

Those students who are guided from within experience that their prana becomes awakened taking a new quality, which I call Shakti. Shakti is the energetic guidance of the inner teacher. When they take a selfless Ayurvedic Yoga inhalation a flow of Shakti will naturally arise from their humility and reverence. Each bodily cavity will react to the Shakti's motion creating a response that moves from pranayama to pratyahara (from outward to inward directed awareness). In the simple motion of inhalation, the head will move downward in such a manner as to create an upward tongue motion (Jiva bandha or Kechari mudra) accompanied by a neck lock (Jalandhara bandha). This is udana prana meeting and equalizing with adhya prana. The progression of the intercostal breathing pattern will bring about an expansion of the rib cage and with it an upward motion of the diaphragm (Uddiyana bandha). A very subtle lift of the pelvic floor (mula bandha) will arise at the end of the inhalation. This is samana prana meeting and equalizing with apana prana. A natural pause (kumbhaka) will follow as vyana prana expressing its nature before the exhalation. As the exhale proceeds to follow the reverse wave of the pranas, the bandhas will deepen from bottom to top resulting in a prolonged breath wave pause (kumbhaka) following the exhalation. Thus the naturally arising of bandhas as a manifestation of pratyahara (inward directed attention) will arise from the Ayurvedic Yoga Pranayama.

Unified the health benefits of Ayurveda in harmony with the naturally arising of spiritual desire creates a profoundly sattvic Yoga experience. The Shakti naturally brings one's attention to their inner teacher. Over time this process will deepen into a desire to share this sublime Shakti Shiva awareness with others who are seeking illumination. And often that sharing will arise without the student's effort.

Shakti loves to give Herself to good people. Good people will naturally have an increased prana, as that is the sign of the manifestation of their goodness. It is not merely the directing of life to the yogic lifestyle of ethical codes called yamas and niyamas. Practice is needed for those who do not experience Yoga naturally arising through all aspects of their life.

Pranayama Guidelines from the Yoga Sutras

The fourth limb of Patanjali's eight limbs of the tree of Yoga is Pranayama. Pranayama is defined in the first of four sutras (II, 49 – 53) citing that the experience of pranayama naturally follows the experience of asana.

*When this (asana mastery) is acquired
then pranayama naturally follows
with a cessation
of the movements
of inspiration and expiration.¹⁰⁶*

By taking this step we are entering the realm of the previously unknown. We

are asked to suspend belief in the necessity of respiration as a requisite for life, as previously described in my experience of a spontaneous Yoga Nidra state. This stage of Yoga practice indeed calls for a leap in faith to allow our breath to suspend its constant motion and believe that we will still have life. Or it may come as a Spiritual awakening from a force higher than your personality's ego. Either way this limb calls for a letting go of the known and surrendering to the unknown. Here the Yogi enters the realm of the great mystery.

For others outside of these requisite conditions for pranayama, there is another way to gradually progress toward this fullness. Patanjali allows for the training of the breath as a means to allowing the requisite conditions for the higher form to gradually develop. The method is simple, yet sublime in its simplicity.

It is wonderful that we are so unique not only in outer form of physical body and posture but also inwardly. In my first seminar with Yoga master Desikachar in 1980 in San Francisco, he said, "God has established different rhythms for breath, pulse, brain unique to each person." The similarity that we all share is that we are unstable. And so by gradually gaining control over the vacillating nature of breath one can progressively visit the uncommon experience of stability. This can be done by regulating any of the breath's three principle qualities. It has the quality of moving external to the body during the exhalation (rechaka), moving internally during the inhalation (puraka), or it may be immobile during the natural pauses between movements (kumbhaka). According to Desikachar, the most important aspect of breath training is to increase the length of the exhalation.

The Yoga Sutras gives a practical progression for breath training to unveil the experience of pranayama.

