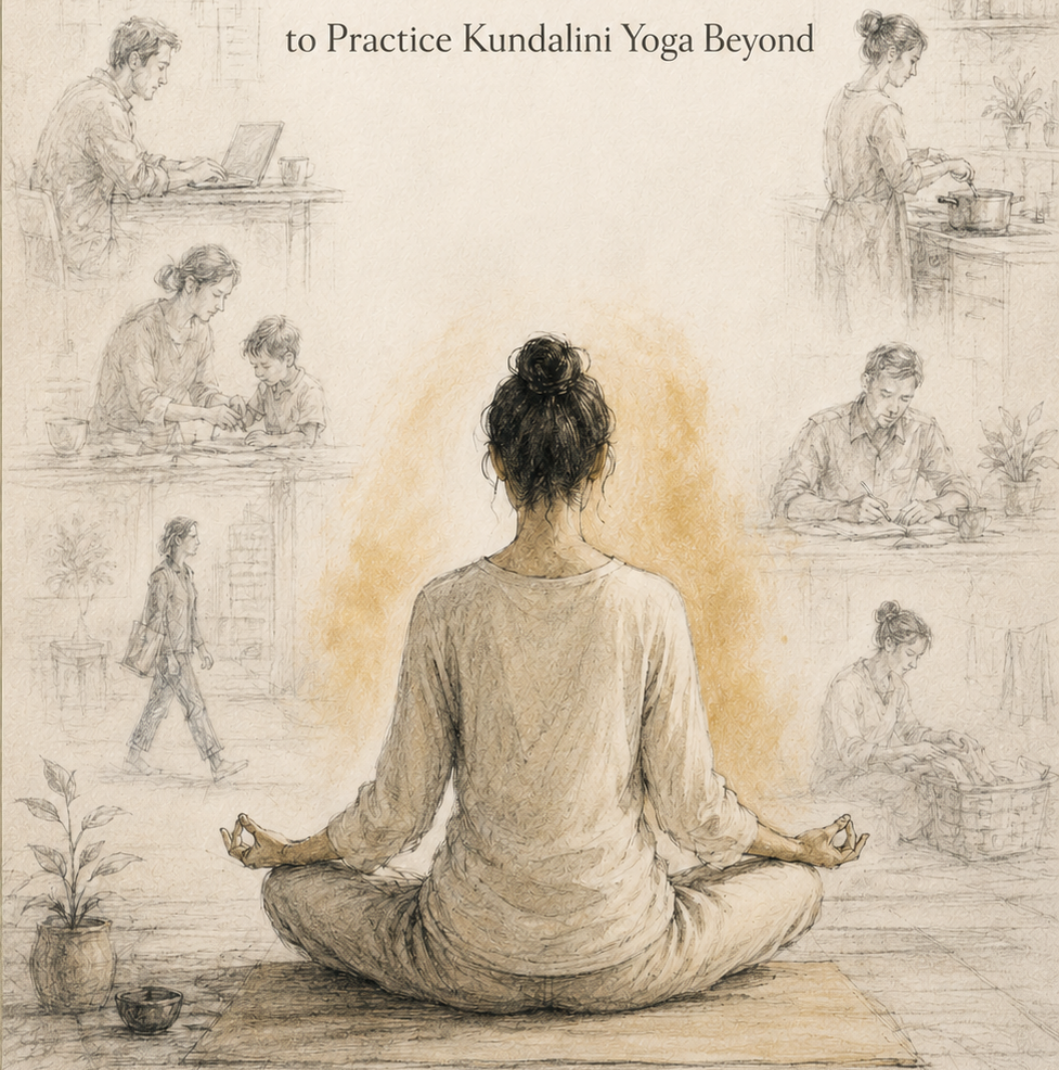


A Beginner's Guide

to Practice Kundalini Yoga Beyond



BE PRESENT. START SIMPLE. GROW GENTLY.

A BEGINNER'S GUIDE

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BE PRESENT · START SIMPLE · GROW GENTLY

A Beginner's Guide to Practice Kundalini Yoga Beyond

Be present. Start simple. Grow gently.

An introductory guide to Kundalini Yoga in nine gradual steps — beginning with the breath and building, class by class, toward a complete and grounded practice.

This guide is for learning and general education. It is not medical advice and does not replace guidance from a qualified teacher or healthcare professional. Please read *Before You Practice* before beginning, and adapt every practice to your own body.

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You Don't Need to Know Yoga to Begin

Maybe you have been curious about yoga for some time, but never really knew where to begin.

Maybe you once entered a yoga class and felt that everyone else already knew what to do.

Or maybe you simply thought:

Yoga is not for me.

I'm not flexible enough.

I don't know how to meditate.

I don't know how to breathe correctly.

I won't know what to do in class.

This course was created exactly for that starting point.

You do not need previous experience. You do not need to be flexible, know how to meditate, understand Sanskrit words, or know yoga philosophy.

We begin at the beginning.

And we learn gradually, in a small group, with enough time to experience, ask, repeat, and understand.

We begin with something you have been doing your whole life:

Breathing.

A Place to Learn, Not to Prove

Sometimes entering an established yoga class can feel a little like entering a conversation that began long before you arrived.

People close their eyes. They breathe in unfamiliar ways. They chant words you do not know. The teacher speaks about meditation, bandhas, prana, or chakras—and before you have understood one thing, the class has already moved to the next.

There is nothing wrong with not knowing.

The difficulty begins when there is no space to learn.

Here, there is.

Over nine classes we will gradually build the foundations of Kundalini Yoga. In each class we first return to what is already familiar, and only then add something new.

And we begin with something you already know how to do: breathe.

First Experience. Then Understanding.

The first thing we do with the breath is not change it.

We notice it.

From there we gradually learn different ways to breathe, move, use sound, meditate, relax, and work with attention.

We also begin to understand why we do these things.

Breathing, for example, happens largely automatically, and at the same time we can influence it consciously. That makes it an interesting meeting point between voluntary action and processes the body usually regulates without conscious effort.

Closing the eyes during practice is not a spiritual requirement. Reducing visual input can simply make it easier to notice internal sensation and direct attention differently.

Relaxation is also not only something we do at the end of class.

Learning to recognize unnecessary effort—and release it—is a capacity in itself.

Throughout the course we return to three simple questions:

- What are we doing?
- Why are we doing it?
- What can we actually feel and observe for ourselves?

Tradition, Without the Need to Believe

Kundalini Yoga has its own traditional language.

You will meet words such as prana, mantra, bandha, and chakra.

