

10 MEDITATIONS

FOR INNER PEACE AND HAPPINESS

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NAMASTE

“It does not matter which religion or philosophy you follow. The important thing is the flow of spiritual energy through Truth, Love and Good Karmas.”

Swami Shyam Yogi

Namaste is the traditional way of greeting in India and Nepal. Everyone can say namaste. You can use namaste as in good morning, good night, thank you or welcome, and it can be used generously. The action of bowing the head and joining the palms of both hands together in front of the chest, over the heart, symbolises “I recognize the God in you”. It is the philosophy of oneness - You and I are One in heart and mind – opening the heart to spread love and peace, and the ability to offer our help and service to each other. Yoga is an exercise that brings all levels of our existence, including the physical and intellectual, into balance. The gesture of namaste is yoga in itself, and many yogic activities begin and end with the performance of this deeply spiritual gesture. The practice of namaste with clear intentions develops faith in ahimsa - non-violence.

Ahimsa Paramo Dharma - Non-violence is the greatest path



PREFACE

I read a book by Osho, a little while ago, that said, “Never believe anything you read nor believe any words you hear,” they are all lies... words are only concepts, a substitute for the real thing. This book is no exception. Dave West has compassionately put this book together to explain a sequence of movements and meditations, in his own way, to help show you an understanding, a way for you to enhance your life. This sequence of movements and step by step meditations can show you a way. But it is no use just to read about them, explore the way he was taught in the Himalayas, his understanding, part by part, movement by movement, and for you to experience the results for yourself. Take what you need and leave the rest behind. If you are expecting instant results, you will be disappointed, you may be surprised, but the secret is to accept whatever you get. Dave West explains that you are limited only by your own imagination. However, you must accept your current limitations and capacity, and gradually over time your stretching will get easier, your understanding will come, as will your energy. In these times of instant fix it, it will be hard, but again a quote from Osho, “To me, only in your loneliness (meditation) will you be able to know the Truth – because you are the Truth... Through these meditations you can find your own Truth.” Start the journey now, and every day take another step...

Martin F. Moore
Meditation Instructor



FOREWORD

A long time ago, while walking on the banks of the river Ganges near Rishikesh, my guru told me that I have to be strong if I am going to choose the path of yoga. Some of the places he is going to take me; some of the things he is going to show me; I am going to need strength and I am going to need to trust him.

After travelling extensively in the Himalayan Mountains for three years, I discovered many ancient secrets to inner peace and happiness. Many of these teachings had been preserved for thousands of years in remote valleys and villages by yoga masters and rishis. They told me that the modern teachings of yoga in the West had become distorted by over emphasis on the physical aspect, resulting in attachment to the body. They instructed me that the time had come for these ancient healing techniques to re-emerge in their true form as the divine science of life.

The information in this book is based on my understanding of the wisdom I received from several gurus, and from personal insights gained through meditation. I cannot offer you what I do not know or what I do not understand at this time. I hope this book may save you some time from all the searching and wandering that is common when one first steps on to the path.

These pages have been a long time in the making. They have been written after fifteen years of studying yoga and meditation in different countries. This book is a compilation of great works from the masters. Its purpose is to put meditation back into the heart and soul of yoga practice and inspire higher consciousness in daily activities. It contains non-commercial yogic instruction and is designed to provide simple straightforward illustrated guidance for beginners. This book is not meant to replace the teacher, or the first hand instruction given in classes. For safe and effective practice it is recommended that you undertake proper instructions from a qualified yoga and meditation instructor, and proceed at your own pace, according to your own experiences and intuition.

Yoga has recently become an internationally accepted health system. However, people have a tendency to over-simplify things and make definitions fit into their parameters of thinking. Yoga has also become a casualty of such thinking. In today's fast-paced world, with its quick-fix solutions for everything, yoga is more and more being branded as a health regime or a solution for all weight problems, something exciting from the exotic east. In the over-zealous attempts to spread yoga, its centuries-old meaning and true purpose is being diluted – no nutrients, just calories.

In India my guru explained, “Modern yoga in the West can be compared to having a three course dinner in a nice restaurant. But most people just order the starter over and over again. It might be very delicious and nutritious but they are missing out on the main course and dessert.” What he meant by this is that people are focusing too much on asana (starter) and not practising meditation (main course) and therefore missing out on the fruit of meditation (dessert) which is inner peace, happiness and enlightenment.

A closer look at the original teaching reveals that yoga is the science of bringing mindfulness into every thought, speech and action. The poses came later as a spontaneous expression of that centred state. This book has been compiled primarily to educate people across the world that yoga *is* meditation, and to dispel existing misconceptions. In the light of so many dilutions and variations found in the world today, I here present direct access to the main points that were passed on to me from the enlightened masters of the Himalayas. This book is a drop of nectar from the ocean of their wisdom.

Many passages in this book have been reproduced directly from the works of Lord Buddha, Maharishi Patanjali, Sri Tirumalai Krishnamacharya, T.K.V. Desikachar Sri Swami Sivananda, Swami Satyananda Saraswati, Bhodidharma, Swami Shyam Yogi, Stephen Levine, Eckhart Tolle, Erich Schiffmann, Robin S. Sharma, Merta Ada, Martin Moore, Achaan Chaa and Geshe Kelsang Gyasto. I have referenced their work to help expand the wisdom I received in the Himalayas. Although I did not have personal contact with some of these masters, I believe they have been with me in spirit throughout the writing of this book. I have felt their presence and guidance. I have tried to combine their wisdom with my own understanding for your benefit. I pray that this new collection reaches you with their blessings, and the blessings from all the holy beings, and assists you towards perfect health, inner peace and happiness.

In the process of compiling this book, I have tried to keep in mind the words of the Venerable Myokyo-ni in her Zen classic 'Gentling the Bull'; "When we read modern meditation manuals, the do-it-yourself type, they read like instructions for home improvement. Or like cooking recipes, they instruct: place the mind here, now place it there, now lift it up from here and place it there... now place your mind nowhere, and just stay like this for an hour or so. It all sounds so easy until you try to do it." I hope I have at least succeeded in making this book as interesting as a cooking recipe and less confusing than home improvement instructions. As Bhodidharma taught, "The ultimate Truth is beyond words. They are not the Way. The Way is wordless. Words are illusions."