*II, 50
The vacillations of breath
are either external,
internal, or stationary,
they may be regulated
three ways:
by location, time, or number;
then they will become
prolonged and subtle.¹⁰⁷*

This practical sutra on pranayama training describes progression through following three steps. The first step in attaining pranayama according to Patanjali, is to direct your breathing to specific locations in the body and develop your capacity to restrain your attention to these specific regions. Thus in Yoga training, we begin with simple exercises to increase the expansion or contraction of the thoracic, abdominal, and pelvic cavity regions. Initially, this results in increased respiratory capacity, breath holding time, and sensitivity to the body's biofeedback mechanisms. With advanced training, the progression is to send the waves of the breath to subtler regions.

An example of progression would be to send the breath to the 4 cavities (cranial, thoracic, abdominal, and pelvic) then next to direct it within each cavity to a specific organ then to a region of that organ. For instance one could direct the breath to the abdominal cavity then to the posterior of that region, then to the kidneys and finally to the adrenal glands, located on top of the kidneys. With help from an anatomy atlas, one can begin to visualize smaller and more minute tissues until the prana of the breath can be directed to the level of cellular physiology.

The directing of the breath to specific areas of the physical body is a necessary prerequisite to effective healing. Through guided awareness by an adept teacher, the student can begin to sense the subtle physical motions of Prana within themselves. In this manner, blood flow can be increased to specific regions and, with practice, to internal organs. Studies of Yoga practitioners have demonstrated their capacity to alter the skin temperature in the hand as an indication of the ability to direct the flow of blood. Even novices can be taught to do this in a short period of time. Since many organ functions depend upon blood flow, increasing or diminishing circulation can have a profound effect upon health.

In the rarely published fifth chapter of the text *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*, the cultivation of awareness of Prana (Prana Dharana) is said to be a means to alleviating disease.

"Whenever any region is afflicted by disease one should contemplate upon the Vayu (Prana) situated in that region. . . . Wherever there is affliction due to disease, filling that region (with Prana) one should hold it there." ¹⁰⁸

One meaning of the word prana is "that which is constantly present everywhere." Through this process of learning to direct the Prana into afflicted regions of the body, health improves. And with it the overall feeling of our innate interconnectedness increases. For it is this symmetry of experience that is Yoga. And with this phase of Yoga discipline the Pranayama discipline can be known as a means to that communion of Self. With that comes loss of the distinct sensations we call dis-ease. "True health is the unimpeded flow and containment of Prana within the body." ¹⁰⁹

The second method of training the breath is according to time or ratios. In the beginning the student is advised to concentrate primarily upon encouraging the flow of their breath to become full and smooth. This lessens the disruptions in the Prana as it moves into the five subdivisions. In general, certified Yoga teachers are advised to give only breath awareness or equal ratio (Sama Vritti "equal movement") breathing. This method is particularly beneficial in that it promotes concentration and steadiness of the body/mind during asana practice. It is free of the side effects that can arise from uneven breathing or training involving breath pauses. Variations to this standard are only ethically given individually by teachers authorized by their instructors to teach personal adaptations.

Uneven ratio (visama vritti "uneven motion") is given individually and then usually for a limited supervised period. This practice is highly beneficial for those

persons with special needs. The effects of Yoga poses and pranayamas are classified as "fasting, contraction" (langhana) or "expanding" (brahma). The most common change given from an even ratio is to extend the inhale. This promotes "expanding" of the lungs. By doing this, the digestion is stimulated as the lengthening of the inhalation stimulates Samana Prana. This in turn promotes more thorough elimination of waste products. There is also a general increase in digestive fire as Agni is increased by this prolonged inhalation.

This uneven pranayama is of particular benefit for those who desire to dive more deeply into meditation or who have irregular biological reflex patterns causing irregular menstrual cycles, constipation, and irregular sleep. This is especially beneficial for those with diagnosed problems in any region above the diaphragm. These practices should not be experimented with as they can disrupt the biological regulatory system of the hypothalamus. Some preliminary signals are obvious and should receive attention. When inhalation is increased too much there may be giddiness, hyperactivity, over reaction to sensory stimuli, weight gain, or suppression of grief and sadness.

