

# Main yoga programmes, spring 2011

Hi everybody,

here is a short summary of the main things we have went through during the course. It is not meant as a thorough description functional for somebody who hasn't taken the course, but only as a reminder, so that you can keep doing things at home if you want.

Best wishes, and enjoy your practice! :)

Gunnar

## ***General considerations, and structure of the programme***

In this course, we have been doing full yoga programmes. This has the benefit that you will gradually move towards a more and more relaxed and meditative state, where you never have to deal with too drastic changes in your state. This is beneficial and avoids many types of resistances, which otherwise may be hard to circumvent. However, this approach is fairly time-consuming, and it is therefore important to know that you can also very beneficially do much shorter programmes. If you just have 10 minutes, it is very good to just do savasana, where you lie still on the back, experiencing how the body and breath calms down. This is also a good way to start a programme, since this will allow you to feel your body, which usually then will tell you which type of programme it needs today. However, as a beginning student it is also a good idea to follow the standard programmes, which are given below. They should also be combined so that a full programme consists of the following structure:

- 1) Savasana, and perhaps the wave breath
- 2) Easy warming up poses
- 3) Bigger poses, which you usually lie in a little bit longer time in each pose
- 4) Some ending pose, e.g. the hare
- 5) Breathing exercises
- 6) Yoga nidra and/or some other meditation

However, also this structure may be deviated from, and you are always welcome to experiment with the material. Make yoga into your own practice!

Also, it is a good idea to not have too big ambitions in the beginning, since this usually leads to you doing it a lot for a short time, whereafter something happens that forces you to take a short break, and then you never get back to it. The important thing, the most important thing to learn, is to come back to the practice after you have had a breaks. If you have had such a break now, try to just do e.g. the savasana or the plow for just a few minutes, and see what happens...in any case - good luck with the explorations! :)

## ***Asanas - the physical exercises***

### **Pawanmuktasana - releasing the small tensions**

This programme is good for introducing beginners to yoga, since it is not that physically demanding. However, it deals with those minor tensions that all - also the more advanced yogis - acquire during everyday life, so it is not a programme that one stops doing, but it is good to do it e.g. once a week also for the advanced yogi. It can then also function as a warm-up to the bigger asanas below.

All exercises should be done approx 5-10 times, and should be done in a light way, but where you are still present in your body and aware of what you are doing. Also, make sure that you are not tensing in unnecessary places, such as your face, in the stomach etc. If you want, you can also combine the movements with the breath (also where it is not explicitly indicated) so that you breath out as you move in one direction, and breath in when you move in the other direction.

1. Sit with your legs straight in front of you, and bend and stretch your toes forward and backward
2. Same thing, but include the feet as well
3. Circular movements with the feet, both directions
4. Clasp your hands under your thigh, and extend the movement from exercise 2, so that you are also stretching and bending the whole leg (i.e. knee)
  
5. Sit with your legs straight, but apart, arms straight and to the sides. With an exhalation bend forward and grab hold of the opposite foot; the other arm is straight back and slightly up, and you look at this backward bent arm. Inhale and come up with the arms to the side, and then exhale bending forward in the other direction, etc. In this position you should not bend forward too much, but keep the back as straight as possible.
  
6. Sit in a comfortable sitting position, with your hand straight and in front of you. Spread and fist your hands
7. Same position, fingers together, hands up and down
8. Same as 7 but with fisted hands, thumbs inside
9. Fisted hands, circular movements  
Rest the arms shortly if you want
10. Arms straight forward, palms up, and then bend the arms so the fingers touch the shoulders. Straighten the arms again, and so on back and forth
11. Same as 10, but to the side
- 12 Arms bent, fingers on the shoulders, and do circular movements, where the elbows are together as long time as possible in front of you, and also otherwise with as big circles as possible. Both directions
  
13. Savasana. Lie still on your back, arms along side the body. Experience how the body is calming down and how the effect of the movements is clinging out. As this process is completed you move gradually more and more towards experiencing the whole, and still, body, which also includes experiencing the breath. After approx 5-10 minutes you move on to the next pose.
  
