

THE HIMALAYAN TRADITION

The Himalayan Tradition comes to us from the Himalayan Mountains in India, which have been home to great sages for millennia. These great sages have lived and passed on knowledge of yogic techniques to disciples who then became masters passing on their teachings in an unbroken lineage since the Vedic period of 5000 years ago. The great sage Shankaracharya established five centers of Himalayan tradition 1200 years ago in India. The methods and philosophies of the Himalayan Tradition have withstood the test of time. Generation upon generation, have followed this path of pure meditation, and a huge reserve of knowledge has been built.

The purpose of the Himalayan Tradition is to awaken the divine flame within each human being, and the goal is for each student to become a master of the Tradition in coming to know his or her true Self. It is the task of the teacher, through the Grace of the Guru, to selflessly help his/her disciples on the way of highest enlightenment. Passing on the knowledge is done experientially through the transmission of a pulsation of energy.

The student is encouraged to study the writings of the Tradition and read about experiences of the great masters of the past for himself or herself. The student is expected to look to the Tradition for support and make sense of what the teacher says.

The Himalayan Tradition of Yoga Meditation combines the wisdom of Patanjali's *Yoga-Sutras* (the most classical text of Yoga), the philosophy and practices of Tantras and the oral instructions and initiatory experiences of a long line of saints and yoga masters whose names may or may not be known. This tradition is a unified system in which all parts are integral and linked, rather than being merely an intellectual combining of these elements.

The principal tenets and practices of all known systems of meditation are contained in the Himalayan Tradition, and for the most part, have arisen out of Himalayan Tradition. For example, *Vipassana* emphasizes breath awareness, *Transcendental Meditation* concentrates on repetition of the mantra, and *Hatha* practitioners perfect the postures. The Himalayan meditator, however, learns to sit in correct posture, relax fully, practice correct breathing, and then combine breath-awareness with mantra.

Following are the **major components** of the Himalayan Tradition of Yoga Meditation: TM

Purification of thoughts and emotions: In order to prevent internal disturbances from extraneous thoughts and sentiments during meditation, one is encouraged to practice purifications such as: The five *Yamas* (codes of conduct: Non-Violence, truthfulness, non-stealing, abstinence from sense-indulgence, and non-possessiveness), and the five *Niyamas* (moral practices: cleanliness in all aspects of one's life, contentment, practices that lead to perfection of mind, body, and senses, study that leads to the knowledge of the Self, and surrender to the Ultimate Reality). Other practices for purification of thoughts and emotions include *brahma-viharas* (or right attitudes), and *prati-paksha-bhavana* which are antidotes to disturbing thoughts. The emotional purification manifests itself in one's mental well-being, in the quality of one's daily contact with others as well as improved stillness in one's meditative postures.

Mindfulness: Himalayan Tradition teaches the method of *asanas* (postures) coupled with full awareness of the states of the body, breath, and mind in a detailed methodology. Central to the practice of *asanas* in this tradition is self-awareness, a deep self-observation in all states of body, breath, and especially the mind. This mindfulness is encouraged to become the way of life for students.

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Breath Awareness: Starting with mindfulness, awareness of breath becomes specialized as the very first step in practice of meditation. Here it is essential to learn diaphragmatic breathing that is slow, smooth, without any jerks, and without a pause between breaths. *Pranayama* or breathing with awareness branches into many practices. *Nadi-Shodhana*, or purification of subtle energy channels, is chief among *pranayama* practice. Other practices include *bhastrika*, and *kapalabhati*.

Japa: Japa is recitation of one's mantra at one of many levels. The science of mantra is based on an understanding of sound vibrations which are primarily centered in the various stations of the *kundalini* and cannot be grasped without initiation. The ultimate purpose of *japa* is to go into supreme silence. A preceptor trained in the Himalayan Tradition leads the students into further and further refinements through nine major stages of mantra practice as taught in the *Tantric* systems.

Shavasana: The shavasana (corpse posture) practices serve as ways of entering one's own subtle body. The interior exercises are detailed and go far beyond mere relaxations in complexity. They may be practiced at the levels of *annamaya kosha* (physical body), *pranamaya kosha* (energy body), or *manomaya kosha* (mental body) in a logical progression. The last *shavasana* mentioned leads to *yoga-nidra* (yogic sleep) at several different levels.

Dharana: Concentrations and *pra-vrttis* or resultant experiences are practiced on the path of realization. The preceptor teaches various methods of concentrations such as, (a) on various focal points within the physical body, (b) at *chakra* (energy) points, and (c) in the *tattvas* (subtle elements).

Dhyana: Meditation proper is the chief practice in Himalayan Tradition. Components that lead one into practice of meditation begins at the level of *manomaya kosha*, and can be entered in many ways, including *japa*, breath awareness, concentrations and initiation

Transmission: From time immemorial, the Tradition has been passed on experientially in an unbroken chain of master-disciple relationships. A meditation guide in this tradition is required to be able to create a common mind-field when leading a class or a group in meditation. The guide must be able to induce a meditative state by his/her mere presence and voice. A guide may only do so to the degree to which s/he is qualified and authorized.

Swami Rama of the Himalayas has presented this tradition in its scientific format within his lectures and writings. He has initiated disciples to continue a degree of transmission.

*May the reader receive the Grace of the Himalayan lineage
and aspire one day to become a vehicle for such transmission.*

योग: समाधि: