



## *Pranayama - Breathing to Equanimity*

### *Beginners' Lesson I - Mind/Body Meditation*

#### *Introduction to:*

#### *Brahma Mudra, Three-Part Breathing, Kapalabhati*

This 30-minute Pranayama session is appropriate for new yoga students as well as for experienced students who wish to expand their understanding of various Pranayama techniques. It can be done by people in any stage of life and even by those recovering from injury, illness, or surgery – as long as the student is fully aware that they must listen carefully to their own inner teacher and make whatever adjustments their bodies need or their medical practitioner recommends. The style presented for each of these techniques is not written in stone but instead should be used as a guide.

Each breathing or stretching technique described here should be modified as needed to allow the student to feel only comfort and relaxation. If you begin to feel dizzy or light-headed, stop immediately, sit down or lie down, and take slow, deep abdominal breaths until you feel balanced and comfortable. Take your time as you come to standing at the end of your practice session.

Enjoy this opportunity to breathe in all that embodies Pranayama – air, energy and life.

#### **30-Minute Pranayama & Meditation Beginners' Lesson I**

- ◆ Sitting in any supported cross-legged position with knees supported, palms facing up on thighs, with eyes and lips closed, begin **Brahma Mudra** - inhale as you gently move your head to the left; open eyes and look over left shoulder; close eyes & exhale back to center; inhale moving your head to the right; open eyes and look at right shoulder; close eyes & exhale back to center; inhale dropping your head back; open eyes and look at nose; close eyes & exhale back to center; inhale dropping the chin; open eyes and look at eyebrows; close eyes and exhale center; do 3-5 rounds
- ◆ Breathe 30 breaths in **Kapalabhati (Fire Breathing)** – like blowing out a candle, the belly is contracted on each exhale, and the inhale is automatic and without emphasis; then take three long, deep breaths in 3-Part Breathing – filling up the low belly, expanding into the ribcage and take one more sip at the throat ; do 3 rounds
- ◆ **Mind/Body Meditation** is a technique that utilizes internal self-talk to bring your attention to each body part, noticing how it feels – tense or relaxed; hot or cold. You simply focus all your thoughts on the particular body part, noticing if air is flowing next to the skin, if it is touching the fabric of your clothing, etc. You are just observing, noticing how you have the ability to tune into various parts of your body even with your eyes closed. In this variation of the Meditation, you will incorporate slow, smooth breathing and an awareness of any tension, and on each exhale you consciously release the tension and then move onto the next body part. Each time you notice that your attention has been diverted with other thoughts (and this WILL happen – and OFTEN!!), just gently bring your focus back to wherever you left off and continue as if there had been no interruption.

With practice, you will feel a sensation of the flow of energy – like a graceful paint brush gently drawing the energy from one part of the body to another. Doing this with the entire body can take a very long time – with lots of practice you can do it in 15-20 minutes, but initially it could take quite a bit longer to do a full body scan. So if you are new to this, work with just one general part of the body in each session – do the head & neck, or the abdomen & hips, or the legs and arms. After weeks or

months of practice, you may want to begin combining more parts into one practice session. Start with any amount of time with which you feel comfortable, perhaps 5-10 minutes to begin, gradually building up to 20-30 minutes as you feel ready.

Here's the full body scan: In a comfortable cross-legged position, tall spine, hands folded in your lap and supported on your thighs, eyes closed, bring your attention to the crown of your head as if you could feel each hair follicle, noticing the skin around the skull, exhaling away any tension. Once you've made contact with that awareness, move your attention down the back of the head, stopping at the base of the skull and again feeling the skin there, noticing if there is tension at the top of the spine – exhale fully to release any tension. Follow the body down the back, stopping at the shoulders, upper back, back ribs, waist, hips, sacrum, tailbone, moving along the buttocks and back of legs, back of thighs, crease of knees, calves, ankles, heels, soles of the feet, pads of toes, tops of toes, tops of feet, front of ankles, shins, knees, front thighs, pelvis, pelvic floor, pubic bone, lower abdomen, navel, solar plexus, heart center, chest, sternum, clavicles, shoulders, upper arms, bony elbow, top of forearms, wrist, back of hands & fingers, pads of fingers, palm, inside of wrists, upper arm to crease of elbow, inner arms to armpits, shoulders, base of neck, throat, jaw, chin, lips, gums, nose, eyes, forehead, up to the crown.

- ◆ **Ahimsa** – the Yoga concept of non-harming. At the end of your meditation, sit for just a few more moments to ponder how you could consciously act with integrity in all areas of your life, speaking your truth with compassion and kindness; and be sure to forgive yourself for those times when you forget! Learning to honor our inner teachers is a life-long practice that may not come easily – but, like your yoga practice, it gets easier each time you try.
- ◆ **Chanting** – end your practice with your hands together in prayer position, thumbs resting on the sternum. With a deep inhale, chant OHM, elongating each breath, and allowing the vibrations to flow through your sternum into your hand.

**Pranayama ... The Harmonious Breath**

**Meditation ... Finding Peace**

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