In contrast with this, the lengthening of the exhalation is called "contracting" (langhana). It is easy for one to experience the principle of relaxation with a prolonged exhalation. The ribcage is narrow in width and depth during this phase of respiration. This variation in pranayama is utilized for those persons who are overworked, stressed or have excess tissue (increased Kapha). Caution is also needed in giving this practice due to detrimental side effects. With too much emphasis on exhalation there may be hyperventilation, dizziness from the increased expelling of toxins and, if habitually practiced, too much weight loss.

Taking these contrasting principles of langhana and brahma as polarities of Yoga practice we can examine other polar opposites, which can be addressed by this practice. The following chart shows some examples of how to conceive of archetypal qualities that can also be used as guidelines for asana and mantra practices.

Brahma - "to expand"	Langhana - "to fast"
Expansive	Constrictive
Lunar	Solar
Shakti	Shiva
Inhalation	Exhalation
Cooling	Heating - Agni
Nurturing & Tonifying	Detoxifying & Reducing
Kapha	Vata & Pitta
Forward bending	Backward bending

The third discipline applied to the breath is the number. This refers to the number of cycles or minutes that a particular method is performed. Gradually the

amount of time spent is increased until the range of control over the respiratory function is extended to double your initial practice.

In this way, the breath regulation can be carried out for periods that will help restore biological and circadian rhythms to homeostasis. As Vata regulates all motions in the body/mind, this alteration of respiration will deepen the changes to all life rhythms. This is a particularly beneficial intervention for those undergoing changes in life - birth, menopause, mid-life crisis, moving to a new city, change in job or relationship. Regulating the number of the breaths can assist the individual's capacity to adapt to larger changes. Once more we see how manipulating the microcosm can assist in adapting to changes in the macrocosm.

This will usually allow sufficient time for the student to discover the difference between breathing exercise and pranayama. This distinction is learned by experience of the waves of Prana rather than through understanding.

When this training becomes stable for 5 minutes, you may begin the second phase of practice - extending the natural length of each breath. This follows with the second definition of pran-ayama in *Yoga Sutras II*, 51-52. Drawing out the breath deepens one's ability to concentrate and maintain a still posture. The breath becomes more subtle and the Pranic energy in the breath becomes more apparent.

Pranayama practice is a tremendous tool for expanded awareness and yet for many students, a taste of this expansion is enough. They may stop and not proceed further in the development of the potentials of Pranayama. For this heightened self awareness often points out areas of life that are stressful - where they experience a lack of empowerment or where they are fearful of change. The process of self-awareness that Pranayama affords can produce radical change in lives that are stuck due to an unmanageable lifestyle, lost motivation or inspiration. It seems peculiar and overly simplistic that by just working with your respiratory inspiration you can also increase your psychic and mental inspiration and live a more fulfilling life. It is due to this challenge that a serious Yogini receives the title of Hero (Vira). For being a committed Yogini reveals bravery to face the challenges of your own self. Taking the vows of regular Yoga sadhana brings courage and by its development more is given.

Asanas for Pranayama

While the majority of my pranayamas are done in seated postures; two, agnisar dhouti and Uddiyana bandha, are done from a standing posture with hands on bent knees. Although any comfortable posture with the pelvic sitz bones 6" higher than your knees is suitable for pranayama, I do have my preferences of poses. It is ideal to use the best-seated posture you can do that locks your legs and pelvis into a static posture. My other favorite postures, in order, equal pose (Samasana), auspicious pose (Swastikasana) or easy pose (Sukhasana). Samasana is with the left heel to the perineum for women and right foot in front of it, both feet flat

on the ground, heels centered on the pelvis. Swastikasana is done with the right foot resting between the left calf and thigh. Sukhasana has the ankles crossed feet pointed ahead and placed directly below the knees so the lower legs are supported by the opposite ankles.

