

Dragon Yoga

By

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As we enter into the new millennium we also enter into the year of the dragon. The Dragon is often seen as a sign for power and immortality. The dragon encompasses all of the other animals of the Chinese zodiac. This makes it the perfect symbol for the new unified world that we are creating and for this new type of yoga that brings the martial arts and yoga back together as one system. The dragon is also a great symbol for yoga. Yoga often draws from the animal kingdom to create and identify postures known as Asanas. The dragon represents all of the animals joined as one. Dragons are also known for their fiery breath. In a part of yoga called pranayama we practice a breath of fire known as Kapala Bhati.

Dragon Yoga is the combination of Shaolin Dragon style kung fu, Chi Kung (Chinese internal martial art) and Ashtanga Yoga. Kung fu and yoga are very closely related. Bodhi Dharma a great sage travelled from India to China to further the teachings of Buddhism. When Bodhi Dharma (aka Da Mo) arrived in China at the temple he found the monks to be in such a sad state of health. The Chinese Buddhist monks were fat and slow and often fell asleep during their lengthy meditations. Da Mo introduced to the monks the teachings of yoga. Da Mo also created Chi Kung the first Chinese internal martial art. These internal practices were designed to promote health, longevity, energy, and inner strength and are still practiced today. While the martial arts were growing in diversity and popularity in China, Yoga was taking new turns in India. Yoga originally called Ashtanga (8 fold path) consisted of Yama (restraints), Niyama (observances), Asana (posture), Pranayama (breathing), Pratyahara (withdrawing from senses), Dharana (concentration), Dhyana (meditation), and Samadhi (superconsciousness). Yoga was getting very popular in India by the Fakirs and holy men who often practiced only one or two of the branches of yoga. Most monasteries and temples encourage the practice of all yogic arts. Many masters or gurus developed their own system of yoga. One of these is also called ashtanga yoga. Modern ashtanga yoga is a flow system where all of the postures move from one to the next much like a martial art form. Forms are a series of postures strung together in a specific way. Modern ashtanga also incorporates something called full vinyasa, a version of sun salute, used to connect certain seated postures together. In this new millennium it is a time to reintegrate our roots a time for yoga and kung fu to join once again to form a new practice Dragon Yoga.

Dragon yoga draws from a powerful history of both yoga and kung fu. These two ancient esoteric arts are brought together in a powerful system of asanas. Dragon yoga incorporates kung fu's teachings of internal arts, five element theory, and poise with

the grace, balance and focus of yoga creating the perfect meld of yin and yang. Dragon yoga promotes physical health and longevity as well as increasing will power and spiritual fortitude. Dragon yoga is designed to bring about deeply rooted inner strength combined with a balanced sense of inner peace. Dragon yoga uses all of the best parts of its parent styles to create a yoga for the future.

The practice of Dragon yoga is one of focus, breathing and movement. When doing Dragon yoga it is ideal to be warm. This will allow the muscles to move and stretch much easier. It is important to take all exercise at your own pace. Everyone's body is different so do what works for you. Breathing, Locks and other basics can turn an exercise program into a spiritual experience. Most important of all is make it fun. This is a dance of divinity a true movement of self expression. Use these practices to increase your personal power and soar like the dragons.

#### Dragon Yoga Fundamentals

These fundamentals are used to enhance your yoga practice. Bringing our focus to the breath and energy actually brings energy deeper into ourselves. The practice of yoga can truly get us in touch with our inner self and can bring us greater innerstanding and self knowledge. Use these techniques to enhance your other practices and your daily life as well as your yoga. For in truth all movement is yoga and all action is kung fu.

#### Breathing

In Dragon Yoga we use the serpents breath (ujiya breath) a type of forced breathing. All breathing is done through the nose both in and out. The breath moves from the back of the throat and makes a sound as it moves out almost like the hissing of a snake. Breathing is very important in yoga. The breath moves the prana (energy) in and out of the body as well as circulating the chi inside the body. Often through breath we can move further into a posture. Our breath helps relax us into challenging poses and also provides greater amounts of oxygen to our cells. This helps detoxify and cleanse our bodies while building greater strength and flexibility. While practicing yoga remember to breath deeply and evenly and with focused intent.

