

Shavasana: The Death Experience, from a Yogic Perspective

Time passes, and you are motionless. An immense quietude falls over you. Mundane thoughts flutter away, and you experience pure release from all that binds you to this world.

Shavasana is a yogic pose intended for extraordinary relaxation. It involves a position of lying down on the back, and requires exquisite focus of the body, breath and mind. Both rejuvenating and rewarding, shavasana is one of the most valued and powerful *asanas* of the yoga system.

That said, however, shavasana serves a greater and more profound purpose than mere relaxation. Known as the *shavam*, or corpse, pose, Shavasana grants us the opportunity to rehearse the “art of death” and embrace our ultimate departure from the natural world.

Sunyata teaches that all “things”, including our physical forms, are completely empty of any defining substance, and that the bodies we inhabit are not the true essence of our being. According to Bhagavad Gita, we are not the form we animate, but the very force of animation itself, meaning that the true quintessence of our existence is deathless, eternal, and transcends the physical.

Hindu wisdom tells us that by attaching ourselves to that which is only temporary, we invite suffering. Through the deep concentration and enlightenment that shavasana brings, we are able to release ourselves from *ahamkara* and relinquish all thoughts binding us to the ephemeral world. In the *Yoga Sutras*, Patanjali revealed that when the *vrittis* of our minds settle, we become aware of our true nature, or *drastuh*. Our *drastuh* is the Witness, the Seer, our soul, and it remains even when our earthly bodies have expired.

By embracing our Witness self, we alleviate the intense fear and anxiety associated with death. We feel at peace with our own imminent death, and are more comfortable around those that are dying. More importantly, this increased self-awareness helps us to remain detached and calm amidst the chaos of our daily, mundane lives. We become buoyed with wisdom and joy, knowing that when our bodily processes cease, the road to our eternal life opens up before us.

Despite its passive appearance, shavasana is quite difficult to master. In this workshop, we will explore the different modifications of this asana. Once an optimal position is achieved, we begin meditation, a slow, step-by-step descent into deep, ethereal stillness. After a state of complete relaxation is reached, students are led through a peaceful, guided visualization called “Dying Meditation and Reawakening”. The class concludes with time for personal reflection and discussion among the group.

Michelle created this class based on her 10 years of experience as a yoga teacher, and also 30 years as a student of yoga. Her teachings are enhanced by her hospice volunteer work and her own near-death experience. This workshop is designed to educate people about the deeper aspects of shavasana and how they can incorporate its revelations into their daily lives.

Michelle is also available for private sessions. For more information, please visit [xxxx](#).

Shavasana: A Journey into New Self-Awareness

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Shavasana is a yoga pose intended for extraordinary relaxation. It involves a position of lying down on the back, and requires exquisite focus of the body, breath and mind. Both rejuvenating and rewarding, shavasana is one of the most valued and powerful of all yoga poses.

That said, however, shavasana serves a greater and more profound purpose than mere relaxation. Known as the “corpse pose”, Shavasana grants us the opportunity to discover revelations about the death experience and our place in the universe. Consequently, we come to view our ultimate departure from the natural world with a new perspective.

Ancient Hindu teachings explain that all “things”, including our physical forms, are completely empty of any defining substance, and that the bodies we inhabit are not the true essence of our being. We are not defined by the fleeting elements of our lives; our bodies, our history, our homes and our bank accounts. Rather, the true quintessence of our existence is deathless, eternal, and transcends the physical.

Hindu wisdom tells us that by attaching ourselves to that which is only temporary, we invite suffering. Through the deep concentration and enlightenment that shavasana brings, we are able to relinquish all thoughts binding us to the ephemeral world. Patanjali, known as “the father of yoga”, revealed that when the activity of our conscious minds goes still, we become aware of our true nature. This nature – the genuine essence of our being, our soul – remains even when our earthly bodies have expired.

By embracing our “true self”, we alleviate the intense fear and anxiety associated with death. We feel at peace with our own imminent death, and are more comfortable around those that are dying. More importantly, this increased self-awareness helps us to remain detached and calm amidst the chaos of our daily, mundane lives. We become buoyed with wisdom and joy, knowing that when our bodily processes cease, the road to our eternal life opens up before us.

Despite its passive appearance, shavasana is quite difficult to master. In this workshop, we will explore several different modifications of this pose. Once an optimal position is achieved, we begin meditation, a slow, step-by-step descent into deep, ethereal stillness. After a state of complete relaxation is reached, students are led through a peaceful, guided visualization called “Dying Meditation and Reawakening”. The class concludes with time for personal reflection and discussion among the group.

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