

Pranayama “Subtle Breathing”

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.63345/ijrhrs.net.v14.i9.3>

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Abstract— Yoga Sutras 1:34 of Patanjali expounds on subtle breathing as pranayama. “prachchardana-vidharanabhyam va pranasya”. Meaning “Or by making the breath and prana light and tenuous through slow exhalation and carefully controlled inhalation together with concentration on the same [the mind-field is purified, made pleasant and its stability is established]”. “This process involves slow exhalation and inhalation. Training oneself to avoid sudden, quick and jerky inhalations. Slow exhalation is prachchardana, carefully, slow inhalation is vidharana. Controlling the flow of the breath with dharana on mental attention is advised”, Bharati (2015). The science of Pranayama is directly connected with the functions of the ANS. The techniques of pranayama help to bring these involuntary functions under conscious control. This can be achieved by regulating the breath and by the breath controlling the motion of the lungs. “This is the most important step in controlling the rhythm of the heart and the vagus nerve. This brings the ANS under voluntary control which opens a way for experiencing the higher and subtler levels of the mind. muscular dystrophy and good health is achieved and you are led to subtler levels of awareness. “The cosmic energy is a form of prana that enters the through the medium called oxygen. Inhaling, vyana one of its functions reaches the cells in the body and removes waste products, in exhalation apana another function of prana, expels the waste products through the medium called carbon dioxide. The cessation of prana and apana is called pranayama, Rama (1979). The process by which the secrete of prana and its control is understood. Having understood pranayama, then the yogi subjugates his mind, body and grasp the very core of cosmic life. “Prana’s physical manifestation is called breath. Control of the exhalation leads to control of the gross and subtle, physical and mental aspects of the body. If prana cease to exist thoughts will never arise because the relationship between prana and mind is of Supporter

and supported, like a flower and its fragrance. When the breath leaves the body the link between body and mind is broken and the soul, intellect and unconscious mind find another place and begin their work anew”, Rama (1979).

Index Terms: Pranayama, subtle breathing, EEG, MRI, yoga sutras, awakening prana, pranas, autonomic nervous system, vagus nerve, slow inhalation, slow exhalation, diaphragmatic breathing, chitta prasadhana, antah karana, control of prana, expansion of prana.

There are four aspects of pranayama, poorarak (inhalation), rechaka (exhalation), antar kumbhaka (internal breath retention, bahir kumbhaka (external breath retention) and there is another aspect of pranayama called kevala pranayama (spontaneous breath retention which occurs in a high state of meditation, where prana ceases the subtle aspect of existence is lifted and a higher vision of reality is attained, Saraswati (2008). The most important aspect of pranayama is kumbhaka or breath retention. To do this you have to gradually develop control over respiration, with emphasis on the inhalation and exhalation in the beginning, to strengthen the lungs and balance the nervous and pranic systems in preparation for kumbhaka. There are five pranic sheaths (or koshas) in the body for different aspects or dimensions of human existence. They are, Anamaya kosha (the food or physical sheath), pranomaya kosha (the vital energy body), manomaya kosha (the mental body), vijanamaya kosha (the psychic or higher mental body) and anandamaya kosha (the bliss body). Together they form an integral whole. Pranayama practices energise and work the pranomaya kosha. This kosha is made up of five major pranas or pancha prana. They are called prana, apana, Samana, Udana and vyana. Muktibodhananda (2012). Prana is the energy governing the thoracic area between the larynx and the top of the diaphragm, it is associated with the heart and respiratory organs, including the muscles and nerves that activate them. It is the force by which the breath is drawn inside. Apana governs the

area of the abdomen, below the navel, and the genitals. Its function is expulsion of waste from the body. This force expels the breath. Samana governs the area between the heart and the navel. It activates and controls digestion, liver, intestines, pancreas and stomach and their secretions. It is responsible for transformation; it relates to assimilation and distribution of nutrients. It relates to kundalini and the expansion of consciousness. Udana governs the head and neck area, activating all sensory receptors, the eyes, ears, nose and tongue. It harmonises and activates the limbs and associated muscles, ligaments, nerve and joints. Responsible for the erect body posture, sensory awareness and the ability to respond to the external environment. Vyana pervades the entire body, regulating and controlling all movements as well as coordinating the other pranas. The other pranas include the five upa pranas or minor pranas, naga, korma, krikara, devadatta and Dhananjaya. Naga functions (belching and hiccups), korma functions is (opening of the eyes and stimulates blinking), krikara functions (to generate hunger, thirst, sneezing and coughing), Devadatta functions are to (induce sleep and yawning) and Dhananjaya functions is to (linger after departure of death, decay and decomposition of the body).