14. From the lying position, with an inhalation, straighten your arms up (hands are fisted) on the floor above head; hold the breath and sit up, arms still above the head; exhale and fall forward and then slide back towards a lying position again; however, before your back touches the ground you raise the arms

again and sit up with an inhalation, and keep circling in such vertical movements. After a few laps, change direction.

15. Sit with your legs straight but apart. Clasp the hands and bend forward over one leg. In the same height, move horizontally to the bending over the other leg and then extend the movement further to the side, and then back so that you again come as much back as possible without touching the ground; complete the circular movement so that you again bend over the first leg. Keep circling a few laps, and then change direction. Arms are always straight, and you look at the hands.

16. Sit in squatting position. Head is hanging, and hands are clasped and between the legs. With a rapid inhalation, throw the straight arms up in the air, and follow the movement so that you are always looking at the hands. With a slow exhalation, let the upper body and arms fall down to the original position, hang a short while (but with no additional breaths), and then repeat the movement another 4-6 times.

17. Sit in a comfortable sitting position. Straight head, experience the whole body. Then let the head fall slowly to one side, so that the ear is approaching the shoulder. Let it hang a little while, and then over to the other side.

18. Same as 17 but looking from side to side

19. Same as 17 but forwards and backwards

20. Circular movements with the head. Use a slow but steady pace, and make sure that you sit with a straight back and relaxed shoulders. A few laps in both directions.

Afterwards, just sit with the head upwards, and experience the whole body for a little while.

## Triangle poses

The triangle poses is another easy set of poses good in the beginning of a programme. In the whole programme you stand in more or less the same pose with the legs: wide apart, as in an equilateral triangle.

1. Arms straight out to the sides, palms up. Exhale while bending forward and reaching (if possible) with the back of the hand on the outside of the opposite, while the other also straight arm is straight up in the air, and you look at the arm up in the air; inhale and come up again with arms to the sides. After some 4-5 times to each side you may want to do the variation where the arm up in the air is instead falling forward above the head.

2. Bring the wrists as close up to the armpits as you can, where the palms are in towards the side of the body, and where the fingers are pointing down. Exhale while you let the hand slide down along the side as you extend the arm and bend to upper body to the same side, so that the hand comes as far down towards the foot as possible. Inhale while coming up again, and then over to the other side.

3. Stand with the arms relaxed. Start looking from side to side. Extend the movement so that it goes further and further, and faster and faster. Eventually this will make the arms swing out to the sides,

without using any muscles in the arms. When the movements is at its peak, the hand swinging on your front should reach the opposite shoulder, and the hand swinging on the back should touch the opposite hip. Arms and all the joints in the arms are completely relaxed. After perhaps half a minute at maximum speed, you gradually lower the speed until the body is completely at rest.

4. Grab hold of the wrist with the opposite hand, behind the back. Exhale and bend forward so that your forehead touches the knee; try to bend the knees as little as possible. Inhale coming up, and then over the other side. After some 5 rounds to each side, extend the movement so that you bend the knee you are bending forward towards, you adjust the foot on the same leg so that the toes points to the side, and you extend the forward-bend as far as you can; if possible so that the forehead touches the ground.

## **Surya Namaskara, the Sun Salutation**

This is one of the most well-known warming-up exercises. As the name suggests, it is a nice way of waking up to do this position outside, facing the rising sun. There are many variations, both regarding positions and speed. It is a good idea to at least play around with different speeds; a slow pace and a fast pace give completely different effects. As usual the movement and breath go together, so that you are moving while breathing, and staying shortly in the pose while holding the breath.

