



# Yoga Types for Beginners

YOGA ROUTINES AND POSES YOU CAN QUICKLY START USING



# OGA



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# Introduction

When one mentions “yoga”, many images may be conjured up. Perhaps you get an image of flower children from the 60’s sitting in a circle with their legs in impossible positions chanting “Ohm” around a huge candle in a poorly lit room. Yoga is an ancient art that has been practiced for centuries. Over the years, it has risen in popularity as a way to stay fit, get in touch with one’s inner self, and keep a balance of sanity in a sometimes insane world.

While yoga did come to popularity in the 60’s with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi who popularized Transcendental Meditation (TM) in the 60’s, because he was associated with the Beatles, yoga practitioners have brought the ancient practice to the forefront of wellness in recent years.

Many scholars believe that yoga dates back over 5,000 years to the beginning of human civilization. Scholars believe that yoga grew out of Stone Age Shamanism, because of the cultural similarities between Modern Hinduism and Mehrgarh, a neolithic settlement (in what is now Afghanistan). In fact, much of Hindu ideas, rituals and symbols of today appear to have their roots in this shamanistic culture of Mehrgahr.

Early Yoga and archaic shamanism had much in common as both sought to transcend the human condition. The primary goal of shamanism was to heal members of the community and act as religious mediators. Archaic Yoga was also community oriented, as it attempted to discern the cosmic order through inner vision, then to apply that order to daily living. Later, Yoga evolved into a more inward experience, and Yogis focused on their individual enlightenment and salvation.

Yoga is the most diversified spiritual practice in the world. Crossing over many cultures (including Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and the West), Yoga also extends over multiple languages such as Hindi, Tibetan, Bengali, Sanskrit, Tamil, Prakrit, Marathi and Pali. The Yogic tradition continues to proliferate and spread its message of peace to this very day.

There are many different places that offer yoga classes – gyms, wellness centers, even the local YMCA. But you don’t have to join a class to practice yoga. It is just as easily done in your home or even at your desk while at work. Yoga can help bring you inner peace when you are stressed out. It can even help relieve the pain of headaches, backaches, and menstrual cramps.

As studies continue to reveal yoga's many health benefits, this centuries old Eastern philosophy is fast becoming the new fitness soul mate for workout enthusiasts. Contemporary devotees range from high-powered execs trying to keep hearts beating on a healthy note to image-conscious Hollywood stars striving for sleek physiques. Even prominent athletes are adding yoga to their training regime to develop balanced, injury-free muscles and spines.

Yet to applaud yoga for its physical benefits alone would only diminish what this entire system has to offer as a whole. By practicing yoga on a regular basis, you may be surprised to find that you're building much more than a strong, flexible body.

Initially, the sole purpose of practicing yoga was to experience spiritual enlightenment. In Sanskrit (the ancient language of India), yoga translates as "yoke" or "union," describing the integration of mind and body to create a greater connection with one's own pure, essential nature.

Classes that have gained popularity in the United States usually teach one of the many types of hatha yoga, a physical discipline which focuses mainly on asanas (postures) and breath work in order to prepare the body for spiritual pursuits.

We will attempt to simplify the ancient practice of yoga by showing you some basic yoga positions, giving you tips on performing yoga exercises, and inducting meditation practices into your everyday life. Through yoga and meditation, you could come to a new level of enlightenment with your personal life and enhance the quality of your existence.

No longer is yoga a mysterious phenomenon. It is now simply a way to keep you healthy and aligned. Now relax and read on as we explore yoga and meditation.

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# CHAPTER I

## What Is Yoga?

Yoga is an ancient Indian philosophy that enhances personal growth and well being. Although it is a systemic philosophical approach, yoga is not a religion, but complementary with most spiritual paths. The physical aspect of Yoga (*Hatha* Yoga) use poses and focused breathing, requiring concentration and discipline. The result is a greater union of mind, body and spirit. Anyone, regardless of body type, age, experience, or physical abilities, can practice yoga.

Pop culture would have us believe that yoga involves contorting your body into uncomfortable positions while staring at a candle and breathing incense. You will see that yoga is much more than that. It is a series of exercises that can be done by almost all people – not just the young who are in shape and healthy. Yoga can be performed by senior citizens, disabled people, and even children. Yoga is a tool for gaining body-mind awareness to enhance whatever spiritual/religious beliefs you have. A yoga session will leave you feeling energized and relaxed. You will work your muscles and will properly align your bones; you will breathe deeply, oxygenating the lungs and blood; you will experience true deep relaxation.

By bringing awareness to the body, and working the muscles, you are able to more deeply relax them than from any other form of exercise. You will gain a deeper appreciation of your body and mind through yoga in a way that no other exercise program will. People who have done no physical exercise at all, as well as Olympic athletes, find enormous benefits from Yoga. The foundation of traditional yoga is careful alignment of your body as you hold the poses. This precision and the awareness that comes with it, leads to tremendous growth, physically, mentally, and emotionally. As in all great arts and sciences, to become proficient in yoga requires effort, determination, and practice. But then, the fruit we reap is always in proportion to the seeds we sow and nurture. Thus, if you are looking for a quick fix, an instant cure, a quelling of surface symptoms while the true ailment remains unhealed, you will not find satisfaction in yoga.

On the other hand, if you want to keep or regain your health, vitality and vigor; if you want to feel younger and stronger; and if you are looking for a perfectly balanced and complete form of exercise that can be started by anyone over seven

years of age, in any condition, and which becomes more challenging as you get more advanced, yoga is for you! There are many benefits of a regular yoga practice. Not only does yoga help maintain a healthy lifestyle, it clears your mind and provide clarity of focus – something we all could use from time to time! Let's look at the benefits of yoga



# **CHAPTER II**

## **Why Do Yoga?**

Yoga Creates both flexibility and strength along with cardiovascular health. It creates mental clarity and focus and emotional balance. Yoga is safe for all ages and body types. It facilitates healing from injuries and is a wonderful way to create wellness. You weight train to gain strength, jog or do aerobics for a cardiovascular workout, practice tai-chi to develop a sense of balance and harmony, stretch to gain flexibility, and meditate to develop peace of mind and relaxation. Yoga is a form of exercise that gives you everything: strength, endurance, balance, flexibility, and relaxation. It is the only complete form of bodywork that does it all. Indeed, yoga is more than stretching and relaxation: it is the ultimate mind-body challenge.

Yoga increases flexibility as it offers positions that act upon the various joints of the body including those joints that aren't always in the forefront of notice ability. These joints are rarely exercised, however, with yoga, they are! Various yoga positions exercise the different tendons and ligaments of the body. The body that may have been quite rigid begins experiencing a remarkable flexibility in even those parts which have not been consciously worked upon. Seemingly unrelated non-strenuous yoga positions act upon certain parts of the body in an interrelated manner. When done together, they work in harmony to create a situation where flexibility is attained relatively easily.

Yoga is perhaps the only form of activity which massages all the internal glands and organs of the body in a thorough manner, including those – such as the prostate - that hardly get externally stimulated during our entire lifetime. Yoga acts in a wholesome manner on the various body parts. This stimulation and massage of the organs in turn benefits us by keeping away disease and providing a forewarning at the first possible instance of a likely onset of disease or disorder.

By gently stretching muscles and joints as well as massaging the various organs, yoga ensures the optimum blood supply to various parts of the body. This helps in the flushing out of toxins from every nook and cranny as well as providing nourishment up to the last point. This leads to benefits such as delayed aging, energy and a remarkable zest for life. But these enormous physical benefits are just a “side effect” of this powerful practice. What yoga does is harmonize the

mind with the body. This results in real quantum benefits. It is now an open secret that the will of the mind has enabled people to achieve extraordinary physical feats, which proves beyond doubt the mind and body connection.

Yoga through meditation works remarkably to achieve this harmony and helps the mind work in sync with the body. How often do we find that we are unable to perform our activities properly and in a satisfying manner because of the confusions and conflicts in our mind weigh down heavily upon us? Moreover, stress which in reality is the #1 killer affecting all parts of our physical, endocrine and emotional systems can be corrected through the wonderful yoga practice of meditation.

In fact yoga = meditation, because both work together in achieving the common goal of unity of mind, body and spirit – a state of eternal bliss. The meditative practices through yoga help in achieving an emotional balance through detachment. What it means is that meditation creates conditions, where you are not affected by the happenings around you. This in turn creates a remarkable calmness and a positive outlook, which also has tremendous benefits on the physical health of the body.

There's no doubt that yoga has tremendous benefits to your health and well-being. So how do you get started with your own yoga program? Let's look at the basic styles of yoga and what they mean.

# **CHAPTER III**

## **Which Is Right For You?**

In ancient times yoga was often referred to as a tree, a living entity with roots, a trunk, branches, blossoms, and fruit. Hatha yoga is one of six branches; the others include raja, karma, bhakti, jnana, and tantra yoga. Each branch with its unique characteristics and function represents a particular approach to life. Some people may find one particular branch more inviting than another.

However, it is important to note that involvement in one of these paths does not preclude activity in any of the others, and in fact you'll find many paths naturally overlapping.

### **RAJA YOGA**

Raja means "royal," and meditation is the focal point of this branch of yoga. This approach involves strict adherence to the eight "limbs" of yoga as outlined by Patanjali in the Yoga Sutras. Also found in many other branches of yoga, these limbs, or stages, follow this order: ethical standards, yama; self-discipline, niyama; posture, asana; breath extension or control, pranayama; sensory withdrawal, pratyahara; concentration, dharana; meditation, dhyana; and ecstasy or final liberation, samadhi.

Raja yoga attracts individuals who are introspective and drawn to meditation. Members of religious orders and spiritual communities devote themselves to this branch of yoga. However, even though this path suggests a monastic or contemplative lifestyle, entering an ashram or monastery is not a prerequisite to practicing raja yoga.

### **KARMA YOGA**

The next branch is that of karma yoga or the path of service, and none of us can escape this pathway. The principle of karma yoga is that what we experience today is created by our actions in the past. Being aware of this, all of our present efforts become a way to consciously create a future that frees us from being bound by negativity and selfishness.

Karma is the path of self-transcending action. We practice karma yoga whenever we perform our work and live our lives in a selfless fashion and as a way to serve others. Volunteering to serve meals in a soup kitchen or signing up for a stint with the Peace Corps or Habitat for Humanity are prime examples of selfless service associated with the karma yoga path.

## **BHAKTI YOGA**

Bhakti yoga describes the path of devotion. Seeing the divine in all of creation, bhakti yoga is a positive way to channel the emotions. The path of bhakti provides us with an opportunity to cultivate acceptance and tolerance for everyone we come into contact with. Bhakti yogis express the devotional nature of their path in their every thought, word, and deed—whether they are taking out the trash or calming the anger of a loved one. Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., are prime examples of bhakti yogis. The life and work of Mother Teresa epitomize the combination of the karma and bhakti yoga paths with devotional aspects of bhakti and the selfless service of karma yoga.

## **JNANA YOGA**

If we consider bhakti to be the yoga of the heart, then jnana yoga is the yoga of the mind, of wisdom, the path of the sage or scholar. This path requires development of the intellect through the study of the scriptures and texts of the yogic tradition. The jnana yoga approach is considered the most difficult and at the same time the most direct. It involves serious study and will appeal to those who are more intellectually inclined. Within the context of our Western religious traditions, Kabbalistic scholars, Jesuit priests, and Benedictine monks epitomize jnana yogis.

## **TANTRA YOGA**

Probably the most misunderstood or misinterpreted of all the yogas, tantra, the sixth branch, is the pathway of ritual, which includes consecrated sexuality. The key word here is "consecrated," which means to make sacred, to set apart as something holy or hallowed. In tantric practice we experience the Divine in everything we do. A reverential attitude is therefore cultivated, encouraging a ritualistic approach to life. It is amusing to note that, although tantra has become associated exclusively with sexual ritual, most tantric schools actually recommend a celibate lifestyle.