Love is a source of freedom; there is a great difference between love and attachment. Love is to give selflessly and attachment is to possess. Attachment is to always depend on others, love is purely dependent on knowledge and reality, peace is not the gift that God gives anyone. This is not his job, his has given us the capacity and talents that we need. It is good to believe in God, but we should do our actions. No one can give you peace, those who are establish in Atman free from attachment and desires are at peace. Love is pure and divine. "Your lifestyle has a profound impact on the pranomaya kosha. The faculties of the mind, emotion, thought, imagination affect the pranic body. Irregularities in lifestyle, dietary indiscretions and stress deplete and obstruct the pranic flow. Depletion of energy in a particular prana leads to the devitalization of organs, limbs, to disease and metabolic dysfunction. Pranayama techniques reverse this and energise and balance the different pranas within the pranomaya kosha. After asana practice comes pranayama practice", Saraswati (2008).

A normal person breathes 15 times per minute and 21,600 times in a day. Respiration burns oxygen and glucose produce energy to power muscle contraction, glandular secretion and mental process, rhythmic, deep, slow respiration stimulates and is stimulated by a calm, content, state of mind. Breathing irregular disrupts the rhythm of the brain and leads to emotional and mental blocks. These mental blocks lead to inner conflict, unbalanced personality, disordered lifestyle and disease. Pranayama practice establishes a regular breathing pattern, breaking the negative cycle, and reversing the debilitating process. Breathing patterns influence the quality of life, quantity of life. Those who are short breathers

are likely to have a shorter lifespan, than those who breathe slowly and deeply. Slow breathing keeps the heart stronger and better nourished and contribute to a longer life. Deep breathing increases the absorption of energy by the pranomaya kosha, enhancing dynamism, vitality and general well-being. "If the mind is stilled and prana flows freely in the nadis and chakras, the way to evolution of consciousness opens. Leading to higher dimensions of spiritual experience. In the science of pranayama there is an intimate connection between breath, nerve, currents and control of the inner prana the vital force. Generally, the major points are moderate exercise, balance and common sense to outer and outer thinking and living, pranayama should not be practiced. But breath awareness and abdominal breathing can be done in shavasana.

The best time to practice pranayama is at dawn, (morning). Before practicing have a bath, wear loose clothing, practice on an empty stomach, have a balanced diet. The practice of pranayama reduces constipation, the quantity of urine. Reduce the intake of salt and spices and drink plenty of water. A clean, quiet and well-ventilated place is recommended for practice, breathe only through the nostrils. First practice asana then shatkarma then pranayama then meditation. A steady and comfortable, sustainable posture is necessary, avoid strain, do not go beyond your capacity. Side effects caused by the process of purification and the expulsion of toxins, you may experience sensations of itching, tingling, heat, cold, lightness or heaviness may occur. If such changes cause difficulty, decrease or stop, the practice with a competent and accomplished teacher or Guru, Saraswati (2008). Bharati (2023) says how to strengthen your prana. Have a sattvic regular sleep, sleep as a vritti as an operation in the mind-field, an activity of the mind. During sleep the brain produces low frequency waves called delta waves and certain areas of the brain remain active. There are three kinds of sleep, sattvic sleep, rajasic sleep and tamasic sleep. Only sattvic sleep energises the pranic-field. Rajasic and tamasic sleep make you sluggish. Some primary rules for obtaining a sattvic sleep, exercise regularly e.g. hatha yoga, contemplative walking, practice of silence, have light dinner to keep the stomach light. "Before going to sleep do some inspiring reading, look at inspiring videos with spiritual objects, beauties, harmonious nature, prayer before sleeping. Sleep after meditation, convert part of the sleep into yoga nidra, conscious rest, when the brain produces delta waves, practice atma-tattva-avalokanam, awareness of the spiritual self". The same method of falling asleep should be practiced when waking up. "This kind of sleep strengthen the sattvic prana not rajasic and tamasic pranas. It intensifies the prana, gives strength to the mind's energy-field. In an inspired way with intuition. Prana is restored, mind is enlivened, helps the immune sysyem resist diseases, keeps the mind in a sattvic state throughout the day" Bharati (2023). Irregular bowel movement weakens the prana system. The pranic system has

