



## Living the teachings

yoga's everyday spiritual meanings

### **Savasana: The Corpse Pose:**

As 2023 comes to an end, it seems like a good time to consider savasana, one of the key components of our yoga practice. In Sanskrit Sava or Shava means corpse and asana means posture or pose, hence "Corpse Pose". It is traditionally practised at the end of a class, but can also be practised at any other time if the need arises, if we need to stop, draw inwards and give ourselves time to reflect. It is often referred to as the "Magical Asana" as we are encouraged to let go of all physical and emotional tension as we enter into a totally relaxed state. The benefits of savasana include a lowering of blood pressure and heart rate, the nervous system calms down and digestion is enhanced, all helping to leave us in a state of calm.

In order to practice Savasana, we should ideally be lying supine on our mat with the legs wide, arms away from the body, palms facing upwards, fingers softly curled. Preferably, we remain conscious and alert whilst in this deeply relaxed state, sometimes people fall asleep, it really doesn't matter if this happens, although loud snoring is not conducive to the rest of the class having a nice relaxing experience! Some people are just not able to be physically comfortable lying in this way, it is then important to adjust positions using props or bending knees (constructive rest) in order for them to benefit from this "magical asana".

Although a blissful experience for the majority and a very welcomed part of class, it is not always easy for everyone. This quiet, largely silent time can be quite frightening to those suffering from PTSD or other mental health issues. If you are already feeling depressed and have low energy, this part of class may take you a little closer to the "Dark night of the soul" and may be scary as you spend time alone with yourself and your emotions. We mustn't assume that everyone will benefit and at times it may need to be carefully managed. Not everyone is comfortable closing their eyes for the same reasons. However, if sensitively handled by the right teacher, it can be a profoundly cathartic experience where we emotionally let go of whatever it is that is holding us back, helping us to then move forwards. During savasana we may listen to a poem, a visualisation or other relevant words, we will almost certainly practice pranayama (a specific breathing technique) we may carry out a body scan or other relaxation technique. All of these are skills that if practised regularly can help us manage stress and take better care of ourselves in our day to day lives.