

Advanced Yoga Practices

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Easy Lessons for Ecstatic Living

Volume 2

More Original Internet Lessons with Additions by the Author

Yogani

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Cover image of radiating *OM* symbol drawn by the author.

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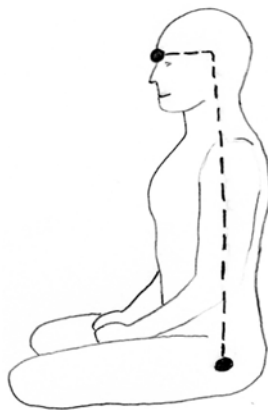
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you. When ecstatic conductivity arises, it becomes largely “feel,” so it is okay to start with feel if that is more natural.

That’s it. Very simple.

Those who can imagine the spinal nerve as a tiny tube or thread, will often ask about following the curve of the spinal, forward and back, and even from side to side in cases where there may be a medical condition affecting the alignment of the spine. Others have asked if spinal injuries involving paralysis will affect spinal breathing. In all of these cases, whether attempting to micro-manage the path of the spinal nerve, or wondering if the condition of the physical anatomy will reduce the effectiveness of our practice, the answer is always the same: Don’t worry about it. Just end up at the brow at the completion of inhalation, and at the root at the end of exhalation. The path in-between can be a straight line without any regard for the actual curvature of the spine, or whether there is any spine at all.

To this end the following diagram is offered, where the brow and root are emphasized, and the path in-between is direct, with the only conspicuous feature of the path being a right-angle turn at the center of the head forward toward the brow. Even that can be passed through as a smooth transitional curve, without any sharp angle to it.



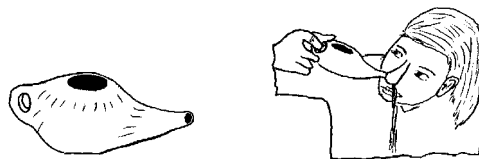
The Path of Spinal Breathing

Now some purists will say, “But that isn’t exactly where the spinal column is, and you are missing the whole thing!”

It doesn’t matter. We can awaken the spinal nerve just as easily by this method as by any other more complicated path for tracing the sushumna. Easier, as a matter of fact, because we will not be getting bogged down in excessive visualization (mind stuff). Like with deep meditation, we just easily favor the path between root at brow, whatever that means for us. It will not be exact. Like the mantra in deep meditation, it will change within our session, and over time. Over the long run of daily practice, the spinal nerve will expand from a small thread-like line to become a vast column of luminous ecstatic energy. Where is the spinal nerve in that? Still up and down the center, like the diagram shows. So the thing is not to micro-manage too much. Just favor the path and let it happen naturally.

and pranayama methods work in the nasal passages and sinuses also, without using water. These include *yoni mudra*, *kechhari mudra*, *sambhavi mudra*, *bastrika pranayama*, and *kapalbhati*.

The simplest way to begin to do jala neti is with a *neti pot*, which is like a small teapot with a spout that fits comfortably into the nostril. It is easily obtained through any yoga supply store. With appropriately mixed salty water in the neti pot and the spout inserted in one nostril with face turned down over the sink, then the head is turned to the side so the water will run into the nostril. From there it will run through the nasal passage, over the back edge of the nasal septum (the divider between left and right nostrils), and back out through the other nostril and into the sink, as illustrated here:



Use of a Neti Pot

This is first done through one nostril, and then through the other nostril. The order does not matter. As long as the head is tipped forward during this procedure, no water will find its way into the throat. A little might spill over into the mouth, and that can be easily expelled through the mouth. (See the instructions below on doing jala neti using a bowl.)

In the course of doing this easy procedure with a neti pot, the sinuses will also be filled with the saline solution, gently massaging and cleansing them. Once both nostrils have received and emptied the neti pot, and have drained, it will take a few minutes more to drain the sinuses. This is done by slowly tilting the head to the left and the right, and then up and down over the sink. Water will continue to come out of the sinuses for a few minutes, so be patient. If you walk out of the bathroom too soon, you may end up draining your sinuses on the living room rug!

The amount of salt we put in the water is important, as this determines the comfort (or lack of it) we will find in doing jala neti. Obviously, if the practice gives us discomfort, we will not be inclined to do it. So getting the salt content right is essential. Everyone will be a little different in this, so some trial and error will be necessary to get the salt content just right for you.

Slightly warm tap water can be used, if the water is sanitary. It is preferred to use pure salt without additives, such as iodine. One to two teaspoons per quart or liter of water is a range of concentration, which translates to about one-half to one teaspoon per pint or half liter. For a small neti pot, a few pinches of salt will be adequate.

