

THE EIGHT LAWS FOR CONSTRUCTING AN INTEGRAL YOGA SESSION

For Teachers & Students of Integral Yoga Dharma Ananda



THE ART OF
INTEGRAL BEING

1 THE LAW OF KUNDALINI STIMULATION

One objective of yoga is to awaken the Kundalini energy that resides at the base of spine. This is the reason for working with the direct stimulation of Kundalini as well as the opening of the *sushumna* (the central channels) along the spinal column within an Integral Yoga session. The inclusion of Kundalini practices and other practices that stimulate this energy are a very important part of a session. The Hatha Yoga practices—with their corresponding static moments of introspective concentration and appropriate conscious yogic breathing—allow for the cellular assimilation of the energy created and awakened during the Kundalini practices. While the lengthening, folding, bending and twisting of the spinal column facilitate the opening, circulation and unblocking of Kundalini energy. *Agni Pran* (breath of fire, fire breathing) is also frequently incorporated into Hatha Yoga *asana* (poses) to intensify their overall benefits.

2 THE LAW OF FULL-BODY STIMULATION

In every Integral Yoga session, stretching and flexing the spine in all directions must be ensured. For this reason, we follow a “pose/counter-pose” structure. However, this structure is different from classical Hatha Yoga because in Integral Yoga “pose/counter-pose” do not necessarily have to be one after another. It is sufficient that all directions are present within one complete session. These directions include upward lengthening, side stretching, back-bending, forward-folding and twisting. A session must complement and soften the powerful specific Kundalini practices and other energetic practices with the *asana* of Hatha Yoga originating from the Rishikesh series. The fundamental quality of which is exactly the integral mobilisation of the spinal column.

3 THE LAW OF SPECIFIC STIMULATION

Without losing sight of ‘The Law of Full-body Stimulation’, a session also works to a specific end. For example, to work one specific chakra, select practices that stimulate the energization and awareness of that specific area. Likewise, to work on a specific therapeutic weakness or ailment, select practices that stimulate the relevant channels, such as the meridians (经络) or *nadi* (literally meaning ‘nerve, blood vessels, pulse’ in Sanskrit). This is to allow for the direct activation of the organs and necessary areas for working. For those who are concerned with the therapeutic benefits within a session, it is essential that the session sufficiently upholds ‘The Law of Full-body Stimulation’ for the session to be effective. This way, the optimal functioning of all the physical and energetic functions of the body, like the immune system, glandular system and lymphatic system, can be ensured.

4 THE LAW OF INTROSPECTION

The contraction of a particular muscle does not become yoga when the action is defined with Sanskrit words. Instead these practices become yoga like any other practices when they are fulfilled with introspective concentration and the appropriate conscious yogic breathing, while the rest of the body is relaxed and we are aware of the physical sensations that are activated within the *asana*. For this fundamental reason, for the efficacy of the session it is essential that concentration is maintained. A conducive environment must be upheld by teachers and students must be guided to learn the techniques properly, such as visualisations, *pranayama* (breathwork, breathing, control of breath) and so forth. In truth, this is only possible when teachers transmits and radiates consciousness in the practice to their students.

5 THE LAW OF JUDICIOUS CREATIVITY

Integral Yoga is an open system. This means that in addition to the existing sacredness of yoga as well as the laws already detailed, every teacher and student can be creative. That is, they can adapt the practice to integrate their own personal style into an Integral Yoga session. The practices and techniques that can be integrated into an Integral Yoga session could come from other systems of yoga and also other disciplines outside of yoga, particularly Taoist practices. Either way, the chosen innovations need to be justifiable through mindful planning and should only be present within a session if their inclusion is meaningful.

6 THE LAW OF HARMONY

Harmony is a concept that is difficult to define, although we tend to know what it feels like when we experience it. It needs to be an elemental factor in an Integral Yoga session. Harmony can express itself in many different aspects of a session. For example, it is preferable to take advantage of the fact that students are lying down in order to practice various techniques that require this particular body position. The same applies for standing *asana* and so forth. Always attempting to prevent the possibility of unnecessary changes that continuously break concentration and do not contribute to the harmony of the session. At the same time, the comfort of the students must always be borne in mind by allowing a few moments for relaxation every 2-3 practices. This is in order to take maximum advantage of the benefits of the mobilisation of energy through introspective relaxation. Another aspect to be mindful of is in sustaining the general harmony of the session by selecting the appropriate music for each moment. Just as there are many factors that allow for harmonious responsiveness within a session, this responsiveness is only truly sustainable if the *sadhana* (daily practice) of the teacher and students is deep, powerful and constant.

7 THE LAW OF RELAXATION

One of the principle objectives of yoga is to teach and learn how to eliminate tensions, not only physical but also mental and emotional. That is, to live in a more relaxed mode beyond the Integral Yoga session. For this reason, yoga classes tend to be associated with relaxation classes. We can achieve this sense of deep relaxation, mostly by respecting the period of relaxation between 10-15 minutes at the end of a session in *savasana* (corpse pose). Just as brief moments of relaxation are taken between practices, the pedagogy of relaxation manifests in all environments of and all aspects of an Integral Yoga session.

8 THE LAW OF RESONANCE

Just as sound vibrates from a singing bowl, the law of resonance expresses itself by allowing the spiritual intelligence of a person to awaken in the spiritual realm. This is initiated with the more advanced spiritual consciousness of another. For this reason, it is important that teachers and students bring the best of themselves to maintain an elevated state of consciousness during the sessions. Teachers are to take students into their inner universe to discover the place in which they have always belonged and remember what they have always known. This message is poorly understood by one's reason, perhaps because it finds it contradictory. However, one's intuition understands this message perfectly. Teachers cannot guide their students along the path they have yet to travel on. Teachers must practice yoga, meditation, wisdom and compassion and be the light for all beings. Students who practice yoga, meditation, wisdom and compassion and be the light for all beings, can eventually also become teachers.

In addition to these eight laws that carry the more transcendent aspects of an Integral Yoga session, there are also some practical considerations to bear in mind that support our work as teachers and students:

GRADUAL IMMERSION

From the moment a student joins an Integral Yoga session, they need to be made aware that there is no such thing as haste in yoga. Haste on a yoga journey lacks consciousness, and yoga is the path of consciousness. For this reason, students must be made aware of engaging in their practice gently and mindfully, respecting the present limitations of their bodies and practising *ahimsa* (non-violence) towards themselves. The yoga practice is a gradual path of tuning in, toning up, surrendering and refinement.

CARDIOVASCULAR PRECAUTIONS

Between aerobic and dynamic practices that cause the heartrate to rise, it is advised to continue with a practice that facilitates cerebral circulation while also causing the heartrate to drop. Students should be safeguarded from the possibility of a cardiovascular incident. For instance, the *asana* that maintain the heart and the head in line horizontally are recommended counter-poses, just as *asana* that maintain the head lower than the heart are. In standing *asana*, it also helps to maintain the arms elevated.

SPECIFIC HEALTH CONCERNS OR INJURIES

In the cases of existing health concerns, such as students who have spinal injuries or pacemakers, it is recommended that a doctor is first consulted to approve whether the student with that specific health concern or injury is able to join an Integral Yoga session.