

Editorial:

Such is the ubiquitous nature of yoga that its teaching spectrum reaches from the everyday life of the householder to the meditations of the monk and recluse. No single level is static and in isolation from the rest; there is always something to learn, new things to discover and individual progress to be made. Every teacher will have discovered that the books and texts are only one step on the journey, and that doors are being constantly opened within, with fresh insights that inspire and guide the aspirant forward. Gordon Smith (Founder Member)



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Hangsa: is a composite sound pattern, useful in refining breath awareness and in attuning body and mind to the more subtle realms of spirit; from which all life has had its origins. *Hangsa* is the phonetic representation of the mantra *hamsa* - a swan, literal meaning "I am He"; *hamsa* is believed to be the natural vibration of the Self, which occurs spontaneously with each incoming and outgoing breath. By becoming aware of *hamsa*, a seeker experiences the identity between the individual self and the supreme Self. Can also be repeated as *so'ham*; when intoning *hamsa* the consonant 'm' has a nasal resonance, hence '*hangsa*'.

There are several legends related to *hansa* (swan) and sometimes a yogi at a particular stage of development is referred to as a swan. There is also a reference to the goose that has to reach high above the earth in its flight across the Himalayas. Sanskrit is a sacred language, each letter an energy package in which prana manifests in a tangible form. It is by listening to the breath that we discover the spirit or essence of the breath in the form of 'so' on the in-breath and 'ha' on the out-breath.

Sanskrit is a sacred language, and its sound forms have links with the creative sound geometry of the universe. When repeating words as mantra, the will and motive of the user is pivotal. There are mantras that are applicable to all levels of human endeavour; yoga mantras however, focus mind and heart on the highest level of spiritual endeavour. This is highlighted by the mantra termed Gayatri. It is:

'Om. Bhur bhuvah swah: Tat savitur varenyam bhargo devasya dhimahi Dhiyo yo nah prachodayat. Om'

(Translation Ernest Wood's Yoga)

'We meditate on the most excellent glory of the divine Sun (or Source); may
'That' direct our understanding.'

Bhur, *bhuva* and *swah* remind the worshipper that this is taking place in three worlds at once; *bhur* is the world of time with its inherent karma that keeps calling us back to deal with previous setbacks. The immediate world, *bhuva*, is analogous to the higher mind, intelligence, logic and spiritual perception. *Swah* is the transcendent and heavenly, wherein lies perfect freedom and the mantra *hangsa* is one of the keys that may help us to achieve that freedom.

Words tend to capture the mind and influence the user within the context in which they are used. Words used as mantra transcend the familiar and have the power to lift the mind and heart into the realm of the spiritual. The following descriptive use of *Hangsa* may vary tonally for students who have knowledge of Sanskrit Euphonics and as their meditative experience grows.

Calming the breath helps calm the mind in preparation for meditative breathing. (*Hangsa*) starts with a long peaceful inflow of the breath, during which it is felt the breath becomes more refined, as if it were ascending and reaching up toward the subtle realms of spirit. The breath is then allowed to hang momentarily and enjoy a moment of perfect stillness, (the heavenly); the peace and stillness is then allowed to descend with the out-flowing breath 'sa' into all areas of the body. The reverse '*sohang*' can also be used with the returning in-breath before repeating the exercise.

The body is a contested zone between the spiritual and the subconscious in which hidden and repressed energies fight to try and re-establish control; it is not possible to pour new wine into old bottles without running the risk of pollution and being contaminated with the old. There has to be 'Self' guidance, periods of rest, which allow for the transition to more refined levels of spiritual consciousness.

The mantra *hangsa* leads to still timeless moments that re-fresh and heal, extends the natural span of life, opens the doors to all possible worlds and awakens the wisdom that can help transform this world and ourselves.

Gordon Smith, Founder Member



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Teaching Success for the Yoga instructor can be achieved by bringing the ancient art of yoga into the modern setting. Both ancient and modern can work together and make for the type of class that will have something for everyone. The spirit of Yoga being best conveyed through a calm disposition and helping the class to take control and learn direct from experience.

Yoga exercise through the medium of posture and asana, usually occupies the greater part of a class and is more than just a physical exercise routine. Yoga by definition means union in every sense of the word. This means by means of exercise, learning about oneself and discovering the link factors that make us complete as human beings. Exercise can be continuously moving or flowing from posture to posture, or held and static as in asana, which is dynamic on the inside.

It takes all sorts to make up a yoga class. There will be Air signs, that is those who like to think about what they are doing; Water signs, who like to refer to the way they feel; Earth signs of a more practical disposition and Fire signs, the energetic and likely wilful. The integral approach to asana, that is learning to co-ordinate Mind, Feeling and Will, lays the foundation for Jnana, Bhakti and Raja Yoga, improving co-ordination and making for a happier and more balanced individual.

Successful Yoga teachers are never complacent and learning really starts once qualified and ready to take the first class. Study needs to be wide-ranging, including philosophy and psychology and of course developing the art of teaching. Each class, to be successful, needs to be more than an exercise routine so that participants return home inwardly calm and more able to cope with what life throws at them.

Time for relaxation is important and setting time for a relaxation at the end of a class can become anticipatory and if skilfully conducted, sets the tone and provides the basis for meditation. The transition from relaxation and falling asleep, to a deep sense of calm and inner alertness, takes skill and experience on the part of the tutor, who at the same time as working with the class is working on themselves.

It is unlikely that the evening Yoga class will provide time for significant periods of meditation, yet a great deal can be done to create interest and act as a guide to further work. Such as, simply learning to sit and becoming 'Self Aware', 'controlling the activities of the mind', 'watching the monkey jump', 'Trataka or gazing' 'calming the breath and calming the emotions.'

It is appreciated that the time allotted for a class was at one time two hours and today is more likely to be less. And yet to be successful there has to be the sense of progress and a continuous learning experience, with the gradual introduction of Sanskrit and much else besides, such as the history of Yoga and for those with knowledge of nutrition, such things as Tamisic, Satvic and Rajistic foods.

Yoga is a way of life and the good teacher leads by example and endeavours to enrich the life of students through study and imparting knowledge in an understandable and easily assimilable way. The spirit of Yoga is summed up in these verses from the **Bhagavad Gita, Ch.6v16-19:**

'Yoga is a harmony.

*Not for him who eats too much, or him who eats too little:
not for him who sleeps too little, nor for him who sleeps too much.*

*A harmony in eating and resting, in sleeping and keeping awake;
a perfection in whatever one does.*

This is the Yoga that gives peace from all pain.

*When the mind of the Yogi is in harmony and finds rest in the Spirit within, all
restless desire gone, then he is a Yukta, one in God.*

*Then his soul is a lamp whose light is steady, for it burns in a shelter where no
wind comes.'*

Gordon Smith, Founder Member