two parts, prana and apana and there are three kinds of organs, prana organs, where the movement is flowing upwards, e.g. the respiration system, the breath flow is upwards through the nostrils. Prana and apana medial organs are mid-way between upward and downward movements which maintain balance between both, e.g. the cardiac and digestive systems. Apana organs the movements are downwards, e.g. intestinal colonic activity, urination, seminal ejaculation, menstruation and parturition. Proper balance of these three categories of organs is important for good health and pranic strength. All principle that involves food intake, apply equally to evacuation for whatever affects one affects the other. Irregularity of sleep affects the organs of evacuation; sleep establish good bowel movement. The force-fields of prana-apan medial organs, control and supply the organs of the pranic-field and the apana-field. Yoga nidra regularise the organs of evacuation in the apana-field. These practices should be learnt by an expert.

The psyche or mind or (antah-karana) has four functions or foundations of mindfulness, according to its various faculties: manas, buddhi, ahamkara and chitta. Manas, through the active senses, sensations from the external environment are brought to the active mind, in return the mind send reactions to these sensations. The buddhi or intellectual faculty's functions are to form and retain concepts, it also reasons, judge, comprehend, discriminates and more. This faculty has two sides of discrimination: its external face, which is the intellect and its internal face, intuitive wisdom. The ahamkara: the ego, which comes from buddhi (closest to pure consciousness), without a point of meditation, it identifies itself with prakriti and functions outside of the pure Self. It establishes the "I sense" the "I am ness" for example: this body is me and I am this body. Chitta's function is to store all impressions or samskaaras. It stores all of one's actions (of word, thought and deed). Chitta is comprised of manas buddhi and ahamkara, individual and universal consciousness. Silence is necessary to study the breath energy, the mind, the intellect and bliss sheaths Swami Rama 1976. Mark S.G Dyczkowski (2007) states that the experience of universal consciousness, light, increased awareness, the arising of innate knowledge, the innate nature of mantra, comes from chittam mantrah. Usharbudh Arya (1986), emphasises on the purification of the mind-field, in his commentary on the Yoga Sutras of Patanjali with the exposition of Vyasa, explains how to make the mind a pleasant place in sutra 1:33, which is also an ascetic practice. Silence is an awakening of that which one has forgotten. That silence from where we came and to that very silence, we shall return. "Silence is not the absence of anything it is the infinity of the word, the word that is God. In the Holy Bible, John 1:1 state that in the beginning was the Word and the Word was God", according to Bharati (2018), Silence is a very refined art; it is an intricate science. It is not just the action of keeping

the mouth closed and not moving the tongue says, Bharati (2006). Higher than the body and speech is asceticism of the mind. Control or mastery of mind automatically brings control of body and speech. An individual state of mind determines the individual state of consciousness. Yogis (not posture experts) are scientists, who are constantly experimenting with the Mind and the States of Consciousness. They have been experimenting on the mind for thousands of generations which is passed on from master's to disciples. From Kapila to Shankaracharya (8th century CE). Bharati (2023) says that in the mechanism of speech, "one should speak from prana. "Atman joins then "meanings" intentional to the buddhi, then buddhi assigns the intent to speak to the mind, mind propels the body-fire (kaya-agni-prana, which forces the visceral air. The air transversing the thoracic systems produces a deep sound". Speech origin is in the consciousness of Atman, the self. The speaker is atman, the self. An effective speech is one with atma-tattwa-avalokanam, observation of consciousness, self, atman. Atman charge buddhi with energy, so the intent to speak is imparted by buddhi, making effective utterance. Bharati (2023) believes that speech-fast is significant in the practice of silence. speech fasting is no consumption of food, controlling the functions of the mouth or not talking. If the mind is not calm to some degree in a meditative mode, it is impossible to undertake speech fasting. Sankalpa is necessary, make a mental resolve to do silence before starting, "I shall keep my speech silent, mind meditative and body relaxed". In this frame of mind continue with your mantra japa breath awareness, silence, mental brahmacharya etc. mental brahmacharya is essential for silence. begin gradually, first try one day, then three days, then seven to ten days, then forty days, you may increase the duration as you progress.