In essence, tantra is the most esoteric of the six major branches. It will appeal to

those yogis who enjoy ceremony and relate to the feminine principle of the cosmos, which yogis call shakti. If you see—and are deeply moved by—the significance behind celebration and ritual (holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, and other rites of passage), tantra yoga may be for you. Many tantric yogis find magic in all types of ceremony, whether it be a Japanese tea ceremony, the consecration of the Eucharist in a Catholic mass, or the consummation of a relationship.

## **ASHTANGA YOGA**

One of the most popular schools of yoga practice today is that of Ashtanga Yoga. Ashtanga literally means “eight limbs”. These eight steps (limbs) basically act as guidelines on how to live a meaningful and purposeful life. They serve as a prescription for moral and ethical conduct and self-discipline; they direct attention toward one's health; and they help us to acknowledge the spiritual aspects of our nature.

The first limb, yama, deals with one's ethical standards and sense of integrity, focusing on our behavior and how we conduct ourselves in life. Yamas are universal practices that relate best to what we know as the Golden Rule, "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

Niyama, the second limb, has to do with self-discipline and spiritual observances. Regularly attending temple or church services, saying grace before meals, developing your own personal meditation practices, or making a habit of taking contemplative walks alone are all examples of niyamas in practice. Asanas, the postures practiced in yoga, comprise the third limb. In the yogic view, the body is a temple of spirit, the care of which is an important stage of our spiritual growth. Through the practice of asanas, we develop the habit of discipline and the ability to concentrate, both of which are necessary for meditation.

Generally translated as breath control, this fourth stage consists of techniques designed to gain mastery over the respiratory process while recognizing the connection between the breath, the mind, and the emotions. As implied by the literal translation of pranayama, "life force extension," yogis believe that it not only rejuvenates the body but actually extends life itself. You can practice pranayama as an isolated technique (i.e., simply sitting and performing a number of breathing exercises), or integrate it into your daily hatha yoga routine.

These first four stages of Patanjali's ashtanga yoga concentrate on refining our

personalities, gaining mastery over the body, and developing an energetic awareness of ourselves, all of which prepares us for the second half of this journey, which deals with the senses, the mind, and attaining a higher state of consciousness.

Pratyahara, the fifth limb, means withdrawal or sensory transcendence. It is during this stage that we make the conscious effort to draw our awareness away from the external world and outside stimuli. Keenly aware of, yet cultivating a detachment from, our senses, we direct our attention internally. The practice of pratyahara provides us with an opportunity to step back and take a look at ourselves. This withdrawal allows us to objectively observe our cravings: habits that are perhaps detrimental to our health and which likely interfere with our inner growth.

As each stage prepares us for the next, the practice of pratyahara creates the setting for dharana, or concentration. Having relieved ourselves of outside distractions, we can now deal with the distractions of the mind itself. No easy task!

In the practice of concentration, which precedes meditation, we learn how to slow down the thinking process by concentrating on a single mental object: a specific energetic center in the body, an image of a deity, or the silent repetition of a sound. We, of course, have already begun to develop our powers of concentration in the previous three stages of posture, breath control, and withdrawal of the senses. In asana and pranayama, although we pay attention to our actions, our attention travels. Our focus constantly shifts as we fine-tune the many nuances of any particular posture or breathing technique. In pratyahara we become self-observant; now, in dharana, we focus our attention on a single point. Extended periods of concentration naturally lead to meditation.

Meditation or contemplation, the seventh stage of ashtanga, is the uninterrupted flow of concentration. Although concentration (dharana) and meditation (dhyana) may appear to be one and the same, a fine line of distinction exists between these two stages. Where dharana practices one-pointed attention, dhyana is ultimately a state of being keenly aware without focus. At this stage, the mind has been quieted, and in the stillness it produces few or no thoughts at all. The strength and stamina it takes to reach this state of stillness is quite impressive. But don't give up. While this may seem a difficult if not impossible task, remember that yoga is a process. Even though we may not attain the "picture perfect" pose, or the ideal state of consciousness, we benefit at every stage of our progress.

Patanjali describes this eighth and final stage of ashtanga as a state of ecstasy. At this stage, the meditator merges with his or her point of focus and transcends the Self altogether. The meditator comes to realize a profound connection to the Divine, interconnectedness with all living things. With this realization comes the "peace that passeth all understanding"; the experience of bliss and being at one with the Universe.

On the surface, this may seem to be a rather lofty, "holier than thou" kind of goal. However, if we pause to examine what we really want to get out of life, would not joy, fulfillment, and freedom somehow find their way onto our list of hopes, wishes, and desires?

What Patanjali has described as the completion of the yogic path is what, deep down, all human beings aspire to: peace. We also might give some thought to the fact that this ultimate stage of yoga—enlightenment—can neither be bought nor possessed. It can only be experienced, the price of which is the continual devotion of the aspirant. Now that we've got that out of the way, let's prep the environment and get you ready for your yoga workout!

## **THE SERPENTINE POWERS**

The Serpentine Power is called Kundalini-Sakti on account of its spiral-like working in the body of the Yogi developing the power in himself. It is an electric fiery occult power, the mighty pristine force underlying all organic and inorganic matter. The Yoga which treats of this Kundalini-Sakti is called Kundalini-Yoga.

Kundalini is the Divine Cosmic Energy in bodies. Siddhi or perfection in Yoga is achieved by arousing this Supreme Force which is lying dormant in the Muladhara Chakra at the base of the spinal column in the form of a serpent with 3 1/2 coils. That Yogi in whom the Kundalini is awakened and taken towards the top of the head is the real King of kings or Emperor of emperors. He has all divine powers. All Siddhis and Riddhis (minor powers) roll under his feet. He can command Nature. He can command the five elements. His glory is indescribable.

Before proceeding to know something about the Chakras and the Kundalini-Sakti it is essential to know something about the spinal column and the Nadis or nerve-currents. The spinal column is called *Meru-danda*, and it extends from the *Kanda* (situated between the anus and the root of the reproductive organ) to the base of the skull. There are two Nadis on either side of the spinal column

called *Ida* and *Pingala*, and between these two runs a hollow canal called *Sushumna* at the lower extremity of which lies the Kundalini-Sakti sleeping a trance-sleep (*Yoga Nidra*). *Ida* starts from the right testicle and *Pingala* from the left, and they both meet the *Sushumna* at the *Muladhara Chakra*. *Ida* flows through the left nostril and *Pingala* through the right. *Ida* is cooling, while *Pingala* is heating. *Sushumna* which originates at the *Muladhara Chakra* runs right up to the top of the head. *Ida* and *Pingala* indicate time; *Sushumna* is the devourer of time. When the *Prana* flows through the *Sushumna*, “the most highly beloved of the Yogins”, the mind becomes quite steady.

The Yogi defies death by devitalising *Ida* and *Pingala* and taking the *Prana* through the *Sushumna* to the crown of the head or *Brahmarandhra* (Seat of Brahman). When the Kundalini is awakened, it forces its way through the *Sushumna*, and its progress is characterized by supernatural visions, acquisition of various special powers, knowledge, peace and bliss. When the Kundalini is taken to the *Sahasrara Chakra* (at the top of the head). The Yogi enjoys Supreme Bliss.

When the Kundalini enters the *Sushumna Nadi*, the *Prana* also enters the *Sushumna* of itself along with the Kundalini. Regular practice of *Uddiyana Bandha* awakens the Kundalini and enables it to rise upwards along the *Sushumna*. This is a powerful Yogic Kriya. All Kundalini enthusiasts should practice this daily. The practice of *Yoga-Asanas*, *Pranayama*, *Mudras* and *Bandhas* is prescribed only to awaken the Kundalini. These are all potent practices in rousing this great pristine force.

A detailed knowledge of *Nadis* (psychic nerves or astral tubes for carrying *Prana*) and the *Chakras* (lotuses or psychic nerve-currents) is of paramount importance for all students of Kundalini-Yoga. The psychic nerve lodged in the hollow of the spinal column is the chief or medium *Nadi*. It is called the *Sushumna Nadi*. Just as electricity is stored up in dynamos, so also the vital force (*Prana*) is stored up in the *Chakras* and the *Sushumna Nadi*. *Prana* plays a vital part in all psycho-physical processes. The first attempt on the part of the young Kundalini-Yogi is the purification of the *Nadis* which will lead to the opening of the *Sushumna* which generally remains closed up in all worldly-minded people.

All students of Kundalini-Yoga should possess a clear and sound knowledge of the six *Chakras*. Then only they can contemplate on these *Chakras*. Meditation on these *Chakras* brings psychic powers. A *Chakra* means a centre of spiritual energy. The different plexuses in the human body correspond tentatively to the different *Chakras* in the astral (*Sukshma*) body. Otherwise *Hatha-Yoga* is



impossible. There is difference of opinion as to where the Chakras are really located. Doctors dissect the physical body. They are not able to find the centers, lotuses and so forth. Some say that the Chakras are situated only in the astral body. Some others maintain that the Chakras are developed during the course of meditation through the force of Dhyana (contemplation), and that they are not in the astral body. This is the real truth viz., *that the Chakras are in a dormant state in the Pranayama Kosha (vital air-sheath) of the astral body and that they become opened owing to intense and deep meditation.*

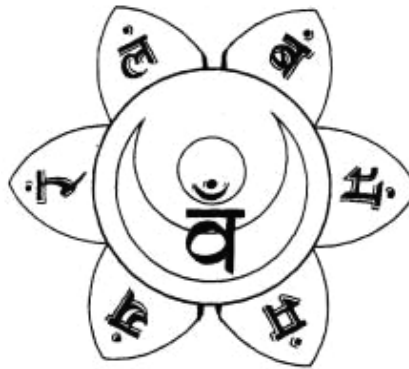
There are six subtle Chakras or centres or lotuses in this Sushumna Nadi. These are *Muladhara*, *Svadhishthana*, *Manipura*, *Anahata*, *Vishuddha* and *Ajna*. Above all these there is the *Sahasrara*, the chief of all the centres. All the Chakras are intimately connected with the Sahasrara Chakra. Hence it is not included as one among the six Chakras. Sahasrara is situated above all the six Chakras at the top of the head.

The **MULADHARA CHAKRA** is situated between the root of the reproduction organ and the anus at the base of the spinal column. It is here, as I have already mentioned, that the two Nadis, Ida and Pingala, meet the Sushumna. The Muladhara Chakra is two fingers above the anus and two fingers below the genitals and four fingers in width. It has four petals of crimson hue. In the pericarp of this Chakra there is a beautiful triangle in which the sleeping Kundalini of the form of a coiled-up serpent dwells. She holds her tail in her mouth and covers the mouth of the Brahma-dvara (the gateway to the Seat of Brahman) with her head. The Yogi who concentrates on the Muladhara Chakra gets full knowledge of the Kundalini and the various means to rouse it to action. As soon as the Kundalini is roused, the Yogi gets the power to rise up above the ground. He gets full control over his breath, mind and semen. His Prana flows through the Sushumna and all his sins are destroyed. He gets knowledge of the past, present and future. He is immensely happy.



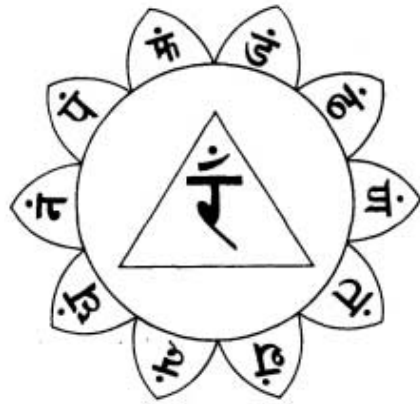
## MULADHARA CHAKRA

The **SVADHISHITHANA CHAKRA** is located within the Sushumna at the root of the sexual organ. It has six petals and is pure blood-like red (vermilion) in color. Concentration on this Chakra frees the Yogi from fear of water. He gets several other psychic powers, intuitional knowledge and freedom from the faults of the mind and the senses. He becomes an object of love and adoration to all beautiful goddesses, and recites all the Sastras unknown to him before. He becomes the conqueror of death and moves throughout the universe fearlessly.