Once your legs are comfortably positioned, and then create an erect spine using strong back muscles to lift your chest and head to an elongated posture. Then begin with your arms fully extended, hands palm down in Chin mudra (consciousness gesture or seal) or palms upward in Jnana mudra (wisdom), lightly touching thumb and forefinger tips. Anjali mudra with palms at the heart or any other mudra you prefer can also be beneficial. These gestures will help produce the attitude of mind for expanding consciousness into the fourth kosha, subtler than the mind's normal states. When considered as seals they help the Yogini to retain/seal pranic flows that otherwise may escape the subtle nadis of the hands and feet. Overtime pranic nadis are built to generate and sustain higher states of consciousness until the highest (fourth) procedure of prana is attained where prana is felt permeating everywhere as the veil over the pure light of consciousness is lifted (YS II, 51-2).

Sequence for Learning Pranayamas

Although I have listed these pranayamas in the Ayurvedic sequence of Vata, Pitta, and then Kapha balancing; the sequence to learn them in is different. Optimal is to learn ujjaye first, nadi shodhana Kriya second, intercostal breathing third, agnisar dhouti fourth, Kapalabhati Kriya fifth, Sitali sixth, and Shambhavi Bhastrika last. In this way the abdominal and respiratory muscles can gradually be toned to the level required by the most demanding of the practices, Shambhavi Bhastrika.

Pranayama for Vata

In general, pranayama balances Vata and calms the mind. Eight types of pranayama are described in the classical 14th century text *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (II, 44-70). The safest are cited here. As a reminder, before any pranayama practice, the purification technique of Water Snuffing (Jala Neti) described in chapter 6 is recommended to be done to open the sinus and upper respiratory passages clearing them of excess mucous.

Even Wave Victorious - Sama Vritti Ujjaye

Described in detail in my previous book, *Structural Yoga Therapy*, as the wave breath, this is the most natural discipline of the Prana to engage in continuously. Sama means even. Vritti means vacillation or wave. Ujjaye comes from two root words, uj meaning "upward" and jayi meaning "victorious." It is a wave motion of breath that raises consciousness and frees the mind from delusions and self-centeredness, allowing the Truth to be known and acted upon.

The principle characteristic of this pranayama is even inhale and exhale, even duration, even effort. Gradually natural pauses (Kumbhakas) are introduced.

Following the guidelines of Patanjali *Yoga Sutras* II, 50 the prana is to become "prolonged and subtle" by this even, sattvic effort. Ujjaye can also be translated to mean, "what clears the throat and masters the chest region." An important technique for Hatha Yoga, Ujjaye is a glottal breath in which the back of the throat is partially closed to narrow the passage of air entering the windpipe (trachea). Ujjaye is the basic pranayama technique from which all others derive.

Precautions

There are no contraindicated conditions for which to deny oneself this practice. Even actively deranged doshas will benefit from attempts at regulating prana through this foundational pranayama.

Common Problems

The most often is stressful breathing, efforting to perfect the posture, too tight a neck position and tensions of the upper body are common with rajasic practitioners.

Instructions

The optimal posture is seated meditation position with your back erect and head slightly bent down, bowing toward your heart. Your head is tilted not contracted downward enough to form Chin Lock (Jalandhara bandha), but enough to create the sensation of the trachea narrowing in the region of the glottis. The posture gives one the attitude of humility. I call the muscles creating this bowing pose, the humility muscles. They are rarely strong enough to sustain the position for a serious pranayama practice. The chest/heart is raised to allow your lungs the freedom to easily expand. Place your hands palm up on your knees with the tips of your forefinger and thumbs joined in Wisdom's Seal, Jnana Mudra, and your arms straight.

