



# Life in Yoga Foundation

*A Non-Profit Dedicated to Health of Body and Mind*

## Mantra based Meditation & Music Yoga

Because of the basic similarity between mantra based meditation and music yoga, both of these are presented together. Mantra based meditation is explained first and the method of substituting music vibrations in place of mantra is explained thereafter.

### 1. Mantra based Meditation

In the five types of exercises that we follow -- physical, breath, naada (sound vibration), mental and observation -- this technique is the third, exactly in-between the grossest and the subtlest techniques. It requires no mental effort. It only requires one to relax, let go, and just hum the mantra internally, or mentally pretend like one is hearing it.

For the convenience of students the following information is summarized in the sections that follow. Section A provides instructions related to the technique. Section B addresses how the mantra based technique works and why it is important. Section C explains the factors that affect the efficacy of mantras, possible side effects and how they should be managed, and how one may outgrow a mantra. Section D notes the place of mantra based meditation in daily living.

#### A. MANTRA BASED MEDITATION TECHNIQUE INSTRUCTIONS:

1. Sit in a relaxed position with back (spine) absolutely straight. [It need not be vertical. It can be slanting as when sitting in a tilted chair, but not curved like when you don't sit back on a chair and let the spine bend in the lower back area and/or near the neck.]
2. Place your right hand (palm facing upward) on the top of the left palm on your lap, and ensure that the thumbs of each hand are gently touching each other. This hand position makes it easier to let go of things and allows one to mentally relax. We shall call this the Nivritti Mudra or Relief Mudra or the Basic Meditation Mudra for later reference.
3. If you are not perfectly relaxed and peaceful at the time you are ready to begin your meditation, take a few (3 to 10) slow deep breaths and just watch the breath flow in and out.
4. Then mentally affirm for yourself: "I give up all ideas and concepts and care about nothing." Repeat it as often as you feel it helps. Typically 3 to 10 times is enough. Keep a sense as if you are internally looking towards the top of your head (at the center of the crown or a little above that) even though your eyes are closed and your head is straight.
5. Then start vibrating the repetitive mantra within you. It is not an audible sound and your lips don't move. It is like a suggestion in your head or somewhere within you. It is like you are pretending to listen to a mantra and you can hear it or feel it inside.



6. Hold this mantra vibration for 5 to 20 minutes without opening your eyes and without pausing. If you break before 20 minutes continue for 20 minutes trying to maintain unbroken segments of 5 minutes or longer. It is best to keep an alarm to time the 20 minutes in the initial stages, rather than looking at the clock every now and then. Later on, a natural timing builds within you.
7. If any thoughts cross your mind, have the attitude of an observer. Don't block any thought. Let them come. You acknowledge every thought, but refuse to analyze it or dwell in it. Thoughts come and thoughts go. Initially most of the 20 minutes may go by as such, but ultimately it will change.

## **B. WHAT DOES THE MANTRA DO?**

The mantra is vibration that penetrates through energy patterns. These energy patterns are the combination of automated programs like karma, which we will just call psychic patterns. Since psychic patterns vary, and their vibrations are different for different individuals, we need to find a different mantra for different people. A real yoga teacher can feel the vibrations of a student's psychic patterns and can seek to find a vibration that will neutralize the vibrations of these patterns and penetrate the awareness upwards through the head. Once the awareness penetrates – drills through – fully through the head, awareness is said to reach the Sahasraara above the head. This builds a Connectivity with the Universal or Cosmic flow (and ultimately to God) that allows for a heightened sense of intuition. This is desired to find relief from stress and peace in life, in addition to serving as a stepping stone for furthering psychic development that would ultimately lead to realization of the true nature of the self and existence. Physical and breath yoga work well for meditation if done prior to meditation. They seek to shake up the energy patterns and flush them. Thus it becomes easier for the mantra to penetrate.