1. Stand with your feet under your shoulders, and your palms together so that the thumbs are touching the chest bone, and the fingers are pointing upwards. Proud straightening of the back.
2. Inhale while raising the arms so that your hands are straight up in the air, and the back is slightly arched backwards. You may look up at the hands.
3. Exhale while bending forward, so that - if possible - your palms are down on the ground. Let the whole upper body just hang, and your neck be flexible, and your forehead approaching the knee.
4. Inhale while putting your right leg backwards, placing your thumb and index finger on the ground so that your thumbs and index fingers are pointing in opposite directions; arch backwards so that you are looking up (or towards the eyebrow center). The knee rests on the ground.
5. Exhale while putting the other leg back as well; also put the palms in the ground, and straighten the legs and the upper body, so that your body and the floor forms a triangle, with the but pointing up in the air.
6. Hold the breath while lying down, so that your toes, knees, chest, hands and chin are in the ground. The thighs, groin, and stomach, however, are up in the air.
7. Inhale while straighting the arms so that the upper body hangs in the arms, and while looking slightly upwards.
8. Exhale and go back to position 5 (mountain pose)
9. Inhale while extending right foot forward so that you come to position 4.
10. Exhale while putting also the left foot forward, reaching position 3.
11. Inhale while rolling up so that you come to position 2

12. Exhale slightly so that you reach position 1.

This constitutes half a round; the other half is identical to the first half, except that you put the left leg back in 4, and the left foot forward in 9.

After you have done as many rounds as you want, you lie down in savasana.

## **Intermediate programme, preparing for the classical programme**

This programme is primarily a practice programme, which you do before you are able to do the classical programme. However, some of the poses are nice alternatives to the classical poses, which you may want to do also as an advanced student.

1-4) Triangle poses, see above

5. Savasana (can be shorter than a full savasana)

6. From savasana, bend your knees, so that your heels come together with your buttocks. Grab hold of the ankles on the front side, so that you get a firm hold of your legs. Inhale while raising buttocks, legs, and the upper part of the body, all the way up to the shoulders, as high up as you can. In other words, shoulders and head, as well as feet, are still on the ground, and you try to get the stomach and pelvis as high up as possible. You hold the breath in while you stand in the pose, which you do for a while (perhaps half a minute). You exhale as you are coming down, and extend the legs so you come back to savasana. Let your breath recover, and then do a new round. Do perhaps 3-5 rounds. You may also want to do variations where you hold the breath out instead of in, or where you breath freely while holding the pose.

7. Dynamic variation of the plow pose (this is optional). Swing the feet above the head all the way, so that - if possible - the toes are in the ground and the legs are straight. After you have been in this plow position as long as you feel like (in the beginning perhaps only a few seconds), you swing back again, coming to savasana. However, after being there only a second or two, you swing back to the plow pose again, and so keep swinging back and forth. Eventually, you may want to extend the periods in the plow pose, so that you in the end keep the plow pose permanently. You end by coming back to savasana again, possibly in a very slow fashion, vertebra by vertebra.

8. The Clown. Sit on our lower legs with a (possibly double folded) mattress in front of you. Put the top of your head and the two palms in the ground, so that they form an equidistant triangle. Straighten your legs, and walk with small steps towards your head, so that your knees come just above the elbows. While having placed the knees there, you raise the lower parts of the legs, so that the feet are pointing upwards. Stand in this pose for perhaps 3-5 minutes, and go directly into the palm pose.

9. The Palm. Stand straight up and clasp your hands so that the palms are pointing down. Raise up the straight arms, so that the palms are pointing upwards. If you want you can look at the hands, but in any case you should stand on the tip of the toes with an inhalation. Keep the pose while holding the breath in, and then come down with an exhalation. Keep standing for a little while with closed eyes, or go directly into savasana.

10. Savasana (full length, i.e. 5-10 minutes)

11. Balance poses. Here you can do one or several different alternatives. One option is the pose where you raise one arm up with an inhalation, and then bending the upper body forward while exhaling and while lifting the opposite leg straight up. Hold the pose as long as you hold the breath, and then come up with an inhalation, and lower the arm with an exhalation. Both sides.