The technique is done by inhaling smoothly and evenness through both nostrils. Then follows a brief pause. Exhalation should be done through both nostrils. The primary method is done with evenness of inhalation and exhalation (technically called sama vritti ujjaye pranayama). Its primary benefit is to balance all the aspects of Vata's five pranas and prepare the mind for withdrawing from the world (pratyahara) into concentration (dharana). Place your attention on the breath sound. Inhale and exhalation is through both nostrils. The inhale and exhale are maintained at an even, steady pace. A constriction will be created at the base of your throat that makes the sound more audible.

Begin by taking a deep breath and feel with your fingertips the soft juncture of skin above and between your collarbones (clavicles) sinking in. It is from this contraction that the "hamm" sound arises. With concentration, the sound can become even and sustained from the beginning to the end of each inhale. Over time this sound will also become articulated during the exhalation cycle as well. There is no pause with the breath, only a smooth, steady in-out flowing cycle. The main qualities of the breath are the vertical motions of the breath's wave and its subtle throat sound.

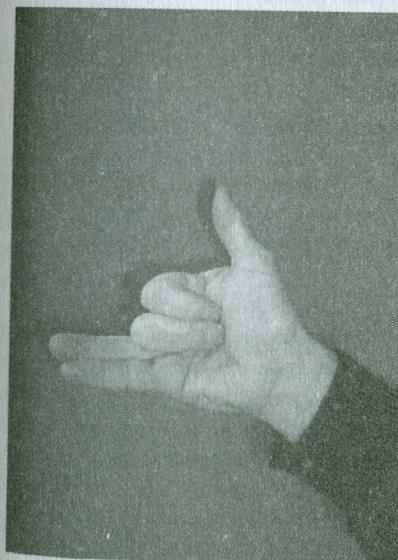
Benefits

By persistently following the *Yoga Sutra* guidelines this practice creates the state of pranayama and the experiences cited in II, 49-52. This practice overtime leads to an inward directed awareness that continuously perceives the currents of sensation that are the essence of prana. It is a breathing that allows consciousness to rise courageously above its usually restless mental nature and through that victory to experience the underlying transcendental Self. The mind then becomes calm, and the stillness, which is always there beneath your thoughts surface with clarity.

Variation for attaining higher consciousness

Cultivate devotion (Bhakti) seeking the Divine Presence as pure awareness. In this case that Presence is the awareness of breath. Feel with great sensitivity the sensations of the singular air from the outside becoming two as it enters the separate left (ida) and right (Pingala) channels. Notice just beyond the root of the nostrils the breath that was two becomes one. Then breathe out to experience the twoness again. Watch very carefully the turning points where one becomes two and two becomes one. This method comes from the *Vijnana Bhairava Tantra* sutras 24, 25, and 27.¹¹⁰

Purifying the Subtle Energy Channels - Nadi shodhana



*"The yogi who has thus overcome fatigue by practicing the asanas, should begin practice of purification of the subtle nerve, the nadis, manipulation of prana, pranayama and mudras to introvert the subtle energies in order to deepen meditation practice."*¹¹¹

The purification of the nadis occurs through all pranayama practices though the practice of alternate nostril breathing is especially renowned for this benefit. This is an example of how each Yoga system is unique. In writing a forward to his student's guidebook on the distinctions of Asana and Pranayama in his tradition, T.K.V. Desikachar notes "there are no standards for names or techniques of each asana and pranayama."¹¹² It is known in different Yoga systems as either nadi shodhana (purification of the subtle channels) or anuloma viloma (alternating the current). This technique consists of altering the side of inhalation and exhalation. Without breath retention (kumbhaka), this is called nadi shodhana. This is the safest way to begin practice. For those with regular pranayama practices, the addition of breath retention following each motion changes its nature and therefore, its name. In this variation, it is known as anuloma viloma.

It is described in Hatha Yoga Pradipika II, 7-13. This alternate nostril breathing is recommended prior to other pranayamas and before meditation practice.

