

# Introduction to Meditation

## Koshas: The Five Layers of Our Being

In order to understand meditation, it is first important to understand the yogic understanding of the human being. According to the yogic science, the human being is made up of 5 layers or koshas; the physical layer, the pranic layer, the mental-emotional layer, the wisdom layer, and the body of bliss.

Asanas or the physical forms of yoga are an exceptional practice to purify and detoxify the physical and pranic layers of the body and help restore vitality to the muscles, bones, and joint tissue. The physical forms also restore the functioning of the fluid system of the body (blood, lymphatic fluid, cerebrospinal fluid, and fascia).

Diaphragmatic breathing and pranayam practices purify the pranic layer of the body allowing us to viscerally experience prana; or the life-force in our bodies. When we are able to experience prana, we also may become attune to prana in Nature, and in all living things.

The third layer of the human being is known as the mental-emotional layer and this is comprised of our thoughts, feelings, and emotions. Singing, chanting, mantra, and meditation are exceptional practices in interrupting mental patterns and re-conditioning our thoughts and elevating our feelings and emotions.

The fourth layer of the human being is the wisdom layer that is comprised of truth, wisdom, insight, and consciousness. An example of truth is that life is inter-connected. When the first three layers of our being are clear, we can more easily access our inner wisdom and develop insight into the purpose and meaning of our lives and our experience.

The fifth layer of the human being is the body of bliss which is a radiant, blissful experience of pure awareness. We all have experiences of this when we are moved to silence by the beauty of a stunning sunset or when we experience connection with a newborn baby.

## Introduction to Meditation

Meditation is a practice to train and condition the mind. Meditation involves focus and concentration and sometimes visualization. Most meditation that is taught is object-meditation when the student focuses on a specific object and tries to maintain focus on that object over an extended period of time. Object meditation may include objects such as the breath, the body, a mantra, a visualization, or a feeling (i.e. loving-kindness).

For most people, meditation is an exercise in mental focus and concentration and bringing stability to the restless nature of our thoughts. In both Buddhist and Yogic Lineages, the ultimate goal or peak experience of meditation is a state wherein subject and object duality cease.

## Teaching Meditation

Teaching meditation involves a balance between clear instructions and silence for people to follow the instructions. A simple guided meditation could follow the format below:

- cues for a tall spine, alignment in the pelvis, shoulders and neck
- cues to relax the muscles of the body and face (especially the lower jaw and forehead)
- cues to become aware of inhalation and exhalation of breath
- cues to focus and concentration on an object (i.e a feeling of gratitude)
- guidance to re-direct the mind to the physical presence of the body
- closing or dedication

## Bibliography

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