12. Standing swinging pose. Stand with your feet apart, and raise your arms above your head with an inhalation. Exhale, while falling forward, and let your whole upper body and neck hang relaxed for a few seconds. Then start the movement. This consists of a first swinging upwards, where you reach the height so that your fingers, hands, arms, head, and upper body form a straight line; this is done with an inhalation; with an exhalation you swing down to the hanging pose again. After approx 20 swings you extend the upwards movement so that you come all the way up, standing there a little while with the breath held in, and then lowering the arms while exhaling. Let the body come down a bit, and then do another 2-4 rounds. You can also do this pose while holding the breath out while swinging; then you don't have to do 20 swings. Afterwards, lie on the back in the savasana.

13. Savasana

14. Universal pose. Lie on the back, put your right foot on top of the left knee, and twist the lower back so that your right knee comes to the ground to the left of the left knee. Put the left hand on the right knee, and the right hand diagonally up in the direction where it is most stretching your chest muscles (where it is highest up in the air). Look up at the arm that is diagonally above the head, and let that arm relax so that with each exhalation it falls a little bit closer to the ground. Eventually the arm, and even the shoulder blade, may reach the ground, but you should not push this process. Make use of the technique from pratyahara where you focus on the pain and tensions from the pose, and where let your breath enter into this focus; this will allow you to relax the tensions more quickly. Eventually you move the awareness to the whole body. After lying some 3-6 minutes (not more than that!) in this pose, come back to savasana, lie a while there if you want, and then go over to the other side.

15. Crocodile pose. Roll over on the stomach, put your elbows in the ground, your wrists together and your palms up so that they form a little shelf, in which you rest your chin and head. Lie for some 3-6 minutes, and relax in the pose. Notice how easy it is to relax in this pose; this is how all yoga poses can become eventually! Let your awareness rest in the feeling of the whole body and the breath, which pushes slightly down towards the ground.

16. The Turtle. Sit with your legs a little bit apart; foot soles on the ground and knees in the air. Let your hands and arms enter the opening under your knees, and bend your elbows so that the hands reach backwards, and - if possible - let the hands meet each other behind your buttocks. Sink in the pose so that your head sinks towards the ground while your legs become more and more straightened (hands are still together). After some 4-6 minutes, you come up again into a sitting position.

Alternative: The Hare. Sit in the diamond pose, i.e. on top of your lower legs, so that the big toes are together, your heels are apart, and your but has sunk into the little opening that has formed between your heels. Grab hold of your one wrist behind your back, and fall forward so that your forehead reaches the ground. Lie in the pose for some 4-6 minutes, before you come up again. Sit and meditate a little bit.

In an alternative version of the hare, you start by inhaling and raising your arms up, and then exhaling

while lowering your upper body and arms to the ground. You then come up in the reversed way: inhaling sitting up, and exhaling lowering the arms.

## **The Classical Programme**

This is the most important physical programme in my tradition, and once you have learnt it, it will most likely form with the core of your daily physical practice. You can do the whole programme or parts of it, but ensure that you always pick up complete parts, i.e. where e.g. a bending forward pose is followed by a bending backwards pose, and then savasana. In other words, a complete part is any set of positions that comes between two savasanas. Here you always do the full savasana, which is an important part of the exercises.

In the beginning you are learning the poses. Then you may go in and out of them several times during the same exercise, and generally do preparatory versions of the exercises. However, as you learn them, you go directly into the full version of the exercises, and focus more and more on the stillness of the body, possibly centered around the chakra related to that pose.