## SVADHISHTHANA CHAKRA

The **MANIPURA CHAKRA** is situated within the Sushumna in the region of the navel and is the third Chakra from the Muladhara. It is of the color of yellow clouds and has ten petals. It is the solar-plexus or “city of gems” because it is very brilliant. Meditation on this excellent Chakra bestows power to destroy and create worlds. The Goddess of Speech, Saraswati, ever dwells in the face of the Yogi. He gets knowledge of the hidden treasures and is freed from all kinds of diseases. He has no fear at all from fire. He can make gold and see Siddhas or Adepts clairvoyantly.



## MANIPURA CHAKRA

The **ANAHATA CHAKRA** is located in the Sushumna in the region of the heart. It is of a green color and has twelve petals. The Anahata sound, the sound of Shabda-brahman, is heard at this centre. You can clearly hear this sound if you concentrate silently at this lotus. He who concentrates on this Chakra gets full control over air. He can fly in the air, enter the body of another and become prosperous. He becomes wise and does only noble deeds. He gets cosmic love and all other divine virtues.



## ANAHATA CHAKRA

The **VISUDDHA CHAKRA** is situated at the base of the throat within the Sushumna. Its color is blue and has sixteen petals. Concentration on this Chakra

enables the Yogi to attain the highest success. He does not perish even during the Pralaya (Great Deluge). He gets full knowledge of the four Vedas and becomes the knower of the three periods of time (past, present and future). He becomes eloquent, wise, enjoys peace of mind, and it is said that by his Yogic power he can move the three worlds.



## VISUDDHA CHAKRA

The **AJNA CHAKRA** is situated in the Sushumna between the eyebrows. This is also known as Trikuti. This is the seat of the mind. This Chakra has two petals and is of beautiful indigo color. He who concentrates on this most excellent Chakra destroys all Karmas or actions of the past lives and becomes a Jivanmukta (living liberated sage). He gets all the eight major Siddhis and the thirty-two minor Siddhis.



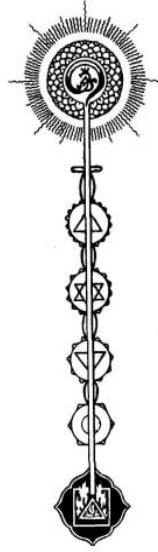
## **AJNA CHAKRA**

The **SAHASRARA CHAKRA** is the thousand-petalled lotus at the top of the head and is the Abode of Lord Siva. When the Kundalini is awakened, it pierces one Chakra after another and finally unites with Lord Siva and enjoys the Highest Bliss. Now the Yogi attains super conscious state and becomes a full-blown Jnani. He drinks the Nectar of Immortality. Illustration shows the ascent of the Kundalini to the top of the head and its union with Lord Siva.

When the Kundalini is awakened, it does not directly proceed all at once to the Sahasrara Chakra. You will have to take it from one Chakra to another. You will certainly live even after it is taken to the Sahasrara. But remember that even after it is taken to the Sahasrara, it may drop down to the Muladhara at any moment! Only when you are firmly established in Samadhi, when you have attained Kaivalya, the Kundalini cannot and does not drop down. Illustration gives a rough idea as to how the Kundalini, when aroused, reaches the top of the head after piercing one Chakra after another.

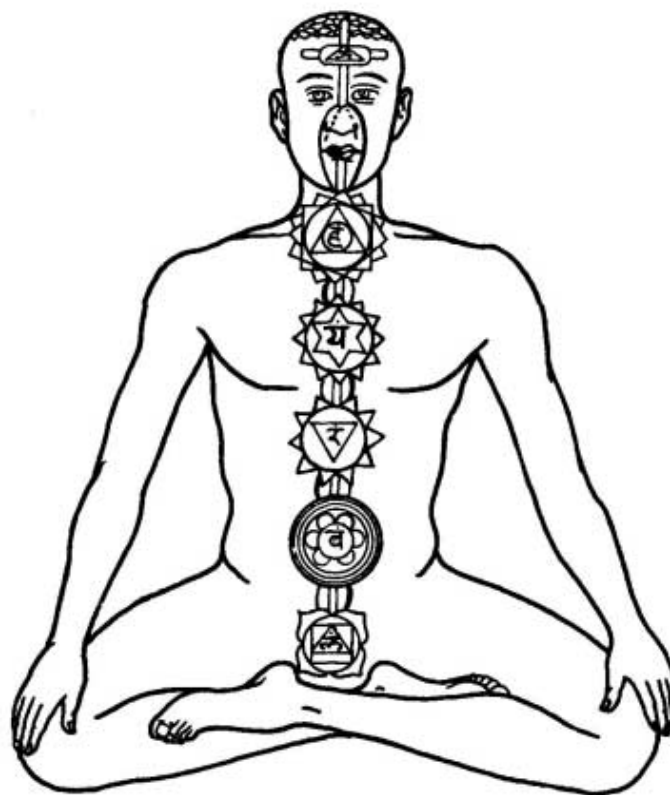
Do not mistake, my dear Kundalini brothers! O ye enthusiastic and emotional young Yogins! the movement of the rheumatic winds in the back due to the chronic lumbago for the ascent of Kundalini. Do your Sadhana with patience, perseverance, cheerfulness and courage, till you get the Nirvikalpa Samadhi.

It is easy to awaken the Kundalini, but it is very difficult to take it up to the navel, to the Ajna Chakra, and thence to the Sahasrara in the head. It demands a great deal of patience and persistence on the part of the practitioner. But there is nothing impossible for a man of determination and iron-will. That Yogi who has taken the Kundalini to the Sahasrara is the real master of the forces of Nature. Generally Yogic students abandon their Sadhana on account of false satisfaction. They foolishly imagine that they have reached the goal, when they get some mystic experiences and powers. This is a mistake. Complete Asamprajnata Samadhi (Nirvikalpa Samadhi) alone can give final emancipation.



### **Ascent of Kundalini**

Some Yogic students ask me: “How long should one practice Sirshasana or Paschimottanasana or Kumbhaka or Maha Mudra to awaken the Kundalini? Nothing is mentioned about this point in any treatise on Yoga.” A student starts his Sadhana from the point or stage where he left in his previous birth. That is the reason why Lord Krishna says to Arjuna: “Or he may be born in a family of wise Yogins. There he recover the characteristics belonging to his former body and with these he again labor for perfection. Ojoy of the Kurus,” So it all depends upon the degree of purity, stage of evolution, the amount of purification of the Nadis and the Pranamaya Kosha, and above all the degree of Vairagya and yearning for liberation.



### **Shat-Chakras, Ida, Pingala, and Sushumna Nadis**

Develop virtues like generosity, forgiveness and so forth. Mere Yogic Kriyas alone will not help you much. Do self-analysis and eradicate your faults and evil habits. Rectify your defects like selfishness, pride, jealousy, hatred, etc. Develop your heart. Share what you have with others. Do selfless service. Then alone you will get purity of mind. In these days aspirants neglect these things and jump at once to do Yogic Kriyas for getting Siddhis. It is a serious Himalayan blunder. They have the hopeless downfall sooner or later. Therefore be careful. Mere Yogic Kriyas cannot bring in much results. Purification of the heart is very necessary. Without it no success in Yoga is possible. You should free yourself from lust, anger, greed, jealousy, hatred, egoism, vanity, attachment, delusion, etc. This is more difficult than the control of the heart or the practice of Nauli or the uniting of Prana and Apana.

Kundalini can be awakened by various methods such as Japa, devotion, Vichara (enquiry of “Who am I”), Asana, Kumbhaka, Bandhas, Mudras, and above all by the Grace of the Guru. You must become perfectly desireless and free from all

earthly longings.

Many persons jump with curiosity and expectation of acquiring occult powers and rousing the Kundalini. They do Sirshasana and various other Asanas and Pranayama. But no one sticks to the practice for a sufficient length of time. They leave off the practice after a few months. This is not good. Application and tenacity, patience and perseverance are essential for sure success and acquisition of Siddhis.

My advice is: Never care for Siddhis or quick awakening of the Kundalini. Have devotion to God. Have perfect trust in Him. Have the spirit of service to humanity. The Kundalini will awaken by itself.

Awakening of Kundalini is not so easy as you may imagine. It is extremely difficult. When all desires die out, when the mind becomes absolutely pure, when all the senses are subdued, when you attain one-pointedness of mind to a considerable degree, when all the ideas of egoism and “mine-ness” melt away, the Kundalini will awaken by itself. Then alone awakening of the Kundalini is also beneficial. Therefore purify yourself first. Have full trust and faith in the Mother. She will do the needful for you at the proper time.

Be not troubled. Be not anxious, my dear friends and brothers! A glorious day is waiting to dawn on you. You will shine with full powers, nay, you will become God Himself. Laugh at all troubles and obstacles and keep your eye on the Kundalini-Sakti all the twenty-four hours. Do all you can in order to rouse her up. If purification is ordained, purify you must. What other alternative is there? Therefore do purity yourself.

O Mother Kundalini! Having pierced the six Chakras, Thou sportest with Thy consort Paramasiva in the thousand-petalled lotus of the Sahasrara Chakra all alone! Salutations unto Thee! Guide me. Give me Light and Knowledge!



# CHAPTER IV

## Getting Ready

Now that you've decided to take up yoga for your health, you must consider the best environment and preparation to do so. The very best time to practice yoga is first thing in the morning before breakfast. Upon waking, empty the bowels, shower if you wish, then commence the day with your regime of yoga practices. The second most conducive time is early evening, around sunset.

It is, of course, far better to do something at a time of the day which suits one, rather than to miss out by being too rigid or idealistic. Always remember integral yoga is a balanced recipe which maintains that to get the best from your yoga practice, you should whenever possible, mix and match the necessary elements of practice which will improve and enhance your spiritual growth and awareness.

Asanas – yoga postures - may be practiced at any time of day except within 2-3 hours of having eaten. You can do postures when the body feels stiff, tense, tired or hyped-up. Be aware not to do too many over-stimulating postures just before bedtime. Asanas are best practiced first in your yoga routine, followed by breathing (Pranayama) and then meditation.

Pranayama may be practiced at any time of day except within 2-3 hours after meals. It may be done when tense or tired or when space does not allow room for postures. Pranayama is best practiced straight after asanas without breaking the flow of awareness. Pranayama is a necessary pre-requisite for successful meditation.

Meditation may be done at any time of day when you feel both awake and relaxed. For best results, you should not do meditation within 2-3 hours of eating, when sleepy, or when mentally “hyped-up”. It is best is to have fresh air in a quiet and clean place that suits the concentration and awareness yoga will create.

**Do not** practice yoga in direct sunlight or after sun-bathing. Outdoors is OK but you should avoid cold wind and insects. Wear loose comfortable yoga clothing so

there is no restriction around the limbs. Exercise on an empty stomach at least three hours after eating.

**Do not** force your body under any circumstances. Many people don't take heed of this advice. They try to push their bodies into the exercises, whether the body is ready or not. This is a great mistake which does more harm than you can imagine. Work slowly with your body. Respect its limits. These limits will gradually extend and you will gain flexibility if you work regularly and sensitively at stretching your limits. The body will get the message and the tension which is preventing you from proceeding will gradually be released.

Relax briefly between each practice. Remember the golden rule: "If it's uncomfortable – DON'T"

**Do not** continue any exercise which causes pain. Pain is a message from the body which must be listened to. In some cases it may simply be the body's process of changing. In such cases, you simply need to bear with it and continue (without forcing) and it will gradually pass. In other cases you may be doing harm to some part of your body and may have to stop and do some other preparatory exercises before returning to that one. Check with your doctor or other professional if you have concerns.

Be conscientious and concentrate on what you are doing. Keep your mind on feeling what is happening in the body and concentrate on your breath and position.

**Do not** think about other things or talk to anyone while exercising. If possible, it would be best if you were alone in the room, without distractions such as radio or TV, so that you can concentrate. If this is not possible, just try to concentrate on yourself and ignore what is going on around you.

Give importance to your breathing. Each exercise has a specific way of breathing. This is an extremely important aspect of the exercise. In many cases, it is even more important than the physical movements themselves. Be conscious of your breathing and breathe slowly and deeply, according to the instructions for each exercise. In general (with some exceptions) we inhale when we stretch upward or backward and exhale when we bend downward or forward. Always breathe through the nose both in and out, unless specified otherwise. Remember "Nose for breathing-mouth for eating".