These concepts belong to yogic traditions and to the ways those traditions describe different aspects of practice and human experience.

We will respect that language without confusing it with modern anatomy or physiology.

When contemporary knowledge can help us understand breathing, attention, movement, or the nervous system, we will use it.

And when we are speaking from a traditional yogic map, we will say so clearly.

You do not need to believe anything in order to practice.

The invitation is to experience, observe, ask questions, and gradually develop your own understanding.

What If I Can't Do Something?

Then we begin exactly there.

Our bodies are different. Our histories are different too.

Some people are comfortable sitting cross-legged on the floor. Others need a chair.

Some people feel comfortable closing their eyes. Others prefer to keep them slightly open.

Some breathing practices feel natural immediately. Others take time.

There is no advantage in forcing your body to imitate someone else's practice.

We will learn to adapt the practice when needed.

And we will also learn something even more important than performing a posture:

The difference between challenge and unnecessary force.

That is also one reason we practice in small groups.

There is space to see the person, not only teach the technique.

What Will We Learn?

Across nine classes we move gradually from the foundations toward a more complete practice.

We will learn conscious breathing, Breath of Fire, the Navel Center, mantra, prana and apana, bandhas, breath retention, meditation, relaxation, and basic principles of nervous system regulation.

Later we will also meet the chakras—not as anatomical organs and not as something you are required to believe in, but as one of yoga’s traditional maps for looking at different dimensions of human experience.

Each new element will connect to something you have already experienced.

You Don’t Need to Become a ‘Yoga Person’

There is no new identity you need to adopt.

Yoga can simply become a place where you learn to notice a little more:

- your breath
- how you use effort
- what happens under pressure

- how quickly you react
- your capacity to recover
- the quality of your attention

And perhaps, over time, also the parts of yourself that are harder to hear when everything moves too quickly.

Nine classes will not teach you everything there is to know about Kundalini Yoga.

That is not the purpose.

They can give you a foundation from which you can enter regular practice with more understanding, autonomy, and confidence.

You don't need to be ready for yoga.

You can begin exactly where you are.

That is where we begin.

A Few Simple Guidelines

Yoga does not require you to arrive in a particular state.

You do not need to be flexible, strong, calm, or experienced.

We begin with the body as it is today.

During the course we will breathe, move, sit, rest, use sound, meditate, and gradually meet techniques that may be unfamiliar.

The most important principle is simple:

Practice with attention, not force.

Challenge Is Not the Same as Overexertion

Some practices can be challenging.

Muscles may work. Breathing may become more active. You may meet restlessness, effort, or unfamiliar sensations.

That can be part of learning.

But pain, significant dizziness, unusual shortness of breath, unusual pressure, confusion, or a clear sense that something is not right are not signs that you should push harder.

If something does not feel right:

- Stop.

- Return to natural breathing.
- Rest.
- Tell the teacher.

The practice can always be adapted.

Adaptation is part of practice—not a failure to perform it.

Your Body Does Not Need to Look Like Someone Else's

Not everyone needs to sit cross-legged on the floor.

You can use a cushion. You can sit on a chair. You can change the position of your legs. You can rest before an exercise ends. You can keep the eyes slightly open if closing them does not feel comfortable.

The posture and technique should serve the practice. Not the other way around.

Breathing Practices

We begin with simple breathing practices and gradually meet Breath of Fire, bandhas, and short breath retentions.

You do not need to perform these techniques intensely for them to be meaningful.

There is no place for competition—with another person or with yourself—around speed, duration, depth of breath, length of retention, or intensity of a bandha.

More is not necessarily deeper.

When breathing becomes a struggle, something in the quality of the practice has already changed.

If There Is a Health Condition We Should Know About

Most people can participate in gentle, adapted yoga practice, but individual circumstances matter.

If you have an existing medical condition, recently had surgery, take medication that may affect your response to exertion, or have any doubt about beginning a new practice, tell the teacher.

In some situations it may be appropriate to consult your doctor or another qualified healthcare professional before beginning.

In special cases, we may ask for medical clearance before participation in particular techniques or in the course itself.

The intention is not to keep you away from practice. It is to know how to help you practice in a way that is appropriate for you.

Pregnancy

Pregnancy does not necessarily mean stopping yoga, but adaptations are often needed.

If you are pregnant, think you may be pregnant, or have recently given birth, tell the teacher before practicing more intensive pranayama, bandhas, breath retention, or demanding kriyas.

When there is medical uncertainty, the guidance of the healthcare professional caring for you takes priority.

Food and Hydration

When possible, avoid practicing immediately after a heavy meal. Give the body time to digest.

Arrive reasonably hydrated, but there is no need to drink large amounts of water immediately before class.

There is no need for rigid rules here. Learn to listen to your body.

During Menstruation

There is no need to stop practicing simply because you are menstruating.

But the needs of the body can change from day to day.

You can reduce intensity, choose a gentler variation, rest more, or skip a particular technique if it does not feel appropriate that day.

Discernment matters more than a fixed formula.

Pain Is Information

If you have an injury, recurring pain, or limitation in movement, tell the teacher.

In many cases a posture or movement can be adapted.

A yoga teacher's role is not to diagnose a medical condition, and yoga is not a treatment for every injury or illness.

But good teaching can take the reality of your body into account.

Pain is not proof that the practice is working.

You Can Always Stop

You can always stop.

Open your eyes. Return to natural breathing. Lie down. Sit. Rest. Ask.

Choosing to stop does not take you out of the practice.

Sometimes stopping is exactly what attention is asking of us.

The Agreement Between Us

The teacher's responsibility is to:

- explain clearly
- offer adaptations
- respect your boundaries
- teach gradually

Your responsibility is to:

- pay attention
- communicate when something does not feel right
- not force yourself simply to keep up

Practice happens in the meeting between these two responsibilities.

There is nothing here to prove.

There is something here to learn.



*You don't need to understand
everything before you begin.*

First, practice.

Then, observe.

Gradually, understanding begins to emerge.

CHAPTER 01

01

AWARENESS

Breath & Relaxation

*What changes when I become aware of
my breath?*

Before you keep reading, pause for a moment.

Do not change the way you are sitting. Do not straighten your spine. Do not take a deep breath.

Simply notice:

- How are you breathing right now?
- Where do you feel the movement—in the abdomen, ribs, or chest?
- Does the breath feel easy or restricted? Fast or slow? Deep or shallow?

There is no need to decide whether you are breathing ‘correctly’ or ‘incorrectly.’