1. Some warming up programme, e.g., the triangle poses, Surya Namaskara, or Pawanmuktasana.
2. Headstand. Sit on your lower legs in front of a possibly double folded mattress. Fold your hands and place them and the underarms on the ground, so that your hands and elbows forms an equilateral triangle. Place the top of the head on the ground with the neck touching the hands, straighten the legs, walk with small steps towards the head and when you are just about the tip over, raise the legs above the floor, and eventually all the way up in the air. While in the pose you stand straight as a line and breath normally. In the beginning you stand only a little while, but when you get more experienced with the pose, it is nice to stand up to 10 minutes, perhaps even longer. An easier version of the headstand is the Clown (see the intermediate programme).
3. The Palm. Stand straight up, clasp your hands so that the palms are pointing down. With straight arms, raise them up, so that the palms are pointing upwards. Look at the hands, and stand on the tip of the toes with an inhalation. Keep the pose while holding the breath in, and then come down with an exhalation. Keep standing for a little while with closed eyes, or go directly into savasana.
4. Savasana.
5. Shoulderstand. From savasana, raise the legs hips and lower back all the way up to the shoulders in the air, so that they stand straight up, forming a straight line. The hands are supporting the back by placing them as close to the shoulder blades as possible. You breath freely, and may stand for up to 10 minutes in the pose. An easier version of this pose is position 6 in the intermediate programme.
6. The plow. Lower the legs so that your toes reaches the ground and the legs are straight, and the arms are extended on the ground, away from the body. In an alternative version of the plow is where you bend the knees so that they come to the ears; then you let the arms cross each other in above the lower part of the legs. An easier, dynamic version of the plow is described in the intermediary programme.

7. Viparita Karani, or the reversed pose. While still in the plow pose, you clasp your hands behind your back so that you get your shoulder blades together, bend the arms in the elbows so that your palms are pointing upwards and then lower the body so that your hip bone can rest in the hands. When you have found a good position for the hip, it is easy to straighten the legs straight up in the air (i.e. not above the head), and to stand in the pose without any muscle effort. This is one of the few yoga poses in which you may stand indefinitely.

8. The Fish. Sit in the lotus pose and experience the whole body. Lean backwards, and rest on the hands. Lean further, and rest on the elbows, and then on the top of the head. Finally, grab hold of the feet, and push up the chest as high up as you can. Once you have gotten into the pose, you stay in it for some up to 10 minutes. When you are finished, you sit up again, and then move on to the savasana.

If you cannot do the full lotus, you should do an easier version. Then you lie on the back, place your hands with the palms up towards the buttocks, and use the elbows to raise the chest as high as you can, and the top of the head on the floor. When you go out, you go directly to savasana.

9. Savasana.

10. Backstretch pose. From savasana, raise your arms with an inhalation, so that they reach the floor above your head. Sit up while holding the breath in (arms are still above your head), and bend forward with an exhalation. If you can, grab hold of the big toes, so that the thumbs are on the outsides, and the index and long fingers between big toes and second toes. Sink into the pose using pratyahara: focusing on the epicenter of the pain, and including the breath in the experience, especially the exhalation. After some 3-10 minutes, come slowly up again to a sitting position, and focus on the whole body and the spine. An easier version of this pose is to slide back to lying position again after bending forward, and so go round in circles. This dynamic version may end with the static version, just as in e.g. the dynamic version of the plow pose.

11. Abdominal stretch (Subtra vajrasana). Sit in the vajrasana (the diamond position), i.e. on your lower legs. Lean backwards, so that you come, first on your hands, then the elbows, top of the head, and - if possible - eventually on your back. If you come all the way to lying on the back, you place your hands on your thighs or with straight arms up above the head. Lie for 3-10 minutes (if necessary practicing pratyahara on the pain, otherwise just experiencing the whole body), and then sit up, before you move onto savasana.

