

The Rhythm of the Five Elements

by Caroline Patrick

The power of nature can be gentle or forceful, and the seasons change no matter how hard we try to hang on to summer's long days and

dreamy nights. Daylight vanishes quickly here in the Northwest as the seasons shift. Vacationers sigh and marvel at the crisp air, scenic views, and lingering sunsets of the San Juan Islands in

the Puget Sound. Experiencing the wood and water elements of this area brings family ideals, new growth of spirit, and business expansion to the forefront.

Wherever you live in the

world, combining these elements in a home, business, or city correctly allows the chi to flow properly, with ease and grace. So, for example, color combinations of green (for the wood element), and a blue-black color (representing water) in your home or business, will encourage new growth of projects and bring abundance when used in the right way.

Balancing of the elements is also necessary to maintain health of the body and the environment. When the environment, the weather, personal behavior, or even the government becomes unbalanced, the elements of wood, fire, earth, metal and water are reflective and show a "destructive cycle." A huge example of improper cycling of the elements would be global warming!

The natural flow of seasonal cycles begins with spring, followed by summer, autumn, winter, and then returns to spring. If wind and water (or feng shui) of the planet become disturbed, you may find these elements jumping across the circle of seasons, which could cause disasters. If spring jumps directly to winter, crops freeze and rot. If winter or summer reverse, we have melting when it should be freezing. There is a time for each element to play its part.

Our bodies are miniature planets and are related to hot-cold, moist-dry conditions. These bodies live in

Understanding the Bagua

The ancient feng shui template starts with the main door to any room or house. This section is called career, which is ruled by water. Next, walking left from the room door is the area of knowledge. Continuing upward is the family gua (in the middle of the far left wall), followed by the money corner of wealth to the far back left corner of the room. And so the aspects continue onward, counterclockwise, around the bagua, or eight-sided template, with eight equal parts.

After wealth comes fame-fire; earth-partnership; children and creativity, which is the metal element; helpful people; and travel for heaven's help; and a center called the tai chi.

To activate any of the nine areas in the bagua, add the element representing that area. For increased fame or reputation, use fire or more light (a 100-watt bulb instead of a 60-watt bulb placed in a lamp in the far middle back of your house). To bring fire energy to a desk, place a lamp in the middle back of your desk, or you may chose statues of birds or wild animals, or a candle. Fire is necessary to make wood burn or to melt metal if your personal elements are mainly water, metal or wood.

structures, which support good health or cause disease. This is why houses need the proper alignment as they "house" our families.

I usually don't enjoy summer, as fall is my favorite time of year when cool breezes give new life and zest for studying, writing, giving classes and traveling. But a lot of things happened this summer, which I prepared by visualizing through intention. It turned into a very pleasant and eye-opening three months.

I wanted the family to become closer. Using my knowledge of feng shui, I quickly gathered some old and new family pictures and place them in altar fashion on a wooden desk in the

family sector or middle left side of the living room. I placed three fairly large bamboo potted plants next to the picture arrangement, giving growth to the section of wood, which activates the family *gua*, or section, of the room or house or building.

After these intentions were placed on the family altar, out of the blue my daughter came for an extended visit, just to be with family, get to know her nephews better, see her brother, and have long talks about the "good ole days." I found this comforting as well as revealing.

Next, she took care of the properties while we cruised to Alaska with the grandchildren, found a parttime job,

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Joy of Whirling

by Dav*d Hargrave

Eventually, in our spiritual explorations we may meet with the whirling dervishes. They are a sect of Sufis who alter their consciousness by spinning and whirling in ecstatic dances. Simply watching these graceful dances brings a joy and relaxation to the audience members.

What is it about spinning that gives these mysterious effects?

As children, long before we heard about the whirling dervishes, most of us loved altering our consciousness through spinning and twirling. Even before we spun ourselves dizzy on carnival rides, we loved long grassy hillsides so we could roll down them. Long before we went to Disneyland, to ride in the large twirling tea cups, we would find an uncle to twirl us around by hand and foot at summer picnics. Think back, can you remember laughing through the dizziness? I sure can.

So there we are: kindergarten whirling dervishes in ecstatic states of happiness. "Again! Again! Spin us again..."

Many years have passed, and now I usually look at long hillsides and wonder, "How are they going to mow that lawn?" And even if I wanted an airplane ride at a picnic there is not an uncle big enough to spin me around anyway. So I've begun to gently spin around on my own. Not anything special, just the basic arms slightly extended gently spinning. Sometimes I raise my arms up in an outward gentle extension with my inhalation and lower gracefully with my exhalation. I have begun to enjoy certain calming effects of these simple motions.

For many years I have been exploring other means of consciousness-altering, including meditation and yoga. To my delight, I fit into the world as a yoga teacher on Sundays as well as an occasional substitute for any teacher who needs me.

I have begun to understand something curious about the breath in yoga. You know, that deep natural breath which leads gently into relaxation. Well, it has occurred to me that this natural breath is the physical consequence of the parasympathetic nervous system. The same way that you can see the invisible wind by the moving of the leaves in the trees, you can see the parasympathetic nervous system by the easy natural breath. (Now, as to how the PNS is tuned resonantly with the rhythms of universal life remains a delicious mystery to me, and that's okay.)

There also seems to be an intimacy of the PNS with the acupuncture meridian system. How so? If you have practiced yoga, you may be familiar with letting your concentration go to places in your body that need relaxation and rejuvenation. Remembering that the intent of an acupuncturist is to relax areas of the body, it appears that mental awareness, by accessing the meridians through the PNS, becomes like an internal acupuncturist.

Let us revisit spinning and whirling. As

children we are ticklish almost everywhere; we seem to be one wondrous erogenous zone. As adults, our erogeny shrinks to ever smaller surfaces. This must mean that some level of our nervous system is shrinking.

What if, I wonder to myself, the growing-ness of the child and the dizziness in the



Members of a Suft sect, whirling dervishes alter their consciousness by spinning and whirling in ecstatic, spinning dances.

brain is somehow triggering one of the pituitary glandulations, such as human growth hormone? And might it be possible to convince the pituitary to squirt some of that magical growth substance into our systems by spinning? Even now, as adults? Yikes! Or maybe, by spinning gently we can, through the parasympathetic nervous system, awaken some level of the nervous system that as children we were entertained with?

And who needs to get too fancy? It seems for sure that the gentle spinnings have an interplay with the free rhythms of the parasympathetic breath. This in turn (oaky, my puns are intended) brings benefits to the endocrine system, which some people consider being ethereal spinning floralities in the energy body, called chakras.

It may be worth mentioning here that the PNS is affected by mental and emotional states. An anxious thought of the past or future, and the breathing and heart beat will increase. The PNS is very sensitive, as we can see through the reactions of our internal organs. Real or imaginary stresses can have deleterious effects on the body. And our personalities and habits may exist as a thin crystallinity within this subtle nervous system. (I've been looking into this ethereal relationship recently.)

Gently spinning lets you be a spindle or the eye of an expanding centrifugal field for a while. This may be a piece of the puzzle of the calming effects.

I accept that many elements in my life will stay mysterious to me. As to why my spinning exercises bring calmness to my mind, my breathing, and my emotions? Well, I receive this as a gift from the mischievous universe of spins and orbits.

Go ahead try it. Take yourself for a spin.

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