Just notice.

This is where our practice begins.

Awareness comes before change.

The Breath

Breathing is with us all the time, and most of the time it does not require our attention.

But unlike many automatic processes in the body, breathing can also be influenced consciously.

We can slow it, deepen it, change its rhythm, and—as we will learn later—pause it briefly.

This makes the breath one of yoga’s most accessible tools for exploring the relationship between:

Body · Attention · State

The first breathing technique we learn is:

Long Deep Breathing

PRACTICE

Long Deep Breathing

Sit comfortably.

You can sit cross-legged on the floor, on a cushion, or on a chair.

Allow the spine to lengthen naturally without trying to hold yourself up by force.

Relax the shoulders, jaw, and face.

Now gradually deepen the breath.

Inhale: abdomen → ribs → upper chest

Exhale: upper chest → ribs → abdomen

Do not try to take the largest breath possible.

Look for a breath that is:

Full · Comfortable · Continuous

Continue for a few minutes.

Then stop controlling the breath.

Allow it to return to its natural rhythm.

What changed?

Do not look for a particular experience. Perhaps something changed. Perhaps almost nothing did. Both are information.

Why Do We Breathe Through the Nose?

Unless a particular practice gives another instruction, we generally breathe through the nose.

The nose helps filter, warm, and humidify incoming air, and nasal breathing creates different airflow and resistance from mouth breathing.

Later we will also meet the way yogic tradition relates nasal breathing to prana.

For now, simply become comfortable breathing through the nose.

Why Do We Close the Eyes?

In many Kundalini Yoga practices you will be invited to close the eyes.

When we reduce visual input, it can become easier to notice what is happening inside:

**Breath · Movement · Tension · Sensation · Thoughts
· Reactions**

If closing the eyes does not feel comfortable, keep them slightly open and let the gaze rest softly downward.

The purpose is not to obey a rule. The purpose is to notice.

Learning to Relax

Notice the jaw, shoulders, hands, abdomen, and face.

Is there somewhere you are holding effort that you do not actually need?

Do not fight the tension. First notice it. Then see whether a little of it can release.

Relaxation is not the absence of practice.

Relaxation is a capacity we practice.

Throughout the course we return again and again to a simple rhythm:

Experience → Pause → Observe → Integrate

Your First Meditation

Sit comfortably again.

This time, do not change the breath. Allow the body to breathe naturally.

Simply stay with the breath.

Inhale—notice.

Exhale—notice.

Sooner or later attention will move somewhere else.

When you notice that this happened, simply return to the breath.

You did not fail.

The return is part of the practice.

The Mantras

In the first class you will hear two mantras: one at the beginning and one at the end.

At this stage, all you need to do is listen.

There is no need to remember the words, imitate the sounds, or understand the meaning yet.

In the next classes we will learn them gradually.

For now:

Listen to the sound.

Notice the silence after it.

That is enough.

UNTIL THE NEXT CLASS

Once or twice a day, pause.

Do not immediately take a deep breath.

First ask:

How am I breathing right now?

Notice.

Then, if you want, take three slow and comfortable breaths.
That is all.

YOUR QUESTION FOR THE WEEK

*What changes when I become aware of my
breath?*

CHAPTER 02

02

BREATH

Breath of Fire

*How can changing the way I breathe
change my state?*

Begin with something you already know.

Notice the natural breath. Then practice a few rounds of Long Deep Breathing.

Pause. Observe.

Today we meet a very different breath.

From Slowness to Rhythm

Long Deep Breathing is slow, expansive, and consciously lengthened.

Breath of Fire is rhythmic, continuous, and active.

It is a breathing technique that appears frequently in Kundalini Yoga kriyas and meditations.

But before practicing it quickly, we need to understand the movement.

Coordination before speed.

PRACTICE

Breath of Fire

Sit comfortably with the spine naturally upright.

Relax the shoulders, chest, and face.

Keep the mouth gently closed and breathe through the nose.

Place one hand lightly on the abdomen.

Begin slowly.

Exhale: breathe out through the nose while gently drawing the abdomen inward.

Release: release the abdomen. As it releases, the inhale happens naturally.

Continue slowly:

**Exhale — release · Exhale — release · Exhale
— release**

Do not pull the air in forcefully. Do not work the abdomen harder than necessary.

When the coordination becomes clear, you can gradually allow the breath to become more continuous.

In an established Breath of Fire rhythm, inhalation and exhalation become approximately balanced, without an intentional pause between them.

There is no need to hurry.

First learn the movement. Then increase the rhythm.

Less Can Be More

For beginners, a short period of coordinated, comfortable breathing is more useful than several minutes of strained breathing.

If you lose the rhythm, slow down.

If the face tightens, relax it.

If the shoulders begin moving unnecessarily, reduce the effort.

If you experience significant dizziness, discomfort, unusual shortness of breath, panic, or feel unwell, stop and return to natural breathing.

In some situations Breath of Fire needs adaptation or may not be appropriate. If there is a relevant health condition, pregnancy, or uncertainty about the practice, follow the guidance you have received from your teacher and appropriate healthcare professional.

Yoga does not improve when we ignore the body's signals.

Pause and Observe

After a short round, stop.

Allow the body to return to natural breathing.

Notice the abdomen, pulse, temperature, level of activity or quiet, and the quality of attention.

Do not decide in advance what Breath of Fire is supposed to make you feel.

What do you actually notice?

Experience → Pause → Observe → Integrate

Two Breaths, Two Experiences

Long Deep Breathing:

Slow · Expansive · Consciously lengthened

Breath of Fire:

Rhythmic · Continuous · Active

There is no single breath that is ‘the yogic breath.’

As practice develops, the question becomes less about which technique is better and more about:

What does this technique do for me, and when is it appropriate to use it?

This is where discernment begins to develop.

The Navel Center Begins to Appear

Place a hand on the abdomen again.

Practice a few slow cycles:

Exhale — abdomen inward · Release — inhale

Feel the relationship between breathing and abdominal movement.

In the next class we will explore why the area around the navel has such an important place in Kundalini Yoga.

But first: feel it.

UNTIL THE NEXT CLASS

Continue practicing Long Deep Breathing.

If Breath of Fire felt comfortable and your teacher has confirmed it is appropriate for you, practice only the short version you learned in class.

The goal this week is not to become ‘good’ at Breath of Fire.

The goal is to recognize more clearly the relationship between breathing and state.

YOUR QUESTION FOR THE WEEK

How can changing the way I breathe change my state?