Allow your attention to flow through the body as you become aware of each muscle and the tension and energy stored there and allow that energy to flow

and the muscle relax. Complete your exercise series with deep breathing and, if possible, with deep relaxation. There are no age limits either young or old for the practice of yoga. However the application of the techniques will vary according to the abilities of the practitioner. Those with disabilities, severe, acute or chronic medical conditions should consult both with their medical practitioner and their yoga teacher to assess any dangers or difficulties which may arise.

Avoid exercising at least three months after surgery, unless you have specific permission from your doctor. Some exercises should be resumed only 6 months after surgery, unless you have your doctor's permission to start earlier. Also, avoid all exercises at any time when you suspect internal bleeding or an inflamed appendix. Never practice any yoga techniques under the influence of alcohol or mind altering drugs. There are no hard and fast dietary rules necessary to begin the practice of yoga. One does not have to give up smoking, become vegetarian, or be a purist to learn yoga.

What you might find, however, is that yoga can help you overcome those bad habits you've been wanting to shed for years and bring you into alignment with your spiritual side which can be key to overcoming vices.

Now let's look at some of the asanas, or positions, that are central to a yoga regime. We'll give you a good basic beginning yoga workout to begin your journey!

# CHAPTER V

## Beginning Your Workout

We use the word “workout” loosely here because, as we’ve pointed out, yoga is less workout and more mind-body exploration. Workout implies sweating as you push your body into exercise mode. That isn’t what yoga is about.

So, here’s a good way to start your yoga plan. Do these exercises in the order given for a good beginning workout.

### Easy Pose

Begin with the easy pose. Easy pose is a comfortable seated position for meditation. This pose opens the hips, lengthens the spine and promotes grounding and inner calm. Basically, you’re sitting cross legged like you did in school as a young child. “Criss cross apple sauce”, as my teacher used to say!

With the buttocks on the floor, cross your legs and place your feet directly below your knees. Rest your hands on your knees with the palms facing up. Press your hip bones down into the floor and reach the crown of the head up to lengthen the spine. Drop your shoulders down and back and press your chest towards the front of the room.

Relax your face, jaw, and belly. Let your tongue rest on the roof of your mouth just behind your front teeth. Breathe deeply through the nose down into the belly and hold as long as is comfortable.

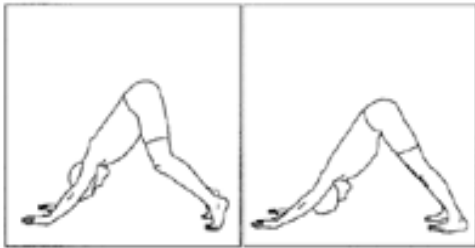
### Downward-Facing Dog

After the easy pose, move into downward-facing dog. This is one of the most widely recognized yoga poses. Downward-Facing Dog is an all-over, rejuvenating stretch.

### Benefits include:

- Calms the brain and helps relieve stress and mild depression
- Energizes the body
- Stretches the shoulders, hamstrings, calves, arches, and hands
- Strengthens the arms and legs
- Helps relieve the symptoms of menopause
- Relieves menstrual discomfort when done with head supported
- Helps prevent osteoporosis
- Improves digestion
- Relieves headache, insomnia, back pain, and fatigue
- Therapeutic for high blood pressure, asthma, flat feet, sciatica, sinusitis

Use caution doing this pose if you have carpal tunnel syndrome, are in the late stages of pregnancy, or suffer from high blood pressure.



Come onto the floor on your hands and knees. Set your knees directly below your hips and your hands slightly forward of your shoulders. Spread your palms, index fingers parallel or slightly turned out, and turn your toes under.

Exhale and lift your knees away from the floor. At first keep the knees slightly bent and the heels lifted away from the floor. Lengthen your tailbone away from the back of your pelvis and press it lightly toward the pubis. Against this resistance, lift the sitting bones toward the ceiling, and from your inner ankles draw the inner legs up into the groins.

Then with an exhalation, push your top thighs back and stretch your heels onto or down toward the floor. Straighten your knees but be sure not to lock them. Firm the outer thighs and roll the upper thighs inward slightly. Narrow the front of the pelvis.

Firm the outer arms and press the bases of the index fingers actively into the floor. From these two points, lift along your inner arms from the wrists to the tops of the shoulders. Firm your shoulder blades against your back then widen them and draw them toward the tailbone. Keep the head between the upper arms; don't let it hang.

Stay in this pose anywhere from 1 to 3 minutes. Then bend your knees to the floor with an exhalation and rest.

## **Sun Salutations**

On days when you think you have no time for yoga, try and do at least one or two rounds of the Sun Salutation. You'll feel the difference.

After downward-facing dog, move into 3 rounds of sun salutations. Stand facing the direction of the sun with both feet touching. Bring the hands together, palm-to-palm, at the heart. Inhale and raise the arms upward. Slowly bend backward, stretching arms above the head. Exhale slowly bending forward, touching the earth with respect until the hands are in line with the feet, head touching knees.

Inhale and move the right leg back away from the body in a wide backward step. Keep the hands and feet firmly on the ground, with the left foot between the hands. Raise the head. While exhaling, bring the left foot together with the right.

Keep arms straight, raise the hips and align the head with the arms, forming an upward arch. Exhale and lower the body to the floor until the feet, knees, hands, chest, and forehead are touching the ground. Inhale and slowly raise the head and bend backward as much as possible, bending the spine to the maximum

While exhaling, bring the left foot together with the right. Keep arms straight, raise the hips and align the head with the arms, forming an upward arch. Inhale and move the right leg back away from the body in a wide backward step.

Keep the hands and feet firmly on the ground, with the left foot between the hands. Raise the head. Exhale slowly bending forward, touching the earth with respect until the hands are in line with the feet, head touching knees.

Inhale and raise the arms upward. Slowly bend backward, stretching arms above the head. Stand facing the direction of the sun with both feet touching. Bring the hands together, palm-to-palm, at the heart.

**The sequence will look something like this:**



## **Tree Pose - Vriksha Asana**

### **Benefits include:**

- Strengthens thighs, calves, ankles, and spine
- Stretches the groins and inner thighs, chest and shoulders
- Improves sense of balance
- Relieves sciatica and reduces flat feet

Use caution if you suffer from insomnia or low blood pressure. If you have high blood pressure, do not raise your arms above your head.



Stand with the feet together and the arms by your sides. Bend the right leg at the knee, raise the right thigh and bring the sole of the right foot as high up the inside of the left thigh as possible.

Balancing on the left foot, raise both arms over the head, keep the elbows unbent and join the palms together. Hold the posture while breathing gently through the nostrils for about 10 complete breaths.

Lower the arms and right leg and return to the tad-asana, standing position with feet together and arms at the sides. Pause for a few moments and repeat on the

opposite leg. Do this two or three times per leg or as long as is comfortable.

The challenge of the *vriksha-asana* is maintaining balance on one leg. Poor balance is often the result of a restless mind or distracted attention. Regular practice of this posture will help focus the mind and cultivate concentration (*dharana*).

When practicing *vriksha-asana* it may help to imagine or picture a tree in the mind and apply the following technique: Imagine that the foot you are balanced on is the root of the tree and the leg is the trunk.

Continue by imagining the head and outstretched arms as the branches and leaves of the tree. You may be unsteady for a while and find the body swaying back and forth, but don't break the concentration. Like a tree bending in the wind and yet remaining upright, the body can maintain balance.

Aim to achieve the "rootedness" and firmness of a tree. Regular practice of the *vriksha-asana* improves concentration, balance and coordination. Because the weight of the entire body is balanced on one foot, the muscles of that leg are strengthened and toned as well.

As you advance in this posture and are able to remain standing for more than a few moments, try closing the eyes and maintaining your balance.

## **Extended Triangle Pose**

### **Benefits include:**

- Stretches and strengthens the thighs, knees, and ankles
- Stretches the hips, groins, hamstrings, and calves; shoulders, chest, and spine
- Stimulates the abdominal organs
- Helps relieve stress
- Improves digestion
- Helps relieve the symptoms of menopause



- Relieves backache, especially through second trimester of pregnancy
- Therapeutic for anxiety, flat feet, infertility, neck pain, osteoporosis, and sciatica

Use caution if you suffer from low blood pressure, have a heart condition, or have neck problems.



Stand with the feet together and the arms by your sides. Separate the feet slightly further than shoulder distance apart. Inhale and raise both arms straight out from the shoulders parallel to the floor with the palms facing down.

Exhale slowly while turning the torso to the left, bend at the waist and bring the right hand down to the left ankle. The palm of the right hand is placed along the outside of the left ankle. The left arm should be extended upward. Both legs and arms are kept straight without bending the knees and elbows.

Turn the head upward to the left and gaze up at the fingertips of the left hand. Inhale and return to a standing position with the arms outstretched. Hold this position for the duration of the exhaled breath. Exhale and repeat on the opposite side.

The triangle pose is basically doing slow toe touches while concentrating on your breathing and stretching your body.

## **Seated Forward Bend – Paschimottanasana**

Literally translated as "intense stretch of the west," Paschimottanasana can help a distracted mind unwind.

**Benefits include:**

- Calms the brain and helps relieve stress and mild depression
- Stretches the spine, shoulders, hamstrings
- Stimulates the liver, kidneys, ovaries, and uterus
- Improves digestion
- Helps relieve the symptoms of menopause and menstrual discomfort
- Soothes headache and anxiety and reduces fatigue
- Therapeutic for high blood pressure, infertility, insomnia, and sinusitis
- Traditional texts say that Paschimottanasana increases appetite, reduces obesity, and cures diseases.

Use caution if you suffer from asthma or have a back injury.



Sit on the floor with your buttocks supported on a folded blanket and your legs straight in front of you. Press actively through your heels. Rock slightly onto your left buttock, and pull your right sitting bone away from the heel with your right hand. Repeat on the other side.

Turn the top thighs in slightly and press them down into the floor. Press through your palms or finger tips on the floor beside your hips and lift the top of the sternum toward the ceiling as the top thighs descend.

Draw the inner groins deep into the pelvis. Inhale, and keeping the front torso

long, lean forward from the hip joints, not the waist. Lengthen the tailbone away from the back of your pelvis. If possible take the sides of the feet with your hands, thumbs on the soles, elbows fully extended; if this isn't possible, loop a strap around the foot soles, and hold the strap firmly. Be sure your elbows are straight, not bent.

When you are ready to go further, don't forcefully pull yourself into the forward bend, whether your hands are on the feet or holding the strap. Always lengthen the front torso into the pose, keeping your head raised.

If you are holding the feet, bend the elbows out to the sides and lift them away from the floor; if holding the strap, lighten your grip and walk the hands forward, keeping the arms long. The lower belly should touch the thighs first, then the upper belly, then the ribs, and the head last.

With each inhalation, lift and lengthen the front torso just slightly; with each exhalation release a little more fully into the forward bend. In this way the torso oscillates and lengthens almost imperceptibly with the breath. Eventually you may be able to stretch the arms out beyond the feet on the floor.

Stay in the pose anywhere from 1 to 3 minutes. To come up, first lift the torso away from the thighs and straighten the elbows again if they are bent. Then inhale and lift the torso up by pulling the tailbone down and into the pelvis.

### **Bound Angle Pose - Baddha Konasana**

Bound Angle Pose, also called Cobbler's Pose after the typical sitting position of Indian cobblers, is an excellent groin and hip-opener.

#### **Benefits include:**

- Stimulates abdominal organs, ovaries and prostate gland, bladder, and kidneys
- Stimulates the heart and improves general circulation
- Stretches the inner thighs, groins, and knees
- Helps relieve mild depression, anxiety, and fatigue

- Soothes menstrual discomfort and sciatica
- Helps relieve the symptoms of menopause
- Therapeutic for flat feet, high blood pressure, infertility, and asthma
- Consistent practice of this pose until late into pregnancy is said to help ease childbirth.
- Traditional texts say that Baddha Konasana destroys disease and gets rid of fatigue.



