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Inside ASHIYANA

Loving DEATH

The Magic of SYMBOLS

THE MOUTH AS A MIRROR

kaya sthairyam PRACTICE

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CONTENTS

ON THE COVER



08
54
18
38
28



PHILOSOPHY

54 CHANGING YOUR POSITION ON DEATH
Explore five stages of loving death—from Allowance to Celebration—and discover how changing your relationship with mortality can transform life.

44 FINDING DAYS OF GREAT PEACE
Follow Sharon Maas's spiritual journey to Ramana Maharshi's ashram and discover the transformative power of Self-Enquiry and inner peace.

18 THE MAGIC OF SYMBOLS
Caroline Shola Arewa explores symbols as a universal language connecting Yoga, sacred geometry, Chakras, ancient Kemet and energy healing.

74 DEMYSTIFYING YOGA: WHY YOGA BEGINS LONG BEFORE WE STEP ONTO THE MAT
Donna Noble challenges yoga's stereotypes, showing how an inclusive practice begins with awareness, self-acceptance and meeting ourselves exactly where we are.



FEATURES

22 A NEUROSCIENTIST'S SPIRITUAL AWAKENING
Neuroscientist Helen Lavretsky recounts a profound kundalini awakening that transformed her understanding of consciousness, spirituality, identity and her life's purpose.

60 PATTERNS TO PURPOSE: THE IDENTITY BENEATH WHAT KEEPS REPEATING
Nikita Thakrar explores recurring patterns, revealing the identities beneath them and the gifts waiting to emerge when familiar roles change.

34 SACRED BIODIVERSITY: A PRACTICE FOR THE LIFE OF THE WORLD
Discover Sacred Biodiversity, where threatened species, sacred imagery and contemplation transform ecological grief into empathy, awareness and action for nature.

70 WHAT THE MOUNTAINS HAVE TAUGHT ME ABOUT YOGA
Rochelle explores how nature, mindful movement and breath can teach us to slow down, reconnect and embrace the present moment.

PRACTICE

28 RECOGNISING AND EXPERIENCING STILLNESS: THE PRACTICE OF KAYA STHAIRYAM
Discover Kaya Sthairyam, a practice of bodily stillness that quietens the senses, steadies the mind and reveals deeper awareness.

08 INSIDE AN ASHIYANA 50-HOUR YIN YOGA TRAINING
Nick Rice reflects on five days of Yin Yoga, self-enquiry and surrender at Ashiyana, discovering stillness, presence and inner courage.

14 MIGRAINE: RESTORING BALANCE THROUGH ANCIENT SCIENCE OF YOG AND AYURVEDA
Ashwini Guru Ji explores migraine through Yog and Ayurveda, examining imbalance and offering traditional practices aimed at relief and restoration.





SERIES

84 THE KUNDALINI: MEMOIRS OF A YOGI (CHAPTER 47)
Yogiraj Muni and Snowie find wisdom in forest exile, discovering loss and pain as pathways to inner presence and peace.

48 TO LAST… IN TRANSLATION (PART 11)
Dr Kausthub Desikachar explores how TKV Desikachar preserved Krishnamacharya's teachings through translation, interpretation, devotion and profound understanding.

66 ARIEL'S ADVENTURES IN THE CHINE: THE GIRL IN BLUE AND THE SPIRITS OF THE BAY (CHAPTER 11)
Ariel faces magical trials of tides and wind, learning harmony, courage and ancestral wisdom as she seeks the Golden Key.

