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Introduction to Extensions

- In regular anatomical terms, extensions usually refer to back-bending.
- However, as taught by *Krishnamacharya*, extensions refer to the category of postures, whose primary focus is two-fold:
 - lengthening and straightening the spine; maximizing vertebral space.
 - Indeed, the intention of all poses should be to elongate the spine.
- Thus, the biomechanics of extension with an emphasis on increased vertebral space should be applied in all categories of poses.
- This means that extensions function as both:
 - the fundamental strategy for maximizing the effectiveness of any and all poses
 - the ultimate goal of *asana*.
- In general, extension postures are unique among all six categories of poses because they involve little to no expansion or compression of either the front, back or side body, spinal rotation or lateral stretching.
- Instead, their focus is on integrating and straightening the four sections of the spine.
- Extensions are deepened by increasing the length of time the poses are held, while improving the quality of the breath.
- Extensions are extraordinarily powerful and powerfully internalizing because they involve less extreme stretching and external sensation.
- In other words, the work in extensions is primarily internal.
- Extensions also help to reveal imbalances in our muscular and breathing patterns as well as in the subtle ways we hold stress.



Asana, Pranayama, Meditation--Your Past, Present and Future

- The effects of the various techniques of *asana*, *pranayama* and meditation impact you (and your life) differently.
- Asana primarily affects your relationship to your past:
 - the body is your material memory, storing your past and recording what you do, think, eat.
 - when you experience stress, emotionally or physically, it is collected by the body and you then experience it as greater resistance in your *asana* practice.
 - during times of love, success and ease, your body is more open; you experience less resistance in your *asana*. Poses are easier, more accessible.
 - thus, *asana* practice principally transforms your body's response to past experience.
- Pranayama primarily affects your relationship to the present:
 - breath and mind are linked, how you breathe is a reflection of how you think.
 - when you consciously shape your breath rhythm, your conscious mind has to engage. It must be present to maintain the selected pattern. This is *pranayama*.
 - on a deeper level, unconscious mental patterns must also conform to changes in the new breath pattern.
 - the mind's deeper patterns are transformed from being identified with past experiences to relating more completely to present moment awareness and the task of smooth conscious breathing and/or retentions.



- because of the profound effect of *pranayama* to affect unconscious patterning and impressions, it is vital to always proceed gently and mindfully.
- thus, while *pranayama* affects you on many levels, its primary impact requires you to be more completely yoked to the present moment.
- Meditation primarily affects your relationship to your future:
 - despite the fact that meditation is the most subtle of the three, it can be the most powerful and in fact, change your destiny.

Meditate, Know Yourself and the Future is Yours

- There are fundamentally three stages in meditation, each one affecting you in distinct ways:
- *Dharana* is the 1st stage.
 - its primary aim is to move from distraction to concentration
 - focus is realized by concentrating on an object—your *mantra*, breath, *chakra* (*chakra*), *vayu* or even your own name, either internal or external, subtle or material.
 - the goal is one-pointed attention.
 - at this stage of meditation the specific object you use (to achieve a one-pointed attention) is less important than realizing a focused state.
- *Dhyana* is the 2nd stage.
 - as mind becomes one pointed, attention flows effortlessly in an unbroken stream



- now, you begin to rise to a deeper, more profound level of perception, e.g. seeing the object, rather than looking at the object, listening, instead of hearing.
- a new world now opens; the innate qualities of the object are imparted to you, the meditator.
- in this context, the object is as important as the act of meditating, because you are, over time, endowed with the qualities inherent in the object on which you are concentrating.
- these qualities endure even after the practice is complete.
- as the mind becomes inculcated with the unique qualities of the chosen object of meditation, the mind becomes the inherent qualities of the object through the way it sees, thinks, feels and acts.
- therefore, it is vital to mindfully choose the object on which you will meditate.
- in this and the following stages, the object of meditation is as influential as the act of meditating.
- *Samadhi* is the 3rd stage.
 - the highest state of mental acuity; the apex of clear perceiving.
 - as we rise through the various stages of *samadhi*, we approach penetrating and perceiving the very essence of the object we are perceiving.
 - in the final stages, there is no longer any distinction between subject and object, meditator and the object we are perceiving.
 - this culminates in knowing the highest Truth.



- beyond self-identity: you are not white/black, male/female, young/old, gay/straight, deserving/undeserving.
- if you consistently make decisions from this clear state of self-knowing (instead of conditioned identity), you alter your future.

