

## **The Role of Asana & The Three Layers of the Bodies**

*by Victor Chng.*

When yogis look at the body, it goes beyond the physical body. The body includes the physical body, the astral body and casual body. The physical body requires food, water and air to survive. The astral body holds all our emotions while the casual body house our true nature. The causal body cause one to questions on the nature of his own existence, the astral generates the emotion for action and the physical carries out the action driven by astral's emotions and motivation.

Man is different from animal because he is able to formulate questions and developed answers for himself. For example, "Why am I here", "What is my mission", "How should I become more compassionate". It is because of the casual body, that enables one to question his existence. This ultimately lead him to spiritual awakening. Casual body is the deepest layer of the body that is not formed by anything physical, it requires energy transformation from the astral body to reach this layer. This layer requires faith and surrendering of our entire "Self" to ultimately realize the true nature.

The astral body is a body of emotion and energy transformation. It is the middle layer that transit between the physical layer and the causal layer. Energy is gain at the physical layer from its environment and transform for the purpose of both physical and astral use. At the physical level, energy is required to provide proper functions of all the organs. Energy is everywhere in the body, but mainly in the charkas. When unawaken, the charkas provide energy to the organs for their necessary function. However, when awaken, it provides energy for spiritual awakening, by penetrating the causal body. To gain energy transformation, it requires one to go beyond his emotions and transform emotions to powerful mental strength for spiritual endeavour.

The physical body is what yogis view as a tool to serve the purpose of this life. It needs all the nutrients from its environment in order to survive. Energy is being taken into the body via exchange with its environment. The physical body is a very sensitive vehicle which are highly influence by its surrounding. Therefore, where we live, what we eat, who we interact with; all influences our energy pattern. In addition, one can also actively manage the energy level through physical activities. Any physical activities, which we do generate energy from within and also, draw energy from the environment. Therefore, whatever we do influence the level of energy intake or dissipation from and to its environment. We can enhance the physical body by cultivating a way of life that brings more health, looking into diet, yoga, meditation and medicine.

Thousands of years ago, yogis found their abode, thousands of metres above sea level in the Himalayas. The environment is cold and harsh. They discovered that by manipulating the body, energy could be generated. Through high level of concentration, they also discovered the path ways of energy – Nadis and the energetic points – Chakras. By actively manipulating these pathways, many different postures were created. In so doing, energy was being internalized for spiritual awakening.

Yoga ultimately wants us to gain more harmony with our true nature. However, it needs to start by first integrating various layers of our body. When we examine any asana, we do not see their functions that will serve us in our daily lives. It does not help us pick up something from the floor or take things from above. We will never do any yoga pose like for our daily activities. That is why, most beginners may find it strange to go into "ridiculous" poses, which does not serve any purpose function. However, when we examine rotations of the joints and the energetic pathways of the stretch and know that they are important to serve an energetic purpose; beyond the physical body, we being to see the purpose of the yoga poses.

Asana, when combine with breathing provides an opportunity to bring together an intimate union between the body and the mind. In our normal self, the mind functions independently of the body. Therefore, we have the saying "the body is willing but the mind is weak". Many times, we wanted to wake up earlier for our practice, but it never happens. By having a regular asana practice, it helps to discipline our body and ultimately our life. It helps one to be more aware of the physical movement and it brings more concentration to our action. When one can practice asana, by not wavering in thinking beyond what is happening in the body movement, the awareness will allow one to practice more successful meditation.

In addition, the effort in breathing while performing asana is intense. For example, if you want to breath in a forward bend or backbend, you will find that your breath naturally becomes more difficult. Asana naturally enables one to bring effort and focus on the breath. In this way, it prepares the body for pranayama practice, which is activate manipulation of the breath.

While performing asana, it is inevitable that the body produces heat. Heat is a sign of energy in the body. The level of heat will gradually increase and it is important for the body to produce heat for various purposes. Heat helps to bring more suppleness to the joints, it detoxifies the body and it allows muscles to become more elastic for deeper stretching. Heat will also produce sweat from the body. This helps to bring about equilibrium of both internal and external body temperature and it also carries waste to the surface of the skin to be expelled. When sweat thinly on the surface of the skin, it is a healthy sign. However, when sweat becomes profuse and starts to drip, it becomes a sign of exhaustion and depletion of energy. When sweat carries too much heat away from the body and is utilizing what has been generated earlier, it will tire the body. Therefore, it is important to provide the body the right amount of asana practice.

Asana is the practice for creating more energy in the physical body. It brings focus and clarity to each physical movement and allows the mind to be single-pointed in the action. Energy is what threads the physical, astral and casual body. When it starts to penetrate into each layer, we begin to feel the sense of integration of our entire being. Asana, contrary to many believes are more than just for the “kicks” or “to sweat”. It has far deeper implication as a tool for energetic and spiritual transformation.

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#### **About Victor Chng**



Victor met Paul Grilley – the founder of Yin Yoga in 2004 Dec and has completed a teacher training with Paul on Yin Yoga and Anatomy for Yoga. He continues to study with Paul and Sarah Power on a residential yoga teacher training program at San Francisco in Feb 2007. Victor is greatly in-depth to his teachers on giving him permission to teach Yin Yoga and to continue exploring this path with his own intuitive knowledge. Since 2005, Victor has been conducting Teacher Training and workshops on Yin Yoga all over Asia. You may contact Victor at email [info@yogainasia.com](mailto:info@yogainasia.com). [www.yogainasia.com](http://www.yogainasia.com).