12. Savasana.

13. Spinal twist. Sit up, and place your left heel to the right of the right hip bone. Place your right foot with the sole down on the floor to the left of the left knee. This means that right knee is pointing straight up in the air, but that the left knee is lying down on the floor. Twist the back so that you can come with the left arm in front of the left thigh, with the left arm being on the outside of the left knee, and the hand grabbing hold of the foot. The right arm is bent, so that the lower arm goes parallel to the line between the hips. You look to the right, and sit as straight as possible. Sit in the pose for some 3-10 minutes, and then move over to the other side (possibly with a short break, sitting with a straight back without twisting). In an alternative version of this, you bend the left arm so that it goes in under the left knee, and grabs hold of the right hand. An alternative pose with approximately the same effect as the spinal twist is the universal pose (see the intermediate programme). After the spinal twist you lie on the stomach.



14. The Cobra. Lie on the stomach, and place your palms in the ground close to the chest. With an inhalation, raise the upper part of the body to the navel, by pushing slightly with the hands. Look up and arch the raised part of the back. Hold the breath while staying in the pose, and come down with an exhalation, let the breath recover, and do one or two more rounds.

15. The Locust. Place your hands under your thighs, palms up. With an inhalation, raise the legs up in the air, as high as you can. Hold the breath, while in the pose, and come down with an exhalation. Let the breath recover and do one or two more rounds.

16. The bow. Grab hold of your ankles, and with an inhalation, raise the legs and the upper body as high as you can, put making use of the tension formed from straightening legs attached to your arms. Look up, and hold the breath while in the pose. Come down with an exhalation, let the breath recover, and then do 1-2 more rounds. After the last round, roll directly on to your back, and into savasana.

(A more comfortable and meditative alternative to 14-16 is the crocodile; this pose, however, is not strengthening your back as much.)

17. Savasana.

18. Yoga mudra. Sit in the lotus position, grab hold of your one wrist behind the back, and bend forward. Sink into a position where your forehead touches the ground, and where you can focus on the whole body and the breath. You may also do this position from the half lotus, and if also that is difficult, you may also do it from the diamond pose, which turns yoga mudra into the hare pose. After some 5-10 minutes, sit up and meditate on the whole body a little while. As you will notice, yoga mudra has made your state slightly meditative already, and you are therefore now ready to go on to breathing exercises.

## ***Pranayamas. - breathing exercises***

These exercises should be done in some variation of the lotus pose (half lotus or a tailor's position), or in the siddhasana, but *not* in the diamond pose. Pranayamas usually follow the physical exercises, and prepare you for the meditation. There are many different exercises, and here I only repeat those that we have gone through during the course.

### **Bhastrika (the black smith bellow)**

Breath quickly in and out 20 or more times, where you use the stomach only (not the chest) to achieve the breath, and where you breath equally forcefully during both the in- and exhalation. Extend the last inhalation so that you get completely full with air; lean forward into the chin lock, do the root lock, and hold the breath with both locks as long as you feel comfortable. Before you exhale, release the root lock and then the chin lock (in that order), sit with a straight back and relaxed face, and *then* exhale. Let the breath recover, and then do 1-2 more rounds.

### **Brahmari (the bumble bee)**

Inhale fully, and do the chin and root lock. Hold the breath a little while, but not overly long. Release the root lock, chin lock, sit up, extend your arms to the side so that the elbows are pointing outwards, and one of the fingers are pushing into the ear cover (the tragus), and exhale with a long "mmm"-sound. Let the vibrations of the sound "vibrate away" any physical or mental tensions you want to release. Lower the arms and let your breath recover, before you do some 2-10 more rounds.

### **The psychich breath**

In this breath you use your false vocal folds (as when you whisper), so that you produce an even sound in the throat. You also fold your tongue so that the tip of the tongue touches the palate (top of the mouth) and keep it there throughout the hold breathing exercise. You should also hold your breath, so that you e.g. have an equal time spent on inhaling, exhaling, holding the breath in, and holding the breath out. Also try to extend this time, so that the breathing becomes more and more full and slow.

This breathing is a central part of many advanced meditations dealing with your energy. A basic visualization is to feel energy flowing into the body on the inhalation, letting it vibrate while holding the breath in, and letting "bad" energy (tensions, anxiety, disease, pain, worry, etc) flow out of the body on the exhalation, leaving it completely clean and open as you hold the breath out.

