

Two Fundamental Concepts in Spanda® Yoga Movement Therapy

Polarity

Spirals are Mother Nature's compassionate design compromising head-on oppositional forces. Tone, in living things, is the dynamic response of the body enabling attention to orient outward or inward. The heavens and the earth provide us with their respective experiences of space and gravity operating so intimately within our physical form we are unaware of the organizing affect they have on our every movement. All these couplings have the shudder of *spanda* as their base. The duality of this world implies polarity along a range of options. We can use this basic principle in our approach to yoga therapy. When one becomes two, there is difference along the line of some continuum. No matter the item being differentiated, left from right, up from down, heavy from light, the polarity is fundamental. From this a fundamental therapeutic question arises: is more or less required to achieve balance?

Brahmana and *langhana* are Sanskrit terms whose concepts serve well as broad strokes in selecting practices for specific states of being and psycho-physical conditions. *Brahmana* refers to "expansion" and is used in pranayama to refer to the inhalation. *Langhana* means "reduction" or lessening. In pranayama, it refers to the exhalation. These two actions of expansion and reduction are basic to all of nature as they embody the duplicity that is the threshold of manifestation. The Spanda pulsation or polarity of vibration is the impetus that initiates formlessness into form. [For this early bifurcation of cellular mitosis, the one that begets the two of the Tao, and two in one in Advaita and Tantra becomes the multitude of things in the material world.](#) From a Tantric perspective, yoga's toolbox is the natural world in its entirety. The subtle and gross elements, natural minerals, plants and properties that organize higher forms of life all can be put into play in the microcosmic universe of the human being seeking balance.

Just as some pranayama practices are generally stimulating, others are generally pacifying or relaxing, while others still are balancing and depending on how they are performed, *asanas* and *vinyasa* movements have similar properties. Thinking in terms of "things to do to expand, activate, enhance, or increase" and "things to do to diminish, reduce, or lessen" can be a useful first step in assessing an overall direction for a therapeutic action.

At the level of the energetic sheath, the chakras can be viewed in terms of polarities as well. An enduring polarity in someone's energetic profile may produce an enduring behavioral tendency with accompanying beliefs. Such a person may tend to operate through the lens of behavioral attributes constellated around a particular "polar type", such as the victim or predator archetype of the root chakra.

Awareness

The other fundamental principle central to our work is the cultivation of awareness. This begins simply with paying attention, such as, "when you do five of these does it hurt? And how much does it hurt?" From this taking stock, awareness can be cultivated to the point of refinement such that it can become the guiding principle in untangling the impediments to growth and relative freedom in this lifetime.

In unsophisticated views of yoga, when a chakra imbalance is presumed, doing a yoga practice that generally involves that chakra's body area is given as a remedy. If someone perhaps finds themselves overcome with sentimentality over the past, the approach might be to have that person practice a "heart opening" posture, such as fish pose. But this uninformed procedure may be the exact wrong thing! It is *not enough* to have a general sense of whether an asana,

movement, mudra, or other practice is “about” a particular chakra. Determining whether or not the heart chakra is in need of tonification or sedation (not simply working with a one-size-fits-all mindset) is an important orientation and first step.

Beyond this, a more accurate question is, “what does the heart center need at this moment?” Does it a generic “opening” or quite the opposite? Might rest in which release from its state of overactive feeling be in order? And more pointedly, what is the importance of this expression to this individual? What is its purpose? What is trying to make itself known?

To explore this, further steps can be taken. These steps require awareness. Yoga therapy can help a soul find enough balance, safety, and stability to do this work. When a person is ready, the deeper work of unfolding meaning can be done. Bringing awareness into patterns of thought, feeling and behavior can provide insight that brings us closer to the ever-existent goal of yoga—autonomy or freedom. Our intuitive powers develop as we open to this guiding Force within us. We call this keen power, Kundalini Shakti.