Sit with your legs straight out in front of you, raising your pelvis on a blanket if your hips or groins are tight. Exhale, bend your knees, pull your heels toward your pelvis, then drop your knees out to the sides and press the soles of your feet together. Bring your heels as close to your pelvis as you comfortably can. With the first and second finger and thumb, grasp the big toe of each foot. Always keep the outer edges of the feet firmly on the floor. If it isn't possible to hold the toes, clasp each hand around the same-side ankle or shin.

Sit so that the pubis in front and the tailbone in back are equidistant from the floor. The perineum then will be approximately parallel to the floor and the pelvis in a neutral position. Firm the sacrum and shoulder blades against the back and lengthen the front torso through the top of the sternum.

Never force your knees down. Instead release the heads of the thigh bones toward the floor. When this action leads, the knees follow. Stay in this pose anywhere from 1 to 5 minutes. Then inhale, lift your knees away from the floor, and extend the legs back to their original position.

## **Wide-Angle Seated Forward Bend - Upavistha Konasana**

Upavistha Konasana is a good preparation for most of the seated forward bends and twists, as well as the wide-leg standing poses

**Benefits include:**

- Stretches the insides and backs of the legs
- Stimulates the abdominal organs
- Strengthens the spine
- Calms the brain
- Releases groins

Use caution with this exercise if you have a lower back injury.



Sit with your legs extended out in front of you, then lean your torso back slightly on your hands and lift and open your legs to an angle of about 90 degrees (the legs should form an approximate right angle, with the pubis at the apex). Press your hands against the floor and slide your buttocks forward, widening the legs another 10 to 20 degrees. If you can't sit comfortably on the floor, raise your buttocks on a folded blanket.

Rotate your thighs outwardly, pinning the outer thighs against the floor, so that the knee caps point straight up toward the ceiling. Reach out through your heels and stretch your soles, pressing through the balls of the feet.

With your thigh bones pressed heavily into the floor and your knee caps pointing up at the ceiling, walk your hands forward between your legs. Keep your arms long.

As with all forward bends, the emphasis is on moving from the hip joints and

maintaining the length of the front torso. As soon as you find yourself bending from the waist, stop, re-establish the length from the pubis to the navel, and continue forward if possible.

Increase the forward bend on each exhalation until you feel a comfortable stretch in the backs of your legs. Stay in the pose 1 minute or longer. Then come up on an inhalation with a long front torso.

## **Full Boat Pose**

An abdominal and deep hip flexor strengthener, Boat Pose requires you to balance on the tripod of your sitting bones and tailbone.

### **Benefits include:**

- Strengthens the abdomen, hip flexors, and spine
- Stimulates the kidneys, thyroid and prostate glands, and intestines
- Helps relieve stress
- Improves digestion

Use caution if you have low blood pressure, insomnia, neck problems, are pregnant or menstruating.



Sit on the floor with your legs straight in front of you. Press your hands on the floor a little behind your hips, fingers pointing toward the feet, and strengthen the arms. Lift through the top of the sternum and lean back slightly. As you do this make sure your back doesn't round; continue to lengthen the front of your

torso between the pubis and top sternum. Sit on the "tripod" of your two sitting bones and tailbone.

Exhale and bend your knees, then lift your feet off the floor, so that the thighs are angled about 45-50 degrees relative to the floor. Lengthen your tailbone into the floor and lift your pubis toward your navel. If possible, slowly straighten your knees, raising the tips of your toes slightly above the level of your eyes. If this isn't possible remain with your knees bent, perhaps lifting the shins parallel to the floor.

Stretch your arms alongside the legs, parallel to each other and the floor. Spread the shoulder blades across your back and reach strongly out through the fingers. If this isn't possible, keep the hands on the floor beside your hips or hold on to the backs of your thighs.

While the lower belly should be firm, it shouldn't get hard and thick. Try to keep the lower belly relatively flat. Press the heads of the thigh bones toward the floor to help anchor the pose and lift the top sternum. Breathe easily. Tip the chin slightly toward the sternum so the base of the skull lifts lightly away from the back of the neck.

At first stay in the pose for 10-20 seconds. Gradually increase the time of your stay to 1 minute. Release the legs with an exhalation and sit upright on an inhalation.

## **Bridge Pose**

This active version of Bridge Pose calms the brain and rejuvenates tired legs.

### **Benefits include:**

- Stretches the chest, neck, and spine
- Calms the brain and helps alleviate stress and mild depression
- Stimulates abdominal organs, lungs, and thyroid
- Rejuvenates tired legs
- Improves digestion

- Helps relieve the symptoms of menopause
- Relieves menstrual discomfort when done supported
- Reduces anxiety, fatigue, backache, headache, and insomnia
- Therapeutic for asthma, high blood pressure, osteoporosis, and sinusitis

Use caution if you have a neck injury.



Lie supine on the floor, and if necessary, place a thickly folded blanket under your shoulders to protect your neck. Bend your knees and set your feet on the floor, heels as close to the sitting bones as possible.

Exhale and, pressing your inner feet and arms actively into the floor, push your tailbone upward toward the pubis, firming (but not hardening) the buttocks, and lift the buttocks off the floor. Keep your thighs and inner feet parallel. Clasp the hands below your pelvis and extend through the arms to help you stay on the tops of your shoulders.

Lift your buttocks until the thighs are about parallel to the floor. Keep your knees directly over the heels, but push them forward, away from the hips, and lengthen the tailbone toward the backs of the knees. Lift the pubis toward the navel.

Lift your chin slightly away from the sternum and, firming the shoulder blades against your back, press the top of the sternum toward the chin. Firm the outer arms, broaden the shoulder blades, and try to lift the space between them at the base of the neck (where it's resting on the blanket) up into the torso.

Stay in the pose anywhere from 30 seconds to 1 minute. Release with an exhalation, rolling the spine slowly down onto the floor.

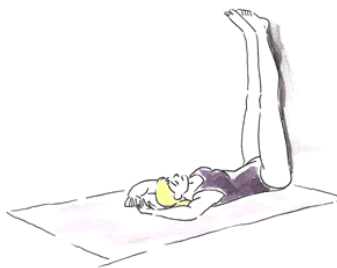


## Legs-Up-the-Wall Pose - Viparita Karani

Said to reverse the normal downward flow of a precious subtle fluid called amrita (immortal) or soma (extract) in the Hatha Yoga Pradipika, modern yogis agree that Viparita Karani may have the power to cure whatever ails you.

### Benefits include:

- Relieves tired or cramped legs and feet
- Gently stretches the back legs, front torso, and the back of the neck
- Relieves mild backache
- Calms the mind



The pose described this is a passive, supported variation of the shoulder stand. For your support you'll need one or two thickly folded blankets or a firm round bolster. You'll also need to rest your legs vertically (or nearly so) on a wall or other upright support.

Before performing the pose, determine two things about your support: its height and its distance from the wall. If you're stiffer, the support should be lower and placed farther from the wall; if you're more flexible, use a higher support that is closer to the wall.

Your distance from the wall also depends on your height: if you're shorter move closer to the wall, if taller move farther from the wall. Experiment with the position of your support until you find the placement that works for you.

Start with your support about 5 to 6 inches away from the wall. Sit sideways on right end of the support, with your right side against the wall (left-handers can

substitute "left" for "right" in these instructions). Exhale and, with one smooth movement, swing your legs up onto the wall and your shoulders and head lightly down onto the floor.

The first few times you do this you may slide off the support and plop down with your buttocks on the floor. Don't get discouraged. Try lowering the support and/or moving it slightly further off the wall until you gain some facility with this movement, then move back closer to the wall.

Your sitting bones don't need to be right against the wall, but they should be "dripping" down into the space between the support and the wall. Check that the front of your torso gently arches from the pubis to the top of the shoulders.

If the front of your torso seems flat, then you've probably slipped a bit off the support. Bend your knees, press your feet into the wall and lift your pelvis off the support a few inches, tuck the support a little higher up under your pelvis, then lower your pelvis onto the support again.

Lift and release the base of your skull away from the back of your neck and soften your throat. Don't push your chin against your sternum; instead let your sternum lift toward the chin. Take a small roll (made from a towel for example) under your neck if the cervical spine feels flat. Open your shoulder blades away from the spine and release your hands and arms out to your sides, palms up.

Keep your legs relatively firm, just enough to hold them vertically in place. Release the heads of the thigh bones and the weight of your belly deeply into your torso, toward the back of the pelvis. Soften your eyes and turn them down to look into your heart.

Stay in this pose anywhere from 5 to 15 minutes. Be sure not to twist off the support when coming out. Instead, slide off the support onto the floor before turning to the side. You can also bend your knees and push your feet against the wall to lift your pelvis off the support. Then slide the support to one side, lower your pelvis to the floor, and turn to the side. Stay on your side for a few breaths, and come up to sitting with an exhalation.

## **Corpse Pose - Savasana**

Savasana is a pose of total relaxation—making it one of the most challenging asanas.

**Benefits include:**

- Calms the brain and helps relieve stress and mild depression
- Relaxes the body
- Reduces headache, fatigue, and insomnia
- Helps to lower blood pressure



In Savasana it's essential that the body be placed in a neutral position. Sit on the floor with your knees bent, feet on the floor, and lean back onto your forearms. Lift your pelvis slightly off the floor and, with your hands, push the back of the pelvis toward the tailbone, then return the pelvis to the floor.

Inhale and slowly extend the right leg, then the left, pushing through the heels. Release both legs, softening the groins, and see that the legs are angled evenly relative to the mid-line of the torso, and that the feet turn out equally. You should narrow the front pelvis and soften (but don't flatten) the lower back.

With your hands lift the base of the skull away from the back of the neck and release the back of the neck down toward the tailbone. If you have any difficulty doing this, support the back of the head and neck on a folded blanket. Broaden the base of the skull too, and lift the crease of the neck diagonally into the center of the head. Make sure your ears are equidistant from your shoulders.

Reach your arms toward the ceiling, perpendicular to the floor. Rock slightly from side to side and broaden the back ribs and the shoulder blades away from the spine. Then release the arms to the floor, angled evenly relative to the mid-line of torso.

Turn the arms outward and stretch them away from the space between the shoulder blades. Rest the backs of the hands on the floor as close as you comfortably can to the index finger knuckles. Make sure the shoulder blades are resting evenly on the floor. Imagine the lower tips of the shoulder blades are lifting diagonally into your back toward the top of the sternum. From here, spread the collarbones.

In addition to quieting the physical body in Savasana, it's also necessary to pacify the sense organs. Soften the root of the tongue, the wings of the nose, the channels of the inner ears, and the skin of the forehead, especially around the bridge of the nose between the eyebrows. Let the eyes sink to the back of the head, then turn them downward to gaze at the heart. Release your brain to the back of the head.

Stay in this pose for 5 minutes for every 30 minutes of practice. To exit, first roll gently with an exhalation onto one side, preferably the right. Take 2 or 3 breaths. With another exhalation press your hands against the floor and lift your torso, dragging your head slowly after. The head should always come up last.

After completing these exercises, take a few moments to practice some deep meditation which is covered in the next section.

## **Desktop Yoga**

Whether you're a high-powered executive or an administrative assistant with your boss's problems becoming your own, many people in the business world experience an inordinate amount of stress at the office. It would be nice to have a quiet place to practice conventional yoga techniques, but that isn't always possible.

Yoga experts have devised a way for you to do a short yoga program right at your desk. Try these exercises to de-stress at the office.

- Sit up tall in your chair, or if possible stand up. Stretch your arms overhead and interlock your fingers, turn the palms to the ceiling. Take a deep breathe in and on the exhale extend your side torso and take the tips of the shoulder blades into the body. Take another deep breathe and on the

exhale stretch to the right, inhale come up and exhale stretch to the left.

