

## **Body and Breath – Editor’s Pick**

*Sarah Powers Interviewed by Karen Macklin  
Tricycle: The Buddhist Review - August 2, 2005*

*Journalist Karen Macklin spoke with four yoga teachers who have incorporated meditation techniques into their yoga practice (and vice-versa).*

When California based yoga teacher Sarah Powers became more interested in the psychological and contemplative dimensions of her practice, she discovered that in-depth teachings of that sort were scarce in the yoga community. “We didn’t have the opportunity for extended periods of stillness practice in most of the yoga intensives I was participating in,” she says. “I would only read about them or have them alluded to in class.”

Powers turned to an investigation into Buddhist meditation, which became, over the years, a devotion. Eventually, her respect for both traditions inspired her to develop a practice that combined them. She calls it Insight Yoga.

“I find that many Buddhists could be greatly enhanced in their practice by investigating the realms of the physical and energetic,” she says, “and many yogis can really be enhanced by the teachings that highlight how to be open to not just concentration, but levels of ongoing awareness and insight.”

Powers says she bases her model for teaching on the Tibetan vision of every practice having three essential pieces, or “three excellences.” Thus, her classes consist of three parts: setting a conscious intention, doing a mindful main practice, and dedicating the fruits of that practice to one’s teachers and to the benefit of all beings. The main practice is a combination of yin (long hold) yoga asana, yang (flow) yoga asana, pranayama (breathing), energetic visualization, and meditation.

Powers mainly teaches extended workshops and retreats. A day on retreat might include a four-hour practice in the morning and a two-hour practice in the afternoon, with half-hour seated meditation sessions interspersed throughout the day. She sees elongated practices as a key to going deeper. “It’s more like a Buddhist retreat with lots of yoga in it,” she says.

So is it yoga or is it Buddhism?

“Ultimately,” says Powers, “we need to move beyond the classification of certain dogmatic definitions that are held by any school, and evaporate the understanding into our unique freedom that isn’t defined by what we call it. It’s really an investigation into how we suffer and the potential for living free.”