Meditation is the art of mindfulness. When you are mindful of all your thoughts, speech and action and can create love, wisdom and compassion in every second, of every minute, of every day, then you have not only succeeded in yoga, but you have truly succeeded in life, in reaching your full potential as a human being. However, do not practise meditation for selfish reasons, but in order to know and understand yourself, and thus be able to teach others how to live peacefully and wisely. I here offer guidance and counsel for those who wish to practise and reach this goal.

It is without any doubt in my heart and mind, that the regular and diligent practice of these meditations, by everyone on the planet, would produce a significant global reduction in violence, crime, poverty, disease and deterioration of the natural environment. I encourage you to take time from the hectic pace of modern living to experience the silence of meditation, combined with regular classes from an experienced instructor. Integrate these teachings with your personal practice, discoveries and insights. Find your own Truth, and let the light of love shine clear in your heart.

Dave West
Bali 2007



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PART 1 – PREPARATION

“YOU MUST BE THE CHANGE
THAT YOU WISH TO SEE IN THE WORLD”

MAHATMA GHANDI



ONENESS WITH NATURE



*Take a walk in nature, away from the traffic and bustle of city life.
Walk slowly and appreciate the beauty and harmony of the natural world.
As you walk take deep gentle breaths and absorb the natural healing energy of your surroundings.
After walking deep into the heart of Mother Nature, find a place on the ground, perhaps soft grass where you can sit undisturbed to meditate. You can even lean against a tree or lie down.
Find a place that feels right for you.
Close your eyes and relax for a few minutes.
Let your breathing become comfortable and quiet.
Let your thoughts settle.
Notice how the ground supports you.
Put your palms down on the ground and sense the mass under you.
Feel the breeze on your skin, feel the temperature.
Notice how you breathe in the air and then expel it out again.
Become aware of the exchange with nature that is always going on. Listen to the sounds of nature.
Can you hear the wind in the trees, birds chirping, insects.
Allow yourself to experience how you are part of this scene, not separate from it but one with nature, one with the universe.
Can you experience the ongoing exchange between you and the world without thinking anything about it? Let go of any thoughts about yesterday or tomorrow.
Bring yourself to this moment without any purpose or goal.
For this moment, don't think about yourself. Set aside your usual concerns.
Be fully in the present moment of being an integral part of the outdoors.
Can you be completely here, in nature, in the now?
Simply observe the purity and tranquillity of this moment.
Feel relaxed, feel safe,
Experience the energy you are made of. Feel what it is like to be you.
Experience yourself as the infinite mind that you are,
Free and fearless, healthy and happy,
Experience a renewal of optimism that will clarify your priorities and aspirations.
Your life will acquire new meaning as you establish the inner conviction that you live in a friendly, non-threatening, purposeful universe.
Hold this awareness for a few minutes or longer.
Slowly open your eyes. Join your hands over the heart and bow your head.
Give thanks for nature, our greatest teacher.
Give thanks for the gift of life.*



INTRODUCTION TO MEDITATION

“Stop gathering information from the outside and start gathering it from the inside.”

Dan Millman

Meditation traditions of the world are centred on the quest for freedom from sorrow, liberation and enlightenment. The practice of meditation requires striving to purify the mind and body, and the intention to turn the mind inwards with techniques that assist us on a journey of self-exploration, self-discovery and self-realisation. This has a profound effect on the way we think, speak and act. It peels away the veil of delusion revealing the true majestic nature of our innermost Self in all its glory. Love, compassion, generosity, dispassion, caring and friendliness all naturally blossom in everyday life. The fruit of meditation is inner peace, happiness and complete harmony with the rhythm of nature.

Meditation is a way to see the world directly, as it is, without any judgement or mental conditioning. It is awareness. It is silence, stillness in the mind; its natural state of being. This is when the mind ceases its constant vacillation between worry over the future and regrets of the past, when the whole awareness returns to the present moment. Such beauty and fullness is found here!

Also termed by athletes as ‘being in the zone’, this natural state of awareness accompanies peak performance in all fields of human endeavour. This presence is stillness inside, alertness, clarity of mind and peace, even in the midst of dynamic activity. Thus, the human nervous system is far more effective, responsive, and action far more powerful.

Yoga masters of the Himalayas recognise that every human being evolves in a different way according to temperament and capacity. They advocate everyone to emphasise the practice of certain healing techniques over others, depending on individual requirements. They taught me how to combine meditation with different forms of yoga. This, they said, all helps to make the purification process deep-rooted and ensures a healthy body, mind and spirit, a prerequisite on the path to inner peace and happiness. These instructions have been firmly rooted in this book.

Ten Benefits from Daily Meditation

1. Meditation can transform your life in a positive way.
2. Meditation can help you to understand and experience what real happiness is and to truly enjoy life.
3. Meditation can energise you, filling you with vitality and strength.
4. Meditation can reduce stress and anxiety.
5. Meditation can help you to sleep better.
6. Meditation can help you to become patient and to remain calm in any situation.
7. Meditation can help to develop your intuition, your sixth sense.
8. Meditation can increase wisdom.
9. Meditation can help you to understand the nature of impermanence.
10. Meditation can help to reveal your true nature and attain enlightenment.

Relevance of Meditation Today

The enlightened masters of the Himalayas taught me that being spiritual is not about locking oneself away on a mountain top for thirty years, chanting and eating nettles. The path to enlightenment is mindfulness; being aware of the present moment and living a higher consciousness lifestyle with our families, friends and enemies, in our home, at work, in the community and environment. It's about creating love and compassion in our normal everyday lives, working together, playing together and meditating together.

As Bhodidharma, the founder of Zen Buddhism, taught, "To find Buddha (awakened mind), you have to see your nature. Whoever sees his nature is a Buddha. If you don't see your nature, invoking Buddhas, reciting sutras, making offerings and keeping precepts are all useless. Invoking Buddhas results in good karma, reciting sutras results in a good memory, keeping precepts results in good rebirth, and making offerings results in future blessings - but no Buddha."

Being spiritual simply means, being in the present moment and mindful that our thoughts, speech and actions are pure, untainted and filled with love. But as cool and romantic as it may seem, meditation and being spiritual is not about wearing hippy clothes and jewellery from India, or hanging cosmic mandalas in our living-room, sitting cross-legged and tuning in, turning on and dropping out. Meditation takes place on the inside and requires regular, diligent practice with patience and determination before results are noticed on the outside.