Kaya-agni-prana in the navel center (manipura chakra) propels the body fire. Correct breathing for its effectiveness. Diaphragmatic breathing and yogic relaxation force speech, this applies to singing. The navel center is the seat of the prana. Diaphragmatic breathing and yogic relaxation are the secret in accomplishing a few spoken words pranically, without wasting energy and weakening the prana. During diaphragmatic breathing the visceral air is pushed up from the navel center and touches the cardiac, thoracic systems and draws energy from them. In the larynx specific sounds are formed which are then uttered by mechanical system, which includes, sthana- the location in the mouth, where the breath is released to form a vowel or where it is blocked to form a consonant. Karana – the instrument, that part of the tongue, placed in a certain position or the formation of the lips. And Prayatna – effort of the breath, the force used to expel the air and throat, to the extent the mouth is opened and how closely the tongue touches the karana spots. The visceral air is

modulated, Bharati (2023). "Speech is a manifestation of buddhi and mind's understanding "knowing" mind-brain's intention to express that "knowing" with certain emotions.

Awakening prana with that intent

Prana propelling the respiratory organs

Prana modulated through the vocal organs

The modulated breath released, generating sound waves, in turn touching the ear canal, passing through the brain system. Producing an understanding or evoking an emotion. Physically speech is modulated by breath. The science of breath rhythm in yoga is Svara-shastra. The tone of voice is called svara also. A musical tone is called svara. Each vowel is a puff of a breath, each vowel and syllable uttered in a single breath, they are short jerky breaths, they are not smooth and rhythmic breaths. The articulation of speech involves all the systems in the body. In yoga human life span is measured by the number of breaths. Some ways to extend your life span and slow down the breath is. An intention to breathe slowly, practice under a master or competent teacher, cultivate sattvic emotions, love, amity, joyfulness and not the opposite which will shorten your life span. Reduce overeating and over sexual indulgence. Practice meditation, reduce your volume and length of speech. Practice intentional silence, Bharati (2023) breath is given to us by the Lord; to use, we do not want to waste it or be stingy with it. use it for communication, not for mindless extravagance like loud, hostile, angry, hurtful and more... contrarywise, when jogging we gasp in short breaths but, at the end it increases the capacity of the lungs and lengthens the breath. To avoid gasping when jogging, keep the mind focus on your mantra, on each jog. Also, train yourself to breathe 1:2 ratio that is exhaling twice as long as your inhalation.

SOME BENEFITS OF SUBTLE BREATHING

Subtle breathing calms down the nervous system, Balance to function efficiently, increase resilience and flexibility, Ideal breath of 5 to 7 per minute, Enhanced immunity (fights against illness), Relaxed calmer mind, relaxed calm body. Expand lungs capacity, increase oxygen absorption and supply, Strengthens the muscles of the chest and improves digestion and the quality of sleep, influences nasal breathing, nasal breathing warms, filters and humidifies inhaled air

before reaching the lower respiratory tract. It resonates with your mantra.

Filters bacteria and viruses in the air, reduces anxiety and depression, Helps control the vrittis in the mind (the monkey that is wandering), It connects to the subtler realm, increase awareness and alertness, reduce pain, decrease mental and physical stress, improve stress management, decrease heart rate and respiration rate, Relaxed tensed muscles, Decrease blood pressure, Experience higher energy levels, Para sympathetic dominance and more.

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