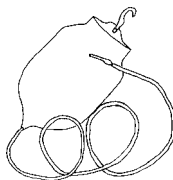
Adjustments to salt content are made based on how it feels going through our nostrils. Everyone is a little different in this, and the above ranges are approximate. If there is too much or too little salt, there can be stinging sensations or other signs of discomfort, and we should adjust our salt content accordingly. No permanent damage will result from using incorrect salt concentration, but it isn't fun either, so we should make the necessary adjustments. When the salt content is right for us, there will be no discomfort at all as the water passes through our sensitive nasal and sinus tissues. This is how we will know we have the correct salt content. Experiment and see for yourself.

Lesson 314 – Colon Cleansing

It has been said that many diseases can be cured through colon cleansing – the use of enemas. Hence the rise in popularity of this practice, and even the springing up of *colon cleansing clinics* across the landscape. Like with so many things in yoga, a moderate approach can be very helpful for our spiritual progress and health. But an obsession with any one practice at the expense of everything else can be counter-productive. It is with that warning that we discuss colon cleansing, the shatkarma that is called *basti*.

The colon is the part of the intestines that goes from the appendix in the lower right abdomen upward (ascending), across from right to left just above the navel (transverse), and back down (descending) the left side of the abdomen to the rectum and the anus.

Basti is a simple warm water enema using a gravity bag, hose with clamp, and an insert fitting at the end, which fits in the anus.



Enema Bag

Slightly warm tap water can be used if it is free of bacteria. If not, use bottled water. No salt is used. With the bag hung a few feet above the anus, carefully fill up the colon with about a quart or liter of water (or less), either leaning forward on the toilet or lying down on the left side. To protect against urinary tract infection, care should be taken not to leak water from the anus on to the urethra – ladies especially. Wait for a few minutes before expelling. Some light nauli (see Lesson 129) can be done while sitting on the toilet before and during the emptying of the colon. This easy and quick procedure will provide a good colon clean-out.

For spiritual purposes, basti can be done every morning before bathing and sitting practices, along with jala neti/nasal wash. However, this is not a routine for beginning yoga practitioners, nor needed for advanced practitioners with ecstatic conductivity well-established. The shatkarmas are most useful for spiritual purposes in the middle stage cultivation of ecstatic conductivity, done in conjunction with a full yoga routine.

For health reasons, one might prefer to use basti for relief during times of stress, constipation and other digestive problems.

Can basti become a habit that we cannot let go of, so we become dependent on the enema to clear our bowels? Not necessarily. Basti can be used daily for spiritual purposes for a long time in support of our yoga routine to assist the awakening of ecstatic conductivity. Then, at some point when ecstatic awakening has become strong and self-sustaining, basti can be discontinued and used only occasionally thereafter.

With the many changes in neurobiological functioning that occur in advancing yoga, regular elimination becomes part of the overall ecstatic neurobiology, but it takes a transition (with a full range of practices) to get there. The shatkarmas, including basti, are part of that transitional phase.

physical sensations, etc. Everything is the same, except we pick up the mantra favoring this location in the body.



Solar Center

With this additional aspect of meditation procedure, we may notice several things occurring:

- An obvious shift in physical location from where we have been thinking the mantra, away from the head or other place where we may have had an unconscious habit to locate it. This does not affect the vibrational qualities of the mantra throughout the nervous system, which will still resonate as a tuning fork does when near another tuning fork of the same frequency.
- A possible reduction in head pressure or other symptoms we may have experienced when unconsciously locating the mantra elsewhere in the body.
- An initial increase in sensitivity in the heart and solar plexus region. This is purification and opening, and can manifest as emotion, vibration or the sensation of heat in this area. If any of these symptoms become excessive, we should first follow the procedure in Lesson 15 for handling strong sensations during deep meditation. If this does not dissolve excessive symptoms of purification, then we should self-pace the use of the solar centering enhancement, as needed. It does not mean we have to reduce overall meditation time if self-pacing the use of solar centering is sufficient to restore balance.
- For those experiencing ecstatic conductivity in the nervous system, sensations in the solar plexus region can be used to locate the mantra. This may be experienced as a physical sensation, radiating energy or light, or expansive empty space. Due to the proximity to the heart, it is common to experience symptoms of expansion and spaciousness, which may be combined with the energetic symptoms of the solar region. This is the joining of emptiness with energy, the joining of the metaphorical shiva and shakti principles in this central region of the body. It produces a radiation of the joining that can illuminate the entire body, and beyond. At the same time, there is a centering effect. So this practice may be experienced in both ways – radiating and centering. The place we will notice the practical results of this will be in daily activity, which is the true measure of any practice we are doing. If we find more inner stability and outpouring divine love in daily activity, we will know our practice is good.



