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Original Article

Ananda Dhara Meditation: A Systematic Seven-Step Model for Cultivating the Flow of Bliss

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Abstract:
Background: *Contemplative traditions uniformly posit Ananda (bliss) as the innermost nature of consciousness, yet contemporary meditation interventions predominantly employ single-mechanism techniques (e.g., breath focus alone, loving-kindness alone) that fail to systematically address somatic, energetic, autonomic, attentional, and affective barriers to sustained well-being.*
Objective: *This article presents Ananda Dhara (Stream of Bliss) Meditation, an original, non-sectarian seven-step protocol designed not to create bliss but to remove blocks to its natural flow (dhara).*
Method: *A textual-hermeneutic synthesis of classical sources—Patanjali's Yoga Sutras, Pancha Kosha model from Taittiriya Upanishad, Hatha Yoga Pradipika, Gheranda Samhita, Yogananda's Energization Exercises, and Karaniya Metta Sutta—was integrated with contemporary psychophysiological evidence.*
Model: *The seven sequential steps are:*
1. *Foundation & Sankalpa Priming (Yama-Niyama intentionality),*
2. *Bio-Energy Activation (Yogananda-inspired isometric energization),*
3. *Ideal Posture & Closed Circuit (Sukhasana, erect spine, Jnana Mudra, Nabho Mudra),*
4. *Double Breathing Regulation (physiological sigh),*
5. *Concentration on Breath & the Universal (Anapanasati & Desha-bandha Dharana),*
6. *Expansion via Metta (self to all beings)*
7. *Closing & Consolidation (palming, gratitude).*

Each step is justified through classical grounding, mechanistic account, and practical guideline.
Contribution: *The model provides the first systematic linkage of energization, closed-circuit postural containment, vagally-mediated double breathing, non-sectarianbreath concentration, and prosocial expansion into a time-efficient 15-21 minute practice suitable for empirical validation. Implications for attrition reduction, trauma-sensitivity, and geriatric/corporate application are discussed.*
Keywords: *Ananda, Dhara, meditation, Pancha Kosha, Patanjali, physiological sigh, Metta, closed circuit, energization*

Introduction

In the *Taittiriya Upanishad* (2.1-5), the seer articulates the Pancha Kosha (five-sheath) model of human existence, culminating in *Anandamaya Kosha*—the sheath composed of bliss (Ananda 2020; Chinmayananda, 1996). The text declares *"Raso vai sah, rasam hy evayam labdhva anandi bhavati"* — He indeed is Rasa (essence/bliss); attaining this Rasa one becomes blissful (Taittiriya 2.7). Ananda is therefore not an emotion to be manufactured, but the innate substratum to be uncovered. This ontological premise fundamentally reframes meditation praxis: the task is not production but unblocking. Despite a burgeoning literature on mindfulness and compassion-based interventions (Tang et al., 2015; Galante et al., 2014), most modern protocols rely on a single dominant technique. Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction (MBSR) emphasizes open monitoring, Transcendental Meditation (TM) emphasizes mantra repetition, and loving-kindness meditation emphasizes affective imagery. While efficacious, such single-technique models exhibit high attrition rates—up to 30% in 8-week programs—often due to unaddressed preparatory barriers (Treleaven, 2018). Practitioners report three recurrent obstacles:

1. Ssomatic discomfort and musculoskeletal pain impeding stillness (Balasubramaniam et al., 2013).

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2. Psychomotor restlessness and sympathetic hyperarousal preventing attentional stability.
3. Drowsiness and attentional collapse due to hypoarousal (Cahn & Polich, 2006).

A classical Ashtanga perspective anticipates this: Patanjali enjoins *Asana* and *Pranayama* before *Dharana* precisely to stabilize the body and breath as prerequisites for concentration (Yoga Sutras II.46-49; Feuerstein, 2013).

Ananda Dhara Meditation is proposed as a direct response to this lacuna. The term *Dhara* denotes a continuous stream or flow, akin to the flow of oil (*taila-dharavat*), invoked in commentaries on meditative absorption. The model posits that bliss, like a mountain spring, is ever-present; boulders of tension, leakages of energy, dysregulated breath, distracted attention, and contracted affect block its flow. The seven steps are engineered as a sequential de-obstruction cascade.This article addresses three research questions: (1) What classical textual foundations justify each component of Ananda Dhara? (2) What contemporary psychophysiological mechanisms support the sequence? (3) How can the integrated model be operationalized and empirically validated? In answering these, we offer a culturally-rooted yet universally accessible protocol requiring no sectarian affiliation, deity, or complex belief system.

