

Musings on Yoga: Puddle Dancing
Yin Space, May 1, 2021

Dear Yin drawn,

Life is about not waiting for the storm to pass. Its about learning how to dance
in the rain.

-Viviane Greene.

As we move into the month of May, there will be rain and storms. Rains nourishing the growing things around us, filling the reservoirs of our watershed even as they fall in sheets, run along roadways, open vast stretches of puddles. Rain sustains and rinses clean, can overwhelm in flood, supporting both endings and beginnings. It is change. It can enliven us at times, and can stir sadness, bring greyness at others. It can remind us of where stuckness and over attachment might be in our lives, as well as open us to regaining flow in our day. During our last **Yin Space**, class in April I offered a theme of dance, honouring the International Day of Dance (April 29th) weaving the learning of dance as a practice of creating, choosing life, healing, coping, engaging with community, working with the flow of life in times where storms, and rains come and go, again and again.



Embrace the Puddles

I truly love to dance, and I have learned that passion. Certainly there are amazing dancers in life, and yet we can all dance in some ways in body, heart, relationship, within our practice. My mom danced. My dad once taught dance. I have memories of stumbling through the 1-2—3 of the waltz in grade school as part of the celebration of the class Mardi Gras. Walking uneasily through high school dances thinking of asking someone to dance as *Stairway to Heaven* filled the space of the gym. Dancing was with another seemed to be what dancing was about during that time - even perhaps as a yoga class might contain a kind of dance between offering by the teacher responding in movement, stillness and breath as one listens to one's inner teacher. Beautiful, filling and yet there is so much more. Shifting perceptions, while living in Nigeria, where my students and community taught me how to both dance in groups to the deep earth sounds of drums, along with how to open into solo play to the rhythms of *Thriller* and *Get up, stand up* playing on battery-filled stereo systems. Over time I began to feel the dance in movements of body and heart/mind in expanding circles; while paddling a canoe in/with a white water river, facilitating a consensus decision process, or cycling through traffic. Shadows dancing at play with sunlight, eagle and salmon moving in the web of life, to the balancing of the view of yin and yang in the world. I realised that dance could be one choice in interpreting and moving through the ups and downs of life.

In coming to yoga I have certainly delighted in the integration of a layer of dance in the flow of forms of 'yang' yoga over time be it following the primary series of Ashtanga, or doing 108 rocking sun salutations guided by local yoga teachers celebrating international peace day. Deepening practice through a weaving of alignment and breath into asana such as *dancer's pose* or *Natarajasana*, leading me to the deep learning of the concept of *lila* (Sanskrit) – divine play – the dance of consciousness and matter in the universe. Loved how seeing through dance brought playfulness, to movement of body with breath and heart at the same time as accentuating the deeper understandings of exploring my practice. It allowed me as well to see the powerful dance even within the gentle and slow practices of yoga such as restorative or yin yoga, even sitting meditation, as much as the exuberant flow of vinyasa. Dance as I wove intention, with attention to breath, and engagement of body; focusing of mind, choosing to let go of judgement, hold compassion for self, and notice life's presence into each moment. Then finding at some point, the words of TS Eliot, "*Except for the point, the still point, There would be no dance, and there is only dance*" reverberated through my practice/s. That within movement and calm,

there is this place of deep stillness, quiet, grace perhaps, that at times we can embrace. And....as *busy doingness* dominates our flow once again, it can take those moments of invite to remember to dance, remember to come to our mat, remember to breathe, to find the balance of the dance of yang and yin in that next moment.

Sphinx Pose*pause.....breathe... notice...inner intention, sensations. Remember to hold kindness for yourself, letting go of judgement Move to lie on your stomach on your mat. Clasp your elbows with the opposite hands and move the elbows just ahead of your shoulders, propping yourself up, forearms and palms on the mat. Notice how this feels in your lower back, taking time to create that first edge where you can be still for a time. If the sensations are too strong, move your elbows further ahead, lowering your chest closer to the floor. Simply lying on your stomach may be enough of a backbend for you. You might use a cushion under the elbows, helping to elevate the chest and deepen the posture or draw a bolster under the armpits as a support. Breathe. Notice. Allow spaciousness to exist...perhaps a still point... Stay a while.....To come out, slowly lower your chest to the floor. Turn your head to one side and rest your cheek on your palms. You may wish to decompress the lower back more by sliding one knee up. Choose the knee that you are looking toward, and keep the knee and foot on the floor.*

.....time passes, things rise and fall...

-Adapted from yinyoga.com

What choice will we make as the rain falls, storms blow, at times taking away even that which is deeply dear and important to us....Dance...ahh...the call to movement; finding the still point. In the midst of despair, or the joy of shared celebration, even when we have tripped, we may choose to include dance as power. Listening inside our flow, finding the balance of the quiet with the rambunctious. As May brings us rain, and storms...endings, and beginnings create your time to come to your mats, stand in tree pose wavering with the wind while waiting for hot drink, or jump in mud puddles. If you feel drawn to the practice of Yin Yoga as we move through spring and into summer please join us, to dance and explore still point, in the shared practice of ***Yin Space_b***.

In closing, as you follow your own path around, through the rain and its puddles, creating your dance, I encourage you to come to your mat, your yoga, your teacher/s, perhaps joining us in ***Yin Space_b***, using it in the way *your practice serves you*. Notice too, how the expanding energies of spring stir the feet, and the hips, adding lightness and play at times. Include the breath, nourishing moments of stillness with movement, finding your balance in spring.

in weaving,

Yin Space_b

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I am grateful to be able to live and share this ancient and evolving practice of yoga on the traditional territories of the lək'wəŋən (Songhees and Esquimalt Nations) Peoples.