- On an inhale, lift your shoulders up to your ears and then exhale and let them drop. Repeat 3 times. Contract the shoulder muscle fully when you lift your shoulders up and then on the drop it will release more completely.
- Stand (or sit at your desk) with your feet planted firmly in the ground. Inhale and raise the arms out to the side, palms down. Exhale and rotate the palms up, rolling the shoulders back. Take an inhale and on the exhale, bend the elbows in toward the waist. Inhale and on the exhale bring the palms to the belly. This exercise helps to open the chest and extend the upper back.
- Take your hands behind your back and interlock the fingers, stretching the shoulders back, opening the chest. Take several breaths. Make sure that your head stays in the mid-line and that your eye gaze is on the horizon.
- Stand by the wall, extend your right arm and place the palm on the wall with the fingers up. On an exhale, turn your chest away, taking the shoulder blade into the torso.
- Stand by your desk and place your palms on the desk top with the fingers pointing toward your body. Gently stretch the lower arm and wrist.
- Wrap the right arm around the torso and place your right hand on the left shoulder with the elbow at chest height and facing forward. Put your left hand on the right elbow and on an exhale, stretch it toward the left, opening between the shoulder blades. Hold for several breaths and then release. Repeat on the other side
- Reach the right arm into the air and on an exhale bend the elbow and reach your fingers down the back, between the shoulder blades. Place the left hand on the elbow and on an exhale gently pull the elbow to the left. Relax the ribs and hold for several breaths. Release and repeat on the other side
- Hug your arms around your chest and then put one elbow underneath the other, the hand facing toward each other and fingers to the ceiling. Exhale

and slowly raise the arms so that the elbows come up to the height of the shoulder, keep the shoulders down. Repeat on the other side.

- Sit on your chair and pull back away from the desk, resting your palms on the desk top and extend your side torso. Lift the ribs up, let the shoulder blades slide towards the desk, and make sure the head is extended from the spine with the chin towards the chest.
- Sit on your chair, feet planted firmly in the floor, sitting bones pressing into the chair. Extend the side torso, and twist to the right (on an exhale), one hand on back to chair, one hand on the side of the chair. Hold for a few breaths and then repeat the other side.
- Sit forward on your chair and open the legs a little wider than the hips. Lean forward from the hips and drop your torso down. Let the head and arms hang down toward the floor.
- Sit upright in your chair with your feet planted firmly on the ground. Press your sitting bones down into the chair and extend the side torso. Relax your shoulders. Place your palms on your knees and spread the fingers wide. Take a deep breath in and on the exhale extend your tongue to your chin; focus your eyes to your nose. Inhale and bring the tongue back into the mouth. Exhale and stick the tongue out again and this time focus the eyes up to your forehead. Repeat 3 times.
- 

Sit upright on chair, relax your shoulders and extend the side torso up. Relax your facial muscles, the jaw and tongue. Circle the eyes clockwise 8 times and counter-clockwise 8 times. Close your eyes and breathe deeply for a few slow breaths.

You may want to try a quick relaxation meditation to wrap up this session just as a way to refresh and regroup.

Yoga can be used for more than simple de-stressing. It can also be used to alleviate the symptoms of everyday ailments without the use of medication.

## **Yoga For Headaches**

There are many different kinds of headaches. Some (like tension headaches and migraines) are fairly common; others (like sinus headaches or headaches caused by brain tumors) are relatively rare. Various treatments are recommended for dealing with headaches. Yoga asanas and breathing can help too, though mostly with tension-type headaches.

Everyone gets a tension headache now and again, but if you suffer from this type of headache habitually, it's important to consult a doctor or other health practitioner to treat the pain and work to resolve the ultimate source of the tension.

When treating a tension headache with asanas and breathing, it's important to start practicing as soon as possible after you start to feel the pain. Once the headache is established it will be very difficult to alleviate.

Here are the yoga positions that can be used to alleviate a headache:

#### Child's Pose (Balasana)



1. Kneel on the floor. Touch your big toes together and sit on your heels, then separate your knees about as wide as your hips.
2. Exhale and lay your torso down between your thighs. Broaden your sacrum across the back of your pelvis and narrow your hip points toward the navel, so that they nestle down onto the inner thighs. Lengthen your tailbone away from the back of the pelvis while you lift the base of your skull away from the back of your neck.
3. Lay your hands on the floor alongside your torso, palms up, and release the fronts of your shoulders toward the floor. Feel how the weight of the front shoulders pulls the shoulder blades wide across your back.
4. Balasana is a resting pose. Stay anywhere from 30 seconds to a few minutes. Beginners can also use Balasana to get a taste of a deep forward bend, where the torso rests on the thighs. Stay in the pose from 1 to 3 minutes. To come up, first lengthen the front torso, and then with an inhalation lift from the tailbone as it presses down and into the

pelvis.

Note: you can do the child's pose when you get tired, out of breath, or need to rest. Simply pick up with your exercises again when refreshed. Child's pose is also a great way to quickly alleviate stress at any time.

## **Standing Forward Bend**



1. Stand in relaxed position with your hands on your hips. Exhale and bend forward from the hip joints, not from the waist. As you descend draw the front torso out of the groins and open the space between the pubis and top sternum. As in all the forward bends, the emphasis is on lengthening the front torso as you move more fully into the position.
2. If possible, with your knees straight, bring your palms or finger tips to the floor slightly in front of or beside your feet, or bring your palms to the backs of your ankles. If this isn't possible, cross your forearms and hold your elbows. Press the heels firmly into the floor and lift the sitting bones toward the ceiling. Turn the top thighs slightly inward.
3. With each inhalation in the pose, lift and lengthen the front torso just slightly; with each exhalation release a little more fully into the forward bend. In this way the torso oscillates almost imperceptibly with the breath. Let your head hang from the root of the neck, which is deep in the upper back, between the shoulder blades.
4. This pose can be used as a resting position between the standing



poses. Stay in the pose for 30 seconds to 1 minute. It can also be practiced as a pose in itself.

5. Don't roll the spine to come up. Instead bring your hands back onto your hips and reaffirm the length of the front torso. Then press your tailbone down and into the pelvis and come up on an inhalation with a long front torso.

## **YOGA FOR MENSTRUAL CRAMPS**

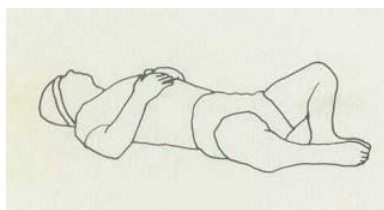
Menstrual cramps can be very debilitating for those who suffer from severe cramps early in their cycle. While your first inclination might be to lay on your couch in the fetus position moaning in pain, try yoga to relieve the pain.

Exercise during menstruation is generally highly recommended. It's believed that exercise can ease the discomfort of your period; quell mood swings, anxiety, and depression; and reduce bloating.

Most contemporary yoga teachers advise a fairly conservative approach toward asana practice during menstruation. This makes perfect sense for women who feel sluggish during their cycle.

However, many other women don't feel the need to change anything about their practice during menstruation, except maybe to limit strenuous inverted poses. Each student should decide for herself what kind of asana sequence is most appropriate for her body during menstruation.

### **Reclining Bound Angle**



- Sit with the soles of your feet touching each other. Exhale and lower your back torso toward the floor, first leaning on your hands.
- Once you are leaning back on your forearms, use your hands to spread the

back of your pelvis and release your lower back and upper buttocks through your tailbone. Bring your torso all the way to the floor, supporting your head and neck on a blanket roll or bolster if needed.

- With your hands grip your topmost thighs and rotate your inner thighs externally, pressing your outer thighs away from the sides of your torso. Next slide your hands along your outer thighs from the hips toward the knees and widen your outer knees away from your hips.
- Then slide your hands down along your inner thighs, from the knees to the groins. Imagine that your inner groins are sinking into your pelvis. Push your hip points together, so that while the back pelvis widens, the front pelvis narrows. Lay your arms on the floor, angled at about 45 degrees from the sides of your torso, palms up.
- The natural tendency in this pose is to push the knees toward the floor in the belief that this will increase the stretch of the inner thighs and groins. But especially if your groins are tight, pushing the knees down will have just the opposite of the intended effect: The groins will harden, as will your belly and lower back. Instead, imagine that your knees are floating up toward the ceiling and continue settling your groins deep into your pelvis. As your groins drop toward the floor, so will your knees.
- To start, stay in this pose for one minute. Gradually extend your stay anywhere from five to 10 minutes. To come out, use your hands to press your thighs together, then roll over onto one side and push yourself away from the floor, head trailing the torso.
- Move back into sitting position with the soles of your feet touching.

## **Upward Bow**

Basically, this is a simple back bend. Lay on the floor, place your hands above your head flat on the floor and raise your back into an arched position.

## **Seated Twist**

Still sitting twist to the right with an exhalation, hold for 30 seconds, then twist

to the left for 30 seconds. Repeat three times to each side, each time holding for 30 seconds.

## **YOGA FOR DEPRESSION**

The word "depression" covers a wide range of conditions, from long-standing and severe clinical or major depression to shorter-term and episodic mild depression, to situational depression brought on by a major life change, such as the death of a spouse, job loss, divorce.

Many different therapies are available for depression, including anti-depressants and psychotherapy. Studies indicate that regular exercise too, including yoga asanas and breathing, can help some people ease the symptoms of mild to moderate forms of depression.

Of course, one major hurdle in using exercise to alleviate depression is motivation, or lack of it. Most depressed people don't really feel much like getting out of bed in the morning, much less exercising.

Then too, failure to see the exercise program through can make a depressed person feel even worse. So start off slowly, and be sure to choose an exercise that you really enjoy; if possible, exercise with a supportive partner or group. Try to exercise at least three times a week.

### **Headstand**

- Use a folded blanket or sticky mat to pad your head and forearms. Kneel on the floor. Lace your fingers together and set the forearms on the floor, elbows at shoulder width.
- Roll the upper arms slightly outward, but press the inner wrists firmly into the floor. Set the crown of your head on the floor.
- If you are just beginning to practice this pose, press the bases of your palms together and snuggle the back of your head against the clasped hands. More experienced students can open their hands and place the back of the head into the open palms.

- Inhale and lift your knees off the floor. Carefully walk your feet closer to your elbows, heels elevated. Actively lift through the top thighs, forming an inverted "V."
- Firm the shoulder blades against your back and lift them toward the tailbone so the front torso stays as long as possible. This should help prevent the weight of the shoulders collapsing onto your neck and head.
- Exhale and lift your feet away from the floor. Take both feet up at the same time, even if it means bending your knees and hopping lightly off the floor. As the legs (or thighs, if your knees are bent) rise to perpendicular to the floor, firm the tailbone against the back of the pelvis.
- Turn the upper thighs in slightly, and actively press the heels toward the ceiling (straightening the knees if you bent them to come up). The center of the arches should align over the center of the pelvis, which in turn should align over the crown of the head.
- Firm the outer arms inward, and soften the fingers. Continue to press the shoulder blades against the back, widen them, and draw them toward the tailbone. Keep the weight evenly balanced on the two forearms.
- It's also essential that your tailbone continues to lift upward toward the heels. Once the backs of the legs are fully lengthened through the heels, maintain that length and press up through the balls of the big toes so the inner legs are slightly longer than the outer.
- As a beginner, stay in this position for 10 seconds. Gradually add 5 to 10 seconds onto your stay every day or so until you can comfortably hold the pose for 3 minutes. Then continue for 3 minutes each day for a week or two, until you feel relatively comfortable in the pose.
- Again gradually add 5 to 10 seconds onto your stay every day or so until you can comfortably hold the pose for 5 minutes. Come down with an exhalation, without losing the lift of the shoulder blades, with both feet touching the floor at the same time.

## **Head to Knee Forward Bend**

### **Benefits Include:**

- Calms the brain and helps relieve mild depression
- Stretches the spine, shoulders, hamstrings, and groins
- Stimulates the liver and kidneys
- Improves digestion
- Helps relieve the symptoms of menopause
- Relieves anxiety, fatigue, headache, menstrual discomfort
- Therapeutic for high blood pressure, insomnia, and sinusitis
- Strengthens the back muscles during pregnancy (up to second trimester), done without coming forward, keeping your back spine concave and front torso long.