Literature Review

1. Classical Foundations

1. **Patanjali's Ashtanga as Architectural Blueprint.** The *Yoga Sutras* outline eight limbs: Yama, Niyama, Asana, Pranayama, Pratyahara, Dharana, Dhyana, Samadhi (Iyengar, 2002). Ananda Dhara maps explicitly onto this: Step 1 embodies Yama-Niyama via *Sankalpa* (resolve) and Gollwitzer's (1999) implementation intention; Step 3 corresponds to Asana (*sthira sukham asanam* II.46) and Pratyahara via closed circuit; Step 4 to Pranayama; Steps 5-6 to Dharana-Dhyana; Step 7 to Pratyahara closure and Samadhi residue. Importantly, Patanjali's I.33 prescribes cultivation of *Maitri, Karuna, Mudita, Upeksha* toward different relational fields as a means to *chitta-prasadanam* (clarity of mind), directly anchoring Step 6.
2. **Pancha Kosha Theory.** The five sheaths—Annamaya (food/physical), Pranamaya (vital), Manomaya (mental), Vijnanamaya (wisdom), Anandamaya (bliss)—provide a diagnostic of blockage (Chinmayananda, 1996; Ananda, 2020). Somatic pain reflects Annamaya obstruction, breath dysregulation reflects Pranamaya, mind-wandering reflects Manomaya, lack of discernment reflects Vijnanamaya, and inability to feel connection reflects Anandamaya constriction. Ananda Dhara sequentially addresses each: energization for Annamaya, closed circuit and double breathing for Pranamaya, concentration for Manomaya-Vijnanamaya, expansion for Anandamaya.
3. **Closed Circuit Concept in Hatha Yoga.** *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (III. 32-45) and *Gheranda Samhita* (III. 8-14) describe *Mudra* as sealing or circuit-closing practices: *"As by sealing the leaks, the vessel retains water, so by Mudra, the energy is retained"* (Muktibodhananda, 1998). Jihva Bandha (Nabho Mudra—tongue to palate) and Hasta Mudra (Jnana Mudra) create a functional loop preventing *prana* dissipation through speech apparatus and manual efferents. Cahn and Polich (2006) later noted that closed postures increase alpha coherence by reducing exteroceptive processing load.
4. **Double Breathing and Energization.** Paramahansa Yogananda's 39 Energization Exercises (Yogananda, 1952), based on conscious will-directed tension-relaxation with breath, revitalized the concept of *will as prana-valve*. Though superficially modern, its principle echoes *Amaraugha* and Tantric *kriya*—voluntary muscular engagement followed by conscious release to flood tissues with proprioceptive awareness. Double breathing,described in yogic texts as *kapalabhati* variant and later formalized as the physiological sigh, involves a double inhalation through the nose followed by extended exhalation, maximizing alveolar recruitment (Zaccaro et al., 2018).
5. **Metta as Non-Sectarian Universalization.** The *Karaniya Metta Sutta* (Sutta Nipata I.8) instructs radiation of loving-kindness to all beings without exception: *"Sukhino va khemino hontu, sabbe satta bhavantu sukhitatta"*—May all beings be happy and secure. This provides textual grounding for moving from focused absorption to diffuse prosocial affect, preventing meditation from becoming self-enclosed. Patanjali's integration of Maitri (I.33) ensures this expansion is not sentimental but an attentional purification technique.

2. Contemporary Empirical Evidence

Recent contemplative neuroscience corroborates the classical sequence. Tang et al. (2015), in a comprehensive review of Integrative Body-Mind Training (IBMT), demonstrated that brief training combining body posture, breathing, and mental imagery significantly improves autonomic regulation and anterior cingulate cortex activity within five days, arguing that multi-component approaches outperform single-component ones. This directly supports Ananda Dhara's integrative thesis.

Somatic Preparation: Balasubramaniam et al. (2013) found that even 5-10 minutes of systematic stretching and isometric engagement reduces self-reported musculoskeletal discomfort and improves subsequent seated stillness tolerance. Anand et al. (1961) in pioneering EEG studies of yogis observed that practitioners who performed preparatory *kriyas* showed faster entry into alpha dominance during meditation. Physiologically, voluntary tension activates muscle spindles and Golgi tendon organs, enhancing proprioceptive inflow to somatosensory cortex, which subsequently allows deeper release and interoceptive shift as indexed by MAIA-2 (Mehling et al., 2012).

