

A Higher Hum: Breath and Mantra Meditation

The following meditation is based upon the **mantra** "so hum," ("I am that") used within the traditions of Tantra and Vedanta.

By Shiva Rea



Mantra, the chanting of sacred words or sounds, is a central part of yogic meditation. Mantra comes from the combination of two syllables: "man," meaning "to reflect" or "be aware," and "tra," meaning "tool for" or "agent of." A mantra is a tool for reflection and the cultivation of awareness, and is used for both concentration and contemplation on the Source.

Within yoga, mantras are based upon sounds that reflect the energy of our divine nature. Om is considered to be the universal, consummate mantra. The following meditation is based upon the mantra "so hum," ("I am that") used within the traditions of Tantra and Vedanta. Since "so hum" also indicates the sound of the breath, it is a mantra that repeats itself effortlessly.

Find a comfortable posture for meditation (seated on a cushion or blanket, in a chair or against a wall). Place your palms facing up in *jnana mudra* (forefinger and thumb touching) with your palms facing up to open your awareness or facing down to calm the mind. Scan your body and relax any tension. Let your spine rise from the ground of the pelvis. Draw your chin slightly down and let the back of your neck lengthen.

Bring your attention to the tidal rhythm of your breath, feeling the rise and fall of your inhalation and exhalation. As your focus settles on your breath, begin to employ the simple mantra "so hum." As

you inhale, say "so" silently to yourself, and as you exhale say "hum." Keep your focus on the sensation of your breath while silently repeating the sacred syllables, "so hum." As you draw your inhalation, gently drawing your breath along the base of your throat, listen for the sound of "so." As you exhale, listen for the sound of "hum" as your breath is amplified in the throat.

Let your mind become absorbed in the sound of so hum-in your internal chanting and your actual breath. As if you were watching the waves of the ocean, let your mind be naturally drawn into presence and stillness—no place to go, nothing to do, so hum, so hum. If a thought (*vriddhi*) arises, come back to the [mantra](#) so hum.

In the beginning, it may be helpful to set an external timer for 10, 20, or 30 minutes so you are not distracted. When you are finished, bring your hands together in *anjali mudra* (prayer position) and close with a moment of gratitude, reflection, or prayer to soak up the energy of your meditation into your being and life.

Soham Mantra Meditation

by Swami Jnaneshvara Bharati

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Natural mantra: The Soham mantra is a natural mantra because it is already part of your nature.

- *Sooooo...* is the sound of inhalation, and is remembered in the mind along with that inhalation.
- *Hummmm...* is the sound of exhalation, and is remembered in the mind along with that exhalation.

Universal mantra: The Soham mantra has been called the universal mantra because of the fact that its vibration is already a part of the

breath, and everybody breathes. *Sooooo...* is the sound of inhalation, and *Hummmm...* is the sound of exhalation.

Other names or designations: The mantra is also designated as Hamsa, Hansa, Sohum, So Ham, or So Hum.

Hamsa mantra: The Soham mantra is also called the *Hamsa* mantra. Hamsa (or hansa) poses the question, *Who am I?* Soham provides the answer, *I am that.*

I am that: While the English translation may not be as important as the quality of the sound vibration, Soham translates as *I am that.* When remembered repeatedly, it declares *I am that I am that I am that I am.* Remembering the Soham mantra often during the day can be a very useful practice.

**Oh mind, sing the sound So Ham
Soham Japalehe Manawa
Soham, soham, soham.
I am that I am, that I am, that I am.**