



9

- *Hatha* practice is dedicated to the yoga (the yoking, unification) of polarities: e.g. sun and moon, active and passive, *prana* (energy) and *chitta* (consciousness).
- One of its most extraordinary teachings points to the relationship between the flow of your breath, nostril dominance and how they both affect specific internal states as well as how these states affect a variety of different worldly activities.
- *Swara* Yoga is a branch of *tantra* yoga more than 1,000 years old. It provides the most in-depth and comprehensive teachings on this subject, exploring how your breath is influenced by:
 - phases of the moon
 - positions of the planets
 - seasons
 - time of day
 - emotional states
- The term *swara* means “wave,” which relates to vibration or sound. Sound waves have pronounced influence on our states of being, despite the fact that we often cannot hear, see or sense them. In fact, by and large, we are wholly unaware of their influence on us.
- The teachings fully explore the principles of how the flow of the breath through the nostrils determines states of awareness, as in the following examples:
 - left nostril dominance relates to activation of lunar qualities (receptivity, calming, the ruler of *chitta* or mind)
 - right nostril dominance relates to activation of solar qualities (active, physical, assertive, the ruler of *prana*)



- balance of left and right, sets the stage for accessing and awakening *sushumna*—the central channel
- The science of *swara* goes into great detail on preparation for both awakening elevated internal states as well as aligning our worldly actions with the appropriate dominance in the nostrils.
- Some general concepts:
 - nostril dominance (spontaneously changes every 90-120 minutes)
 - the implication of this is that you shift from *chitta* (a mentally dominant state) to *prana* (an energetic/physically dominant state) 8-12 times per day
 - this helps explain why your mental focus is typically optimal for about one and a half to two hours
 - after two hours, the quality of your attention begins to fade
 - according to this science, this is because the pranic current that fires it has shifted
 - modern research corroborates these ancient insights, suggesting that you take a break from mental activity and, if possible, move—return to body-oriented activity
- For the purpose of our current discussion, here are some simple principles:
 - remember, “*ida*” = left nostril, which corresponds to right hemisphere/right channel and “*pingali*” = right nostril, which corresponds to left hemisphere/left channel



- to maximize physical activities, right nostril dominance is prescribed
- to maximize mental activities, left nostril dominance is prescribed
- to improve digestion, right nostril dominance is ideal
- for sleep, which is considered both a physical and mental activity but predominately physical—applying 1:2 breath ratio, start on your left side, take 4 smooth, long breaths, then shift to your right side for 8 breaths; last stage, rest on your back for 16 breaths
- You have several options to shift nostril (*prana/chitta*) dominance:
 - use your hand to block your nostrils (as in alternate nostril breath), inhale through the nostril you wish to activate, exhale through the nostril you wish to pacify
 - rest on the side of the hemisphere you wish to activate (e.g. if you wish to activate solar/physical/right nostril, rest on your left side)
 - place your hand into the under arm of the nostril you wish to block (e.g. if your intention is for right nostril dominance, place your hand into your left underarm)
 - consider integrating more than one of the above to expedite the process of shifting nostril dominance



10

Awaken the Potential of Your Mind

- The tantric approach to meditation shares many of the same principles as other approaches and traditions, however there are some noteworthy distinctions.
- Some important assumptions of the tantric approach include:
 - your mind, by nature, is active
 - rather than try to still the mind, which it will naturally resist, it can be helpful to make the mind move
 - tantric methodology covers a wide range of various kriyas, techniques that engage the mind to move, requiring it to do—see, feel or sense—any one of a vast array of intentions or subtle, internal and sacred objectives (e.g. a flame at the heart, which expands and contracts on the breath)
- The result is that the mind, preoccupied with the task at hand, becomes so infused with the unique and/or divine-like qualities related to the specific technique that it eventually becomes still.
- Immersed in a state in which it experiences complete and utter satisfaction; it reaches a point where it has no desire to move.
- It rests in utter tranquility, infused with the rarefied qualities of the techniques that were used to transform it.



- Thus, this particular tantric approach to meditation is: make the mind active—allowing it to do what it likes to do, which is move—and thereby, engage it to do the very thing that will have the most positive effect on it.

Intention and Fulfillment

- As previously noted, one of the definitions of *tantra* is “to accelerate.” In essence, this means reducing the time required to benefit from the fruits of your efforts/practice—and, in the ultimate sense—achieve the highest aims of life.
- To those ends, the formula for tantric meditation principally includes the following three ingredients:
 - *tantra*
 - *yantra*
 - *mantra*
- *Tantra*, in this context, refers to the priority of practice to overcome boundaries:
 - we are each unique
 - the same approach will not have an optimal effect on everyone
 - the quality of your practice should be measured by its effects on your life
 - the goal of practice is not peace—although it may provide it—rather, practice must have a long-term positive impact on the quality of your life—greater fulfillment, freedom, capacity and auspiciousness



10

- meditations that might be the least accessible or challenging initially, might be the most valuable—at the beginning of any meaningful transition, you often meet resistance
- therefore, don't be too quick to judge a practice; very often the most profound practice, the one that will have the most long-term benefits, may at first seem non-productive or futile
- *Yantra* usually refers to meditative forms, visual meditative tools that delineate the relationship between geometry and consciousness; bypassing intellect, they reveal higher realities.
- In the context of this discussion “*yantra*” denotes a more general idea—the external and/or internal practice(s) of seeing/organizing attention in a specific way that awakens higher states of consciousness.
 - *yantra* does not necessarily mean a formal external practice of meditating on a visual diagram or a state of consciousness expressed geometrically
 - it can also denote a specific meditative focus, one of many possible images or intentions that depict a specific landscape (or focal point) of enlightenment
 - these types of yantras can be used as preliminary meditative practices
 - utilizing the pranic body, they help you access deeper states of realization and transformation prior to moving into the later stages of meditation
 - whether or not you use a *yantra* or *kriya*, practice should always begin with (some approach to) *prana dharana*

TANTRA SHAKTI M10



10

- once *prana* is collected, you may be well served to apply a specific *kriya* (*yantra*—“machine”) to support fulfilling the ultimate intention of your practice, e.g. *prana dharana*, followed by light in the heart (this would serve as the “*yantra*”), followed by *mantra*
- by first creating an ideal pranic landscape, you heighten the overall effect and long-term impact of the meditation
- From the viewpoint of ParaYoga, *mantra* is the cornerstone of meditation practice; it is also at the core of tantric practice.
- *Mantra* is consciousness as revealed through sound.
 - *mantra* is highly accessible and yet sublime
 - silent *mantra* is the deepest and most profoundly transformative
 - every *mantra* is inherently a unique state of consciousness
 - through systematic and sustained repetition, a mantra's essence is revealed