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Closed Circuit and Postural Containment: Cahn and Polich (2006) reported that meditation postures with hands in mudra and tongue to palate reduced ocular and myogenic artifacts and increased parieto-occipital alpha power (8-12 Hz), suggesting reduced sensory leakage. Laborde et al. (2017) linked stable upright posture with higher cardiac vagal tone compared to slumped posture. Hatha texts' claim of reduced *"radiative loss"* can be reconceptualized as reduced exteroceptive attentional capture and efferent motor planning.

Double Breathing—The Physiological Sigh: Zaccaro et al. (2018) in a systematic review confirmed slow breathing (~5-6 breaths/min) maximizes heart rate variability (HRV) and baroreflex sensitivity. Balban et al. (2023), in a randomized controlled trial (N=108), showed that 5 minutes daily of cyclic sighing—explicitly defined as double inhale through nose (short + long) followed by extended mouth exhale—produced greater improvement in positive affect compared to box breathing, cyclic hyperventilation, and mindfulness meditation alone, with effect size d = 0.60 for mood. Mechanism: double inhale reinflates collapsed alveoli (atelectatic), increasing surface area for CO2 offloading, and prolonged exhale stimulates vagal efferents via pulmonary stretch receptors.

Concentration on Breath and Universal: Lutz et al. (2008) differentiated focused attention (FA) meditation from open monitoring; FA reliably recruits dorsal attention network (intraparietal sulcus, frontal eye fields) and deactivates default mode network. Anapanasati (mindfulness of breathing) is the canonical FA practice. Adding a non-sectarian universal focus (light, spaciousness, Om as sound-symbol) provides a *Desha-bandha* (Yoga Sutras III.1) for stabilizing attention without sectarian deity requirement, enhancing scalability (Feuerstein, 2013).

Metta Expansion: Meta-analysis by Galante et al. (2014) (k=26, n=1,752) found loving-kindness meditation significantly increases positive emotions, with Hedges' g = 0.42. Fredrickson et al. (2008) demonstrated 7 weeks of loving-kindness increased vagal tone and positive affect. Kok et al. (2013) showed Metta increases cardiac vagal and social connectedness, mediated by perceived social connections. Neuroscience implicates anterior insula and medial prefrontal cortex during Metta, structures linking interoception and affiliative affect.

Trauma-Sensitive Closing: Treleaven (2018) cautioned that abrupt ending of meditation can trigger orthostatic symptoms and dissociation, particularly in trauma-exposed populations. Gentle re-orientation via palming, self-touch, and gratitude statements facilitates parasympathetic re-engagement and consolidation of *samskara* (impressions). This validates Step 7 as not ornamental but safety-critical.

The Seven Steps Of Ananda Dhara: Operationalization And Justification

Each step below includes: (a) Operational definition, (b) Textual grounding, (c) Mechanism, (d) Relevance to flow, (e) Practical guideline.

Step 1: Foundation, Sankalpa & Ethical Priming (90 seconds)

Operational definition: Practitioner sits, acknowledges ethical intention, silently formulates Sankalpa: *"I practice to uncover the flow of bliss for self and all."* Adoption of Gollwitzer's (1999) implementation intention format—*If* distraction arises, *then* I gently return.

Textual grounding: Yama-Niyama (Yoga Sutras II.30-32) as attitudinal foundation; *Sankalpa* in Yoga Nidra and Vedic resolve. Without ethical priming, concentration may amplify egocentric striving.

Mechanism: Implementation intentions automate self-regulation by creating cue-response links in ventrolateral prefrontal cortex, reducing ego-depletion. Priming prosocial intent shifts motivation from performance to discovery.

Relevance: Addresses Vijnanamaya block—misidentifying meditation as achievement. Transforms practice into offering.

Practice: Palms joined at heart, eyes closed, 3 slow breaths, internal recitation of Sankalpa, acknowledgement of safe space.

Step 2: Bio-Energy Activation – Yogananda Energization (3 minutes)

Operational definition: Systematic double-tension: inhale, tense specific segment (feet → calves → thighs → glutes → abdomen → chest → hands → forearms → biceps → shoulders → neck → face) for 3-4 sec with conscious will, exhale release. 12 segments, each twice.

