

# Pranayama Study Notes – Fall 2018 Session with Lisa Walford

## **WEEK 1: Sessions 1-7**

First day:

- 01-01-Seated\_Meditation.mp3 (8m) (*was 1a*)
- 01-02-Savasana.mp3 (14m) (*was 1b*)
- 01-03-Seated\_Breath\_Awareness.mp3 (15m) (*was 1c*)
- 01-04-Supine\_Ujjayi.mp3\* (11m) (*was 1d*)
- 01-05-Closing\_Poetry.mp3 (4m) (*was 1e*)

Second day:

- 01-06-Supine\_Savasana\_Sidebreath.mp3\* (21m) (*was 2a*)
- 01-07-Seated\_Shape\_Jalandhara.mp3\* (15m) (*was 2b*)

### **First Day**

The first day (sessions 1-5) contain the basic introductions. The second day (sessions 6 and 7) is to practice after you are familiar and comfortable with the first session.

On your first day I suggest that you begin with session 2. If you want to continue on that day, add session 3.

On your second day begin with session 4. Session 4 can be practiced for several days. If you want to continue, add session 3.

Alternate your practice between recordings, if you like.

Be patient, remember, it is not how much you can learn, or how deeply you can breathe. Rather the conditioning of the nervous system and mind happen over a long period of time. You are reconditioning your body/mind from a reactive and instinctive state into a receptive and responsive state. Just as it has taken many years to be programmed into who you think you are, it will take some time to change.

### **Second Day**

Sessions 6 and 7 are longer, but excellent.

Session 7 will benefit you once you practice and consolidate the material in the first session.

*\* indicates good daily practice*

## **WEEK 2: Sessions 1 - 10**

Third day: This is an embodied practice of cultivating a field of awareness.

There is a lot of repetition in pranayama, this is how we refine our awareness. Practice patiently, and persevere. You will have days of restlessness and days of boredom. Then, every so often, the sweet presence reveals itself in the integration of your breath, awareness, and body.

Download these files individually or all together. Itunes is a good resource if you have an Iphone or Ipad. Podcast apps will also grab the files from Itunes. However, you can also download them from my website.

Practice daily, generally for ten to fifteen or twenty minutes. You can create a playlist of your favorite files. Always begin with one of the Savasana scripts, and end with a silent Savasana.

Third day:

- 02-01-Savasana\_Kingdom\_Within.mp3 (13m) *(was 1a)*
- 02-02-Wavebreath\_Shape\_Seated.mp3 (9m) *(was 1b)*
- 02-03-Ujjayi\_Seated.mp3 (4m) *(was 1c)*
- 02-04-Ujjayi\_Seated.mp3 (6m) *(was 1d)*
- 02-05-Savasana\_Viloma\_1.mp3 (12m) *(was 1e)*
- 02-06-Viloma\_1\_Seated.mp3 (5m) *(was 1f)*

Fourth day:

- 02-07-Bramhari\_Savasana.mp3 (12m) *(was 2a)*
- 02-08-Ujjayi\_Seated.mp3 (10m) *(was 2b)*
- 02-09-Wavebreath\_Supine.mp3 (12m) *(was 2c)*
- 02-10-Meditation.mp3 (6m) *(was 2d)*

### **Third Day**

**Session 1:** Savasana: Take a tri-fold blanket and place it X-ways under the thoracic spine. A pillow blanket under the head. The separation between the lifted chest and descending abdominal cavity is more apparent.

**Session 2:** The Hatha Yoga Pradipika says that the yogi should live under a benevolent king in a peaceful setting. Through Savasana, invite a serene, benevolent kingdom within.

**Session 3:** Notice how different facets of the breath effect the sensory organs. We naturally inhale and exhale, but the intentional act of inhalation will have an effect, a response, and a consequence on the body, mind and senses. Cultivate sensitivity to this process.

When sitting, consider that you are creating a shape in the body akin to a temple, the abode of the soul. With this great care, observe the shape of the seated posture. Then, the wave breath gradually inhabits the shape from within.

**Session 4:** The fourth recording begins with instruction on Ujjayi and continues with seated Ujjayi. Consider the directional flow of the breath and the quality of the Ujjayi sound.