CHAPTER 03

03

VITALITY & SOUND

The Navel Center + Mantra

*How does what begins inside me become
expression?*

Begin with what you already know.

Notice the natural breath. Practice Long Deep Breathing. Then, if Breath of Fire is appropriate for you, return to it briefly.

Pause. Feel the abdomen. Notice the breath. Notice your state.

In the first class you learned to observe.

In the second, you discovered that changing the breath can change experience.

Now we begin to explore the place where breath, movement, and vitality meet.

Finding the Navel Area

Place one hand over the navel area.

Cough once gently.

Feel what happens under your hand.

There is an immediate muscular response in the abdomen.

In Kundalini Yoga the area around the navel has particular importance. Many breathing practices, movements, and kriyas involve this region.

Within the traditional yogic map, the Navel Center is also associated with vitality and the capacity for action.

That is the traditional language of yoga.

You do not need to decide now what the Navel Center ‘really is.’

Begin with what you can feel.

What Do We Mean by Vitality?

It is easy to confuse vitality with 'having a lot of energy.'

But excitement, restlessness, or constant activity are not necessarily vitality.

In this course we use the word more precisely:

Vitality is the availability of our internal resources to meet life.

Sometimes vitality makes action possible. Sometimes persistence. Sometimes recovery. Sometimes it allows us to remain steady instead of reacting immediately.

So in practice we are not working only with physical strength.

We are working with:

Breath · Movement · Attention · Rest · Sound

From Breath to Sound

Until now, most of our work with the breath has been quiet.

Today we add the voice.

Sound is also a bodily event.

It is produced through breath, muscular coordination, and vibration.

In mantra practice we intentionally bring together:

What Is Mantra?

A mantra is a sound or sequence of sounds used intentionally as part of practice.

Within this Kundalini Yoga tradition, mantra is described as a projection of the mind through sound.

A traditional teaching explanation breaks the word into:

Man – mind

Tra – wave or projection

In this sense, mantra is not simply a word we repeat. Breath, sound, rhythm, and attention come together to give the activity of the mind a particular direction and expression.

Depending on the practice, a mantra may be chanted aloud, spoken, whispered, or repeated silently in the mind.

Mantra can give structure to:

Breath · Sound · Rhythm · Attention

As always, we begin with the practice itself.

Experience the sound. Notice what happens. Interpretation can come later.

Today you learn the two mantras you have already been hearing since the first class.

Ong Namō Guru Dev Namō

Until now, you listened.

Today you begin to participate.

Within the Kundalini Yoga tradition in which this mantra is used, Ong is associated with creative consciousness and creative force.

For our practice, we can begin with a simple movement:

Something within becomes expression.

Namo carries a quality of bowing, recognition, or devotion.

If Ong points toward creative movement into expression, Namu brings another quality:

Receptivity and listening.

Through these two qualities we can gently meet two traditional concepts:

Shakti — creative force, movement, expression

Bhakti — devotion, receptivity, offering

For now, simply experience the relationship between expression and listening.

The Opening Mantra

Ong Namu
Guru Dev Namu

Within the Kundalini Yoga tradition in which we practice, the mantra is used at the beginning of practice as a way of

orienting ourselves toward the wisdom and awareness the practice asks us to access.

You do not need to adopt a particular belief about it.

Learn the sound. Learn how it is used. Notice what happens when ordinary conversation and activity make space for:

Breath → Sound → Silence

HOW TO CHANT THE OPENING MANTRA

The opening mantra is:

*Ong Namō
Guru Dev Namō*

In Ong, the g is not pronounced as a separate consonant. The sound is nasal and resonant.

It is important to distinguish Ong from Om, the sound commonly used in other yoga traditions.

The mantra stays essentially on the same tone, with only Dev rising to a slightly higher pitch.

Ong Namō Guru Dev Namō

Whenever comfortable, the complete mantra can be chanted on one breath.

If one breath is not comfortable, there is no need to force it. You may use two breaths:

*Ong Namō
inhale
Guru Dev Namō*

Breath should support the mantra, not become a struggle.

Sat Nam

Sat — truth, reality, what is real

Nam — name, identity

Within this tradition it is often translated as:

Truth is my identity.

HOW TO CHANT SAT NAM

When chanting Nam, complete the final m by gently closing the lips.

The final consonant is part of the word itself, so allow the sound to finish clearly rather than leaving the mouth open at the end.

In the traditional chanting rhythm used in this practice, Sat is extended approximately seven times longer than Nam.

Saaaaaaat Nam

The exact duration does not need to be measured mechanically. The important thing is to feel the long extension of Sat followed by the shorter, clearly completed Nam.

There is no need to use this as a positive statement you are supposed to convince yourself of.

You can allow the mantra to open a question:

What in me is deeper than the roles, reactions, and stories I usually identify with?

First learn the sound. Meaning can deepen through practice.

Feeling Sound

When you chant mantra, do not try to make something special happen.

Be curious.

Where do you feel vibration?

Abdomen · Chest · Throat · Mouth · Face · Head

What happens to the breath? What happens to attention?
And what happens when the sound ends?

Experience before interpretation.

Sound and Silence

Chant Sat Nam a few times.

Then stop.

Do not rush to speak.

Listen.

Throughout the course we will repeatedly meet these relationships:

Movement → Stillness

Breath → Pause

Sound → Silence

UNTIL THE NEXT CLASS

Once during the day, experiment with sound.

Take a comfortable breath. Chant Sat Nam. Then remain quiet for a few moments.

Ask:

What can I feel while I am making sound?

And what remains when the sound ends?

YOUR QUESTION FOR THE WEEK

How does what begins inside me become expression?

CHAPTER 04

04

DIRECTION

Prana, Apana & Mulabandha

What gives direction to my vitality?

Begin with what the body already knows.

Notice the natural breath. Practice a few rounds of Long Deep Breathing. Then, if appropriate, practice Breath of Fire briefly.

Pause. Observe. Then chant:

Ong Namo Guru Dev Namo

Today we meet one of yoga's central concepts:

Prana

What Is Prana?

Prana is sometimes translated simply as 'breath.'

But that is not a complete translation.

In yogic traditions, prana refers to a vital principle associated with life, vitality, and movement.

Breathing is one of the main ways yoga works with prana, but breathing and prana are not the same thing.

Air, oxygen, and respiration can be described through physiology.

Prana belongs to yoga's traditional understanding of life and the subtle body.

We do not need to turn one into the other.

We can learn the traditional map and then ask:

What does this map help us notice in our experience?