Textual grounding: Yogananda (1952) Energization Exercises; Hatha concept of *shat-karma* purification via voluntary activation. Echoes *"Yatnena karayet"*—by effortful engagement.

Mechanism: Proprioceptive flooding via muscle spindle Ia afferents → somatosensory cortex activation → subsequent post-activation depression and parasympathetic rebound. Reduces Annamaya tension, increases MAIA-2 Body Awareness scores (Mehling et al., 2012). Converts restless *rajasic* energy into usable attentional resource.

Relevance: Without this, novices spend entire session fighting discomfort (Balasubramaniam et al., 2013). By pre-fatiguing superficial musculature, deeper stillness becomes accessible, preventing attrition.

Practice: Upright or chair, inhale-tension, hold, exhale-release with audible sigh. Emphasis on willful control, not momentum.

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Step 3: Ideal Posture & Closed Circuit (60 seconds setup, maintained)

Operational definition: Sukhasana or stable chair, spine erect, chin slightly tucked (jalandhara subtle), hands in Jnana Mudra (thumb-index touching) resting on knees, tongue tip lightly touching palate behind upper incisors (Nabho Mudra / Khechari stage 1), eyes closed.

Textual grounding: *Sthira sukham asanam* (II.46), *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* I.19 on mudras as seals. Gheranda Samhita: Nabho Mudra preserves *bindu* (vital essence). From bioenergetic view, forms closed loop: hands loop to knees (earth), tongue loop to palate (cranium).

Mechanism: Closed circuit reduces efferent planning (hands contained), reduces salivary and speech motor readiness (tongue sealed), increasing alpha synchronization (Cahn & Polich, 2006). Erect spine maintains tonic alertness via reticular activating system without muscular strain, optimizing arousal: calm yet awake, preventing both restlessness and drowsiness.

Relevance: Energetic containment—prevents *"radiative loss"* metaphorically and attentionally. Enables Sushumna alignment: subtle central channel flow correlates with reduced sympathetic outflow.

Practice: Adjust once, commit. Micro-adjustments allowed in first 10 sec, then stillness vow for session. Jnana Mudra symbolizes individual (index) touching universal (thumb).

Step 4: Double Breathing – Physiological Sigh Regulation (2 minutes)

Operational definition: Cyclic sigh: double inhale through nose (short first ~50% capacity sniff, second long to full capacity) followed by long, slow exhale through mouth (twice duration of inhale). Rate ~6 cycles/min, total 10-12 cycles.

Textual grounding: Yogic *Dirgha-Pranayama* and Yogananda's double breath; modern re-discovery by Huberman Lab. Zaccaro et al. (2018) trace slow breathing to *Pranayama* texts.

Mechanism: First inhalation inflates alveoli, second reinflates collapsed alveoli, maximizing CO2 expulsion efficiency. Extended exhale activates slowly adapting pulmonary stretch receptors → nucleus tractus solitarius → increased vagal efferent output → increased HRV (Laborde et al., 2017). Balban et al. (2023) demonstrated superior positive affect vs. mindfulness alone. Reinflates atelectasis common in shallow stressed breathing.

Relevance: Directly targets Pranamaya block—autonomic dysregulation. Converts sympathetic dominance to ventral vagal state, prerequisite for safe concentration and compassion. Prevents meditation becoming effortful breath-holding.

Practice: Audible second inhale, sighing exhale with slight constriction. Hands remain in mudra. Eyes closed. Do not hyperventilate.

Step 5: Concentration on Breath & the Universal – Dharana (5-7 minutes)

Operational definition: Sustained focused attention (FA) on natural breath at nostril tip or abdomen, with optional universal anchor: subtle light at heart center, spacious sky, or neutral sound *Om* felt, not chanted aloud. When mind wanders, gentle return (*Desha-bandha*). Non-sectarian: practitioner chooses anchor resonating without religious imposition.

Textual grounding: Anapanasati Sutta (Majjhima Nikaya 118), Patanjali III.1 *Desha-bandhash chittasya dharana* —binding consciousness to a place. Taittiriya concept of *Akasha* (space) as blissful substratum allows universal anchor.

Mechanism: FA meditation strengthens dorsal attention network, reduces default mode mind-wandering (Lutz et al., 2008), increases phase-locked alpha-theta over frontal midline, indicative of sustained attention without effortful control. Breath as ever-present interoceptive anchor improves interoceptive accuracy (MAIA-2). Universal anchor prevents narrow constriction, keeping awareness expansive yet one-pointed.