## **C. EFFICACY OF MANTRAS, SIDE-EFFECTS AND OUT-GROWING IT**

The efficacy of a mantra will change through the time of day and over a period of time. It is important that when finding the mantra the teacher base it on the average pattern of the person through the day. Thus it can be used during multiple times of the day. On rare occasions, a student may require two or three different mantras for different times of the day. However, it is important that the meditation be done approximately in the same time each day and in the same sequence of actions through the day (e.g. doing it first thing in the morning after brushing your teeth, or after reading your newspaper or after your morning walk or after your bath, etc.). This will provide maximum efficacy. Over a period of time, as the patterns of a person, particularly those related to karma begin to break-down, the same mantra may not be as useful. Then one may need another mantra or one may reach a state of constant meditation (even while leading normal activities of life) where no mantra is needed – broadband Connectivity is what we call it!

It is occasionally possible that mantra based meditation may lead to strong vibrations in the body to the degree of feeling unstable and even a sense of heat. It is considered unsafe to practice mantras in such a manner. The vibrations and heat indicate that the mantra is unable to penetrate the patterns fully, but is able to drill through partially. It is best to cool the system with another mantra “Om Joom Saha” or simply stop the use of the mantra for sometime. The “Om Joom



Saha” can be thought of as reversing the drill-bit, while stopping the meditation is equivalent to stopping the drilling.

A word of caution is appropriate for people who use mantras without knowing whether it is appropriate for them. Such use of mantras can lead to adverse affects as well, particularly if the vibrations create restlessness or heaviness in the system. This is the reason mantras are often instructed secretly to a specific individual in the Hindu tradition.

#### **D. THE PLACE OF MANTRA BASED MEDITATION IN DAILY LIVING & USE OF GENERAL MANTRAS**

Mantra based meditation is considered a part of the daily living of many traditions, particularly in Hinduism. All thinking human beings are prescribed to do this three times a day in Hindu tradition. In the ritual Hindu format, it is done as part of the daily Sandhya Vandana three times a day. Normally the Gayatri mantra is used. Such mantras work on everyone, but since it may not be the best needed at a time, it may take years before they start working. Unlike that a customized mantra should have effect in a few minutes – a distinct effect that a practitioner will feel. However the ritualistic Sandhya Vandana invokes through mental yoga certain spiritual programs (Devas), who can energize the process. Since this requires beliefs, in our approach we avoid it, although we recommend that meditation with mantra be done twice or thrice a day roughly around the same time. However for those who maintain the ritual system, by understanding how it is an optimized yoga practice they can enhance the value of their practice and avoid the unnecessary elements like having to sit on a hard floor and needing to use water for ritual activities and complicating the ritual.

## **2. Music Yoga**

While many people may think that they listen to music and can therefore use this technique, it is not that easy. The right music is like the right mantra, so any music is not good enough. Further, just like a general mantra, when used long enough (many years typically), one falls into the groove and is able to experience naada yoga from the mantra, music too can work in the same way.

Following are some indicators of where this can be used:

- When a person listens to the same type of music everyday about the same time of day;
- When there is one or two favorite pieces that one naturally tunes into when one is in a relaxed mode;
- When one finds oneself gravitate to a certain rhythm and the words don't seem to matter at all.
- When one finds that one has lost track of time when listening to that music.

Under such circumstances the following exercise will reveal if one can experience Naada yoga through that favorite music piece.

All rules of Mantra based meditation noted in the previous chapter hold true. Please review the 7 steps in section A of the previous chapter and just substitute the following in place of the mantra.



Without actually playing the music piece, just visualize the music in your head and feel the vibrations move through you. If you sense a discernable level of relaxation, a sense of peace and perhaps a sensation like a column above the head or a sense of lightness, all that would indicate this works for you.

The points that promote the effectiveness of mantra based meditation equally promote this practice too. Doing after physical or breath yoga and doing it at the same time everyday will make it more effective.

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**This presentation of Mantra Based Meditation and Music Yoga was written by Dr. C. Rajan Narayanan of the Life in Yoga Foundation, and the content reflects two chapters in a forthcoming book. Life in Yoga Foundation is charitable organization dedicated to sharing the benefits of yoga without fees to those wishing to learn. Donations to support this effort can be mailed as a check to “Life in Yoga Foundation” to 6 Seneca Forest Court, Germantown, MD 20876.**