**Session 5:** Viloma 1 enables an immersion into the embodiment. In Savasana, dividing the breath into sections with a pause between physically lengthens the breath. The pause is not a holding of the breath, rather, a moment for the disbursement of prana, and a moment opening into silence.

**Session 6:** Viloma 1 seated: We are conditioning the breath and being conditioned by the breath.

## **Fourth Day**

**Session 7:** Bhramari with a head wrap. All sensory organs recede, the skin on the face softens, a natural facial.

**Session 8:** Ujjayi seated. Let the breath follow the shape of the pose, like a guest who enters into a temple and gazes at the spaciousness inside the sacred space.

**Session 9:** Supine: low support under the spine with an eye wrap under the thoracic spine, T7-8. Watch the path of exhalation, how the breath descends toward the floor and from the lower ribs toward the pelvic floor. The navel area widens as it descends. Then, wave breath, the first impulse to inhale follows the path of the exhalation. As inhalation sculpts the thoracic cavity, the breath moves from the lift of the eye wrap toward the breastbone. Dynamic listening.

**Session 10:** Seated meditation.

Bhagavad Gita: Some offer inhalation into exhalation, And others exhalation into inhalation, restraining the path of inhalation and exhalation, Intent on control of the vital breath. IV.29 (Sargeant)

Some of you will find that the inhalation feels more familiar, and some will find the exhalation comes more naturally. With practice and perseverance, each quality will feed and nourish you in a different way.

## WEEK 3: Sessions 1 – 10

In Light on Pranayama, Shri Iyengar gives an outline, a course for the study of pranayama. The preparatory stage lasts six weeks and consists of supine Ujjayi, including Ujjayi I through III. Ujjayi 1 is an extended exhalation, Ujjayi 2 is a lengthened inhalation and Ujjayi 3 is equal smooth and soft inhalations and exhalations. The first week in this course introduces and encourages a profound quality of conscious relaxation through Savasana. This alone will progressively enrich your practice. So, recognize that patience, perseverance and practice are the bedrock of Pranayama.

In these, the fifth and final sixth days, I introduced material that is only appropriate once you have a firm base with Savasana, Ujjayi and a stable seated position.

Fifth day:

- 03-01-Seated\_Meditation\_Mind\_as\_Object.mp3 (12m)
- 03-02-Savasana\_Exhale,\_Empty.mp3 (9m)
- 03-03-Explanation,\_graphic\_shapes,\_Shri\_Yantra.mp3 (7m)
- 03-04-Supine\_Yantra\_Ujjayi\_3.mp3 (12m)
- 03-05-Seated\_Yantra\_Ujjayi\_7.mp3 (9m)
- 03-06-Savasana\_on\_Kindness.mp3 (4m)

Sixth day:

- 03-07-Preparation\_with\_Props,\_Movement\_and\_Breath.mp3 (21m)
- 03-08-Bhastrika.mp3 (11m)
- 03-09-Seated\_Anthara\_Kumbhaka.mp3 (11m)
- 03-10-Savasana.mp3 (8m)

### Fifth Day

**Session 1:** Seated meditation watching the mind. What is the nature of the mind? Objectify and study the qualities on the mind, how the lens through which we engage with the world has its own vocabulary. Note the difference between how the mind is drawn to sensation, feeling, thought, emotion, and qualities such as dullness, reactivity, stillness, focus, etc. Just as you might study something in a laboratory, observe the nature of the mind.

In the Bhagavad Gita, chapter V1, Krishna advises Arjuna on the path of yoga. Here are two translations:

*Reshape yourself through the power of your will; never let yourself be degraded by self-will. The will is the only friend of the Self, and the will is the only enemy of the Self. (5) To those who have conquered themselves, the will is a friend. But it is the enemy of those who have not found the Self within. (6, Eknath Easwaran)*

*One should uplift oneself by the Self; One should not degrade oneself; For the Self alone can be a friend to oneself; And the Self alone can be an enemy of oneself. (5) For him who has conquered himself by the Self, The Self is a friend; But for him who has not conquered himself, The Self remains hostile, like an enemy. (6, Winthrop Sargeant)*

**Session 2:** Savasana Exhale. Lie flat with a pillow under the head. Soft, quiet exhalations pacify the ego and help to relax the body. In *Light on Life*, in the chapter on Living in Freedom, Guruji explains Savasana.