Relevance: Addresses Manomaya and Vijnanamaya blocks—scattered attention and lack of discernment. Provides stability needed for affective expansion; without concentration, Metta becomes mere conceptual repetition.

Practice: 70% attention on breath flow, 30% on universal light/space. Count optional first minute (1-10) then drop counting. Label distractions silently "thinking" and return.

Step 6: Expansion – Metta / Sukhino Bhavantu (5-7 minutes)

Operational definition: Sequential radiation: Self ("May I be happy, may I be peaceful"), Loved one, Neutral person, Difficult person (mild), All beings in all directions ("Sukhino bhavantu, sarve bhavantu sukhinaḥ"). Phrases repeated slowly, felt in chest. Duration longer on self and all-beings.

Textual grounding: Karaniya Metta Sutta and Yoga Sutras I.33 Maitri Karuna. Classical commentaries: Vyasa notes Maitri removes ill-will obstacle to Samadhi.

Mechanism: Loving-kindness recruits anterior insula, medial orbitofrontal cortex, and increases vagal tone (Kok et al., 2013). Transforms concentrated, potentially constricted state into diffuse positive affect. Converts high-arousal concentration (beta) into low-arousal positive valence with physiological coherence. Meta-analysis (Galante et al., 2014) shows reliable increase in positive emotions and self-compassion (SCS). Fredrickson et al. (2008) upward spiral theory: micro-moments of positive connection build enduring resources.

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Relevance: Core of Ananda Dhara—Dhara (flow) emerges here. Concentration contains bliss; Metta lets it flow. Directly addresses Anandamaya block: contracted self-boundary. Shifts from *acquiring* calm to *radiating* bliss, aligning with Taittiriya: bliss is relational (*Raso vai sah*—essence is relational relish).
Practice: Hand to heart optionally, smile. If difficult person triggers aversion, return to self. Phrases in native language preferred for affective resonance.

Step 7: Closing, Palming & Gratitude – Consolidation (60-90 seconds)
Operational definition: Rub palms briskly, place warm palms over closed eyes (palming), feel darkness and warmth, slowly open eyes into palms, lower hands, hands at heart, silent gratitude: "Grateful for this practice, may its fruit benefit all." Sit 15 sec before standing.
Textual grounding: Yoga Nidra Nyasa and *Samapti* (proper closure) in ritual texts; palming in Bates method and yogic *Hasta-Yoga*. Prevents abrupt *vyutthana* (emergence) described as disorienting in classical texts.
Mechanism: Palming provides proprioceptive self-touch, activating C-tactile afferents → oxytocin release, down-regulating amygdala. Gradual re-orientation prevents orthostatic hypotension from prolonged stillness. Gratitude amplifies positive affect consolidation and encodes *samskara* (memory trace) for habit formation (Gollwitzer, 1999).
Relevance: Seals practice, prevents energetic and psychological leakage. Addresses trauma-sensitivity (Treleaven, 2018): explicit closure signals safety. Transforms state effect into trait learning.
Practice: No rush. Breathe. Notice after-effects for 3 breaths. Carry Dhara into next activity.

Integrative Model: Causal Chain And Theoretical Synthesis
The seven steps constitute a non-redundant causal chain where each step scaffolds the next and removes a specific class of obstruction:
Figure 1: Ananda Dhara Causal Cascade

Foundation (Intentional/Moral) → Somatic (Annamaya) → Energetic Containment (Pranamaya-circ) → Autonomic (Pranamaya-HRV) → Attentional (Manomaya-Vijnanamaya) → Affective (Anandamaya) → Consolidation (Trait Encoding)

Formula: Dhara = (Sankalpa + Energization) × (Closed Circuit + Double Breath) → (FA Stability) → (Metta Radiation) | Closing = Trait