The Vayus

Traditional yoga describes prana as functioning through different movements or directions called vayus.

We begin with two:

Prana Vayu — traditionally associated especially with inward and receiving functions, particularly in the chest region.

Apana Vayu — traditionally associated especially with downward movement, elimination, release, and the lower abdomen and pelvis.

Take a comfortable inhale: receive.

Exhale: release.

This is a practical doorway into the concepts, not the full traditional definition.

Vitality Also Needs Release

Living systems also need to release.

The lungs inhale and exhale. The body receives and eliminates. Muscles contract and release. Attention focuses and lets go. Activity needs recovery.

Vitality is not only the capacity to accumulate or activate.

It also depends on the ability to release what no longer needs to be held.

From Vitality to Direction

What happens when vitality receives direction?

This brings us to a new family of yogic techniques:

The Bandhas

What Is a Bandha?

The Sanskrit word bandha carries meanings related to binding, holding, or locking.

In yoga, bandhas are specific internal actions coordinated with posture and breath.

Traditionally they are understood as ways of containing, organizing, and directing prana.

Today we begin with:

Mulabandha · Root Lock

The aim is not to contract the body as strongly as possible.

Precision matters more than force.

Finding the Area

Sit comfortably.

Before trying to activate anything, bring attention to the base of the pelvis.

Mulabandha involves the pelvic floor region, and in the Kundalini Yoga method used in this course it is practiced through coordinated activation of the lower pelvic area.

At first, the coordination may not be completely clear.

That is normal.

The first goal is not mastery. It is beginning to distinguish activation from unnecessary tension.

Your teacher will guide the technique during class.

PRACTICE

Mulabandha

Practice only the form demonstrated to you in class.

During the activation, notice what happens in the rest of the body.

Does the jaw tighten? Do the shoulders rise? Does the face harden?

Then release completely.

Activate → Release → Observe

Release is part of the technique too.

Another Mantra

*Aad Guray Nameh
Jugaad Guray Nameh
Sat Guray Nameh
Siri Guru Devay Nameh*

Within this tradition it is known as the Mangala Charan Mantra.

Traditionally it is associated with guidance and protection.

We can allow the word 'protection' to open a practical question:

How do I enter practice with orientation and awareness?

Direction Without Force

Vitality alone is not enough.

Mulabandha offers another possibility:

Less force. More precision.

UNTIL THE NEXT CLASS

Practice Mulabandha only in the gentle form you learned.

During the day, notice two movements:

What am I receiving?

What am I able to release?

YOUR QUESTION FOR THE WEEK

What gives direction to my vitality?

CHAPTER 05

05

SUPPORT

The Bandhas

*Can I create stability without creating
tension?*

Begin with what you already know.

Return to Mulabandha. Activate it gently as you learned.
Release.

In the previous class we explored direction. Today we
explore something more subtle:

Support.

Three Principal Bandhas

Mulabandha — Root Lock

Uddiyana Bandha — Diaphragm Lock

Jalandhara Bandha — Neck Lock

At this stage, a bandha becomes meaningful through:

Coordination · Sensitivity · Appropriate use

—not through force.

Uddiyana Bandha · Diaphragm Lock

The word Uddiyana carries a meaning related to rising or
upward movement.

In yogic tradition, Uddiyana Bandha can be a strong and
advanced technique.

What we learn here is a gentle beginner introduction, not
the full classical expression of the technique.

It is practiced after exhalation and involves an inward and upward abdominal action while the breath remains comfortably suspended for a short time.

The aim is not to create the strongest abdominal vacuum possible.

First learn the direction of the action.

The basic structure is:

Comfortable exhale → short suspension → gentle inward and upward abdominal action → release → inhale

Never struggle to remain without breathing.

Release the abdominal action before inhaling.

Jalandhara Bandha · Neck Lock

Begin with organization.

Allow the spine to lengthen naturally.

Keep the chest comfortably open.

Relax the shoulders.

Then allow the chin to move gently slightly back and down, according to your teacher's guidance, while maintaining length through the neck.

Jalandhara is organization, not compression.

Three Areas

Mulabandha — base of the pelvis

Uddiyana Bandha — abdominal region

Jalandhara Bandha — neck and throat

For now, learn to identify each one separately.

Base → Abdomen → Throat

Breath → Posture → Attention

The Traditional Understanding

In yogic tradition, bandhas are tools for working with the containment and direction of prana.

Modern anatomy and physiology can describe muscular activity, breathing mechanics, pressure changes, and postural coordination related to these practices.

But these are not the same language.

A physiological description is not proof of the subtle-body explanation.

Our approach remains:

- learn the map
- learn the technique
- observe the experience

Support Is Not Rigidity

We sometimes confuse stability with tension.

Bandhas offer another possibility:

Support does not require maximum tension.

We can activate what is needed and allow what is not needed to remain relaxed.

The Importance of Release

Bandhas teach activation.

But they also teach how to stop activating.

After each bandha, release completely.

A Note on Safety

Bandhas—especially when combined with breath retention—are learned gradually and with teacher guidance.

Discomfort is not a measure of progress.

During pregnancy and in some medical situations, certain techniques may need to be modified or avoided.

Adapting or skipping a technique is still a way of practicing.

UNTIL THE NEXT CLASS

During the day, notice:

Where am I using more effort than necessary?

Notice the jaw · shoulders · abdomen · hands.

Can you remain stable while releasing some unnecessary effort?

YOUR QUESTION FOR THE WEEK

Can I create stability without creating tension?

CHAPTER 06

06

THE PAUSE

Breath Retention & Mahabandha

*What happens when I stop doing—and
remain?*

Until now, the breath has mostly been something in motion.

Today we explore something different:

The pause.

Within the breath, stillness is already present.

Four Moments in the Breath

Inhale → pause → exhale → pause

The Sanskrit term Kumbhaka is used in pranayama for breath retention or suspension.

For now we distinguish two experiences:

- a brief retention after inhale
- a brief suspension after exhale

The purpose today is to feel the difference safely—not to extend the time.

Retention After Inhale

Take a comfortable inhale.

At the end of the inhale, remain for a brief moment.

Then exhale gently.

The important word is not hold. It is remain.

More Is Not Better

Duration is not a measure of depth.

Notice whether the body tightens, whether the face becomes tense, whether the mind immediately begins counting, and whether you can recognize the moment the body asks for the next breath.

The pause reveals our relationship with effort.

Suspension After Exhale

Inhale comfortably.

Exhale naturally, without trying to force every bit of air from the lungs.