#### Bhandas

The bhandas are the way of sealing energy in the body. The two primary bhandas are Mula bhanda and Urdhva Bhanda. The bhandas provide great strength allowing you to hold postures for longer periods and to achieve new goals in your yogic practice. Mula bhanda is the area in-between your sphincter and genitals known as the perineum. Locking this area is done by drawing in and up on the muscles of the perineum. This lock seals in energy and provides protection from injury during yoga. Mula bhanda is the locking of the great seal. By closing this gate we keep precious energies in our body that stimulate our kundalini and

increase our internal heat. Uddiana bhanda is the stomach lock. This is where we keep the muscles of the stomach drawn in and tight. It is best to hold your bhandas throughout your practice so when holding a posture and breathing think about your bhandas.

#### Meridians

The meridians are the energy channels of our body. This is where energy or chi circulate. The two primary meridians of the body are the governing vessel and the conception vessel. The governing vessel flows up the spine (the spine governs our movements). The conception vessel flows down the chest bisecting the belly button (we were attached by our navel at conception until birth). These two meridians connect at the base of the spine and are connected by sealing mula bhanda. On the other end they are connected at the roof of the mouth and by pressing the tongue flat into the space behind the teeth. By connecting these meridians we stimulate energy to move and flow within us opening blocked areas and imbuing us with greater power.

#### Five Elemental Dragons

The five elemental dragons truly represent the essence of Dragon Yoga. Chinese five element theory shown through the creation cycle is powerfully expressed through these ancient yogic/kung fu postures. Each elemental dragon acts to strengthen each element. Through regular practice these postures balance and harmonize the five elements within our bodies and our lives. These poses are foundational in both yoga and kung fu. Strong deeply rooted stances are the backbone of any discipline. By encouraging both stretching and strengthening we create an ideal balance of yin and yang. These postures can be done individually or as a flowing series. The longer a stance is held and the more deeply we breathe into it the greater the benefits will be. Great people take even greater challenges.

#### Fire Dragon (Warrior Pose)

Front leg is forward and bent at a 90° angle so that thigh is parallel to the ground with foot facing front. The back leg is straight and the rear foot points out at a 45° angle away from the body. Body faces forward with hand opposite the forward leg pressing forward with thumb tucked in and first finger up and other fingers bent halfway and hand on same side as leg is cocked back at hip with a closed fist facing forward. This posture is held for 5 good breaths (inhalations and exhalations) on each side.

#### Earth Dragon (Horse Stance)

Legs are slightly wider than shoulder width. Feet face forward and knees are bent so that thighs are parallel with ground. Face forward with chest pressed out and back erect and straight. Fists are at side with elbows pulled back. This posture is held for 10 breaths.

#### Metal Dragon (Tiger Stance)

From a solid horse stance extend one leg while bending down on the other. Bring most of your weight onto the bent leg. Place your arm opposite your extended leg above your head with your fist facing the extended leg. Place your arm opposite your bent leg down by your extended knee bent with the fist facing upward. Your body faces the extended leg and leans into it. Hold this posture for 5 breaths each side.

#### Water Dragon (Uncoiled Serpent Pose)

Stand with both feet together. Bend the knees as much as possible while standing straight. Hold hands together in prayer position above the head with arms at full extension. Look up at outstretched hands. Hold this pose for 5 breaths

#### Wood Dragon (Tree Pose)

Place the feet together and stand facing forward with legs straight. Arms extend out to side with palms pressing out. Look forward and hold for 5 breaths.

#### Dragon Walk

Stand facing forward with about 10ft of space in front of you. Place your right foot 2 ft. in front and 1 foot to the left of your left foot by crossing it in front and squatting down so your front foot is flat and your back foot is on the ball and toes your right thigh and left calf should be parallel with the floor. You should be facing forward and your hands should be in mudra or chamber. Take 5 steps forward in this fashion. And hold for 5 breaths .

These practices express the essence of dragon yoga. Dragon yoga makes an excellent daily practice. For more information on Dragon Yoga or to order a Dragon Yoga book or video contact Master Jeremy Safron in Maui Hawaii at 808 573 5097 or visit us on-line at [www.dragonyoga.com](http://www.dragonyoga.com).