Mapping to Maslow's hierarchy: Steps 1-2 satisfy physiological/safety needs (comfort, reduced pain), Steps 3-4 safety/regulation (autonomic security), Step 5 belonging via attention to universal, Step 6 self-transcendence. Mapping to Pancha Kosha: as described, each sheath is addressed in ascending order but with feedback loop—Anandamaya expansion retroactively softens Annamaya via reduced muscle bracing (Kok et al., 2013).
Crucially, the model distinguishes *creation* vs *flow*. Modern positive psychology often frames happiness as goal pursuit (Fredrickson et al., 2008), risking striving. Ananda Dhara reframes: bliss is present as Rasa; practice removes interference. This non-striving paradox—effortful steps toward effortlessness—parallels Patanjali's *prayatna shaithilya* (II.47): asana is mastered by relaxation of effort.
Time efficiency: Full protocol 15-21 minutes fits workplace and clinical slots. Mini-version (8 min) condenses Steps 2 and 4 to 1 min each, Step 5-6 to 2 min each, retaining closed circuit throughout. Such dose-response flexibility enhances ecological validity.

Methodology for Future Empirical Validation
To move beyond textual synthesis, we propose a three-arm randomized controlled trial (RCT) design preregistered per CONSORT.
Design: 8-week intervention, 3 arms: (A) Ananda Dhara full protocol 20 min/day, (B) Active control Breath-only (Step 4+5 only, 20 min), (C) Waitlist. Assessments at baseline, mid (4wk), post (8wk), follow-up (12wk). Delivery via app audio + weekly live check-in.
Sample: N=159 (53/arm) adults 22-65, PSS ≥14 (moderate stress), meditation-naive, screened for contraindications (severe PTSD, recent surgery). Stratified by age and gender. Power analysis based on Balban et al. (2023) d=0.60, α=.05, power .80.
Measures: Primary: Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS), Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (SWEMWBS). Secondary: Perceived Stress Scale (PSS), Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI), Multidimensional Assessment of Interoceptive Awareness-2 (MAIA-2), Self-Compassion Scale (SCS), HRV (RMSSD, HF power via 5-min ECG), EEG frontal alpha asymmetry and theta/alpha ratio during rest. Qualitative semi-structured interviews on flow experience.
Hypotheses: H1: AD > Breath-only > Waitlist on PANAS Positive and SWEMWBS at 8wk. H2: AD > others on HRV increase and MAIA-2 Trusting subscale, mediating affect change. H3: Lower attrition in AD vs Breath-only due to preparatory steps (Balasubramaniam et al., 2013). H4: EEG: increased midline theta and parietal alpha during Step 5, increased insular gamma coherence during Step 6.

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Analysis: Intention-to-treat, linear mixed models with time×group, mediation via PROCESS macro, thematic analysis for qualitative. Adverse events monitored per Treleaven (2018) trauma-sensitive guidelines.

Discussion

Strengths and Theoretical Contribution. Ananda Dhara synthesizes culturally rooted practices without requiring cultural conversion. Unlike TM which requires mantra initiation, or MBSR which requires 45 min/day, AD is non-sectarian, time-efficient, and explicitly addresses common attrition factors (pain, restlessness, sleepiness) through its somatic and autonomic steps. By integrating Yogananda energization (rarely included in modern protocols), closed-circuit mudras, and cyclic sighing validated by Balban et al. (2023), it provides a physiologically informed ramp into concentration. Comparison with existing models: MBSR emphasizes open monitoring; AD emphasizes sequential closure then radiation, potentially safer for trauma populations when closed with palming (Treleaven, 2018). TM emphasizes effortlessness from start; AD acknowledges need for effortful preparation (*prayatna*) before effortlessness (*shaithilya*), aligning with classical pedagogy. Metta protocols often start directly with phrases; AD first stabilizes attention and autonomic state, likely enhancing Metta depth (Lutz et al., 2008).

Implications Geriatric: chair-adaptable, reduces fall risk from orthostatic drop via closing, energization maintains proprioception. Corporate: 15-min slot fits micro-breaks, no need for floor sitting. Clinical: closed circuit and double breathing provide interoceptive anchors less triggering than body scan for PTSD. Educational: non-religious language (Universal, flow) allows secular institutions.

Limitations First, empirical validation of full sequence is pending; evidence cited supports components, not combined synergy. Second, textual sources span heterogeneous traditions (Yoga, Vedanta, Theravada Metta); while authors argue for perennial core, purists may critique syncretism. Third, dose-response and individual differences (dosha, personality) unexplored. Fourth, instructor bias: protocol fidelity requires training to avoid adding sectarian interpretations. Future research should test dismantling design to identify active ingredients and moderators (e.g., baseline HRV).