On Mantra & Mantra Meditation

- *Mantra* = “man”—to think + “tra”—that which protects, expands. *Mantra* expands the mind while protecting it.
- *Mantra* is not a bridge to Divinity; it is Divinity, not so much an object as a state of consciousness. “In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God, the Word was God.”
 - The source of life is sound/vibration; sound/vibration is the source of life.
- Different states of consciousness, e.g. mantras, are inherently unique vibrations.
- *Mantras* heal, inspire, transform and enlighten—but not all *mantras* do all four.
- Spoken *mantra* primarily affects the conscious mind.
- Silent *mantra* primarily affects the unconscious mind.
- Silent practice of *mantra* is the most powerful approach to imbue your mind (conscious and unconscious) with the highest attributes.
- *Mantras* are both locked and unlocked:
 - most *mantras* are locked, the full force and essence of these *mantras* are not readily available, protecting the practitioner and the tradition



- unlocked *mantras*, like the *Gayatri* and others, indicates that the full force and essence are fully available—their unique qualities remain open to all dedicated practitioners.
- In the systematic approach to mantra practice we aim to experience the *mantra* directly:
 - you are no longer mentally repeating it.
 - you are perceiving it unfolding—your mind is still enough to hear/see/feel it revealing itself to you.
 - now you are the living embodiment of the *mantra*; you rest in pure non-dual awareness.
 - you are one with the Source.

Systematic Approach To Mantra Debrief

- The systematic approach to silent *mantra* or *japa* practice has five steps:
 - each of the following steps unfold effortlessly and in their own time. Don't force. *Mantras* are already present, they sustain the world. Your intention is to still your mind enough so that you can perceive your *mantra* unfolding silently.
- Step 1: Pure Breathing (this is maintained until the forth step). This leads into...
- Step 2: dawning of awareness; as mind becomes still, you perceive awareness unfolding. This leads into...
- Step 3: the experience that awareness is most concentrated at the third eye. This leads into...



- Step 4: perceiving awareness as vibration or sound. As the experience unfolds, you relax all voluntary breathing, breath becomes silent, effortless. This leads to...
- Step 5: listening, feeling or seeing your *mantra* unfold from the current of silence.
 - this is a different level of sound, sound that is the source of creation, sound that gives rise to thought, sound from which exaltation is revealed.
 - this feeling/experience of the *mantra* is not different from the *mantra*.
 - this is the sublime essence of the *mantra* unfolding from the vibration that is the source of all.
- The 5 open *mantras* of ParaYoga and the qualities related to each:
 - OM: transcendence, peace, dissolution of duality
 - SO HUM: (ultimately independent of the breath) merging universal and individual, pointing or directing self to universal being
 - RAMA: enlivening mind, awakening your purpose, moving forward in life, positivity, living your *dharma*
 - GAYATRI: awakening the light of intelligence by dissolving any and all darkness, dullness and doubt
 - MAHA MRITYUNJAYA MANTRA: strengthens power of will, knowledge and action, unblocking the flow of enthusiasm, courage and determination, enabling you to overcome all obstacles, empowering the healer within
- Start with a shorter *mantra* (1-3 syllables) in order to become familiar with resting in the place where silent awareness and the unfolding of the *mantra* coexist.



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Lineage of ParaYoga

Refer to Appendix: page 137 “ParaYoga Lineage Chart”

- The *sanskrit* term for lineage: “*sampradaya*,” means “that which gives eternally, that which guides and loves limitlessly.”
- The pool of knowledge that is the source of wisdom and transmission, inspiring and informing *Yogarupa* and ParaYoga include the following three lineages or *sampradaya*:
- Kavi Yogaraj Mani Finger and his son, Alan Finger of ISHTA yoga
 - Mani Finger had three teachers: Paramahansa Yogananda, Swami Sivananda Saraswati, Maharaji Kavi Shuddhannada Yogi Bharati.
- Sri Tirmalai Krishnamacharya and his son, TKV Desikachar
- Panditji Rajmani Tigunait, spiritual head of the Himalayan Institute
 - *Sri Vidya* lineage, of which the sage Adi Shankara is its source (8th century CE)
 - Bengali Baba, the teacher of Swami Rama, Panditji’s teacher, was also the teacher of Krishnamacharya’s teacher—Yogeshwara Ramamohana Brahmachari