest on the arms, but, over time, you will feel more comfortable on the back of the head. If you have Lotus, take hold of the feet with the hands and try to bring the elbows all the way down to the ground. After releasing gracefully out of the posture, take a few long, slow breaths in *Savasana*.

On the level of the benefits to the physical body, Headstand brings much blood to the head, boosting thinking power, mental clarity and sharpness. The Pituitary and Pineal glands are stimulated and the heart and veins in the legs rest. Shoulderstand has almost



Dharma Yoga

new york center

the same benefits as the Headstand, but is a little less intense. *Sarvangasana* also helps to regulate the function of the Thyroid gland. *Matsyasana* is the counter-pose for Shoulderstand, opening the chest and placing the spine in extension. On the more subtle level, *Sirshasana* is not only an *Asana*, but a powerful *Mudra* called “*Viparita Karani*”. It is thought to extend life since its action stops the aging process. To a certain degree, Shoulderstand may be considered a *Mudra*, as well, since its action is so similar to that of the Headstand. Fish-Pose has the effect of stimulating the heart-center, the space we all wish to inhabit more-and-more.

Remember, without *Yama* and *Niyama*, the firm foundation upon which Dharma Yoga, and all of practice depends, there is no Yoga. Dedicate the fruit of all action to the Almighty One and enjoy your short journey to immortality. Om Shanti Om

Sri Dharma Mittra and his expertly trained teachers serve daily sessions to the public at the Dharma Yoga Center on 23rd St and 3rd Ave. in the Gramercy Park section of NYC. Dharma Yoga Life of a Yogi Teacher Training Immersions for 200 and 500 hour programs exceed Yoga Alliance standards. We have designed the curriculum to cover all facets of Classical Yoga, including Dharma I, II, III, IV, Pranayama, Concentration & Meditation, Purification, Diet & Lifestyle, Ethics, Satsang, Anatomy, Physiology & Pathology, Adjustments, Philosophy, Scriptural Study, Conditions & Injuries, Kriyas, Kirtan and more. This is an intensive in the highest sense, for deep immersion into the science, discipline and protocol of true Yoga with a living Yoga Master. Come to a TT Open House, or join a class, workshop or kirtan anytime. Go to: www.dharmayogacenter.com for more information.

