

Yoga and Meditation Guidelines

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The guidelines are referenced where appropriate. The rest is a result of my outer experience, inner experience, and interpretation. Many thanks to all beings who contributed directly or indirectly to the spiritual understanding. The contents of this document is subject to copy rights policy.

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Prologue

In an age of transformation and transition these guidelines are intended to bring peace and harmony to all beings, and a greater awareness and inquiry into your spiritual development and well being.

The guidelines used here are from renowned saints and sages. Please accept any apologies if the interpretation here is not congruent with your interpretation. You are welcome to email me with your views and comments.

The driver and guidelines in this document are strongly aligned with the works of Saints Patanjali and Thirumular. Works from other sages are referenced as well.

We are in the age of Kali Yuga (Iron Age) which is one of four Yugas ie. Satya Yuga (Truth/Golden Age), Treta Yuga, Dwarka Yuga, and Kali Yuga. Each age is depicted by a greater attachment to material/body existence.

There are four spiritual paths that one may follow ie. Karma yoga (Action/Kiriyai), Bhakti Yoga (Devotion/Sariyai), Raja Yoga (Yoga/Yogam), and Jnana Yoga (Wisdom/Jnanam).

Swami Chinmayananda mentioned three decades ago (in Durban, S.A.) that Bhakti Yoga (path of Devotion) is the easiest and recommended path to follow in Kali Yuga.

Decades later in this knowledge age more aspirants question the rationale behind everything we do, including our beliefs and spiritual practices. This may be a reflection of the evolution of the species, transitioning away from Kali Yuga into the next imminent age, Satya Yuga. Enjoy the clarity, revelations, and knowledge that this period offers.

The first two paths of Karma and Bhakti yoga relate to external worship. The next two paths, Raja Yoga and Jnana Yoga involves internal worship.

Take all that comes to you, analyse and select, digest and nourish your system to reach your path goals.

Raja Yoga system is a means of purifying the physical, mental and subtle instruments so that the selection is refined, facilitating higher states of awareness and knowledge in a co-ordinated and safe manner.

In the Saiva tradition Shiva is the Yogi of all Yogis. Shiva passed the yoga to Shakti, then down the line to Sadasiva, Mahesvara, Rudra, Vish-

nu, and Brahma. The four sons of Brahma/Kumaras (Sanaka, Sanatana, Sanandana, and Sanatkumara) bearing the title Nandhi, together with Shivayoga muni, Patanjali, Vyaghrapada and Thirumular were taught the yoga systems, and all eight were leaders of the initial Agamic schools (Natarajan, 1991)

Good Wishes! Use the force with love, care and direction!

Chapter 3

Pranayama

*Pranayama is the practice and control of inhaling, exhaling and breath retention.
Prana is the vital energy or life force.*

Benefits of pranayama

The body becomes firm and strong, and full of energy. Calms the mind and increases concentration. According to Swami Yatishwarananda (1979), pranayama when combined with a very disciplined mind in a spiritual mood enhances one's ascent into higher planes of consciousness.

Caution

Intense pranayama with breath retention techniques have dangers and need to be done under a qualified teacher's constant supervision. There are dangers in exciting latent energies that may prove harmful (Swami Yatishwarananda, 1979)

Therefore the pranayama practices discussed and practiced here are limited to basics.

Preparation for pranayama

There are numerous pranayama exercises for different purposes. These may be learnt from a suitable yoga pranayama teacher.

This pranayama practice follows on from the relaxation techniques and deep breathing exercises learnt in the previous stage.

The practice of taking 'full' breaths of air may take months to establish. So please have patience and steadfastness (Yama and iYama lesson).

Again, practice pranayama on an empty stomach. Sit in Padmasana or siddhasana, or in a comfortable position if you are uncomfortable.

The poise of the body should be in a straight line. The mudra/hand gesture will be explained and demonstrated on the day.

Method for pranayama practice

There are astral nadis (tubules) along the spine position. Both nadis are roughly on the side of the spine and are called Ida and Pingala nadis. Ida is on the left, and Pingala is on the right. The breath alternates from Ida to Pingala throughout the day.

First, we will go through awareness of the breath passing through the nostrils.

Then we will practice pranayama - using the alternate breathing technique.

Place the ring finger of your right hand over your left nostril, and your thumb over your right nostril.

Gently press the ring finger on your left nostril so that the breathing is blocked on the left nostril.

Take a gradual deep breath through your right nostril.

Hold the breath for a few seconds.

Concurrently release your ring finger from the left nostril, and press the thumb on your right nostril blocking the breath flowing in the right nostril.

Then exhale through your left nostril.

Retain breath for a few seconds

Keep the finger and thumb in the same position, now breathe in through your left nostril.

Retain the breath for a few seconds

Concurrently press the left nostril with your ring finger, and simultaneously release the pressure of the ring finger on the right nostril.

Breathe out through the right nostril.

This is one complete cycle.

Note that the breath during inhalation and exhalation is the same length, for this exercise.

Repeat the cycle five times.

More detailed discussion on mudras, pranayama and position of the arms will be discussed on the day.

References

1. Yogeswar, 1986. Textbook of Yoga. ISBN 0-14-302965-7