

TINDERBOX

SPIRITUAL BEINGS BEING HUMAN

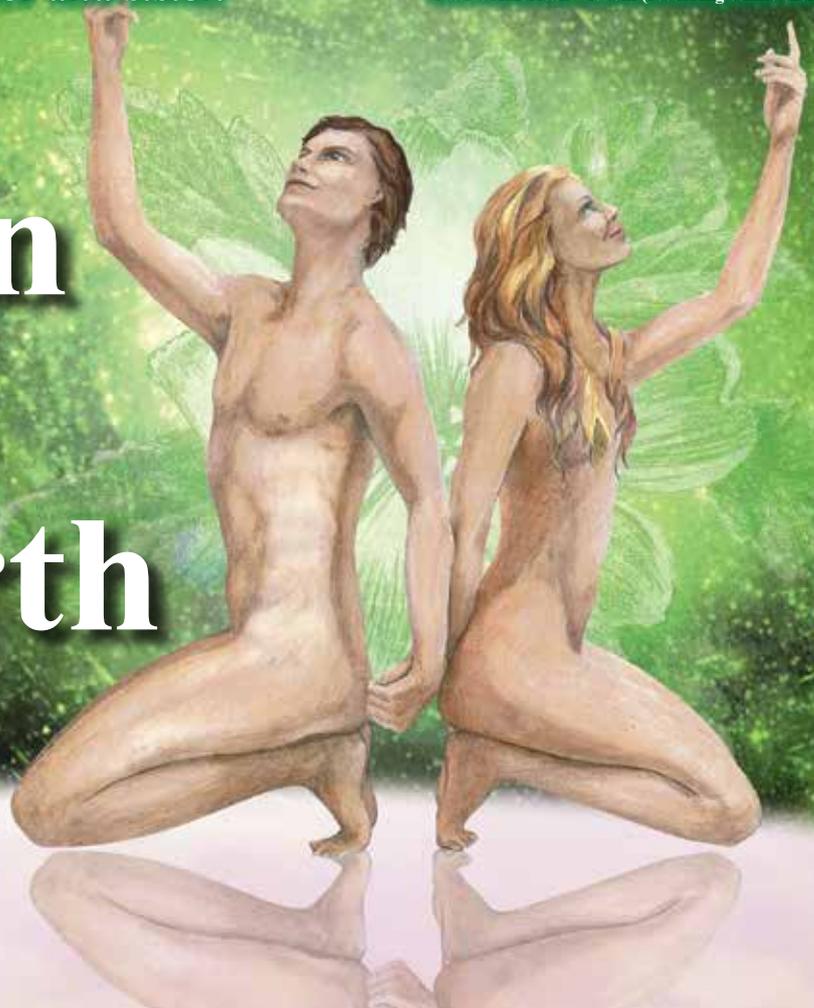
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*Regard heaven as your father, Earth as your mother
and all that lives as your brother and sister.*

- Native American wisdom (recurring ethnic theme)

Between heaven and earth



THE NATURE of yoga is to shine the light of awareness into the darkest corners of the body, which becomes a laboratory of consciousness, a field of exploration into the truth of our own existence.

The past, like the future, is indefinite and exists only as a spectrum of possibilities. It is the mind that habitually lives in the past and the future.

Our body lives in the present, although it bears its imprints of the past because every emotion leaves its mark.

The essential tools that are immediately available to us to proceed with this spiritual work are our bodies and our breath, which bring us directly into present time.

Wherever our breath flows, awareness follows and Prana life force then follows suit.

The body is our vehicle for awakening; so long as we keep our minds out of the way, we need little else for developing direct perception.

Our Spiritual Ecology

The meaning of yoga is 'union', (from *yuj* meaning to yoke together)

SPECIAL FEATURE YOGA IN NATURE

and the purpose of yoga is to unite our Selves with our highest nature. Sadly, in the confused haze of modern trivialised, watered-down yoga, its clear, pure meaning and purpose is often lost.

Yoga is very much about how we relate to the earth by coming home to the sensing, feeling body and aligning it with ease to the Natural forces that surround it so completely.

The Sanskrit term, *asana*, is sometimes translated as 'pose' or 'posture', however neither translation is wholly accurate; the word means 'seat' and it denotes the art of sitting comfortably in a grounded way to develop interior awareness.

Actually, any way that we may sit, stand or move on the earth can be an *asana* when we focus our mind's attention completely *in* the body; moving as a unified whole to perceive what the body has to tell us. Yoga could be broadly termed as how we consciously

conduct ourselves between earth and the sky (heaven). A body that pays attention to the feeling of contacting the earth on which it stands, grows in understanding.

The birds have vanished in the sky and now the last cloud drains away. We sit together the mountain and me, until only the mountain remains.

Li Po (Taoist poet)

Relaxed and Powerful is our Mantra

We're all stumbling towards the light with varying degrees of grace at any given moment.

Bo Lozoff

We don't do something to the body; we *become* the body that is connected to the earth. Relaxing the upright body by surrendering our weight to gravity

initiates a profoundly organic process of bodily and psychic unfolding.

We feel the physical body form a bridge between the terrestrial and the celestial; this is called *Sthira sukham asanam* and means that our connection to the earth is firm and steady yet also comfortable, if not joyful.

