

Yoga Spirit Academy E-zine

Healing body, mind and spirit
with the wisdom of Yoga, meditation and Ayurveda

March / April 2019

Volume 12, Issue 2

Pranayama and Meditation By Janet W. Parachin, PhD

This is the second article in a new series on prānāyāma. As they are presented each month, these articles can be found at <http://yogaspirittulsa.com/Newsletters>.

Prānāyāma and meditation are two different practices with differing purpose and benefits. Is there overlap? Yes, indeed, and I will share with you a prānāyāma /meditation at the end which incorporates both. In this article I hope to clear up any misconceptions about these practices so you will be encouraged to make time for both in your daily routine.

If you're familiar with *The Yoga Sutras* compiled by Patañjali prior to 400 CE, you've no doubt memorized the eight limbs of Yoga. Patañjali lists them as

Yama: 5 practices for living well in community with others

Niyama: 5 practices for spiritual living

Āsana: Yoga postures that prepare the body for higher practices

Prānāyāma: a process of stabilizing prāna so that the mind becomes steady and still for meditation

Pratyāharā: control the senses by focusing them inwardly on the heart rather than outwardly toward their objects

Dhāranā: concentration on one object

Dhyāna: sustained concentration on one object, also known as "meditation"

Samādhi: sustained meditation in which the mind loses itself in its object altogether, also known as "self-realization" or "enlightenment"

It's clear that Patañjali sees prānāyāma and dhyāna as two different practices with two different purposes. He also wants

us to see that prānāyāma is the practice that must precede dhyāna because the refining and control of prāna is preparation for the sustained concentration required for meditation. This makes sense because when your energy is scattered it's nearly impossible to have mental focus. How much easier it is to think clearly when you've taken some deep breaths and brought your attention inward away from the distractions of everyday life.



Although there is always some overlap, it's useful to think of prānāyāma as a practice centered in the body and breath while dhyāna is concerned more with the mind. Prānāyāma refines one's breathing ability and increases awareness of how prāna (life force energy) flows. This is why we can use a breath practice like Alternate Nostril breathing (Nādī Shodhana) to balance the nervous system and calm an anxious mind. Dhyāna, as a practice more concerned with the mind, allows us to become aware of our habitual thought patterns. This includes both the helpful thoughts that can support our best selves and the unhelpful thoughts that lead to discouragement, selfishness, and actions which hurt self and others.

The overlap occurs when we use breath awareness to calm and center the body/nervous system AND bring one-pointed
continues on page two

Yoga Spirit Academy
200-hour and 300-hour yoga teacher training
Tulsa, Oklahoma
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200-Hour Yoga Teacher Training

Spring is a great time to begin yoga teacher training. Our classes meet one weekend a month (Saturday and Sunday 1:00-7:00) for one year. This schedule makes it possible to keep your day job, sleep in your own bed, and spend time with family and friends on the weekend. Your two days with us are like a mini-retreat where we explore yoga postures, breathing, meditation, history, philosophy, lifestyle and ethics. You'll receive lots of information and inspiration to take back into your daily life. For more information, look at our website <http://yogaspirtulsa.com/Training-Workshops/Teacher-Training> or contact the Director for a packet of information.

How will Yoga change your life?

Pranayama and Meditation cont.

attention and focus to the mind. So ham meditation is a great example of this combination of prānāyāma and dhyāna. Practice it most days to experience the benefits of both paths.

So ham breath meditation (Pronounced "so hum")

When we breathe in the breath makes a soft "so" sound, and when we breathe out the breath makes a soft "hum" sound. *So* refers to higher consciousness and *ham* refers to the individual self. When we meditate on *so* and *ham* together, we unite our individual self with higher consciousness, allowing us to rise above the stresses of everyday life.

Sit cross-legged on a cushion or on a chair with feet on the floor. Sit up on the sitting bones with spine erect. OR Practice while lying in Savasana. Watch the breath as it moves in and out through the nostrils. Do not try to change the breath. Simply observe it. Notice how the breath makes a soft "so" sound on the inhalation and a soft "hum" sound on the exhalation. Simply observe "so" and "hum" for several minutes. Practice for 5 minutes to begin and gradually lengthen to 20 minutes each day. Take your time finishing up and gently return to your daily activities.

Yoga for Pregnancy Workshop

Have you ever wondered what type of yoga is safe and appropriate for women during pregnancy? This is an important question because Yoga is excellent during pregnancy and women should be encouraged to continue their yoga practice during this time. This workshop is for anyone interested in Yoga, but especially women who are pregnant or who will become pregnant and yoga teachers who will have pregnant women in their classes.

In this workshop you will learn:

- Yoga practices of postures, breathing and meditation appropriate for each trimester of pregnancy
- Safe practices for a pregnant woman who attends a yoga class
- When it is more appropriate for a pregnant woman to attend a prenatal yoga class rather than their regular yoga class



All yoga teachers receive a continuing education certificate and students in the YSA 200-hour teacher training receive workshop credit.

<http://yogaspirtulsa.com/Training-Workshops/Workshops>

CALENDAR

March 9-10 Yoga Teacher training weekend

March 22 Sangha Day Meditation

April 13-14 Yoga Teacher training weekend

April 27 Yoga for Pregnancy workshop
2019 training dates are now on the website

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