### **Nadi shodan (the alternate breathing)**

This exercise can be done in different degrees of difficulties, and we have so far only dealt with the most basic version. Here you place your right hand so that your index and long finger touch the forehead or eye brow center, the ring finger on top of the left nostril and the thumb on top of the right nostril. This allows you to close one or both of the nostrils, so that you competely hold your breath, or only breath through one of the nostrils.

You start by inhaling through the left nostril, and then exhale through the right; then you inhale through the right again, and finally exhale through the left. This is one round; do 5-15 rounds. Try to make the breath as slow and long as possible. Prioritize to make the breath soundless, i.e., as slow as possible, but where you still are in complete control all the time.

After the nadi shodan you do not do any further breathing exercises (apart from possibly the psychic breath), but sit experiencing the breath and the body for a little while, before you (if you want) move onto the meditation part of the programme.

## ***Relaxation, concentration and meditation***

The first challenge in learning to mediate is to learn to sit or lie completely still for more than 15 minutes, without falling asleep. If you can do those two things together, you are almost ensured to have altered your state to a meditative one. When it comes to sitting still, you may notice that you get sudden urges to move, e.g., because your nose itches tremendously. This is almost always your mind playing tricks with you, and it is part of the mind's general tendency to keep you on the same state as you have been; as you learn to recognize this, you will recognize such impulses (also their more subtle forms) for what they are: just signs that you are about to swich state, road marks so to say, and not anything anything that has any power over you.

Another important thing to notice is that mediation is not something you think about, or understand, but it is something you *do* (even though it deals a lot with not doing). You may be interested in learning about meditation, and may benefit from such learning, but such learning can never replace the actual *experience* of other states of awareness. In fact, it is a good idea to drop your ideas and expectations about what will happen, as these will often block your ability to experience truly transformed states, and new aspects of your being. Just follow the instructions, and let what happens happen.

In this course, we have primarily encountered 2 different meditations: yoga nidra and antar mouna. However, it is important to notice that they include important sub-techniques that may be practiced on their own: for instance body awareness and breath awareness.

## **Yoga nidra**

Yoga nidra is a typical tantric meditation, where you use the process of nyasa: moving from one focus point to another in a carefully designed process that triggers your relaxation, and allows you to go relatively deep already as a beginner. Yoga nidra exists in two versions: a long and a short (preparatory) version. If you haven't done yoga nidra in a long time, you might want to do the short version again, before you next time (one or a few days later) move on the deep version, although you have already learned the long one.

Yoga nidra is done by listening to instructions by the teacher (possibly recorded on a tape), and there is therefore no point in writing those down here. I will send out a tape later, and you can also by one at [www.yoga.se](http://www.yoga.se)

## **Antar Mouna - Inner Silence**

Antar mouna is one of the most important meditations, and also one of the most generic ones, as it follows the natural process of the mind's calming down process. It consists of a number of steps, where we have touched upon the first 3. Antar mouna can be done both alone and with a teacher, and it is therefore shortly described here. It is, however, easier to do it with a teacher, so if you find Antar Mouna difficult, just try more with Yoga nidra, psychic breath and/or body/breath awareness.

1) First, just allow yourself to complete the thoughts you came into the meditation with; think them to their end so to say. In this phase you may also adjust your body if you want to, and in this meditation it is perfectly fine to sit on a chair or in any other way, as long as your back is straight. However, after this is done, it is a natural thing to go outwards with your awareness: to the sounds and to the surroundings. So you just follow this natural impulse, and notice the sounds. However, do not get caught in individual sounds, but try to hear them all as a single soundscape, which you just take in, without analysis. Also remind yourself sometimes that you are there, e.g., by mentally saying "I am here, I am listening".