### **Use caution with this pose if you have a knee injury.**

1. Sit on the floor with your buttocks lifted on a folded blanket and your legs straight in front of you. Inhale, bend your right knee, and draw the heel back toward your perineum. Rest your right foot sole lightly against your inner left thigh, and lay the outer right leg on the floor, with the shin at a right angle to the left leg (if your right knee doesn't rest comfortably on the floor, support it with a folded blanket).
2. Press your right hand against the inner right groin, where the thigh joins the pelvis, and your left hand on the floor beside the hip. Exhale and turn the torso slightly to the left, lifting the torso as you push down on and ground the inner right thigh. Line up your navel with the middle of the left thigh. You can just stay here, using a strap to help you lengthen the spine evenly, grounding through the sitting bones.
3. Or, when you are ready, you can drop the strap and reach out with your right hand to take the inner left foot, thumb on the sole. Inhale and lift the front torso, pressing the top of the left thigh into the floor and extending actively through the left heel. Use the pressure of the left hand on the floor to increase the twist to the left. Then reach your left hand to the outside of the foot. With the arms fully extended, lengthen the front torso from the

pubis to the top of the sternum.

4. Exhale and extend forward from the groins, not the hips. Be sure not to pull yourself forcefully into the forward bend, hunching the back and shortening the front torso. As you descend, bend your elbows out to the sides and lift them away from the floor.
5. Lengthen forward into a comfortable stretch. The lower belly should touch the thighs first, the head last. Stay in the pose anywhere from 1 to 3 minutes. Come up with an inhalation and repeat the instructions with the legs reversed for the same length of time.

# CHAPTER VI

## Complete Yogic Relaxation

Yogic relaxation has three aspects: physical relaxation, mental relaxation, and spiritual relaxation. As you lie in Corpse Pose for your final relaxation, practice the thought-focusing exercises below to relax body, mind, and spirit.

### **Part 1: Physical relaxation**

Take a few slow, rhythmic breaths using your abdomen. Then follow this exercise in autosuggestion for five to ten minutes. Have a clear mental picture of your feet, think about the downward pull of gravity, then send a mental command to your feet by silently saying, "I am relaxing my feet, I am relaxing my feet, my feet are relaxed." Move up the body; each time clearly visualize the area you are focusing on, think about the pull of gravity and your rhythmic breathing, then send a command to relax to your ankles, calves, knees and thighs, hips and buttocks, abdomen and chest, lower back, middle back, shoulders and neck, hands and fingers, arms, mouth and eyes, facial muscles and scalp. Finally, relax your internal organs, Again, visualize the area, breathe slowly, and send the command to relax to one organ at a time: kidneys, liver, intestines, bladder, pancreas, stomach, heart, lungs, and brain. Your subconscious mind conveys the command,

### **Part 2: Mental relaxation**

The mind is always moving between the past and the future, and in the present it is constantly pulled by the five senses. It needs to relax, so practice this mental relaxation for about two minutes. Continue abdominal breathing, this time inhaling and exhaling for five seconds each. The speed and rhythm of your breath and your thought waves are intimately linked. Start to observe the flow of air moving in and out of your nostrils. Soon your mind will be calm; if you sense it becoming active, focus on your breathing until it quietens.

### **Part 3: Spiritual relaxation**

Complete spiritual relaxation is possible only if your thoughts have a carefree focus, so now visualize a calm lake, unruffled by waves, Picture the still water resting on your inner self, which is timeless and unchanging, Continue for five

to eight minutes. Then take a few deep breaths, slowly move your legs and arms, and give your whole body a good stretch, Finally, spend a minute sitting cross-legged and chant the mantra "OM". Now you will be able to hold this sense of relaxation and focus for several hours.



# CHAPTER VII

## Final Relaxation

At the end of every yoga session, you should practice a final relaxation lasting 15-20 minutes. This will bring about complete physical, mental, and spiritual relaxation, which is a key experience of yoga.

1. Inhale and lift your right leg 10cm (4in) off the mat. Hold your breath for a few seconds, tense your leg, then exhale and allow your leg to drop. Repeat with the left leg.
2. Inhale and lift both arms 10cm (4in) off the mat. Hold your breath for a few seconds, tense your arms, then exhale and allow your arms to drop to the mat.
3. Inhale and **lift** your hips and buttocks off the mat. Hold your breath for a few seconds, tense your buttocks, then exhale and release.
4. Inhale and lift your chest off the mat. Hold your breath for a few seconds, tense your shoulder blades, then exhale and release.

Following these steps your blood pressure and body temperature will drop during final relaxation so, depending on the season, you may like to cover yourself loosely with a blanket before you begin.

5. Inhale and pull your shoulders towards your ears. Hold your breath for a few seconds, then exhale and release your shoulders.
6. Inhale and squeeze the muscles of your face tightly together. Hold your breath for a few seconds, then exhale and release.
7. Inhale, open your mouth, stick your tongue out, and look to your forehead,

Hold your breath for a few seconds, then exhale and release.

8. With an inhalation, slowly roll your head to one side; with an exhalation, roll it to the other side. End by bringing your head back to centre.

# CHAPTER VIII

## Yogic Diet

A diet that is wholly conducive to the practice of Yoga and spiritual progress is called Yogic diet. Diet has intimate connection with the mind. Mind is formed out of the subtlest portion of food. Sage Uddalaka instructs his son Svetaketu “Food, when consumed becomes threefold: the gross particles become excrement, the middling ones flesh and the fine ones the mind. My child, when curd is churned, its fine particles which rise upwards, form butter. Thus, my child, when food is consumed, the fine particles which rise upwards form the mind. Hence verily the mind is food.”

Again you will find in the Chhandogya Upanishad: “By the purity of food one becomes purified in his inner nature; by the purification of his inner nature he verily gets memory of the Self; and by the attainment of the memory of the Self, all ties and attachments are severed.”

Diet is of three kinds viz., Sattvic diet, Rajasic diet and Tamasic diet. Milk, barely, wheat, cereals, butter, cheese, tomatoes, honey, dates, fruits, almonds and sugar-candy are all Sattvic foodstuffs. They render the mind pure and calm. Fish, eggs, meat, salt, chillies and asafoetida are Rajasic foodstuffs. They excite passion. Beef, wine, garlic, onions and tobacco are Tamasic foodstuffs. They fill the mind with anger, darkness and inertia.

Lord Krishna says to Arjuna: “The food which is dear to each is threefold. Hear the distinctions of these. The foods which increase vitality, energy, vigor, health and joy and which are delicious, bland, substantial and agreeable are dear to the pure. The passionate desire foods that are bitter, sour, saline, excessively hot, pungent, dry and burning and which produce pain, grief and disease. The food which is stale, tasteless, putrid and rotten, leavings and impure is dear to the Tamasic.”

Food plays an important part in meditation. Different foods produce different effects on different compartments of the brain. For purposes of meditation, the food should be light, nutritious and Sattvic. Milk, fruits, almonds, butter, sugar-candy, green gram, Bengal gram soaked in water overnight, bread, etc., are all very helpful in meditation. *Thed* (a kind of root available in abundance in the Himalayan regions) is very Sattvic. Tea and sugar should be used in moderation.

It is better if you can give them up entirely. Dried ginger-powder can be mixed with milk and taken frequently.

Indian Yogins like this very much. Another health-giving stuff is myrobalan of the yellow variety which can be chewed now and then. In the Vagbhata it is represented as even superior to a nourishing mother. It takes care of the body better than a mother does. A mother gets annoyed with her child sometimes, but myrobalan always keeps an even temperament and is cheerful and enthusiastic in attending to the well-being of human beings. It preserves semen and stops all nocturnal emissions. Potato, boiled without salt or baked on fire, is also an excellent food for practitioners.

A beginner should be careful in choosing food-stuffs of Sattvic nature. Food exercises tremendously vast influence over the mind. You can see it obviously in everyday-life. It is very difficult to control mind after a heavy, sumptuous, indigestible, rich meal. The mind runs, wanders and jumps like an ape all the time. Alcohol causes great excitement of the mind.

Evolution is better than revolution. You should not make sudden changes in anything, particularly so in matters pertaining to food and drink. Let the change be slow and gradual. The system should accommodate it without any trouble. *Nature non agit per saltum* (nature never moves by leaps).

Food is only a mass of energy. Water and air also supply energy to the body. You can live without food for several days; but you cannot live without air even for a few minutes. Oxygen is even more important. What is wanted to feed the body is energy. If you can supply this energy by any other means, you can entirely dispense with food. Yogins live without food by drinking nectar.

This nectar flows through a hole in the palate. It dribbles and nourishes the body. A Jnani can draw energy directly from his pure, irresistible will and support the body without any food whatsoever. If you know the process of drawing the energy from the Cosmic Energy, then you can maintain the body for any length of time and can dispense with food completely.

Food is of four kinds. There are liquids which are drunk; solids which are pulverized by the teeth and eaten; there are semi-solids which are taken in by licking; and there are soft articles that are swallowed without mastication. All articles of food should be thoroughly masticated in the mouth until they are reduced to quite a liquid before being swallowed. Then only they can be readily

digested, absorbed and assimilated in the system.

The diet should be such as can maintain physical efficiency and good health. The well-being of an individual depends more on perfect nutrition than on anything else. Various sorts of intestinal diseases, increased susceptibility to infectious diseases, lack of high vitality and power of resistance, rickets, scurvy, anaemia or poverty of blood, beriberi, etc., are due to faulty nutrition. It should be remembered that it is not so much the climate as food which plays the vital role in producing a strong healthy body or a weakling suffering from a host of diseases.

An appreciable knowledge of the science of dietetics is essential for everybody, especially for spiritual aspirants, to keep up physical efficiency and good health. Aspirants should be able to make out a cheap and well-balanced diet from only a certain articles of diet. What is needed is a well-balanced diet, not a *rich* diet. A rich diet produces diseases of the liver, kidneys and pancreas.

A well-balanced diet helps a man to grow, to turn out more work, increases his body-weight, and keeps up the efficiency, stamina and a high standard of vim and vigor. You are what you eat.

Where can Sannyasins in India, who live on public alms get a well-balanced diet? On some days they get pungent stuffs only, on some other days sweetmeats only and yet on some other days sour things only. But they are able to draw the requisite energy through power of meditation. This unique Yogic method is unknown to the medical profession and to the scientists. Whenever the mind is concentrated, a divine wave bathes all the tissues with a divine elixir. All the cells are renovated and vivified.

Gluttons and epicureans cannot dream of getting success in Yoga. He who takes moderate diet, who has regulated his diet can become a Yogi, not others. That is the reason why Lord Krishna says: "Verily Yoga is not for him who eat too much, nor who abstaineth to excess, nor who is too much addicted to sleep, nor even to wakefulness, O Arjuna! Yoga kills out all pain for him who is regulated in eating and amusement, regulated in performing actions, regulated in sleeping and waking." Therefore take pleasant, wholesome and sweet food half-stomachful; fill a quarter stomach with water and allow the remaining quarter stomach free for expansion of gas. Offer up the act to the Lord. This is moderate diet.

All articles that are putrid, stale, decomposed, unclean, twice cooked, kept overnight, should be abandoned. The diet should be fresh, simple, light, bland, wholesome, easily digestible and nutritious. He who lives to eat is a sinner, but he who eats to live is verily a saint. In the Siva Samhita it is said: “Yoga should not be practiced immediately after a meal, nor when one is very hungry; before beginning the practice, some milk and butter should be taken.”

You will find in the Yoga-Tattva Upanishad: “The proficient in Yoga should abandon the food detrimental to the practice of Yoga. He should give up salt, mustard, sour things, hot, pungent or bitter articles, asafoetida, women, emaciation of the body by fasts etc. During the early stages of practice, food of milk and ghee is ordained; also food consisting of wheat, green pulse and red rice is said to favor the progress. Then he will be able to retain his breath as long as he likes. By thus retaining the breath as long as he likes, Kevala-Kumbhaka (cessation of breath without inhalation and exhalation) is attained. When Kevala-Kumbhaka is attained by one and thus inhalation and exhalation are dispensed with, there is nothing unattainable in the three worlds to him.”

In the Bhikshuka-Upanishad you will find: “Paramahamsas like Samavartaka, Aruni, Svetaketu, Jada Bharata, Dattatreya, Suka, Vamadeva, Haritaki and others take eight mouthfuls and strive after Moksha alone through the path of Yoga.”

Manu, Jesus and Buddha exhorted the people to refrain from using liquors, intoxicants and drugs as these are deleterious in their effects. No spiritual progress is possible without abandoning them.