READER'S ASHRAM

80 ASK YOGI MAHARAJ DR MALIK

94 VEDIC ASTROLOGY

WHAT'S HOT

88 NEW BOOKS, ACCESSORIES AND PRODUCTS

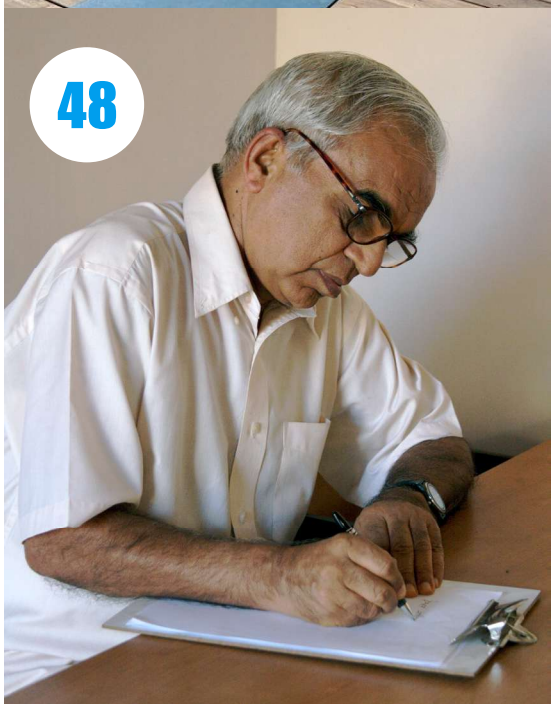
HEALTH & WELLBEING

38 THE MOUTH AS A MIRROR: BREATH, BALANCE AND WHAT YOUR SMILE REVEALS ABOUT WHOLE BODY WELLBEING
Discover how your mouth can reflect whole-body wellbeing, from breath and blood sugar to inflammation, nervous-system balance and mindful care.