*"When all the nadis and chakras (which are full of impurities) are purified, then the yogi is able to retain prana."*¹¹³

By alternately breathing through each nostril, the mind naturally begins to find the state of peace and one's attention goes inward.

Precautions

The main side affect to avoid is dizziness or lightheadedness. This may arise from going to rapidly or from trying to force open a closed nostril. Be sure you do water snuffing (see chapter 6) should the alternating nostrils feel restricted.

Instructions

This pranayama is performed by closing alternate nostrils. First the right palm is spread open and the index finger and middle fingers are turned down to rest at the base of the mount of Venus muscle formation beneath the thumb. The ring, little finger and the thumb remain extended. This hand position is called Doe Seal (Mrigee Mudra) although in some circles is called Vishnu Mudra. It is used to regulate the opening and closing of the nostrils. Then place the right thumb along side the middle ridge of the bone of the right nostril midway from the cheekbone to the top of the nose so that the tip of the ring finger can apply equal pressure on the left middle nasal bone.

The ideal placement will press a sensitive point half way from the bridge of the nose to the cheekbone along the edge of the lateral nasal bones. The thumb and ring finger tip should remain in contact with these points throughout the practice.

Do not remove your fingers from your nose. Then alternately vary the pressure from side to side to close the right then the left nostril using a subtle sideways wrist motion called radial then ulnar deviation.¹¹⁴

Begin with your hand in position with a mild pressure applied to both nasal points. Practice Ujjaye breathing for some time through both nostrils until you are comfortable with your hand in this position. Keep your spine straight and head centered, slightly bowed. Correct any tendency to turn your head toward your right. Bring your hand toward your head rather than the reverse. Then begin to alternate currents, inhaling through the left nostril, slowly yet fully. Change pressure to exhale through the right nostril. Then inhale through the right nostril. Change and exhale through the left. This ends one round, continue for 6-10 rounds, and then sit quietly allowing your mind to experience the spaciousness that arises from balancing the channels of respiration.

Practice Ujjaye breathing for some time through both nostrils until you are comfortable with your hand in this position. Keep your spine straight and head centered, slightly bowed. Correct any tendency to turn your head toward your right. Bring your hand toward your head rather than the reverse.

Then begin to alternate currents, inhaling through the left nostril, slowly yet fully. Change pressure to exhale through the right nostril. Then inhale through the right nostril. Change and exhale through the left. This ends one round, continue for 6-10 rounds, and then sit quietly allowing your mind to experience the spaciousness that arises from balancing the channels of respiration.

Variations

The next level of practice is directing your Prana to specific physical regions such as feeling the breath in the cranial, then thoracic then abdominal then pelvic cavities. Then create an awareness that extends to each of these cavities. Practice gradually extending the duration of your breath without stress or strain. The purpose is to slow down your breath with only minor changes in lowering heart rate or blood pressure.

A second variation can be done with the addition of breath pauses (kumbhaka) following each motion changes its benefits and its name is anuloma viloma. This name means "alternating currents." This is especially potent in uncovering the subtle, all pervasive nature of prana known as Adya (or the primary) Prana. The pause should at first be only half the duration of the motions. That is inhaling and exhaling for a count of 8 can be alternated with pauses of 4. The best form of kumbhaka is the naturally arising form. In this way the True Self reveals itself in a sattvic manner without even the slightest rajasic tendency of effort.

Benefits

*"When all the nadis and chakras (which are full of impurities) are purified, then the yogi is able to retain prana."*¹¹⁵

The ability to retain prana is a great achievement. Many people are basically like leaky buckets with their life force on any or all dimensions (koshas). By

practicing this technique the practice moves from Hatha Yoga to its subtle body benefits that is the hallmark of Tantrik Yoga. Classical Yoga of the medieval period did not distinguish Hatha from Tantra Yoga or Raja Yoga. They were all considered as one yoga according to the Hatha Yoga Pradipika, IV, 103.