At the end of the exhale, remain for a brief moment.

Then allow the next inhale to come.

Experience before interpretation.

We Do Not Fight the Breath

When there is a clear need for air:

Breathe.

The purpose is not to suppress the body's signals.

The purpose is to become better able to recognize them.

Mahabandha · Great Lock

When the principal bandhas are coordinated together, the traditional term Mahabandha is used.

Mahabandha is not simply ‘doing all three bandhas harder.’

It is a more complex coordination of breath, internal activation, and attention.

Mahabandha should be learned directly with a teacher.

Three principles matter more than duration:

- Do not struggle.
- Remain only while comfortable.
- Release consciously before returning to normal breathing.

Knowing how to come out of a technique is part of knowing the technique.

Traditional Map and Bodily Experience

Traditional yoga understands Kumbhaka and the bandhas as important tools for working with prana.

From a physiological perspective, breath retention and muscular actions can influence internal pressures, breathing mechanics, and cardiovascular responses.

These are different levels of description.

We can preserve the distinction and learn from both.

The Pause Changes Attention

When breath is moving, there is something clear to follow.

When movement stops briefly, the quality of attention can change.

And here the pause begins to prepare us for something beyond pranayama:

Meditation.

Stillness We Create · Stillness That Appears

There is a difference between creating stillness and noticing stillness when it appears by itself.

Both can teach us something.

From Breath to Life

Something has already happened.

Something else is about to happen.

And for a moment:

We remain.

This does not mean being passive.

It means discovering that not every space has to be filled immediately.

A Note on Safety

Intentional breath retention requires more attention than ordinary breathing practice.

It is learned gradually and without excessive effort.

If you experience significant dizziness, pain, unusual pressure, visual disturbance, panic, confusion, or a strong need for air, stop and return to natural, comfortable breathing.

Do not use retention time as a measure of progress.

UNTIL THE NEXT CLASS

Formal breath retentions and Mahabandha are not required home practice.

Once or twice during the day, notice one natural breathing cycle:

Inhale → transition → exhale → transition

YOUR QUESTION FOR THE WEEK

What happens when I stop doing—and remain?

CHAPTER 07

07

MEDITATION

Attention & the Mind

*Can I notice what is happening without
immediately becoming what is
happening?*

Sit comfortably.

Before you do anything, notice what is already happening.

There may be sounds around you, sensations in the body, movement of breath, thoughts, expectations.

Do not try to change anything.

How do I think meditation is supposed to feel?

Many people come to meditation with the same thought:

I need to stop thinking.

But meditation does not require the absence of thought.

It begins somewhere else.

The Mind Thinks

Thoughts, images, memories, associations, judgments, and plans are part of ordinary mental activity.

Meditation allows us to notice:

Where attention goes.

Thought and Attention Are Not the Same

We do not always choose which thoughts appear.

But we can develop the capacity to recognize where attention has gone.

And sometimes, choose to return it.

The Return

You are following the breath.

Then you realize you have been thinking about something else for a while.

Something important happened:

You noticed.

Awareness recognized that attention had moved somewhere else.

Now attention can return.

Notice → Return

The need to return is not a sign that meditation failed.

The return is part of meditation.

In Fact, We Have Been Practicing This from the Beginning

Underneath all the techniques, one capacity has been developing gradually:

The capacity to notice.

In meditation, that capacity moves to the center of the practice.

What Do We Use to Meditate?

Yogic traditions use many different supports:

Breath · Mantra · Mudra · Movement · Visual focus ·
Rhythm · Silence

The technique gives attention somewhere to return to.

PRACTICE

Sat Nam with the Breath

Inhale — Sat

Exhale — Nam

Each time attention moves somewhere else:

Return to Sat Nam.

There is no need for anger or judgment.

Just return.

What If My Mind Never Becomes Quiet?

Then you have a mind.

The purpose of practice is not to measure how few thoughts you managed to produce.

A more useful question is:

Am I becoming more able to recognize what is happening?

Meditation Is Not Relaxation

Meditation can be relaxing.

But meditation and relaxation are not the same thing.

The purpose is not to manufacture a pleasant inner state.

We develop the ability to remain in contact with experience without an immediate need to escape it, suppress it, or follow everything that appears.

From Reaction to Choice

Event → Interpretation → Reaction

Meditation can strengthen an important capacity:

Notice earlier.

And within that space another possibility can appear:

Choice.

When Meditation Becomes Difficult

If sitting with the eyes closed creates significant distress, strong agitation, or disorientation, there is no need to force yourself to continue.

Open the eyes. Look around. Feel contact with the floor or chair. Return to natural breathing.

Presence includes the capacity to know when to stop.

UNTIL THE NEXT CLASS

Once a day, sit for 3–5 minutes.

Inhale — Sat

Exhale — Nam

Each time attention moves somewhere else: return.

YOUR QUESTION FOR THE WEEK

*Can I notice what is happening without
immediately becoming what is happening?*

CHAPTER 08

08

REGULATION

The Nervous System & Recovery

Can I return after being disturbed?

Before you begin, notice your state.

Not only your thoughts.

Notice the body, breath, jaw, shoulders, abdomen, and speed of thinking.

Do not try to calm down.

What is my state right now?

We Are Responding All the Time

The nervous system is continually receiving information and adjusting the body's activity to what is happening.

The body responds.

Breathing can change. Heart rate can change. Muscles can prepare for action. Attention can narrow or widen.

The capacity to respond is not a problem.

Adaptation is part of life.

Activation Is Not the Enemy

We need activation.

And we also need the capacity to recover, rest, digest, sleep, and restore.

A healthy system is not a system that stays calm all the time.

Regulation is the capacity to adapt to what is happening and recover when the demand changes.

The goal is not to become a person whom nothing disturbs.

It is to develop a greater capacity to meet what disturbs us and find a way back.

How Do I Know I Am Activated?

Perhaps breathing becomes faster, the jaw tightens, the shoulders rise, the abdomen contracts, the body becomes restless, thoughts speed up, or attention narrows.

Not everyone responds in the same way.

The purpose is to begin recognizing how it happens in you.

Regulation Begins with Recognition

If I do not notice that my breathing has changed, that my body is tightening, or that attention has narrowed, I have less information about the state I am in.

Awareness creates the possibility of choice.

Two Breaths, Two Different Demands

Long Deep Breathing:

Slow · Expansive · Consciously lengthened

Breath of Fire:

Rhythmic · Active · Continuous

Instead of asking which is ‘better for the nervous system,’ ask:

How does each one affect me?