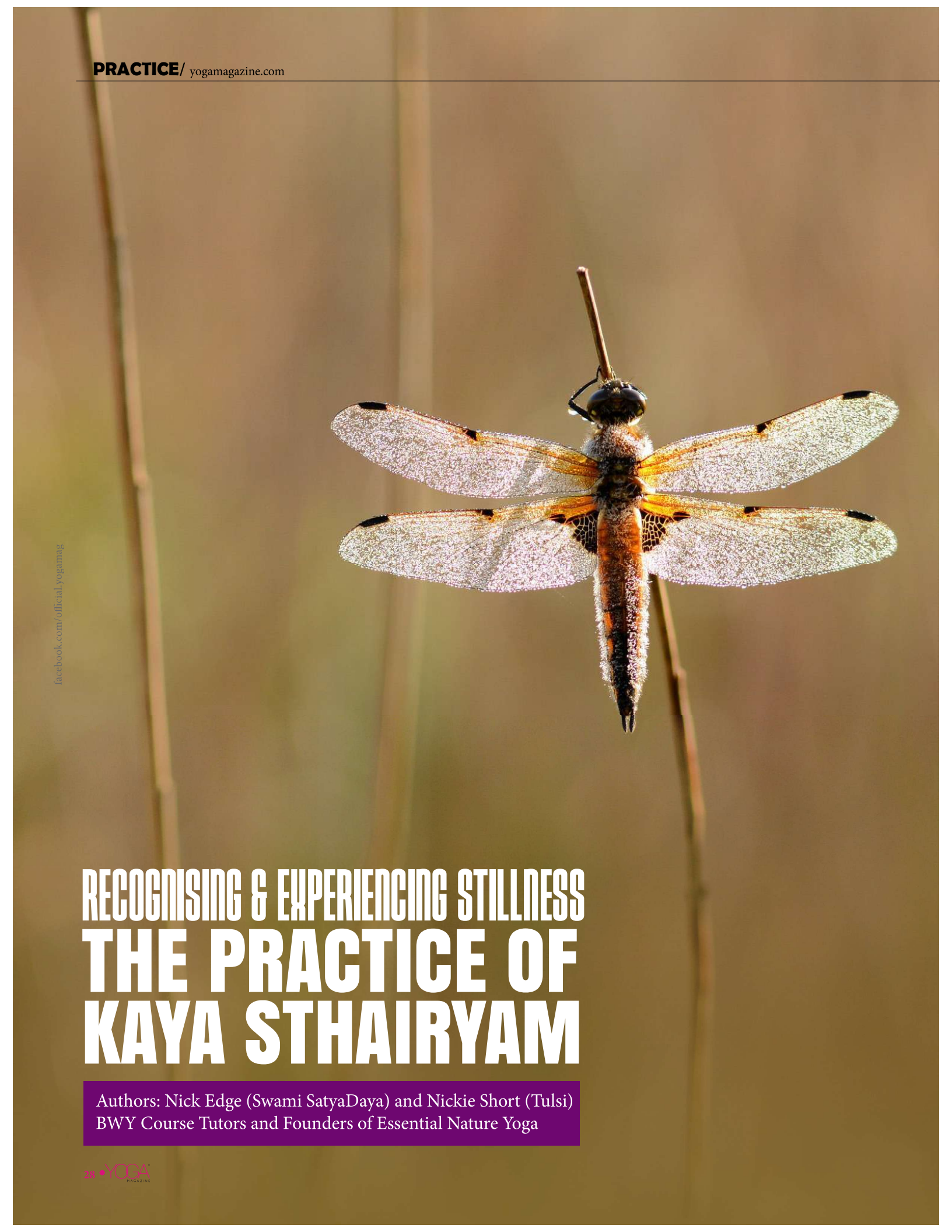


BWY
BRITISH WHEEL OF YOGA

Winter Solstice Yoga Festival

At a time of constant pressure and distraction, this online festival, featuring five expert tutors in yoga and ayurveda, invites you to return to what matters most.

Friday 18 December 2026, 9am-5pm, via Zoom
Tickets from £45 @ bwy.org.uk



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RECOGNISING & EXPERIENCING STILLNESS

THE PRACTICE OF KAYA STHAIRYAM

Authors: Nick Edge (Swami SatyaDaya) and Nickie Short (Tulsi)
BWY Course Tutors and Founders of Essential Nature Yoga



In the modern world, we are surrounded by a constant stream of sensory impressions. From the moment we wake to the sound of the alarm, to checking messages on our phones and scrolling through social media, to the radio playing in the background on the way to work or a podcast in our ears on a morning run – the list goes on. For many of us, this input rarely stops until we finally lay our heads on the pillow at night. Even our yoga practice can be experienced through the same lens: a teacher's voice and visual guidance channelled through a screen.

Learning to acknowledge and experience deep stillness helps us meet the busyness of life without being carried away by it. Rather than trying to escape everyday demands, deepening our practice and experience of meditation allows us to participate fully in life's rich tapestry while remaining conscious of the deeper stillness veiled at the core of our being – and of all that is.

Through the regular practice of the techniques offered in *Kaya Sthairyam,* we open ourselves to the direct experience of meditation. Over time, this can lead to a greater ease and steadiness as we navigate life's ups and downs.

What is Kaya Sthairyam?

Finding stillness, and then resting in it, is one of the biggest challenges of meditation. Even when the body is still, the mind can often remain in constant movement, darting from one sight, sound or sensation to the next.

Kaya Sthairyam, often translated as 'body steadiness' or 'bodily stillness', is a practice that invites a deeper sense of physical stillness, allowing the mind to quieten naturally. Although commonly taught as a preliminary meditation practice, it is more profound than simply forcing the body to remain still and can be a powerful meditation in its own right.

Kaya Sthairyam helps calm the senses by focusing attention on physical experience. The stillness that develops is not forced. Instead, the need to move gradually fades, reducing the effect of sensory impressions.

Meditation and the relevance of Kaya Sthairyam

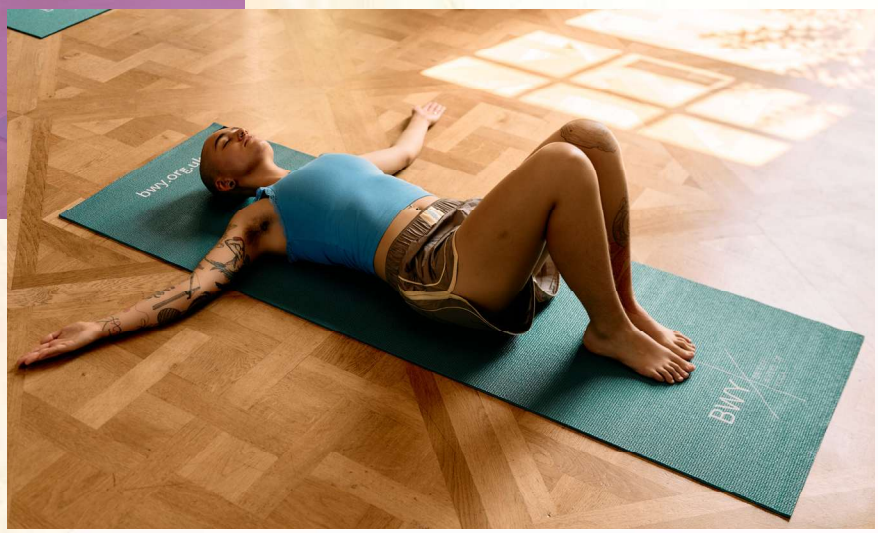
Meditation is a fundamental aspect of yoga, and also one of the most misunderstood of all practices. It can help if we are clear about what meditation is not. It is not a battle with the mind. It is not an expectation that the mind will be continually peaceful and free from fluctuations. And it is not a way of pretending that we are better or more 'spiritual' than others because we practice yoga.

