***Brahmana* and *Langhana* as Umbrella Themes in Individual Work**

*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 duplicity, also called polarity, is the threshold of manifestation: formlessness into form. From a Tantric perspective, yoga’s toolbox is the natural world. Thinking in terms of ‘things to do to expand, activate, enhance, or increase” something and “things to do to diminish, reduce, or lessen” something can be a useful first remedial step.

As we have learned, some pranayama practices are generally stimulating, others are generally pacifying or relaxing, while others still are balancing. This can be true, to some degree, of *asanas* and *vinyasa* movements *depending on how they are performed*.

In that the chakras can be viewed in terms of polarities, using these universal polar concepts can be of import. As we’ve seen, a polarity in someone’s personality construct may occur. That 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.

In less sophisticated views of yoga, when a chakra imbalance is assessed, 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. The question, more accurately is, “what does this heart center need?” Does it need stimulation, opening, or does it possibly need sedation, rest, release from its state of overactive feeling? Or something else? Beyond this rudimentary level, what is the meaning of this psycho-emotional-physical expression? And, how is it serving this soul in this current expression?

Returning to a basic level of useful work, 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 crucial. It is *not enough* to have a general sense of whether an asana, movement, mudra, or other practice is “about” a particular chakra or issue. It is imperative to discern at the energetic and more deeply powerful levels of being, whether that chakra or issue is in need of tonification or sedation.

Second, beyond this rudimentary level, the deeper more pointed work of unfolding meaning, usefulness and insight can then be done. Yoga therapy can help a soul find balance enough to do the work necessary to bring awareness and insight into behavioral patterning. The ever-existent goal of yoga—freedom—can be kept in mind, even if in the back of the mind, and it can be a beacon of intent. Our intuitive powers develop as we ourselves, as therapists, open to the Force within us. This tradition calls this keen power, Kundalini Shakti.

Working at these deeper levels entails not only assessing excess or lack, but also offering methods within which a student/client is empowered to gain insight into thought, emotional, and habitual patterns that sustain the imbalance on behavioral and other levels. Doing this sensitive, subtle and sophisticated work with safety, focused attentiveness, and great supportive care is the focus of the second year of this training.