Buddha believed that the mind is our greatest resource, and that meditation is the method that develops the mind correctly to bring about clarity of understanding. This is as relevant today as it was thousands of years ago. Meditation helps us now, as it did then, to begin to understand ourselves better, which in itself is a great achievement, because it is our misunderstanding of ourselves that leads us to disharmony.

Meditation is an ideal way of performing a self-examination, working through unknown obstacles that are disturbing our life on account of which we are unable to progress. This requires effort, just like anything we set our heart on to achieve cannot be attained without struggle or effort from our side. The struggle is for the perfection of one's thoughts, words and deeds. The effort is towards attaining balance in the different facets of one's personality.

Sri Swami Sivananda of Rishikesh taught, "To live harmoniously the mind, body and spirit must develop in a balanced way according to individual temperament and capacity." This means that the head, heart and hand must synchronise if we want to realize our goals, whether they be material, spiritual or both. Meditation provides a suitable environment for this metamorphosis to take place. A place to accept inherent weaknesses and blemishes, change our outlook and opinion, and improve ourselves.

What is Happiness?

All of us seek inner peace and happiness because this is what we lack in our lives. William Hart writes, "We all want to be happy; we regard it as our right. Yet happiness is a goal we strive toward more often than attain." At times we all experience dissatisfaction in life, agitation, disharmony, and suffering. Even if at this moment we are free from dissatisfactions, we can all remember a time when they afflicted us and can foresee a time when they may reoccur. Eventually we must all face the suffering of death.

Geshe Kelsang Gyasto asks, "What is the ultimate supreme goal of human life? What is real happiness? What do you wish for, strive for, or daydream about? Do you want material possessions, such as a large house with all the latest luxuries, a fast car, or a well paid job? Or is it reputation, good looks, power, excitement, or adventure? Do you try to find the meaning of your life in relationships with your family and circle of friends?" All these things can make us happy for a short while, but they can also cause us much worry and suffering. They can never give us the perfect lasting happiness that all of us, deep in our heart, long for.

Bhodidharma taught, "Once you stop clinging and let things be, you'll be free, even of birth and death. You'll transform everything." However, our ordinary view is that I am the centre of MY universe and that other people and things derive their significance principally from the way in which they affect ME. It is this view that is the source of all our selfish intentions and suffering. It is this view that prevents us from letting go.

We need to free ourselves from the illusion that we are nothing more than this physical body and mind. When we are free from the illusionary sense of self that governs what we think, say and do, we free ourselves from the fear that is the consequence of this illusion. This also frees us from the suffering we unconsciously inflict on ourself and others.

Geshe Kelsang Gyasto answers, "The only thing that will never deceive us is the attainment of full enlightenment." This means living a higher consciousness lifestyle, with love, wisdom, compassion and non-violence at the centre of our thought, speech and action. Only then will we be free from desires and delusions, faults and distractions, and possess the qualities necessary to help all living beings. Through this understanding we can clearly see that the attainment of enlightenment (higher consciousness lifestyle) is the real meaning of our precious human life. The path of meditation allows us to reach this supreme goal.

Opening the Heart

Mother Teresa said, "Everybody today seems to be in such a terrible rush, anxious for greater developments and greater riches and so on, so that children have very little time for their parents. Parents have very little time for each other, and in the home begins the disruption of peace of the world."

Opening the heart, cultivating love and kindness, and awakening the compassionate spirit inside our self is the key to inner peace and happiness and the essence of spiritual progress. Love is a natural occurrence in the world, but bringing it to the forefront of our daily thought, speech and action involves cherishing others more than we cherish ourself. This can be achieved through the regular practice of compassionate meditation. Here we can control our ego, eliminate self-importance and selfishness, and consider the happiness of others throughout our daily activities.

S. N. Goenka believes, "When one experiences truth, the madness of finding fault with others disappears." We all need to heal our life, to understand our sickness, or to heal past traumatic experiences, for example - family, romantic partners, teachers, and other important relationships. Meditation is the ideal place where we can examine these experiences and attitudes, and replace negative attitudes with more positive ones.

Swami Satyananda Saraswati wrote, "Self-exploration through regular meditation allows us to recognise that the faults and failures in our daily life are not in the difficult situations that confront us, or in the people with whom we have to interact. The problems we face arise from within. Circumstances only act as a catalyst to bring them to the surface." This means that everything we feel, think, say, or do is coming up from deep within. Meditation gives us the chance to reflect on this, and apply the necessary changes to take place within us.

By letting go of our ego's reactions and practising forgiveness and acceptance we begin to experience pure and perfect love. We learn to gladly allow the energy of love to circulate and shine through, unobstructed by fear, pain and hatred. Erich Schiffmann wrote, "The deeper we explore, the more we come to realise a very simple truth: Loving thoughts feel good, and unloving thoughts feel bad. Unloving thoughts are like self-inflicted poison darts, whereas loving thoughts are the natural response to reality when it is clearly perceived. This simple understanding will initiate a natural change of mind that will culminate in the most important theme of yoga and meditation: Learning to love and be loved."

In this way we can begin to discover that suffering is our greatest teacher, and that the suffering in everyday life gives us many opportunities to live the ideal way. When we experience our own suffering it is a difficult time, and we tend to become overwhelmed with grief. But this is

also a great opportunity to become stronger, adapt and evolve. In the depths of our suffering we can learn from the past, accept the difficult present and become stronger for the future.

However, when we help others to feel less suffering, less distress from the inevitable negatives of life, the tragic losses and frustrations, the moment we do a positive thing for others without thought or concern for ourselves, in these moments suffering and enlightenment are one. This teaches us not to live apart from the world, but to live a real and active part of it. We discover that enlightenment is not some great cosmic peace trip for monks in caves; it is actually found right in the midst of our daily existence, and that the ultimate ideal of universal compassion can be approached in small ways, not just as all or nothing.

Journey of Self-Discovery

T.K.V. Desikachar wrote, "The journey of self-discovery through meditation takes each of us in a different direction." As we go deeper and deeper into meditation, we begin to discover our own truth, our own experience of the soul, life, creation and the cosmos, and eventually it will bring us to the ultimate truth and divinity of all things. And this is the happiness, freedom and enlightenment that we all seek.