Technique Is Not a Prescription

The same technique will not necessarily create the same experience in every person or in every situation.

Yoga gives us tools.

Practice develops discernment about when and how to use them.

Experience → Pause → Observe → Integrate

We do an exercise.

Then we stop.

In the pause, we learn to recognize the transition.

Recovery is part of practice.

Regulation Is Not Control

Regulation does not mean making every uncomfortable state disappear.

It relates to developing enough awareness and flexibility to stay in contact with what is happening—and, when possible, choose how to respond instead of being automatically driven by the state.

Sometimes regulation requires activation. Sometimes calming. Sometimes movement. Sometimes rest. Sometimes

asking for help. Sometimes simply doing nothing for a moment.

From Meditation to Regulation

Thought → notice → return

Today we expand:

State → notice → respond

I can experience a state without assuming I have to act from it immediately.

The Nervous System Is Not a Spiritual Failure

Being activated does not mean you have failed at yoga.

A more meaningful question is:

- Can I recognize what is happening?
- Can I recognize what is needed?
- Can I recover?

UNTIL THE NEXT CLASS

Once a day, pause and ask:

What is my state right now?

How am I breathing?

Where am I holding effort?

What is the quality of my attention?

Then:

What might support me now?

YOUR QUESTION FOR THE WEEK

Can I return after being disturbed?

CHAPTER 09

09

INTEGRATION

Earth · Heart · Sky

*What might become possible if I keep
practicing?*

Before you continue reading, pause.

Sit comfortably.

Do not change the breath. Do not use a technique. Do not try to relax.

Simply notice:

Body · Breath · Attention · State

This is where we began.

What You Already Know

Over these weeks you learned to observe before rushing to change.

You experienced Long Deep Breathing and Breath of Fire.

You explored the Navel Center and vitality.

You discovered how breath becomes voice and mantra.

You met the traditional language of prana and apana.

You practiced the bandhas.

You explored the pauses within breath.

You began to meditate.

And you began to explore activation, regulation, and recovery.

These are different ways of exploring one human system:

Body · Vitality · Relationship · Action · Expression ·
Perception · Awareness

Today we meet one of the maps yoga offers for understanding this whole.

The Chakras · A Traditional Map

Chakras belong to the subtle anatomy described in Indian yogic and tantric traditions.

They are not physical organs.

There is no anatomical structure that modern medicine identifies as a ‘chakra.’

Different traditions have also described chakra systems in different ways.

The familiar seven-chakra model is an important and influential map—but it is not the only map that has existed.

What About Glands and Nerve Plexuses?

In modern yoga, particular chakras are often associated with endocrine glands, nerve plexuses, and psychological qualities.

These correspondences can be useful as symbolic or comparative teaching maps.

But:

A chakra is not an endocrine gland.

A chakra is not a nerve plexus.

Our approach remains:

- learn the traditional map

- understand what contemporary knowledge can responsibly say
- do not confuse the two
- then practice and observe

Two Triangles and a Bridge

Instead of learning seven separate lists, imagine the chakra system as two broad movements.

EARTH

- 1 · Foundation
- 2 · Movement & Relationship
- 3 · Vitality & Action

HEART

- 4 · Connection & Integration

SKY

- 5 · Expression
- 6 · Perception
- 7 · Transcendence

This is not a ladder in which we try to escape the bottom in order to reach the top.

It is a map of relationship and integration.

The Lower Triangle · Earth

1 · Foundation — Can I be here?

2 · Movement & Relationship — Can I move with life and remain in relationship?

3 · Vitality & Action — Can I act?

Together, the first three centers bring us toward:

Embodiment · Relationship · Action

Earth is not less spiritual than Sky.

Without ground, practice has nowhere to live.

The Upper Movement · Sky

5 · Expression — Can what is inside me become expression?

6 · Perception — Can I see beyond my first interpretation?

7 · Transcendence — Can my experience become wider than my ordinary sense of ‘me’?

But transcendence opens another question:

What happens when we return?

The Heart · The Human Meeting Place

Between the two movements is the fourth center:

The Heart.

The heart stands between:

Earth and Sky · Embodiment and transcendence ·
Individuality and relationship · Action and awareness

And here an important word appears:

Integration.

Transcendence asks:

Can I experience something beyond my ordinary sense of self?

Integration asks:

Can what I discovered become part of how I live?

Practice must return to life.

Earth and Sky

The lower centers are not a problem to overcome.

And the upper centers are not achievements that make us 'more developed.'

We need both movements.

Earth rises.

Sky descends.

And symbolically, they meet at the heart.

Transcendence Without Integration

A spiritual experience does not automatically create maturity.

Whatever practice opens must eventually meet:

The body · Relationships · Choices · Responsibility ·
Boundaries · Ordinary life

Otherwise spirituality can become another way of leaving ourselves.

Integration Without Transcendence

Life can become organized almost entirely around survival, work, obligations, achievement, and problems to solve.

We function.

But something wider can gradually disappear from view:

Meaning · Wonder · Silence · Contemplation

So the movement is not:

Earth or Sky.

It is:

Earth and Sky.

From Technique to Discernment

Knowing more techniques does not necessarily mean knowing ourselves better.

Gradually, the important questions change:

- What is appropriate now?
- Do I need activation or rest?

- Effort or release?
- Speaking or listening?
- Continuing or stopping?

This capacity develops slowly.

We call it discernment.

Depth Is Not Intensity

Continuing to practice does not necessarily mean stronger Breath of Fire, longer breath retentions, harder kriyas, or longer meditations.

Depth can look much quieter.

Practice deepens as perception becomes more precise.

Where We Began

Nine classes ago we began with one instruction:

Notice the breath.

So we end there.

From Here

Nine classes are enough to begin.

They are not enough to finish.

And that is a good thing.

You now have a foundation from which regular practice can become something more than following instructions.

What might become possible if I keep practicing?

If that question remains alive, continue.

You began by learning the practice.

Now the practice can begin teaching you.

What You Have Learned

This section is not a replacement for the classes.

It is a simple place to return when you want to remember a name, a principle, or the purpose of something you have practiced.

Some techniques—particularly bandhas, breath retention, and Mahabandha—should continue to be practiced according to the guidance you received from your teacher.

Long Deep Breathing

Quality: slow · full · comfortable · continuous

The breath gradually expands through the abdomen, ribs, and upper chest, then releases.

Remember: deeper does not mean bigger.

Avoid forcing maximum air.