2) After spending some 5-10 minutes (not less than 5 minutes!) on step one, you may notice that the mind wants to proceed to step 2: the thoughts. This is a natural thing that happens by itself (even though you should actively decide when you do the switch); when you sit still without generating new actions, lots and lots of thoughts will start to pop up. As they do, just notice them, but do not forget yourself because of them. In a way, do not think them, but observe them, as you would observe a movie or a play acted out in front of you. Make sure to recognize all sorts of thoughts, including those

thoughts you have about yourself, and about how the meditation is going. Those too are just thoughts, and are to be treated as something *within* the meditation, and not as something outside of it. In this meditation, there are therefore not anything that can disturb you: no thought or impression can bring you out of the process, but you treat them all in the same way, as an impression which you experience, without forgetting yourself. You may say to yourself, "I am not this though, I am the one experiencing it", but it is not something you philosophically argue, but something you *do*. Try to make the thought into something that just happens, and try to distance yourself from it; to not identify yourself with the thought or even with the thinker, but with the observer of the thinking and the thinker; you observe the thinker, or take a step back, so to say. In this step, you may also want to make use of the breath: if you need more focus, you use the awareness of the breath in the nose, and if you want to go deeper and/or need to relax, you focus on the breath in the stomach. You should sit with this step until the thoughts start to thin out. If this is the first time you meditate in a while, this may not happen for the time you have set out to mediate (because you have so many undigested impressions that needs to seen and released), and then you simply stay with step 2. However, if the thoughts start to thin out, you move on to step 3.

3) In step 3, you choose a thought actively, and then allows the mind to do whatever it wants with that thought. This may be any thought you want, but an important option is to go back through the day (or perhaps more easily, to go through the "highlights of the day"). If the mind associates away from the original thought to other neighboring thoughts, that is perfectly fine, and then you just move along to those associations. However, if you forget the thread altogether, e.g. by falling asleep or by thinking about something completely different, you just go back to to the original line of thoughts. Here it should emphasized that you are not actively choosing how the mind treats your thoughts, but you just stay back, and observe the association process. You do this until you suddenly just *stop*, and then you sit for a while with no thoughts. Then you pick a new thought, and keep doing that for a while. After that you may move on to step 4 (which we haven't gone through yet), or just go to some generic ending of the meditation.

Generic ending) The end goal of all meditations are always more or less the same, although the techniques to get there may be widely different. In this end result you just let go of everything, of all identifications with anything you normally hold on to, your personality, your physical impressions, your relationships to others, and you just hand all of these things over to whoever/whatever has anyway been carrying you all along (your soul, your pure consciousness, Paramatman, God, the Universe, or whatever you may want to call it). Stop identifying with anything in particular, and just let go. See what happens. Become the background, the space, where everything else has been playing out. No again, this is not something you think about, but something that you *do*. That you open yourself up to. Here you have no expectations as to what should or could happen, and you also stop doing. In a way, what you do is that you stop doing, and just rest in *being*.

You "do" this until you decide that it is time to go out. Then you say clearly, but mentally, Om Tat Sat to yourself, once or many times, and then you start the important process of moving out. This is a very important process, which you shouldn't do unconsciously, but with a high sense of awareness, precision, and intention. You decide to go out, and to keep as much of your deep sense of pure awareness with you as you can, when you start entering the relative world again. First just take in the impressions, and last of the senses is the sight, and then - upon your decision! - you finally move. Also after the meditation is over, it is a good idea to not think to much right away, to not go back to your personality directly, but to just observe pure unprocessed impressions for a little while. Also, after the meditation it is a good idea to go all the way out, perhaps into nature, or perhaps into some work. This will allow you to get a maximal effect of the meditation, and this also allows your mind to be more

flexible. It is also because this is the natural response to true mediation: *"If you have been truly meditating you will want to move out all the way afterwards into full activity and awareness, because you have been fully active and aware in your meditation; if you instead want to sit and be cosy, in a sort of semi-conscious under-the-blanket-state, you haven't been meditating but just dreaming about it."*