The vast majority of persons dig their graves through their teeth. No rest is given to the stomach. After all, man wants very little on this bountiful earth—a few loaves of bread, a little butter and some cold water. This will amply suffice to keep the life going. People, on the contrary, stuff their stomachs with all sorts of things, eatable and uneatable, on account of the force of habit even when there is no appetite. This is very bad. All diseases take their origin in overloading the stomach. Hunger is the best sauce. If there is hunger, food can be digested well. If you have no appetite, do not take anything. Let the stomach enjoy a full holiday.

A variety of dishes overworks the stomach, induces capricious appetite and renders the tongue fastidious. Then it becomes difficult to please the tongue.

Therefore control the tongue first; then all the other senses can be easily controlled.

Man has invented so many kinds of dishes just to satisfy his palate and has made life complex and miserable. He calls himself a civilized man, when he is really ignorant and deluded by the senses. His mind gets upset when he cannot get his usual dishes in a new place. Is this real strength? He has become an absolute slave of his tongue. This is very deplorable. Be natural and simple in eating and drinking. Moderation is Yoga. Eat to live and not live to eat. Follow this golden rule and be happy. You can then devote more time to Yoga practices.

A Yogic student who spends his time wholly in pure meditation wants very little food. One or one and a half seers of milk and some fruits per day will quite suffice. But a Yogi who ascends the platform for vigorous active work wants abundant nutritious food.

Vegetarian diet has been acclaimed to be most conducive to spiritual and psychic advancement. It has been found that meat augments animal passion and decreases intellectual capacity. While it is true that meat-eating countries are physically active and strong, the same cannot be said of their spiritual attainments. Meat is not at all necessary for the keeping up of perfect health, rigor and vitality.

On the contrary, it is highly deleterious to health. It brings in its train a host of ailments such as tape-worm, albuminuria and other diseases of the kidneys. Killing of animals for food is a great sin. Instead of killing the egoism and the idea of "mine-ness," ignorant people kill innocent animals under pretext of sacrifice to goddess, but in reality it is meant to please their own tongue or palate.

What inhuman horrible crimes are being committed in the name of God and Religion! Ahimsa (non-injuring) is the first virtue that a spiritual aspirant should try to possess. You should have reverence for life. Lord Jesus says: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Mahavira shouted in a trumpet-like voice: "Regard every living being as thyself and harm no one." The Law of Karma is inexorable, unrelenting, immutable. The pain you inflict upon another will surely rebound upon you and the happiness you radiate will come back to you

adding to your happiness. He who knows this Law will not hurt anybody.

Meat-eating and alcoholism are closely allied. The craving for liquor dies a natural death, when the meat is withdrawn. The question of birth-control becomes very difficult in the case of those who take meat. To them mind-control is next to impossible. Mark how the meat-eating tiger and the cow or elephant living on green grass are poles asunder! The one is wild and ferocious, the other is mild and peaceful. Meat has direct influence on the different compartments of the brain.

The first and foremost step in the spiritual advancement of an aspirant is the giving up of meat. The Divine Light will not descend, if the stomach is loaded with meat. In large meat-eating countries cancer mortality is very high. Vegetarians keep up sound health till old age. Even in the West doctors in hospitals put patients on a regimen of vegetable diet. They convalesce quickly. It is welcome sign to see that at least in some of the countries of Europe vegetarian hotels are springing up in amazing numbers, and it is not too much to expect that in the course of a decade or two the Westerners will become quite a different race of people altogether in their food, dress, manners, habits and social customs.

Pythagoras seems to bewail when he says: "Beware, Omortals, of defiling your bodies with sinful food. There are cereals, there are fruits bending their branches down by their weight, and luxurious grapes on the vines. There are sweet vegetables and herbs which the fire can render palatable and mellow. Nor are you denied milk, nor honey, fragrance of the aroma of the thyme flower. The bountiful earth offers you an abundance of pure food and provides for meals obtainable without slaughter and bloodshed."

Fasting is interdicted for practitioners of Yoga as it produces weakness. But occasional mild fasts are highly beneficial. They will overhaul the system thoroughly, give rest to the stomach and the intestines and eliminate uric acid. Yogic students may take one full meal at 11 o'clock, a cup of warm milk in the morning and half a seer of milk and some plantains (or oranges or apples) at night with much advantage. The night meal should be very light. If the stomach is overloaded, sleep will supervene and as too much sleep is injurious to Yogic practices, one cannot make any real headway in the path of Yoga. Therefore a diet consisting of milk and fruits alone is a splendid menu for all practitioners.



Aspirants should avoid all narcotics, coffee, tea, alcohol and smoke that stimulate the senses. Our senses are compared to restive horses, and they become uncontrollable by taking narcotics. You should control them by refraining from taking narcotics. We are all slaves of our senses more or less and the senses in turn are the slaves of narcotics. If you really crave for perfection, control of mind and success in Yoga, avoid these narcotics by all possible means.

Boil half a seer of milk along with some boiled rice, ghee and sugar. This is called *Charu*. This is an excellent food for Yogic practitioners. This is for dinner. Half a seer of milk and some fruits will do for the night. Try this prescription and tell me the benefits you have derived in your Sadhana.

Milk should not be boiled too much. It should be removed from fire the moment the boiling point is reached. Excessive boiling destroys all nutritious principles and vitamins and renders milk unfit for consumption. Milk is an ideal food for aspirants. It is a perfect food by itself.

Fruit-diet exercises a marvelous influence upon the constitution. This is a natural diet. Fruits are tremendous energy-producers. Fruits and milk help concentration and meditation. Barley, wheat, milk, ghee and honey promote longevity of life and increase power and stamina. Fruit-juice and the water wherein sugar-candy is dissolved are very good drinks. Butter mixed with sugar-candy and almonds soaked in water overnight will cool the system.

Above all do not make much fuss about your diet. You need not advertise to everyone that you are able to live on a particular form of diet. The observance of such Niyama (rules) is for your own advancement in the spiritual path and you will not be spiritually benefited by giving publicity to your practices. There are many nowadays who make it their profession to make money and their livelihood by performing some Yoga-Asanas, Pranayama or by having some diet regulation as eating only raw articles or leaves or roots. These people cannot have any real spiritual growth. The goal of life is Self-realization, and aspirants should always keep this in view and do intense Sadhana with zeal and patience.

Live a natural simple life. Take simple food that is wholly agreeable to your system. You should have your own menu to suit your constitution. You are

yourself the best judge to select a Sattvic diet. In the matter of food and drink you will do well to eat and drink as a master. You should not have the least craving for any particular diet. You should not become a slave to this food or that food. Simple, natural, non-stimulating, tissue-building, energy-producing, non-alcoholic food and drink will keep the mind calm and pure and will help the student of Yoga in his practices and in the attainment of the goal of life.

### **SATTVIC- RAJASIC- TAMASIC ARTICLES OF DIET**

#### **SATTVIC**

Cow's milk.  
 Cream.  
 Cheese  
 Butter.  
 Curd.  
 Ghee.  
 Sweet fruits.  
 Apples.  
 Bananas.  
 Grapes.  
 Papaya.  
 Pomegranates.  
 Mangoes.  
 Oranges.  
 Pears.  
 Pineapples.  
 Guavas.  
 Figs.  
 Vegetables.  
 Coconut.  
 Brinjals.  
 Potatoes.  
 Cabbages.  
 Spinach.

#### **RAJAS**

Fish  
 Eggs  
 Meat  
 Salt  
 Chillies  
 Chutney  
 Asafoetida  
 Pickles  
 Tamarind  
 Mustard  
 Sour Things  
 Hot Things  
 Tea  
 Coffee  
 Cocoa  
 Ovaltine  
 White Sugar  
 Carrots  
 Turnips  
 Spices

#### **TAMASIC**

Beef  
 Pork  
 Wine  
 Onions  
 Garlic  
 Tobacco  
 Rotten Things  
 Stale Things  
 Unclean  
 Twice Cooked  
 Intoxicants  
 Liquor  
 Drugs

# CHAPTER IX

## Yoga Glossary

**ABHYASA**—Spiritual practice

**AHAM BRAHMA ASMI**—I am Brahman

**ATMAN**—The Self

**AVIDYA**—Nescience

**BANDHA**—exercise in Hatha Yoga

**BHUMA**—the Infinite; the unconditioned; Brahman

**BINDU**—point; seed

**BRAHMAMUHURTA**—auspicious time between 4 to 6 a.m.

**CHAITANYA**—Pure consciousness

**CHAKRA**—Centre of spiritual energy

**CHITTA**—Subconscious mind

**DHARANA**—Concentration

**DHYANA**—Meditation

**EKAGRATA**—One-pointedness of mind

**GUNA**—Quality

**ISVARA**—Lord, God

**JADA**—Insentient; non-intelligent

**JAPA**—Repetition of the Name of the Lord

**JIVANMUKTI**—Liberation in this life

**KAIVALYA**—Final emancipation

**KAMANDAL**—The holy vessel used by a Sannyasin for keeping water

**KARMA**—Action operating through the Law of Cause and Effect

**KIRTAN**—Singing the Lord's Names

**KRIYA**—Hatha Yogic exercise

**KUNDALINI**—The primordial cosmic energy located in the individual

**LAKSHYA**—Goal

**MAYA**—The illusory power of Brahman

**MOKSHA**—Liberation

**MUDRA**—A type of exercise in Hatha Yoga

**NADA**—A mystic sound

**NADIS**—Nerve-currents

**NIRGUNA**—Without attributes

**NIRVANA**—Liberation

**NIRVIKALPA**—Without the modifications of the mind

**OMKARA**—The sacred syllable Om symbolizing Brahman

**PRAKRITI**—Nature, the primitive non-intelligent principle

**PRANAVA**—Same as Om

**PRATYAHARA**—Abstraction or withdrawal of the senses from their objects

**SABDA BRAHMAN**—sound-form of Brahman

**SAGUNA**—With attributes

**SAMADHI**—The state of superconsciousness where Absoluteness is experienced

**SAMSKARA**—Impression in the subconscious mind

**SATCHIDANANDA**—Existence Absolute—Knowledge Absolute—Bliss Absolute; Brahman

**SAVIKALPA**—With modifications

**SOHAM**—A Vedantic assertion meaning “I am He (Brahman)”

**TAPAS**—Penance

**TAT TVAM ASI**—That Thou Art

**TATTVA**—Principle, Reality

**TRIKUTI**—Space between the eyebrows

**VEDANTA**—(Lit.) End of the Vedas; the school of thought based primarily on the Vedic Upanishads

**VIRAT**—Macrocosm; the Lord in His form as the manifest universe

**VRITTI**—A wave of thought, a modification of the mind

**YOGA**—(Lit.) Union; union of the individual soul with the Supreme Soul; any course which makes for such union.

# CHAPTER X

## Conclusion

The popularity of yoga is, without a doubt, increasing as people are constantly trying to balance the stresses of everyday life with their own spiritual well-being. It is important for you, the reader, to realize that we are not medical professionals and have simply tried to provide you with an introduction to yoga and meditation. This book is a way for you to get started on your own yoga program. If you have special health considerations, you should be sure and consult with your doctor before embarking on a yoga program, or any other exercise program for that matter.

We cannot be held responsible in any way for any problems that may arise from your yoga journey. This is meant simply as an informational tool to help you start down that path. But you will find that once you start initiating yoga into your daily exercise routine, you will most likely notice a heightened state of well-being and a more spiritual connection to both your inner self as well as any higher power you choose to acknowledge.

Remember to concentrate on your breathing when performing the poses, and don't force your body into positions it isn't comfortable doing. When meditating, focus on the inner calm you are trying to achieve. Perform these exercises when you get the chance. You don't have to do a full cycle to feel better. Even practicing one exercise when you have the time can have huge therapeutic benefits to mind, body, and soul!

Yoga can better your life in so many ways. It can help you become a better spouse, parent, worker, and person. You can help others by spreading your experiences with yoga and meditation. Imagine the thanks you'll receive as you tell others how this ancient art has enhanced your life! Shanti (peace) to you as you journey to your own Shambhala (place of utter tranquility).