Explore: How does slowing and deepening the breath affect your state?

Breath of Fire

Quality: rhythmic · continuous · active

The exhalation is created through a rhythmic inward movement of the abdomen. The abdomen then releases, allowing the inhale to occur naturally.

As the rhythm becomes established, inhalation and exhalation become approximately balanced.

Remember: coordination before speed.

Stop if the breath becomes strained, you feel significantly dizzy, or you experience discomfort or unusual symptoms.

Navel Center

The area around the navel is important in many Kundalini Yoga breathing practices, movements, and kriyas.

Within the traditional map it is associated with vitality and the capacity for action.

Remember: direct feeling before interpretation.

Mantra

Breath · sound · rhythm · attention

Opening:

*Ong Namō
Guru Dev Namō*

A beginning orientation toward the wisdom and awareness practice asks us to access.

Mangala Charan:

*Aad Guray Nameh
Jugaad Guray Nameh
Sat Guray Nameh
Siri Guru Devay Nameh*

Traditionally associated with guidance and protection.

Sat Nam:

Sat — truth, reality, what is real

Nam — name, identity

Truth is my identity.

Used as mantra, meditation, and closing.

Prana & Apana

Prana is a traditional yogic concept referring to a vital principle associated with life and movement.

It is not oxygen or simply another word for respiration.

Prana Vayu — traditionally associated with inward and receiving functions.

Apana Vayu — traditionally associated with downward movement, elimination, and release.

Beginner doorway:

Inhale — receive · Exhale — release

This is not the full traditional definition.

Bandhas

Internal yogic actions traditionally understood to contain, organize, and direct prana.

Mulabandha — Root Lock — base of the pelvis

Uddiyana Bandha — Diaphragm Lock — abdominal region

Jalandhara Bandha — Neck Lock — neck and throat

Mahabandha — Great Lock — coordinated use of the principal bandhas

Remember: precision before intensity.

Bandhas are not about the strongest contraction possible.

Learn coordination with your teacher and release consciously.

Breath Retention

Retention after inhale · Suspension after exhale

Kumbhaka is a traditional pranayama term for breath retention or suspension; the full system is more detailed.

Remember: Remaining is not struggling.

There is no competition around duration.

Formal retention combined with bandhas should remain teacher-guided.

Meditation

Meditation does not require the absence of thoughts.

Distinguish thought from attention.

Basic practice:

Inhale — Sat · Exhale — Nam

When attention wanders:

Notice → Return

The return is part of meditation.

Regulation

Regulation does not mean being calm all the time.

Human beings need both activation and recovery.

Practice can help us recognize state and respond.

State → notice → respond

Ask:

- How am I breathing?
- Where am I holding effort?
- What is the quality of my attention?

Then:

What might support me now?

Chakras

Chakras are part of a traditional subtle-body map, not anatomical structures.

EARTH — Foundation · Relationship · Vitality

HEART — Connection · Integration

SKY — Expression · Perception · Transcendence

The movement is not escape from Earth toward Sky.

Earth and Sky meet through integration.

Practice returns to life.

The Rhythm of Practice

Experience → Pause → Observe → Integrate

Do something. Stop. Notice. Allow what happened to settle before immediately moving on.

This is not only a class structure. It is a way of learning.

When You Don't Know What to Practice

Return to the beginning.

Sit comfortably. Do not immediately change anything.

Notice the body, breath, attention, and state.

Ask:

What is appropriate now?

Perhaps breath. Movement. Meditation. Rest. Perhaps you do not know.

You do not need a technique for every moment.

Practice begins with attention.

Discernment develops with experience.

GLOSSARY

Essential Terms for Your Practice

This is not a complete philosophical glossary. It is a simple reference for the terms you have met in practice.

APANA

A traditional yogic term associated with downward functions, elimination, and release. Apana Vayu is one of the principal vayus.

BANDHA

An internal yogic action coordinated with posture and breath. Traditionally, bandhas are understood to contain, organize, and direct prana. In this course you met Mulabandha, Uddiyana Bandha, and Jalandhara Bandha.

BHAKTI

Devotion, receptivity, offering. In this course, Bhakti was introduced alongside Shakti to explore the relationship between expression and receptivity.

CHAKRA

A concept belonging to the subtle anatomy of Indian yogic and tantric traditions. Systems vary across traditions. Chakras are not physical organs, endocrine glands, or nerve plexuses.

KRIYA

Literally related to action. In Kundalini Yoga, kriya usually refers to a defined sequence or practice that can include posture, movement, breath, mantra, mudra, concentration, and relaxation. A kriya generally follows a particular structure rather than being a random collection of exercises.

KUMBHAKA

A pranayama term for breath retention or suspension. There are different forms and applications. In this introductory course you explored only brief, comfortable pauses.

MANTRA

An intentional sound or sequence of sounds used in practice. Mantra can bring together breath, vibration, rhythm, and attention. Depending on the practice it may be chanted aloud, whispered, or repeated mentally.

MEDITATION

A broad name for practices that work with attention and awareness. Meditation does not necessarily mean eliminating thought or becoming relaxed.

Attention wanders → awareness notices → attention returns

MUDRA

A gesture or position used in yogic and contemplative practice. Many mudras involve particular positions of the hands and fingers, although the term has broader traditional meanings.

PRANA

A foundational concept in yogic traditions referring to a vital principle associated with life and movement. Prana is deeply connected with breath in yogic practice, but it is not simply another word for air, breath, or oxygen.

PRANAYAMA

The yogic discipline of consciously working with the breath and, traditionally, with prana. Pranayama is more than ‘deep breathing.’ It may include different rhythms, proportions, techniques, and retentions.

SADHANA

A sustained or regular spiritual practice or discipline. Sadhana is not one particular technique; the word points to returning to practice consistently over time.

SAT NAM

A central mantra in the Kundalini Yoga tradition used in this course.

Sat — truth, reality, what is real

Nam — name, identity

Truth is my identity.

SHAKTI

A Sanskrit term associated with power, creative force, and manifestation. In this course, Shakti was introduced alongside Bhakti to explore the relationship between expression and receptivity.

VAYU

A word related to wind or movement. In yogic subtle-body theory, the vayus describe different functions or movements of prana. In this course you met mainly Prana Vayu and Apana Vayu.

A Final Note

You do not need to memorize all of these words.

Knowing Sanskrit terminology is not evidence of deeper practice.

Return to the glossary when you meet a word you do not remember.

Then return to what matters more:

Practice · Experience · Attention · Discernment