Meditation is a core element of yoga: a system of practices that evolved as a path towards realising deeper levels of our being – our essential nature. That is quite a bold statement, but it lies at the heart of the tradition.

"Yogas chitta vritti nirodhaha."
(Yoga Sutra 1.2)

Patanjali, in the Yoga Sutra, describes yoga as arising when the fluctuations of the mind settle. In that stillness, a state of meditation can emerge, in which consciousness is recognised as our essential identity.

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For meditation to bear fruit, the mind must quieten – even if only temporarily. But this is not something we can force.

So what do we do? We give the mind something to focus on to keep it occupied. This is the beauty of many meditation techniques, especially within yoga. Some people find practices of single-pointed focus and absorption easy, but for many of us the most effective practices are those where we have more to do.

These approaches offer a framework, or a clearly marked pathway, for the mind to follow. As the mind settles, the practice helps us become less identified with the aspects of experience we often assume define us: the physical body, the stream of thoughts, the dance of emotions and feelings. This does not mean denying these levels of experience. On the contrary, we can use these moment-to-moment experiences as the basis of our meditation, so that we begin to open up to deeper levels of our being usually hidden by our strong identification with body, mind and emotion.

Kaya Sthairyam is one such practice.

As mentioned earlier, in Sanskrit kaya means 'body' and *sthairyam* means 'stillness' or 'steadiness'. The intention is to encourage a natural stillness in the body – not to force the body to be still. We can all sit stiffly in discomfort; as the saying goes, 'any fool can be uncomfortable'. That is unlikely to deepen meditation.

Kaya Sthairyam uses our embodied experience to cultivate stillness in the body, which in turn can encourage stillness in the mental and emotional spheres.

Although *Kaya Sthairyam,* with its focus on stillness within the physical form, has often been considered a



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preparatory practice for 'further' meditation practices, it is also of profound value as a stand-alone practice.

It would be easy to go on describing what may or may not be possible through the practice of *Kaya Sthairyam*. But, as the old Asian proverb says, 'talk does not cook the rice'. The key is the doing.

The following variation of the practice is simple to learn and can be practised safely at home. With regular repetition, it can become a reliable way to access stillness before meditation, relaxation or Yoga Nidra.

The practice of Kaya Sthairyam

Kaya Sthairyam is typically practiced from a comfortable seated posture. Choose a position that allows your spine to be upright yet relaxed: on a chair, on a cushion on the floor or supported by props as needed. The key is to feel stable and at ease, without strain. If sitting is not appropriate, you can practise lying down, though there is a greater risk of falling asleep rather than engaging with the practice. Once you know the techniques for cultivating stillness, they can also be used to settle for any meditation, relaxation or Yoga Nidra practice.

You may find it helpful to imagine, or sense, yourself as something in nature that is still and steady: a tree rooted in the earth, or a mountain rising calmly against the sky. Alternatively, picture yourself sitting in front of a full-length mirror, simply observing without judgment. This sets the tone of quiet steadiness for the practice.

The main focus of *Kaya Sthairyam* is rotating awareness around different parts of the body several times, fairly quickly. You can move in any order that feels clear to you. For example, from the right hand, up the arm, across the shoulders, down the other arm,



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through the trunk, hips, legs and feet, and then the face and head.

1. In the first rotation, bring your attention to each part of the body in turn. Simply name it inwardly: "right hand", "right forearm", "right elbow", and so on.

2. In the second rotation, move through the same sequence again. This time, at each body part, notice any sensations present: warmth, coolness, pressure, tingling, tightness, ease, or no sensation at all. Allow each sensation to be as it is, without trying to change it.