This book has offered limited explanation on the actual experience of meditation. This is because everyone is different and will have a different experience, different thought patterns and interpretations. As Bruce Lee said, "I cannot teach you, only help you to explore yourself. Nothing more." This is the journey you must make yourself, your own discoveries, your own realisations, your own Truth.

When we begin our journey on the path to enlightenment it is important to re-evaluate our lifestyle and the direction we are heading with our life. We should examine all activity as it happens, and how our mind observes and perceives its thoughts, speech and actions, how it responds, creates and reacts according to different outside or inside stimuli. It is important to slow down the mind and actually be in the present moment, focusing fully in the here and now.

Robin S. Sharma wrote, "In the midst of everyday activities, the mind is kept continually distracted with details. People move from one thing to the next without a pause. Even at the end of the day when the mind could take some time to reflect, most people fill their leisure hours with structured activity. Daily tension and stress does not have any way to release or disperse. They continue to build and store up within us."

Stillness in meditation directly relaxes the mind, releases tension and stress, and awakens it to the potentials that are present in each and every person. In meditation we discover how thoroughly our life is shaped by our thoughts and the way we interpret what's going on. Every thought, feeling and emotion manifests itself in one form or another in our body and in our life. We notice this with surprising clarity as we become more sensitive to the inner feeling of who we are. When we open our mind to meditation, change becomes possible. Problems dissolve and deeper wisdom emerges.

Meditation carries us directly to the depths, steering through the continuous flow of conscious thought, navigating into calm seas, and revealing reality in its crystal-clear reflection. Meditation helps us to experience emptiness and undergo a profound transformation of our experience of the world. It is a firsthand method; nothing can substitute for the personal exploration of our own mind. By regularly practising we can delve into our own consciousness with meditative exploration and come to our own profound and meaningful understandings. As Sir Isaac Newton once said, "To myself I am only a child playing on the beach, while vast oceans of truth lie undiscovered before me."

After the regular and diligent practice of meditation considerable changes begin to take place in the mind, brain and nervous system. New nerve-currents, new cells, new vibrations, new avenues and new channels are formed. The whole mind and nervous system become remodelled. We will have a new mind, a new heart, new sensations, new feelings, new mode of thinking and

acting and a new view of the universe. Diligent practice and persistence with meditation produces results that are permanent and abiding.

The greatest minds of our time, including Gandhi, Osho, Paramahansa Yogananda and Einstein, have all emphasised that the journey of self-discovery and spiritual evolution is man's greatest adventure, and should be pursued as the ultimate supreme goal of human existence.



GENERAL NOTES FOR THE MEDITATOR

“Mental health and positive thinking are the cures for many modern diseases.”

Swami Shyam Yoga

The principle goal of meditation is self-realisation. This means understanding our true nature as a spiritual being, the nature of impermanence and the attainment of enlightenment. But meditation on any philosophical theme could be a powerful constructive aid on the path of personal development. It is generally believed that meditation promotes stillness of the mind through concentration and heightened awareness, whereby a greater receptivity is attained and previously unknown depths of consciousness can be penetrated. Meditation also leads to increased ability to think clearly, to make fullest use of imagination and will power, and ultimately to inner strength and peace. Meditation is the ideal place where we can empty our mind from all the programming and brain-washing in the world today, and fill it with an inspiring and enlightened presence. With a clear mind we can then contemplate our life and make positive changes and conscious decisions towards attaining our full human potential. The following are certain practical points regarding the basic techniques and lifestyle necessary for success. They are meant as guidelines for the meditator in the absence of a spiritual guide or meditation instructor.

Before Beginning

Before diving straight into meditation be aware that it is a long term process. It involves incorporating a holistic lifestyle, not just sitting quietly for a few minutes each day. This means re-evaluating all areas of your life and making positive changes where possible, at this time, little by little. Changes may include moral discipline, diet, cleanliness, truthfulness, non-violence. Before starting meditation and yoga the stomach, bowels and bladder should be empty. For best results do not begin meditation or yoga until at least 4 hours after a heavy meal. Early morning practice is

recommended. Taking a cold shower before you begin can make you more alert and greatly enhance the effect of your practice. Wear loose and comfortable clothes made from natural fibres. Remove all jewellery, watches and spectacles/glasses. Start your meditations on a new moon to incorporate the natural flow and cycles of the universe.

Positive Thinking and Determination

There are many obstacles on the path of meditation. It is extremely important to have a strong determination to succeed while maintaining a positive mental attitude. Positive thinking promotes mental health and helps to remove negative thoughts, avoiding anxiety and depression through life's ups and downs. However, most people are only positive on the surface, with 90% of their thoughts being negative, for example - fear of failure. Although we appear positive on the outside it is this underlying negativity that we ultimately attract. Buddha said, "All that we are is the result of what we have thought." Our thought is our own making and it affects all our succeeding thoughts. It decides the trend of our mind towards integrity or weakness, good or ill. We are the sum total of all our karma; thought, speech and action. Every moment we are changing the aspect of our existence. Every moment we are creating our self. We are responsible for our own future and for the future of mankind. Determination includes awareness of all thoughts, speech and actions, and maintaining a high standard of morality. Be positive. Attract positive energy, now! (See Earth Healing Meditation).

Discipline

To succeed in meditation one must have discipline. Regular, systematic practice is essential. Discipline also means restraints on behaviour through universal moral commandments, self-purification and spiritual discipline. Swami Sivananda says "To achieve the goal of yoga one must have constant spiritualisation of all activities and cultivation of virtues such as non-violence, truthfulness and celibacy." If you are non-spiritual, try to maintain mindfulness by constantly being in the present moment, aware of all thoughts, speech and actions. Discipline yourself to apply your best effort in all things throughout the day.

Personal Health and Hygiene

The Greek philosopher Hippocrates said, "Natural forces within us are the true healers of disease." Despite more medical knowledge, technology and health care facilities than ever before, the health of the Western world is deteriorating at an alarming and ever quickening rate. What most of us fail to realise is that it is what goes into our bodies (that which we absorb from the air, our food and water) that affects the internal environment of our bodies and determines the rate at which we age, and our overall level of health. Toxins absorbed through our external environment (as well as self administered) include:

- Exhaust and factory emissions.
- Chlorinated, fluoridated and other pollutants in water.
- Chemical sprays and fertilisers.
- Smoking, caffeine, alcohol.
- Hormone enhanced meat and dairy products.
- Processed foods, high sugar and high fat junk food.
- Mental, physical and emotional tension and stress.

