

## Evening Practices

*What can we say about Evening Pranayama/Kriya/Meditation?*

### evening considerations

usually the pitta and vata is high from the day (much higher than in the morning when one can harness the sacred early morning energy). therefore, the beginning is about steadying and stabilizing the vata and pacifying the pitta.

it is much easier to start supine or folding to earth rather than trying to work with subtle energy and subtle "inner instructions". The outside impressions and the imprint of the day is still too present. the flow of the senses outwards has made these impressions. to being the inward journey its easier to find the ground, to relax, to orient the head back to the sky or down to the earth. which takes the orientation away from the external world

At the beginning, let the outer world remain there. don't try to push it away immediately (it will just make a tension). invite the beginning of pratyahara, of inward gaze or from the tanmatras flowing in; sound inward, eyes inward, sensations inward.

*NOTE often useful to allow the outer world to mingle with the inner. Don't try to make fast hard boundaries and push inwards too fast. let that happen naturally (the practice will create that) give permission to let the outer world come in. Let it come to meet you instead of you reaching out to meet it. This is an integrative approach and more connected to the idea of inter-connection. The inward quiet will come naturally through the practices - it need not be forced.*

purify the wind and fire element with sound but not too long. simple short openings work best. less instructions, simple related ideas. in any case combination of simple instructions, silence, simple breath, letting the shape of the body re-ground and letting the mind flow in.

if chanting, chant to open space and invoke. make it shorter, quieter and save the longer, the devotional, the most subtle for the end. It always works better in the evening since you have to let the practice re-open the inner orientation.

### about the early part of the practice in evening, using restorative, supine and grounding forms

remember, most people in the evening have;  
*a strong outward flow of the senses and some strong postural tendencies from the day.*

*usually posture is head forward and reaching from leaning into work and communication, looking at digital devices, eating, talking. shoulders collapsed, front line a bit protected, diaphragm a bit tight, pelvis tight from sitting/protecting and often a shallow breath as a result of the stress and the sympathetic nervous system responses or fight, freeze or retreat. Even in a gentle sweet day, the body is unconsciously protecting, establishing the ego, grasping for pleasure and resisting suffering.*

*try to reserve this posture. Asanas that help:*

*Supta Baddha Konasana variations, Arching the upper/mid back over a bolster or blocks to release the chest and let the head fall gently back to earth onto a block or folded blankets. Simple seated forward folds, and/ or Childs pose to calm and look back to earth and take away the many impressions. Or using any of the supine Pranayama forms which allow the vata to stabilize. Also*

windshield wipers with is the gentle form of the inner groin, psoas release (there are many supine and yin-based forms but these work well).

Supine Twist and Face down bolster twist also very good in the beginning of evening practice since they harmonize energy and release tension in the inter-costal tissue around the ribs.

If doing any inversion, because sometimes the lifts the heaviness of the day but if its' in a pranayama context support it and usually less stimulating but often chin down, vip karani, restorative halasana.

use bolster supported DD in evening cause the brain gets to release, and lungs get to work, but not too long. (then combine it with Vip karani which needs the opening of the back of legs. let the organs release, turn the world upside down but in a calm way.

### **about the Kriyas and inner preparation forms;**

the evening favours the kriyas and subtle preparations which are above the breathing diaphragm In evening, the upper kriyas help more since all day you were talking, eating, looking, leaning forwards, engaging with the outer world etc. clear and release more in the the heart, chest, throat, tongue, eyes, mouth, ears.

should you use kapalabhati? Still an excellent evening kriya when done softly. Less important than in the morning practice, but for many people, still very useful. Just do it lighter, softer and perhaps not as long as in the morning. Uddiyana bandha is not recommended since it lifts a lot of apana energy upwards, but some students will benefit because it helps to release the breathing diaphragm. Use the lower kriyas as needed but you will overall see the value of the higher kriyas in the evening. Avoid the lower kriyas in evening when the student suffers with difficulty sleeping.

tongue release kriyas (jivan bandha, kechari mudra, simha mudra)  
taping the sternum to soften around lungs and heart  
four point eye gaze (brahma mudra)  
forms of brahmari, gentle humming, binding the head options  
Trataka for the eyes, but usually saved for the end of the practice

Use then face down savasana/pranayama forms after the kriyas since this gives and excellent release of mouth, jaw, neck and softens the front line into the ground, supports relaxing the forehead and third eye.