3. In the third rotation, begin to sense a stillness that pervades each part of the body. At each area, ask inwardly: "What is still here?" You might notice that beneath changing sensations there is a simple, quiet presence – a stillness that underlies all other experience.

After the three rotations, let go of the step-by-step movement of attention. Rest with the experience of the whole body at once. Sense the entire physical form as a single field of awareness, permeated by stillness.

Gradually, you may recognise that this stillness feels more fundamental than any particular sensation, thought or feeling that arises. Other experiences may come and go, but the underlying stillness remains.

Deepen the practice by revisiting the qualities of the tree or the mountain. Sense how stillness can underlie all the experiences of nature as well as our own being. Allow your own body to share in that quality. Another development of the practice is to experience the movement of the breath, which can appear to arise from and return to that state of stillness.

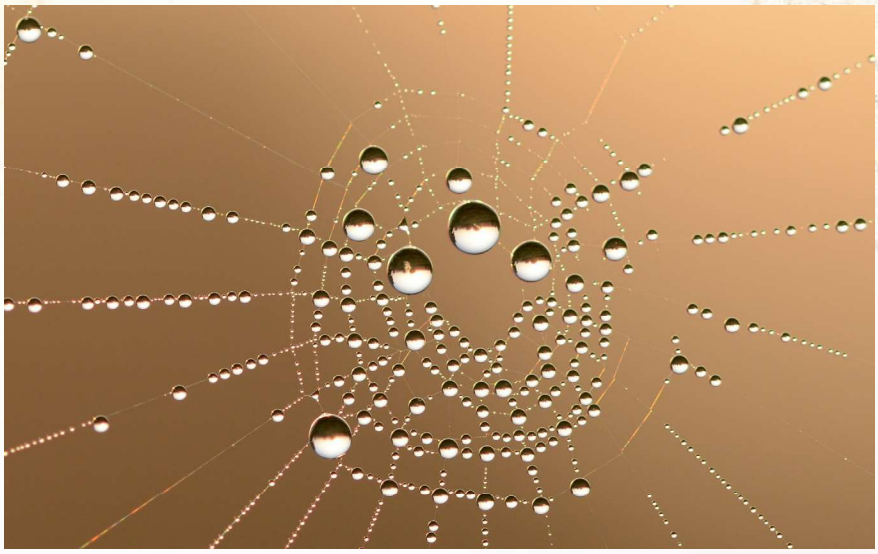
Stay for as long as feels supportive – five, ten or fifteen minutes. When you are ready, let your awareness widen again to the room, and gently bring



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movement back to the body before opening your eyes.

Over time, once the experience of *Kaya Sthairyam* arises more readily, it becomes easier to move on to meditation practices such as Antar Mouna (inner silence). From that place of stillness, we can begin to notice and witness the fluctuations experienced as thoughts and memories, feelings and emotions. Just as importantly, as we become more conscious of the presence of this deep stillness, we can remain aware of its presence even in the midst of the ups and downs of busy daily life.



Explore the practice

Join the British Wheel of Yoga online Winter Solstice event on **Friday 18 December,** where Tulsi will lead a workshop dedicated to the practice of *Kaya Sthairyam.* In this session she will introduce the basic practice and explore how aspects such as breath and mantra can be included to enhance the experience of stillness and meditation.





About Essential Nature Yoga

Essential Nature Yoga is Nick Edge (Swami SatyaDaya) and Nickie Short (Tulsi). Together, they bring over 60 years of experience practising and teaching authentic yoga and meditation. Both have been influenced by the traditional teachings of the Bihar School of Yoga and Mandala Yoga Ashram, where they lived and served for over 20 years collectively. Alongside their own projects, they run courses and workshops in partnership with the British Wheel of Yoga (BWY).

Their aim is to offer the authentic teachings of yoga, meditation and Advaita in a way that is accessible to modern life. They teach in the hope that the practices enrich people's lives and open the possibility of recognising, at a fundamental level, who and what they truly are.

You can access a recorded *Kaya Sthairyam* practice via their website resources, or join one of their online classes, workshops or in-person retreats, where these practices are introduced and explored in depth.