Toxins then build up within the body, disrupt the pH level, and cause blood and tissue toxicity. As these toxins accumulate in our cells, they break down and inhibit the body's immune system, and over time damage organs, tissues, arteries, joints and glands. When the body becomes overloaded and unable to keep up the fight, it is then that disease creeps in. Almost all illness and diseases are directly related to the health and condition of our body's internal environment. Toxicity creates a

breeding ground for germs and viruses, allowing them to penetrate a weakened immune system. Avoiding and removing toxicity from the body is paramount, if we are to regain and maintain vibrant health, reduce the effects of premature ageing, and ward off illness. In our world today, it is virtually impossible to avoid toxic contamination. However, with environmental awareness and yogic training, combined with minor lifestyle changes, such as food and cleanliness, it is possible to drastically reduce the harmful effects, increase the length and quality of life on this planet, and live free from sickness and disease.

Healthy Diet

Eat slowly, consciously absorbing prana from your food. Eat a nourishing and well balanced diet, based on natural foods. Avoid over-eating. Avoid over-fasting. Avoid over-processed foods. Eat only foods that are freshly prepared and easily digestible. This keeps the body light and supple and the mind calm, giving a high resistance to disease. It is essential to drink plenty of water between meals, especially during periods of intense practice to avoid dehydration and to support healthy bodily function. Take natural remedies according to your requirements; Ayurveda, Traditional Chinese Medicine, Homeopathy, Western Herbalism. Avoid pharmaceuticals and synthetic medicines except in emergencies.

Warning: Consult your medical advisor before making any major dietary changes. A daily diet should be prescribed according to the nutritional requirements of your individual constitution.

Vegetarianism

It is assumed by many that vegetarianism is an integral part of meditation and yoga practice. This belief is only partially true, for while yoga views vegetarianism as the most beneficial system of nutrition, it does not insist that all practitioners of yoga become vegetarians. Non-vegetarians are heartily accepted as practitioners of yoga. This book, however, is not interested in arguing the pros and cons of meat versus vegetarianism, but simply to instruct that vegetarianism is the preferred nutritional system of yoga and meditation. This is because total body health can be obtained with a vegetarian diet which is beneficial in preparation for higher forms of meditation and yoga. Many modern food types as well as meat have a tendency to be a greater repository of toxins and waste products than vegetarian food and may be detrimental to the purification process of the mind and body. The ancient gurus and rishis of yoga advise but do not preach vegetarianism. One of the basic aims of yoga is to tune the body to a high degree of sensitivity and this is more easily achieved by abstaining from meat. Remember, yoga aims to bring about mental peace and tranquillity as well as physical relaxation, which is more easily obtained if one does not eat meat. If you are not sure whether you can obtain all your nutritional needs of the body from a vegetarian diet, then you should not become one. But if you study any charts given on this subject you will clearly see that all the body's requirements – fats, carbohydrates, proteins, vitamins and minerals - are obtained in more than adequate quantities in vegetarian foods. It is recommended that advanced students should consider a purely vegetarian diet to enhance spiritual progress. Manu, the codifier of laws in ancient India, summed up the most sensible approach to the whole subject when he said, "There is no wrong in eating meat or drinking wine, but the abstention therefrom gives many benefits."

Fasting

Digestion is a process which requires considerable energy. Fasting relies on the body having sufficient vitality to initiate its own cleansing process once the digestive load is removed. It is a very powerful cleansing technique and should be used with caution. According to Umasvati, the second century A.D. Jain philosopher of India, fasting has six beneficial effects: you will become free from all desire, you will not desire a longer life, you will not desire a shorter life, you will not desire the company of friends, you will not desire any pleasures of the senses, you will not desire

approval. A fast may last from one day to six weeks. There are many different ways to fast that produce various physical and mental benefits; water, food, juices, brown rice, urine, as well as practising non-attachment through abstinence. How and when to fast is a personal choice. How and when to break the fast is also extremely important. Seek proper guidance. It is not just a matter of starving yourself for a few days. Over-fasting weakens the body. Medical science has proved that short fasts cleanse the whole system and promotes rejuvenation. The philosophy of yoga recommends fasting once per month on the eleventh day of the new moon (or according to your religion).

Exercise

Regular exercise is essential for a healthy heart, lungs, digestion, muscles and circulation. Regular exercise relieves tension and stress and induces a good night's sleep. Exercise may include yoga, jogging, swimming, cycling, sports, or walking in nature. For general health purposes the American College of Sports Medicine suggests a minimum of 20 to 60 minutes per day of increased cardiovascular, respiratory and muscular activity, 3 to 5 days per week. Light exercise before meditation can loosen up the back, neck, hips, knees and ankles, and increases the circulation of blood and prana. It is far easier to practise meditation when the body is healthy and can sit quietly, without pain or discomfort, and is fully charged with vitality and strength. In yoga, proper exercise is given by surya namaskar and asana, which work systematically on all parts of the body, stretching and toning the muscles and ligaments, keeping the spine and joints flexible, improving circulation and the flow of prana. This brings steadiness and lightness to the body and mind. Never exert undue force, as pain is a signal to stop the practice.

Warning: To avoid injury always consult your medical doctor before commencing any health program. The amount of physical activity you perform should be safely within your physical limitations. Proceed with a suitable and structured program.

Sex

The philosophy of yoga advises the reduction of sexual activity and thoughts, so that sexual energy can be conserved and used for spiritual progress. This is the true interpretation of 'celibacy' for the average practitioner. Complete sexual suppression is not necessary, but it should be reduced and controlled as much as possible. This will save huge amounts of energy and considerably decelerate the ageing process. It will also help in reducing the great attachment that people have with sex and the material world. Advanced students may choose to completely abstain from sexual activity and thoughts.

Sleep

Sleep is a periodic, natural, reversible loss of consciousness. The optimum amount of sleep varies with each individual and age, with children requiring more sleep than adults. The National Sleep Foundation maintains that eight to nine hours of sleep for adults is optimal and that sufficient sleep benefits alertness, memory, problem solving and overall health, as well as reducing the risk of accidents. The University of California, San Diego, found that people who live the longest sleep for six to seven hours each night. The University of Pennsylvania has confirmed that the more one works, the less one sleeps, and that work is the single biggest factor troubling sleep. Many people have trouble sleeping, which may stem from a number of issues, including:

- Uncomfortable sleep furnishings.
- Stress from family, job, personal issues.
- Environmental conditions: heat, cold, pollution, noise, bright light.
- Environmental surroundings: tidiness of room, odours, cleanliness.
- Poor body positioning.
- Illness.