1a. Warm-up, Head to Heart



1b. Warm-up, Arms to Heart



1c. Warm-up, Legs to Heart



2a. Knees to Chest



2b. Roll, Left then Right



2c. Bicycle



3. Kneeling Seat



4. Camel



5. Child



6a. Sitting, Head to One Knee



6b. Sitting, Head to Both Knees



7. Shoulder Stand



8. Plow



9. Sitting, Head to Both Knees



10. Seal of Yoga



11. Fish



12. Sitting, Head to Both Knees



13. Cobra



14. Locust



15. Bow



16. Wheel



17. Peacock



18. Spinal Twist (advanced)



19. Abdominal Lift - Nauli



20. Standing Back Stretch



21. Standing Toe Touch



22. Corpse Pose

AYP PRACTICE CHART																		
Main Practices Sequence* >	Spinal Breathing Pranayama			Energy Cultivation			Deep Meditation			Core Samyama			Energy Cultivation			Cosmic Samyama		
Learning Sequence >	2nd			3rd			1st			4th			5th			6th		
Level** >	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A	B	I	A
Energy Cultivation Practices																		
Mulabandha		I	I						A			A						A
Sambhavi Mudra	I	I	I						A			A						A
Siddhasana		I	I					A	A			A	A					
Uddiyana or Nauli		I	I						A			A						A
Kechari Mudra		I	I						A			A						A
Spinal Bastrika					I	I												
<i>Yoni Mudra</i>					I										I			
<i>Chin Pump</i>						I												
<i>Whole Body Mudra</i>			A			A			A			A			A			A
Practice Times***																		
Standard	5-10 min			2-5 min			10-20 min			5-10 min			2-5 min			5 min		
Aggressive	Over 10 min			Over 5 min			Over 20 min			Over 10 min			Over 5 min			Over 5 min		

Notes:

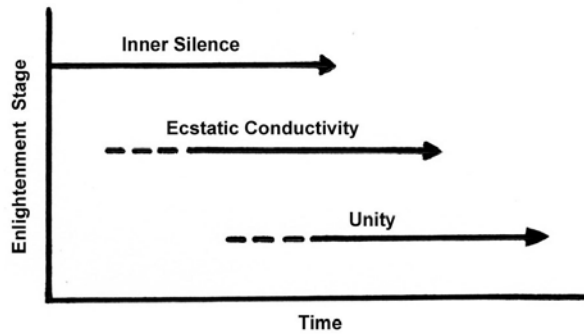
* Each cycle of core practices is preceded by asanas (postures), and followed by rest.

** Practitioner Level: **B** = Basic, **I** = Intermediate, **A** = Advanced

*** Practice times are twice per day. Structured retreats may include more practice cycles per day.

“I” designates an Intentional Practice

“A” designates an Automatic Practice



Enlightenment Bar Chart

As always, we are keeping it as simple as possible. Some might argue that it is too simple, given the complex maps to enlightenment that are found in some of the traditions of the world. They are so much fun to play with!

Our reasoning is that it is much better to stay focused on daily practices, rather than to get caught up in maps. The journey has enough wrinkles of its own that we will find cropping up in our experiences, and we prefer to manage the practices and experiences directly with self-pacing, grounding, and other means. It is the fastest and surest way forward. There is no substitute for the direct experience we gain with a hands-on approach to practices.

With a little “reading between the lines,” it can be seen that there is much to consider in the above enlightenment bar chart. Let’s look at it from the perspective of practices, which is the only way any spiritual map can represent something real:

- Inner Silence – Cultivated with deep meditation and enhancements.
- Ecstatic conductivity (kundalini awakening) – Cultivated with spinal breathing pranayama, asanas, mudras, bandhas, etc.
- Unity – Cultivated with samyama, self-inquiry, and increasing karma yoga in daily activity.

So we begin with the cultivation of inner silence. The dotted lines at the beginning of the ecstatic conductivity and unity stages indicate that experiences of these stages may occur intermittently at an earlier time. In the case of ecstatic conductivity, in some individuals it may occur *before* cultivating inner silence, particularly if there has been a history of engagement in energy practices prior to learning meditation. Then the result may not be so ecstatic, but more problematic, contributing to various kinds of sensitivity that have to be dealt with along the way. We have called it “premature kundalini awakening,” and this is not part of the AYP approach. Nevertheless, it happens (we see people coming into AYP all the time with premature kundalini), and it is still possible to get back on track by introducing deep meditation and spinal breathing pranayama, with good self-pacing, grounding and additional remedial measures, as necessary, that are discussed in Lesson 69 and elsewhere in the lessons (see “kundalini” in the Topic Index).