As we continue to drop down into ourselves, ever more sensations appear; the more we relax the more tensions in both body and mind are released.

If we sincerely surrender to gravity the terrestrial force, then we spontaneously feel the force of levitation, the celestial force, felt as an uplifting movement, the joints and spinal column feel spacious as energy is circulated more freely.

We will feel a buoyancy and lightness of the body, that were it not tethered so comfortably to the earth by the gravitational cord, it might just float away.

The perpendicular spine acts like an antenna, whereby the nervous system and all the faculties of attention

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True nature revealed through yoga

FROM PAGE 1

are available for tuning into the Divine. The Buddha taught that we should cultivate awareness in each of the four positions, which are meant to represent all the activities of life: sitting, standing, walking and lying down.

Maintaining awareness of all that we do and all that arises is called living in the 'eternal now', keeping what Thich Nhat Hanh called our 'appointment with life', which is ever in the present moment.

The path of humanity is always coordinated with heaven and earth in the alternation of movement and stillness. Human energy is always in communion with heaven and earth in the alteration of exhalation and inhalation.

Heaven and Earth (Ming dynasty)

Wholeness is our true Nature

When you enter into a relationship with sacred Nature you discover and connect with your genuine Self.

Tensin Wangyai Rinpoche

It is worth exploring the practical and systematic discipline of yoga to access techniques that will open us to Mystical Nature.

This is not part of a religious process, but an experiential practice of self-study to realise our true nature as human beings that extends far beyond the limits of the human mind and personality.

We learn that there is an abiding presence that is never touched by what happens to us. Like the sun obscured by clouds, it remains shining in the background.

Upsetting life events and our interpretations of these events are like the clouds that obstruct the experience of our wholeness, our true nature.

We are subject to feelings of sorrow, insecurity and fear because we have separated ourselves from the experience of the whole.

Our human conditioning means we identify ourselves with the limitations of the body, mind and senses, leaving us feeling incomplete and limited.

The unifying goal of yoga involves re-integration to transcend our individual minds and our sense of self to realise that our human potential is infinite, eternal and whole.

Look deep into Nature and then you will understand everything better.

Albert Einstein

Being as one with Nature

Yoga requires us to be open and flexible, which is how we must approach Nature.

In breath, the visible and the invisible worlds meet.



CONTEMPLATION: SIMPLE, CONSCIOUS BREATHING

SIT WITH a long, relaxed straight spine, and focus all of the mind's attention on the complete breathing process.

Inhalation: This should be smooth and continuous and prolonged over time to assist in expanding your lung capacity. Breathe in healing life-giving Prana.

Retention of (or holding) the breath after inhalation: This has a cleansing effect on the body as it allows time for fresh air to mix with the stale air in your lungs and also permits a greater absorption of oxygen into the blood. As one's practice advances, one should aim to prolong this retention for as long as it is possible. Allow the nourishing Prana to percolate in the cells.

Controlling the breath is a prerequisite to controlling the mind and the body.

Exhalation: This is a passive process in which the lungs recoil and the chest relaxes. It should be continuous, relaxed and complete. Breathe out all tension, pain and negativity.

After several rounds of this regulated breathing, then let each part of the breath unfold by itself without your modification and just watch; every time your focus is distracted, immediately return it to the singular one-pointed task of witnessing the breath.

Note: If at any point when doing breath work that involves breath retention, you feel flushed or your heart rate goes up, breath normally until things settle, before trying again.

Swami Rama

Minding Mind Mayhem

Stop trying to do anything to get who you are and simply rest in this nectar of pure consciousness that is always here.

Gangaji

The human brain is a hard-working organ, its long-term memory (which develops up to the age of forty) can hold one million billion separate bits of information in a lifetime.

This is a lot of data to draw from and indicates the mind's busy predisposition and the challenging task we have to subdue its overwhelming ebullience. Our lives are shaped by what we think, what we say and what we do.

Thoughts kindle feelings and feelings fuel action. It is usually mayhem inside the normal human mind with anywhere between 12,000 and 50,000 thoughts per day.

Each thought generates a measurable electric charge, which stimulates the release of neuro-peptides; the messenger molecules that affect our cells, emotions and health.

We humans are not so proficient or diligent about controlling our thoughts in everyday life. It is an amazing game-changer to practice mindfulness, or work towards quietening 'the chattering monkey', as the mind is so aptly called.

This foundational act of 'yoga' will

change the way we see and relate to the natural world, as we become sensitised to a subliminal level of communication to which we are usually completely immune.

It is only when we forget all our learning that we begin to know.

Henry Thoreau

This is about *opening* in the profoundest sense; to enter into mystical nature means opening our minds and our hearts.

To develop our own inner life is tantamount to opening our deepest eyes to see and feel the essence of the life around us.

We need to lift our "walls" that insulate us from Nature and live from our depths, so that we can experience the depths around us.

It is not about doing "asana" or yoga postures in the forest as such, although it could be, but rather about how through focussed stilling of the mind, we can reclaim inborn direct experience with plants and nature.

The sages of ancient India approached Nature with this same consciousness of total communion with it.

The trees, the flowers, the plants grow in silence. The stars, the sun and the moon move in silence. Silence gives us a new perspective.

Mother Teresa