- Pain.
- Medicine and drugs: some medications may cause insomnia, or result in dependency on a drug to fall asleep; others, including recreational drugs, are stimulants that may make sleep difficult or impossible.
- Improper sleep timing: outside the rhythms of nature.

The philosophy of yoga recommends early to bed and early to rise. For the average practitioner, this is approximately 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. This is ample time to get a good night's sleep and gives you enough time in the morning for meditation and yoga. The regular practice of yogic techniques, such as corpse pose and yoga nidra, greatly enhances the relaxation and rejuvenation of the mind and body, and promotes restful sleep. (See Advanced Meditations)

Meditation Room

For success in meditation, it is best to have a proper attitude and environment. The place of meditation, schedule, physical and mental state should all reflect a readiness to turn inward. Try to have a separate room for meditation. If this is not possible designate an area especially for meditation only. Keep your meditation room simple and clean. For inspiration, a simple focus point may be set up in the room including fresh flowers, or objects and symbols according to your personal beliefs. As meditation is repeated powerful vibrations will be lodged in the room. In six months the peace and purity of the atmosphere will be felt.

Regularity

The regularity of practice is very important. It is difficult to focus the mind when it wants to jump about as soon as you sit down for concentration. Meditating at a fixed time every day conditions the mind to slow down its activities with the minimum of delay. Not having time or not making the time to meditate indicates the lack of commitment and you may want to re-evaluate your lifestyle before continuing. The most effective times to meditate are at sunrise and sunset. The mind will settle down more quickly when a regular time and place have been established.



Sit on a small cushion with the legs crossed. Adjust the sitting position until comfortable. Close the eyes. Relax the face, shoulders, arms, stomach and legs.



Keep the spine and head straight, as if the top of the head is being pulled up to the sky. Relax the breathing. Relax the mind.



There are many different hand positions. This one rests the hand on the knee with the thumb and index finger joined in chin mudra.

Sitting Position

In his rules for Zazen, Mumon Yamada Roshi states, "There are four meditation postures: walking, standing, sitting and lying down. The sitting posture is the most quiet of these four... To sit on this very ground is to become one with this whole universe..." The Roshi suggests to commence

meditation training in the sitting position. Enlightenment is extending the meditation beyond quietly sitting alone, by maintaining the awareness while going about our daily life, being mindful of all thought, speech and action. By regularly sitting in meditation you will, through experimentation, find your most comfortable position. A cushion is a valuable tool in maintaining a comfortable position. A cross-legged position provides a firm base for the body and makes a triangular path for the flow of energy. If this is not possible try sitting on a chair. It is not important to sit in the lotus at this stage. Just try to be comfortable without damaging your knees. More important is having a good posture in the upright position. The spine and head should be straight but not tense. Feel as though the top of your head is being pulled up to the sky. You may like to choose the above suggested sitting position with one of the many thousands of mudras. Gently rest the tongue against the roof of the mouth. Once you have established a comfortable position and relaxed breathing do not move the body unless it is absolutely necessary. This helps to steady the mind and encourage concentration. Metabolism, brain waves and breathing will slow down as concentration deepens due to a steady sitting position. Before starting, the body should be relaxed and calm. Command the mind to be quiet. At first the mind will wander and jump around, but will eventually become concentrated, along with the concentration of prana. If the mind persists in wandering do not force it to be still. Simply disassociate from it, and observe it as though you are watching a movie. It will gradually slow down. Be the witness, but without judgement.

Mudra

The Sanskrit word mudra means 'psychic, emotional or devotional gesture and attitude'. It is also described as a 'seal', 'short-cut' or 'circuit by-pass'. Yogis have experienced mudra as attitudes of energy flow intended to link individual pranic force with universal or cosmic force. Mudras are a combination of subtle physical movements which alter mood, attitude and perception, and which deepen awareness and concentration. A mudra may involve the whole or part of the body in combination with asana, pranayama, bandha and visualisation techniques or it may be a simple hand position. Mudras can be categorized into five main groups. Between them these groups engage substantial areas of the cerebral cortex:

Hasta – hand mudras

Mana – head mudras

Kaya – postural mudras

Bandha – lock mudras

Adhara – perineal mudras

Ancient statues and carvings of yogis and sages have been found depicting a characteristic mudra. Mudra has symbolic meaning and neuro-psychic implications. If the individual dwells on and tries to experience the meaning contained within a mudra, he can develop the power to invoke forces within. In this way it is possible to experience inner forces which otherwise remain hidden and dormant. Though we cannot normally detect this more subtle aspect of our being, prana is nevertheless continually flowing within the physical body. For example, the position of the hands while practicing meditation is very important. Some of the prana is discharged from the tips of the fingers. The hand mudras are methods of redirecting the prana inwards. The fingers and the hands in contact with the knees close some of these circuits. The prana is kept within the body instead of being lost. At first it may seem to be an insignificant aspect of meditative practice, yet it has been found by the rishis and yogis throughout the ages, that the wrong position of the hands can affect your meditation. Advanced mudras are introduced after some proficiency has been attained in asana, pranayama and bandha, and gross blockages have been removed. Mudra is a higher practice which leads to the awakening of the kundalini. Seek proper guidance.

Duration

Beginners may start meditating for only 10 or 15 minutes. This gives time for the body and mind to adapt and evolve to the new demands being placed upon it. As strength and stillness increase so too should the length of time spent in meditation. Gradually increasing by 5 minutes each week is a great way to train yourself in meditation. Beginners should aim to sit quietly and still for one hour, with good awareness. This may take a few months to achieve depending on the capacity and time available. Do not give up. The 10 Meditations to Inner Peace and Happiness will guide and support you through many of the ups and downs that beginners usually face when first attempting meditation. Persist and you will succeed.