### **Basic Breathwork in the Evening.**

All supine Pranayama works very well (better than the early morning)

In the evening there is a need to unlock the basic breath and to re-set to the parasympathetic, with soft breath that opens in the belly, lateral movement at the ribs along the side and towards the back body, and softening the chest.

all of the viloma pranayamas, strap/belt work on body, hands touching the body as reference work excellent. just a gentle open breath that is free and then regulate the frequency so that it slows down and the exhale is managed and gently lengthened. MORE IS LESS. try to re-synch the breath to the nervous system.

use the soft ujjayi

use the beautiful simple breath patterns, slow things down and focus not on more breath/air but rather extending the length in a gentle way.

lean towards bhaya kumbhaka more, pause at end. feeling a moment of the mula bandha at the end of each exhale in the evenings gives a good re-ground to the body and mind. Back to the source and the home back.

Generally, in the evening breathe a bit lower in the body. Use the option of the exhale moving down to the ground or spreading wide from the navel area, instead of its normal upward pattern which is used in the morning. This is optional but very effective for those that tend too airy or that struggle with mental vata or have difficulty sleeping.

Use hands on body in Viloma, especially to gesture the movement or push of the exhale down, or a gathering energy gesture/mudra at the belly.

This is not to say, that the breath cannot enjoy the pleasure of moving up to the crown and third eye or the top of the lungs, but the emphasis is lower in the body in the evening.

### **Nadi Shodhana in evening**

**Nadi Shodhana can be very useful in the evenings as well as morning. It's such a balancing, equalizing and harmonious practice, that it's hard to imagine a time when it's not useful. Nevertheless, there are some evening considerations which help to shape the way you do nadi shodhana at night.**

Since we generally avoid long, formal pranayamas in the evening (the vata will lift, risking too much energy and possibly compromising sleep). If in the morning you're able to do 8-10 minute of nadi shodhana, make the evening 5-6 mins. Generally in the evening all formal seated pranayama sessions benefit from being a bit shorter. What can be longer is the supine breath, the restorative breath in asanas or even sitting and imagining the nadi shodhana with no ujjayi breath, no manipulation of the nostril, no ratios, etc.

But some formal nadi shodhana is still the cornerstone of an evening pranayama session. if you don't do it too strong or too long, a wonderful calming effect is realised at the end of the day.

Formal kumbhaka is also used less in the evenings (experienced students may enjoy this and finding the antar kumbhaka grounding, but for beginners it can cause the energy to lift too much. Experiment to see for yourself and adjust. usually, a Nadi shodhana with a simple extension of the exhale and noticing the gentle natural pause between the breaths - using a soft mula bandha for a moment at the end of the exhale (and otherwise leaving mula bandha at ease). This is generally the best way in the evenings.

### **special pranayamas**

**The evening favours three pranayamas. Chandra bedhana (moon/lunar breath), Brahmari (gentle humming breath), and Vata reducing breath. pick one of them to do after the nadi shodhana, or drop the nadi shodhana sometimes and do two of these.**

refer to the instructions on these in the special pranayama section.

Like nadi shodhana, the length of time spent in each special pranayama can be less in the evening. Chandra bedhana for 3-8 minutes. Brahmari shorter than in the morning, since after some time, the vibration will change from grounding and calming towards stimulating or even depleting in the evening. 5 minutes can be wonderful in the evening. It is also recommended to make the Brahmari humming a deeper or lower tone at night.

Vata reducing is an excellent evening practice for all in the evening. (see details in the instruction/technique section. 15-25 rounds are ideal at night.

## **Dharanas**

most of the vertical based breaths (which move up and down between crown and ground are lovely at any time of day, but for those students that become too lifted, too airy or tend towards excess vata and struggle with sleep, the vertical dharanas like OM AH HUNG and Sushumna breath, can be too stimulating.

in the evening, favour the dharanas which focus around the heart chakra or which focus lower in the body. Gathering energy at the navel, Metta breath practices, SO HAM at the heart (or HAM SA at the heart) are more gentle in the evening and less likely to over stimulate. In addition, the heart based dharanas work well to transform the natural pitta which rises during the day and give it some ease and surrender - which transforms it too a more sattvic state.

the length of time in the dharanas can be according to the desire and ease in the students. As long as it feels sattvic and steady, continue. When the fatigue eventually comes or if there is a sudden lift towards nervous energy, stop the session and let the body rest.

12 minute segments work nicely in the evening dharanas

## **Closing**

There are some wonderful ways to close in the evening:

Trataka with deep brahmari chanting (just the humming sound, not the AUM, since the AUM is sometime too spacious and opens too high into the ether element at night.

Letting the last minutes be effortless, with no technique, just observing, softening, letting go in the seat or laying down.

noticing the end of the exhale and the felt sense of the physical body - the inner mandala of the body. Let go on the exhale and notice, "what still remains".

Gratitude practices, chanting softly or inwards, giving thanks to earthly and celestial beings.

To build ojas in the evening, use sound/music, the gentle vibration of singing bowls or listen to an evening raga some music which makes the heart feel relaxed. drink warm tea, walk under the moon light. Oil the body.