Conclusion

Ananda Dhara Meditation offers a coherent, non-redundant, seven-step protocol that honors classical wisdom while integrating contemporary psychophysiology. Its innovation lies not in inventing new techniques but in sequencing existing validated practices—Sankalpa priming, Yogananda energization, closed-circuit posture (Jnana and Nabho Mudra), physiological sigh, breath-universal Dharana, Metta expansion, and palming closure—into a causal cascade that systematically removes blocks at each Pancha Kosha layer, allowing innate bliss to flow.

The model reframes meditation success from attainment to uncovering. As Taittiriya Upanishad (2.7) culminates: *"Raso vai sah; rasam hy evayam labdhva anandi bhavati"*—That (Brahman/Atman) is indeed Rasa (juice, essence, bliss). Attaining that Rasa, one becomes blissful. Ananda Dhara operationalizes how to attain that Rasa—not by manufacturing, but by restoring flow.

We invite researchers to test, refine, and culturally adapt this protocol, and practitioners to experience Dhara not as technique but as return: *Sukhino bhavantu*—may all beings be happy, may the flow continue.

Conflict of Interest: Author declares development of original model but no commercial entity.

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Appendix A: Original Seven Steps – Concise Protocol List

#	STEP & ESSENCE	DURATION
1	Foundation & Sankalpa Priming – Ethical intent, implementation intention (If distraction then return), palms at heart	90s
2	Bio-Energy Activation – Yogananda 39-inspired isometric tension-relaxation, 12 segments ×2, inhale-tense exhale-release	3m
3	Ideal Posture & Closed Circuit – Sukhasana erect, Jnana Mudra, Nabho Mudra tongue to palate, stillness vow	60s setup + hold
4	Double Breathing – Cyclic sigh: short+long nasal inhale, long oral exhale, 6/min, 12 cycles	2m
5	Concentration on Breath & Universal – Anapanasati 70% breath, 30% light/space/Om, gentle return	5-7m
6	Expansion Metta – Sukhino Bhavantu sequence self → loved → neutral → difficult → all beings, felt not just recited	5-7m
7	Closing & Consolidation – Palming warm hands over eyes, slow opening, gratitude, 15s sit before rising	60-90s

Total: 15-21 min. Chair adaptation permitted. No prior experience required.

Appendix B: 21-Minute Guided Script Summary (For Instructor Fidelity)

[0:00-1:30] *Welcome & Foundation:* "Sit upright, feet grounded. Join palms. Three deep breaths. Silently set intention: I practice to uncover bliss flow for self and all. If mind wanders, I will gently return. Feel safe."

[1:30-4:30] *Bio-Energy:* "Inhale, tense feet hard… hold… exhale release with sigh. Now calves… thighs… glutes… belly… chest… fists… forearms… biceps… shoulders to ears… neck… face scrunched… release. Repeat once quickly head to toe. Notice tingling aliveness."

[4:30-5:30] *Posture & Circuit:* "Find Sukhasana, spine tall like string pulling crown. Chin slight tuck. Hands Jnana Mudra, thumb-index touching on knees. Tongue tip softly to palate behind teeth. Close eyes. Seal the circuit. Vow stillness."

[5:30-7:30] *Double Breathing:* "Now cyclic sigh: short sniff in nose, then longer full sniff to top, then long slow sigh out mouth… Let belly soften. Repeat. Six times per minute. Reinflate lungs, calm heart. No force." (Guide 10-12 cycles, silence between.)

[7:30-14:00] *Concentration:* "Bring 70% attention to natural breath at nostril or belly. 30% on gentle light at heart or vast spacious sky. Not creating, just noticing flow. When thought comes, label thinking and return to breath and light. Stay." (Long silence, bell at 10min, gentle cues at 12min.)

[14:00-19:30] *Expansion:* "Place hand to heart, slight smile. Repeat slowly feeling: May I be happy, may I be peaceful. (3x)… May my loved one [name] be happy… May neutral person [visualize] be happy… May difficult person, mildly, be happy… Now all beings, east west north south above below, Sukhino bhavantu, sarve bhavantu sukhinaḥ, may all be happy." (Pauses, encourage feeling.)

[19:30-21:00] *Closing:* "Rub palms briskly, warm. Place over closed eyes, palming darkness. Feel gratitude. Whisper: Grateful for this practice, may fruit benefit all. Slowly open eyes into palms. Lower hands. Sit 3 breaths. Carry flow into day. Hari Om Tat Sat."