Pain

Pain teaches us about suffering, acceptance and compassion, and is an indication that we are going/have gone beyond our current limitation and capacity. Beginners may experience pain in the body during and after meditation. This is quite normal in the beginning and should not stop you from continuing your practice. Pain, discomfort or stiffness may be experienced in the knees, ankles, thighs, buttocks, back, neck or shoulders. Simple discomfort will soon disappear, usually after a few weeks of daily practice. As you train the body to sit quietly, the muscles and joints necessary to hold the body in meditation will develop and strengthen with regular practice. Experiment by meditating in different positions; lying down or sitting in a chair, but always meditate everyday without fail. The practice of asana contains several good stretches that can certainly help you through these first challenging stages of meditation. Massaging the painful parts of your body before and after meditation with pure coconut oil can help improve circulation and strengthen your body. Headaches, tensions and depression during or after meditation may also indicate incorrect practice. If you experience extreme pain anywhere in the body then you should terminate your practice immediately and seek medical advice before continuing. In TIME Asia, Pamela Paul wrote, "Over the past three years, 13,000 Americans were treated in an emergency room or doctor's office for yoga-related injuries, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission."

Expectations

Do not expect overnight results. Disappointment may result from not understanding basic concepts and theories. It may take many years of discipline to achieve success, and in time you will understand the need for patience and persistence. Meditation is a skill that responds well to practice. Be Patient with yourself. As Milarepa, the great Tibetan yogi said, "Do not entertain hopes for realisation, but practise all your life." At the beginning even if your meditation does not seem to be going well, remember that by applying effort to training in meditation you are creating the mental karma to experience inner peace in the future. So even if you feel that you are not making any progress, you are at least sowing the seeds of future happiness. Mumon Yamada Roshi states, "One inch of sitting, makes one inch of Buddha. If we sit while one inch of incense burns, our spirit naturally becomes clean." After you have been regularly and correctly practising meditation for only one month you will already begin to notice a deep sense of peace and harmony emanating from inside you. After several years of regular meditation considerable changes take place in the mind, brain and the nervous system. The whole mind and nervous system becomes remodelled. You will have a new mind, a new heart and a new view of the universe.

Progress

Nelson Mandela once said, "After climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb." Progress can be ascertained in different ways. The first sign of progress is waking up early and practising regularly at the same time every day. Other signs of progress are sitting for one hour in meditation, sitting for three hours in meditation, etc. But progress also depends on

the quality of practice, not just duration. Correct practice involves a well structured and systematic program designed for individual requirements. Each of us has a different starting point depending on temperament and capacity. We begin where we are and how we are, and whatever happens, happens. We should not compare or compete with others. We should celebrate our individuality and accept our personal starting point. The actual practice of meditation takes each person in a different direction. Each of us is required to pay careful attention to the direction we are taking, so that we know where we are going and how we are going to get there. This careful observation will allow us to discover something new about ourselves. When we gain more understanding of ourselves and reach a point we have personally never been before, that is progress. The more we progress, the more we become aware of the holistic nature of our being, realising that we are made of body, breath, mind, and more. Reaching our full potential as complete human beings means incorporating all aspects of ourself, emphasising all aspects of human life, including our relationships with others, our behaviour, our health, our breathing and our meditation.

Retreats

Meditation retreats are extremely beneficial to our lives, especially if taken two or three times per year. They are usually held in a specially designed facility, located in a quite and beautiful natural environment. They help us to take a break from the hustle and bustle of daily activity, and the stresses and strains of work and family life. Retreats are a powerful way of programming our minds and bodies to develop good habits and routines that, upon our return home, help us through the ups and downs of our normal everyday lives. Usually, all cooking and cleaning is organised by the retreat manager, giving us the chance to eliminate mundane tasks and concentrate on the object of the retreat. Light and nutritious vegetarian meals are the usual diet at retreats. Noble Silence – the principle of minimum communication is a powerful technique practised at most authentic retreats to promote inner awareness. Before undertaking any kind of retreat, participants must be prepared to develop an attitude of commitment and resolve to turn their minds inwards for the full duration. Meditation retreats are a time for self-discovery and self-realisation, where many participants experience profound personal insight and spiritual progress. Three day retreats are very useful for cleansing and recharging our whole being with determination, strength and guidance. This may include inspirational and relaxing techniques, as there is not enough time to go deep into the subconscious, and root-out and destroy our demons. A seven to ten day retreat is required for learning advanced techniques, deeper self-purification, and taking our commitment and devotion to the next level. Correct preparation and inner strength must be developed before undertaking thirty day retreats and longer.

Advanced Yogic Meditation

Central to the philosophy of yoga is the belief that divinity or God is already inside us, but has remained dormant, veiled by the illusion that happiness can be found in achieving material possessions and desires. Yogis believe that meditation is the art of controlling the mind in order to gradually awaken and reconnect us to the divinity within. Initially this brings inner peace and happiness to our life, but with regular practice the layers of the mind are peeled away, allowing us to discover for ourselves deeper realms of consciousness. Advanced Tantra Yoga meditation techniques involve unblocking and purifying the energy channels and energy centres in the prana body. This can be symbolised by the awakening of the creative energy sleeping in the base of the spine. It is then raised up through the spine to the crown of the head, which is the seat of pure consciousness. The fruit of meditation is the union of this creative energy with pure consciousness, resulting in complete absorption with the Divine. This process unveils the spiritual potential of man, releasing us from our attachment to the physical world. By transcending the mental and physical worlds we attain the realisation known as samadhi, where there is no separation, no duality between the individual human spirit and the Supreme Universal Spirit, or God. We are One

with the Universe. This is the supreme goal of human life - enlightenment – being aware of the ultimate truth of all things at all times. Depending on the karma, capacity and devotion of the individual, this may take many years of diligent practice. It may take a second.

Higher Consciousness Lifestyle

Those who truly wish to support and advance their meditation and reach their full potential as spiritual beings should choose to lead a higher consciousness lifestyle. (See Appendix 3 & 4). This requires greater self-discipline and may include a strictly vegetarian diet, reducing the hours of sleep and conservation of energy. Morality plays an important role in spiritual evolution, i.e. not killing, not stealing, not lying, not committing sexual misconduct and not taking intoxicating substances. Truly enlightened people, those who experience happiness daily, are prepared to put off short-term pleasure for the sake of long term fulfilment. They tackle their weaknesses and fears head on, even if at first the unknown brings discomfort. They resolve to live a higher consciousness lifestyle, improving every aspect of themselves ceaselessly and continuously. In time things that were once difficult become easy. Fears that once prevented them from all the happiness, health and prosperity they deserve fall away. As Albert Einstein said, “True religion is real living; living with all one's soul, with all one's goodness and righteousness.” Cultivating a spiritual life is enhanced by giving less importance to the physical world such as materialism, desires and pleasures of the senses. However, do not meditate so much that you neglect your obligations to family and employer. Instead incorporate meditation and wisdom into your daily life, creating peace and harmony. As you become more adept at meditating, extend your meditations beyond quietly sitting alone. Throughout the day be aware of your thought, speech and action. Observe your happiness, your suffering, your pleasure and pain. Observe with a peaceful mind, without reacting. Tune in to your higher consciousness and live a more meaningful life.

