

# Energy Work and Yoga

By Marilyn Schotte, certified Healing Touch practitioner

During the years that I worked toward Healing Touch certification, I also studied to become a certified yoga instructor. While studying in an ashram by a river in southern Virginia, I was astounded and also gratified to learn that ancient yogis, many centuries ago, had discovered the human energy field. In Sanskrit these energy layers are called “koshas” or sheaths. The yogis recognized five interpenetrating sheaths around the innermost Supreme Self, our inner divinity. These sheaths are named *Annamaya kosha* (the physical self); *Pranamaya kosha* (the etheric body); *Manomaya kosha* (mental/emotional); *Vijanamaya kosha* (celestial or wisdom/intellect body) and the *Anandamaya kosha*, the causal or bliss body. (In Barbara Brennan’s system, these five are somewhat differently divided to make a total of seven energy layers.) “Chakra” is of course a Sanskrit word that means “wheel,” a symbol of the vortex shape of etheric energy around the body’s nerve plexes, perceived by yogis with second sight or intuitive wisdom.

Recently, while visiting a Smithsonian art museum, I saw a large, exquisite painting of a yogi in meditation, with chakras portrayed symbolically, entitled “**Chakras of the Subtle Body**”. The canvas was painted in 1823 but depicted a model of the “entire” human form known by yogi experts thousands of years before. There were more than seven chakras illustrated.

In the west we think that yoga, introduced to the US in 1893 by the Indian Swami Vivekananda but now a household word, is about developing strength, flexibility and the ability to relax. It is that, but it is also so much more. It is about bringing awareness to the body, mind and spirit. It is much more than a system of



exercise or series of physical poses we know as hatha yoga. That is only one branch. In fact the classic reason to do yoga postures is to prepare the body for meditation and to bring the body, mind and spirit into unison.

Yoga, I realized during my instructor courses, is both an art and (mainly) a science. The different poses, and there are literally hundreds, reveal the art of manipulating the physical body to alter the flow of vital energy (called “prana” in Sanskrit) to work toward balance and harmony in the energy field, which is precisely the aim of Healing Touch and other healing modalities. Not only are the seven major chakras affected but also hundreds of other minor ones at the joints of the skeletal system.

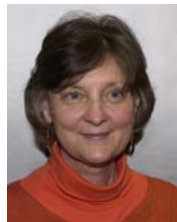
The pranamaya sheath or etheric layer contains the “nadis”, nerve channels in the subtle body, which were also discovered by the Chinese and labeled as meridians. On this level acupuncture causes subtle shifts in the energy flow and so affects the physical layer. The etheric layer is also the interface between the physical body and the mental body or mind, hence the importance in yoga of breath work. One of the basic breathing practices is called “nadi shodanam” or “nadi suddhi”, or alternate nostril breathing. It is also known as the nerve-cleansing breath because it directly affects the flow of energy in the subtle nerve channels, thereby calming the nervous system.

There is a system of Tibetan yoga, centuries old, which was also developed to affect the chakras of the body and prepare for meditation. The most well-known form is called “the Five Tibetans”, first publicized in the west in 1939 in a book by Peter

Kelder. See the link at [www.lifeevents.org/5-tibetans-energy-rejuvenation-exercises.htm](http://www.lifeevents.org/5-tibetans-energy-rejuvenation-exercises.htm) for an explanation and demonstration of this form.

Most mornings I do a series of yoga postures, plus a weekly yoga class. We all store tension in our bodies. I often recommend yoga to my HT clients. Even if I feel sleepy, grumpy or dopey, I always feel better after the session, more alert but calmer, more flexible and more grounded. My system has been re-balanced. As one of my yoga teachers said, "*Discipline is remembering what you want.*" I highly recommend a regular practice of yoga as a significant part of self-care, something which we as healers are apt to minimize. I believe that a consistent practice of yoga as part of self-care enhances the work that we do for others.

About the author:



Marilyn started Healing Touch classes with Janet Mentgen in 1990 and became a Certified Healing Touch Practitioner some years later. She is also a certified yoga instructor and Reiki II practitioner. For more than 10 years Marilyn has been an HT practitioner at the bi-monthly HT clinic held at the North Bethesda United Methodist Church in Bethesda, MD. A few years ago she retired from almost 30 years as a biologist with the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. to pursue her interests in the healing arts.