*Savasana is about shedding, in the same way that the snake sloughs off its skin to emerge glossy and resplendent in its renewed colors. We have many skins, sheaths, thoughts, prejudices, preconceptions, idea, memories and projects for the future. Savasana is a shedding of all these skins... We even lie on the ground as a snake does, with the maximum possible surface of our bodies in contact with the earth... My students are all sons, daughters, husbands, wives, workers, parents, male or female. A thousand threads of identity bind them to the floor as they lie in Savasana, like Gulliver imprisoned by the threads of the midget Lilliputians. Savasana uses techniques of relaxation to cut these threads. The result is not, as in meditation, freedom, but loss of identity. To relax is to cut tension. To cut tension is to cut the threads that bind us to identity. (I strongly encourage you to read this book, it is excellent!)*

**Session 3:** Explanation of graphic modes of breath, Shri Yantra. A yantra is a mystical diagram designed for its symbolic representation of reality and is a tool for meditation. It represents the form of the cosmos and the human body. Prashant Iyengar introduced the use of these graphic modes many years ago. Prashant never called these techniques meditations on a yantra; I am taking some liberty here. He directed his instructions on the shapes of the diagram and in the body, he made the practice experiential through the breath. It will help immensely for you to google Shri Yantra and look at the designs. There are many renditions, some are intricate, colorful, and others simple. The basic pattern is concentric triangles, half of them inverted. The overall effect is of many six pointed stars expanding from a single, central point.

**Session 4:** Instructions for supine with the focus on the inhalation. There are six stages.

- 1. Pelvic floor to the sides of the pelvis, a subnormal breath.
- 2. Pelvic floor to the sides of the navel
- 3. Pelvic floor to the sides of the lower ribs
- 4. Pelvic floor to the sides of the middle ribs
- 5. Pelvic floor to the sides of the armpit chest, the height of the heart
- 6. Pelvic floor to the sides of the collar bones

**Session 6:** Instructions for seated with the focus on the inhalation. Note, the launching point differs from supine. Allow for a deep exhalation after each cycle. Maintain a strong, stable upright seated pose throughout.

- 1. Pelvic floor to the sides of the pelvis
- 2. Below the navel to the sides of the waist at the navel
- 3. Navel to the sides of the lower ribs
- 4. Bottom of the breastbone widening to the middle ribs
- 5. Heart center widening to the sides of the armpits
- 6. Top breastbone widening to the collar bones

**Session 7:** Savasana, brief relaxation on kindness to close out the session.

From the outermost sheath of experience to the innermost point of stillness, abide with your Self.

## Sixth Day

**Session 8:** 2 blocks + bolster: Place 1 block under your head and 1 under the thoracic spine, the shoulder blades on the block. Place a bolster above your head with additional blankets if your shoulders are stiff. Instructions will be to lift the arms up to the ceiling and slowly extend them overhead, then, after a few exhalations, to intertwine the elbows and rest them on the bolster. The abdominal wall recedes, bottom ribs naturally expand, side walls of ribs extend.

Following the movement the instructions proceed with supported Savasana. Breath awareness, hollowing out the face, throat, abdomen, and watch the velocity, the volume and the place in the body where the exhalation reaches.

**Session 9:** The first few minutes of this recording explains the bellows breath. This pranayama is a heating practice and is best done in the winter months or if there is mucus that you need to throw out of the body. Follow the instructions carefully. If you feel at all dry or restless, then you need to do more preliminary asanas and pranayamas before proceeding.

**Session 10:** Antara Kumbhaka: "To maintain the stability of the lifted self is true kumbhaka." (Tree of Yoga, pg 60)

Here, with inhalation, the muscles around the chest gently expand, like a parachute. Then, the breath is suspended momentarily, uplifted, silent. The brain must remain passive and deflated. Exhale before you need to so that the transition is smooth and quiet.

**Session 10:** Savasana on acceptance.