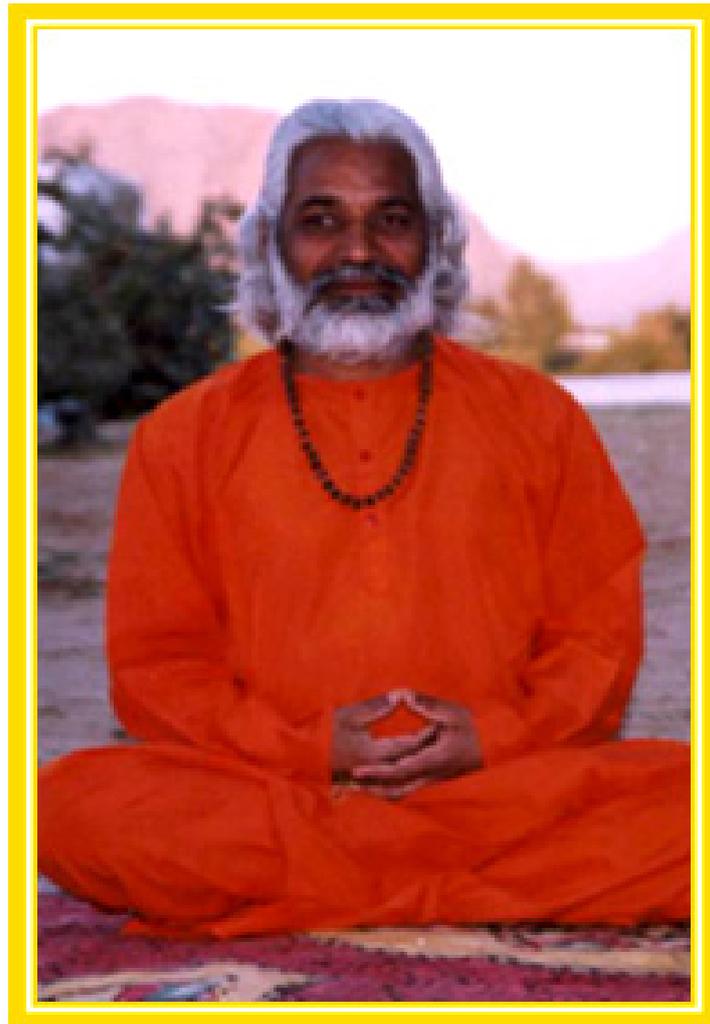
Mindfulness throughout the Day

At the end of sitting meditation it is recommended that you lie down and simply observe the beauty and joy of the present moment. This is the feeling of inner peace and happiness. While meditating we are practising being in balance and harmony, so that we have a good idea of where we are heading and what it is meant to feel like. The goal is to train the mind to maintain this awareness in every moment, so that we are mindful throughout the ups and downs of daily life, and spontaneously create compassion and kindness, peace and happiness in all our activities. (See Advanced Techniques ‘Mindful Walking’). Practice makes perfect. Contemplate this for a few moments before finishing your sitting meditation.

Searching

Bhoddharma taught, “The fools of this world prefer to look for sages far away. They don't believe that the wisdom of their own mind is the sage . . . the sutras say, ‘Mind is the teaching’. But people of no understanding don't believe in their own mind or that by understanding this teaching they can become a sage. They prefer to look for distant knowledge and long for things in space, buddha-images, light, incense, and colours. They fall prey to falsehood and lose their minds to insanity.” Too much searching is a common obstacle and may be caused by doubt, confusion, greed, fear, etc. Searching is an important part of choosing the right path according to your temperament and capacity. Searching may include reading, attending lectures and classes, travelling abroad as well as smelling the flowers in your own garden. It is a personal choice which path you take, which guru you follow, which system you practise. It may include untrodden paths, new avenues, or personal beliefs combined with world religions and philosophies. It is different for everyone. We are all different important, aspects of creation, part of the supreme universal consciousness, and therefore require to satisfy our own understanding and perceptions. The main thing is to find what works for you, what is suitable for you, what motivates you to get out of bed

every morning and practise. You must decide. It is the regular and systematic practice of this path that will eventually lead you to spiritual progress. Chopping and changing: this style today, that style tomorrow, this spiritual guide today, that one tomorrow, is a sure combination for slow progress. Practising different techniques every day with no thread is the long way round to achieve success. There is too much searching, wondering, and questions. Changing paths must be kept to a minimum. As Aldous Huxley said, "Man approaches the unattainable truth through a succession of errors." Therefore, learn from your mistakes. Use the techniques that are available to you. They are like road maps. They show the most direct way to get where we want to go. Take your time and make a choice. Question what you are doing and why. Know why you have chosen this path. Have faith. As you go along make changes according to your individual requirements and realisations. Keep asking questions, keep exploring and observing. Developing a daily personal practice is the key to success.



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DAVE WEST left England and began his spiritual journey in India, Nepal and Tibet in the early 1990's, studying Raja Yoga and Kundalini Yoga in Rajasthan with Swami Shyam Yogi, Sivananda Yoga in Vrindavan, and Tantric Buddhism with Himalayan Yoga masters in Ladakh, Dharamsala and Kathmandu. After 2000 he began studying Tai Chi and Chi Kung with several masters from China, Thailand, UK, USA and Canada. Dave has taught Tai Chi, Yoga and Physical Education at international schools, hotels and health centres around the world. He has written three books on Yogic Meditation, Tibetan Yoga, and Tai Chi Chi Kung, containing gentle yet powerful exercises for living in health and harmony with the natural world. Dave has spent the last 10 years developing programmes for tourists, expats and locals in Bali, leading groups

and individuals into the great outdoors, teaching how to heal their mind and body with ancient wisdom, experience their connection with the natural world, and develop a relationship with universal energy and the Divine. Dave lives, teaches, and surfs in Bali.



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