



13

- The practice of yoga *nidra* has at least four unique aims: healing, learning, transformation and accomplishment.
 - healing: focus is on deep rest, by dropping into effortless and complete homeostasis, physical, energetic and mental layers are repaired and renewed
 - learning: once the deepest state of rest is accessed, cognition and memory can be trained, mental capacities heightened
 - transformation: deep relaxation becomes an entry point to expand awareness and freedom at all levels of being, including the unconsciousness
 - accomplishments or powers (*siddhi*); many of the miracle-like powers you have heard about yogis being able to accomplish are accessed through yoga *nidra*
- The 61 Points Exercise focuses primarily on the first of these—healing.
- The 75 Breaths Exercise offers another approach to yoga *nidra*.
 - its primary orientation is transformation as well as healing
 - when practicing 75 Breaths, you will use the 61 Points technique as preparation.

Introduction to 75 Breaths

- The 75 Breaths Exercise has nine stages.
 - each stage involves *kriya* meditation-like movements, where awareness moves effortlessly from one point to another on the flow of your breath
 - awareness will descend on your inhale and ascend on your exhale, in all but the last of the nine stages

TANTRA SHAKTI M13



13

- during the first eight stages of the recommended approach, the movement begins its decent and ends its ascent at the crown of the head
- The sequence (only after completing the 61 Points practice) proceeds as follows:
 - soles of your feet: on inhale see, feel or sense your awareness move from the crown of your head to the soles of your feet; on exhale awareness returns to crown (10x)
 - ankles: on inhale awareness moves from the crown of your head to your ankles; on exhale awareness returns to crown (10x)
 - knees: on inhale awareness moves from the crown of your head to your knees; on exhale awareness returns to crown (5x)
 - base of spine: on inhale awareness moves from the crown of your head to the base of your spine; on exhale awareness returns to crown (5x)
 - navel center: on inhale awareness moves from the crown to the base of your navel center; on exhale awareness returns to crown (5x)
 - heart center: on inhale awareness moves from the crown to the heart center; on exhale awareness returns to crown (5x)
 - throat center: on inhale awareness moves from the crown to the throat center; on exhale awareness returns to crown (5x)
 - 3rd eye: on inhale awareness moves from the crown to the 3rd eye center; on exhale awareness returns to crown (5x)
 - crown of the head: on inhale awareness moves from a few inches below the tip of your nose and rises



just beyond the crown; on exhale it descends
to below the tip of your nose (25x)

- Important: each stage unfolds effortlessly. Do without trying! Don't shape your breath deliberately. Cultivate effortlessness throughout the practice.

Yoga Nidra and 75 Breaths: Tips for Practice

- It is ideal to practice 75 Breaths and/or 61 Points two to three times per week.
- It is okay if you fall asleep. You probably need the rest.
- If you get restless when practicing, stop practicing. Simply return to it the next day or as soon as possible. It is okay if, a couple times a month, you find yourself unable to settle into it.
- If this restlessness occurs much more often, examine your life-style, diet, and/or your practice for what might be causing disturbances in your nervous system.
- Your aim is to stay awake throughout the practice.
- Yoga *nidra* can be a wonderful preparation for sleep. However, it is important that you cultivate discernment between the state of sleep and yoga *nidra*.
 - Therefore if you find yourself about to fall asleep, tell yourself, "I am stopping the practice of yoga *nidra* and am going to sleep." Do this just before you drift off to sleep
- 75 Breaths, combined with 61 Points should take 35 minutes.
- 75 Breaths can be done either way—ascending on exhale or descending on exhale. The approach I am suggesting (and have detailed) is easier to access and, for most people, more relaxing.



14

- *Adhikara*, means “authority,” “capability,” “rank,” “qualified.” In this context, it means “the right to know.”
- *Adhikara* addresses the signposts of discipleship, the vital role of progressing in practice and studentship within *tantra*.
- The term denotes the process by which you and your practice will evolve over time. In other words, your practice should and will change as you change.
 - *adhikara* addresses this process, taking into account your evolution as a person and as a practitioner
 - the essential message is that as you grow in both contexts (person and seeker), you become more qualified to receive evermore advanced and life-changing practices and teachings
 - the right teaching at the wrong time can be just as non-constructive as the wrong teaching at the right time
- In short, the process of *adhikara* signifies the importance of maturation, to become more refined as a seeker, more masterful, more aware, more in tune with the sacred and less immersed in self-importance.
- The general process for expanding conscious and becoming a more fit vehicle of the teachings follows the transition from:
 - Matter → Energy → Consciousness.
 - most of us are principally identified with our body and our material things; your intention is to gradually shift from a primarily material orientation to an energetic orientation



14

- energy: energy can provide a bridge to the universal; first, cultivate your connection to this subtle realm to transform yourself and later, be able to completely lose all subjective identification and merge with the Absolute
- consciousness is the end of the journey—God, *Ishwara*, Divine Mother are different names for it; in this stage all limited perception dissolves; oneness with the Supreme Reality is all there is
- *Adhikara* is the term for this process, describing the seeker's journey through these three phases.
- The yamas and niyamas of *tantra* yoga provide further guidance, shedding light on the process, the practices, contemplations and considerations that allow you to progress through *adhikara*.
 - their importance relates to their value of conditioning your mind as well as body, your will as much as "heart," and their contribution to engendering the ideal internal conditions that, when combined with the rigors of a complete practice, will lead to a safe, effective and auspicious outcome
- Note: in *tantra* yoga, the yamas and niyamas are different than those propagated in the yoga tradition (nonviolence, truthfulness, non-stealing, continence and non-coveting, self-purification, contentment, self-discipline/austerity, self-study, self-surrender).
- Some of these are common to both systems; those that are unique to *tantra* are worth noting and reflecting upon in as much as they, from the point of view of *tantra*, comprise a complete practice that can lead to the highest achievements.



14

- The additional yamas of *tantra* yoga are:
 - *kṣhamā*: forgiveness
 - *dhṛti*: fortitude
 - *dayā*: compassion
 - *mitāhāra*: measured diet
 - *ārjava*: non-hypocrisy, sincerity
- Tantra's additional niyamas include:
 - *āstikya*: faith in real self (*jñana* yoga, *raja* yoga), belief in God (*bhakti* yoga), conviction in *veda*
 - *dāna*: generosity, charity, sharing with others
 - *īśvarapūjana*: worship of God/Supreme Being
 - *siddhānta vakya śrāvaṇa*: listening to ancient scriptures
 - *mati*: think and reflect to understand, reconcile conflicting ideas
 - *hrī*: modesty, acceptance of one's past
 - *japa*: *mantra* repetition, reciting prayers or knowledge
 - *hutam*: rituals, mindful ceremony such as fire practice
- The result of these practices and disciplines:
 - the body becomes purified
 - attention is turned inward
 - spiritual passion is enlivened
 - vital force (*prana*) is balanced and strengthened
 - *manas* (lower/reactive mind) is calmed and brought under conscious control
 - *chitta* is disengaged; memories no longer have sway over you
 - *ahamkara* (ego) is dissolved
 - *buddhi* (intelligence) is sharpened and strengthened



14

- Among the many other considerations we've reviewed, *adhikara* implies that you diminish ego at every step while at the same time, sharpening your powers of discernment and allowing your inner teacher to guide you toward the Divine.
- My teacher, Mani was very clear with me that "the only time people should know you're a yogi is when you're either teaching or practicing."
 - in other words, he made it clear that assuming the persona of a "yogi" would be an impediment to my growth and ultimate success as a yogi
 - don't live behind the ego of a yogi; be humble enough to be just another human being; carry your yoga inside of you

Introduction to 4-Part Spinal Kriya with Maha Mudra

- Key practices to move *prana* into the spine/*sushumna*: *asana*, breath and breath retention, *mudra* and *kriya*. Also, consider combining these techniques with sound/*mantra*.
- Always remain mindful of the "golden rule" of *prana*:
 - energy follows thought
 - the skillful application of *prana dharana* is a means for applying "*yantra*," the second of the three aspects of tantric meditation practice
- Four stages lead into *prana dharana* (energy collection/concentration):
 - *prana anusandhana*: stage 1—"research, investigation;" wherein you observe the airflow of the breath and gradually become more sensitive to its relationship to pranic force as light, presence or heightened awareness

TANTRA SHAKTI M14



14

- *prana samvedhana*: stage 2—"sensitivity," in which the more subtle aspect of the breath is revealed, the mind becomes absorbed and connected to light/presence
- *prana sanchaya*: stage 3—"to collect, to hold," storing *prana* initially in the mid-brain; the mind now is completely absorbed and at rest in a collected field of *prana*
- *prana prasara*: stage 4—"to move something to where it belongs so that it can fulfill its purpose;" *prana* has fully blossomed, a locus that unlocks the potential of your practice
- As you practice *maha mudra*, remember to keep your breath as steady as possible.
- The key signs of advancement in the practice of *mudra*: sustained periods of smooth breathing and being able to hold the *mudra* for increasingly longer periods of time.
- As an extension pose, *maha mudra* provides an array of benefits:
 - improves posture, strengthens lower back musculature
 - helps to stabilize the lower mind
 - internalizes attention
 - breaks up the inertia/stagnancy of the lower chakras
 - the process of lengthening the spine encourages *prana* to move toward the spine