Vata Balancing Diet Suggestions

	<u>Balancing?</u>	<u>Favor or Avoid</u>
Fruits	Yes	Sweet fruits, apricots, avocado, bananas, berries, cherries, coconut, figs (fresh), grapefruit, grapes, lemon, mango, melons (sweet), oranges, papaya, peaches, pineapple, plums
	No	Dried fruits, apples, cranberries, pears, persimmon, pomegranate, watermelon
Vegetables	Yes	Cooked vegetables, asparagus, beets, carrots, cucumber, garlic, green beans, okra (cooked), onion (cooked), potatoes (sweet), radishes, zucchini
	No	Raw vegetables, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, celery, eggplant, leafy greens, lettuce*, mushrooms, onions (raw), parsley*, peas, peppers, potatoes (white), spinach*, sprouts*, tomatoes (* indicates Okay in moderation with oil dressing)
Grains	Yes	Oats (cooked), rice, wheat
	No	Barley, buckwheat, corn, millet, oats (dry), rye
Animal Foods	Yes	Beef, chicken/turkey (white meat), eggs (fried/scrambled), seafood
	No	Lamb, pork, rabbit, venison
Legumes	Yes	Mung beans, tofu, black & red lentils
	No	All other legumes
Nuts	Yes	All nuts in small quantities
Seeds	Yes	All seeds in moderation
Sweeteners	Yes	All sweeteners except white sugar
	No	White sugar
Condiments	Yes	All spices are good
Dairy	Yes	All dairy in moderation
Oil	Yes	All oils are good

Pitta Balancing Diet Suggestions

	<u>Balancing?</u>	<u>Favor or Avoid</u>
Fruits	Yes	Sweet fruits, apples, avocado, coconut, figs, grapes (dark), mango, melons, oranges (sweet), pears, pineapple (sweet), plums (sweet), pomegranate, prunes, raisins
	No	Sour fruits, apricots, berries, bananas, cherries, cranberries, grapefruit, grapes (green), lemons, oranges (sour), papaya, peaches, pineapples (sour), persimmon, plums (sour)
Vegetables	Yes	Sweet & bitter vegetables, asparagus, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, cucumber, cauliflower, celery, green beans, leafy greens, lettuce, mushrooms, okra, peas, parsley, peppers (green), potatoes, Sprouts, zucchini
	No	Pungent vegetables, beets, carrots, eggplant, garlic, onions, peppers (hot), radishes, spinach, tomatoes
Grains	Yes	Barley, oats (cooked), rice (basmati), rice (white), wheat
	No	Buckwheat, corn, millet, oats (dry), rice (brown), rye
Animal Foods	Yes	Chicken/turkey (white meat), eggs (whites), rabbit, shrimp (small amount), venison
	No	Beef, eggs (yoke), lamb, pork, seafood
Legumes	Yes	All legumes except lentils
	No	Lentils
Nuts	Yes	Coconut
	No	All other nuts
Seeds	Yes	Sunflower, pumpkin
	No	All other seeds
Sweeteners	Yes	All sweeteners except molasses and honey
	No	Molasses, honey
Condiments	Yes	Coriander, cinnamon, cardamom, fennel, turmeric, black pepper (small amount)
	No	All other spices
Dairy	Yes	Butter (unsalted), cottage cheese, ghee, milk
	No	Buttermilk, cheese, sour cream, yogurt
Oil	Yes	Coconut, olive, sunflower, soy
	No	Almond, corn, safflower, sesame

Kapha Balancing Diet Suggestions

	<u>Balancing?</u>	<u>Favor or Avoid</u>
Fruits	Yes	Apples, apricots, berries, cherries, cranberries, figs (dry), mango, peaches, pears, persimmon, pomegranate, prunes, raisins
	No	Sweet & sour fruits, avocado, bananas, coconut, figs (fresh), grapefruit, grapes, lemons, melons, oranges, papaya, pineapple, plums
Vegetables	Yes	Pungent & bitter vegetables, asparagus, beets, broccoli, brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, celery, eggplant, garlic, leafy greens, lettuce, mushrooms, okra, onions, parsley, peas, peppers, Potatoes (white), radishes, spinach, sprouts
	No	Sweet & juicy vegetables, cucumber, potatoes (sweet), tomatoes, zucchini
Grains	Yes	Barley, corn, millet, oats (dry), rice (small amount – basmati), rye
	No	Oats (cooked), rice (brown), rice (white), wheat
Animal Foods	Yes	Chicken/turkey (dark meat), eggs (not fried or scrambled), rabbit, shrimp, venison
	No	Beef, lamb, pork, seafood
Legumes	Yes	All legumes except as listed
	No	Kidney beans, soy beans, black lentils, mung beans
Nuts	No	No nuts at all
Seeds	Yes	Sunflower, pumpkin
	No	All other seeds
Sweeteners	Yes	Raw honey
	No	All other sweeteners
Condiments	Yes	All condiments except salt
	No	Salt
Dairy	Yes	Ghee, goat milk
	No	All other dairy
Oil	Yes	Almond, corn, sunflower (all in moderation)
	No	All other oils