Pranayama for Pitta

Cleansing the Fire - Agnisar Dhouti

This practice is given previously as one of the Six Purification Methods (see chapter 6). Review the notes there in your practice and then consider these additional comments to deepen your practice from a Kriya to a Pranayama.

Agni creates a physical purification by increasing the movement of air in the fire region of the middle abdomen. We all know that our body temperature is naturally 98.6° F. This is remarkable that our body maintains such a high internal heat in spite of what the weather is like outside. Agni is responsible for that heat maintenance. Water coming into our body at the mouth is cooler than that exiting the urinary canal via the urethra. An ideal sign of balance of this Agni as a sub form of Pitta is that the belly will feel to be the warmest place on the skin.

Precautions

This practice, like other abdominal exercises such as Kapalabhati, nauli, and Uddiyana Bandha, is not recommended for menstruating women or those who are pregnant; as well as persons suffering from respiratory or cardiovascular disease, ulcer, hiatal hernia, or abdominal disorders. It is best done one hour prior to a meal or at least two hours following a meal. If recovery from each repetition takes more than three breaths, you are straining your internal organs and going beyond your current capacity. Remember to be gentle with abdominal exercises.

Common Errors

The pulling and releasing should be applied directly back and forth, unlike Uddiyana Bandha, in which the pull is exerted back and upward, resulting in a hollow upper abdominal cavity. It is important to keep your head down both to maintain a neck lock, and to watch the motions to your central abdomen. It is imperative that the inward pull of the belly occurs only during exhalations; otherwise headaches and dizziness may result. Keep your upper body stationary without lifting your shoulders, tensing your neck, or dropping your chest. For the benefits to accrue the practice should be centered on the central abdomen.

Instructions

Once you have learned to isolate your torso so that it does not move during the practice, you can begin to expand the benefits to the subtle body. The best way to learn this practice is from a standing position. Prepare yourself by baring your abdomen so you can observe its movements throughout the practice. From this posture

spread your feet slightly wider than hip distance and bend your knees, while keeping the back in neutral spinal alignment with a lumbar curve. Place your hands above your knees with straight arms. This will enable you to hold your torso and shoulders still. Tilt your head downward and watch your abdomen throughout the exercise. It is important that you keep your eyes open and observe the motions so that you can focalize them to the navel region. If you cannot see the belly due to large chest then you may place a mirror on the floor in front of and between your feet and gaze there.

Inhale, relax your abdomen letting its contour fall forward with gravity, and then exhale pulling the central abdominal region straight backward (NOT upwards as in Uddiyana Bandha). Repeat this preliminary practice of abdominal breathing six times, then inhale deeply and while exhaling lower your head until your chin is close to your chest forming the neck lock (Jalandhara Bandha). While holding the breath out, gently pull the belly back and relax it repeatedly in a comfortable steady pace until you run out of air.

Then release the neck lock and slowly inhale returning to normal abdominal breathing while continuing to observe the belly. Your holding time will be about 20-30 seconds so as to not strain any of the respiratory muscles or heart.

Repeat the procedure after taking a minimum of three slow breaths to create an effect of gently massaging your abdominal organs. For the next repetitions count the number of contractions you can sustain and strive for a number and pace that is stable. I am assuming that you are having no side affects and have thoroughly read the cautions. The neck lock action will assist at prolonging the breath pause without strain.

To enhance the benefits of the practice visualize that deep within your abdomen is a fireplace and the motions of your abdomen are fanning the fire to increase your digestive heat. Allow any excess heat to escape up the chimney through your upper body. When balanced the warmest area of your body as felt by your palm will be your belly.

When you need to breathe be sure to allow your abdomen to move naturally in harmony with your breathing.

Benefits

Regular practice increases the strength of your abdominals, and improves stamina by the increase in your breath holding time. This practice decreases Kledaka Kapha. It increases Pachaka Pitta and Agni and therefore improves digestion. For students who are overweight consistent practice can assist a more balanced diet in regaining your constitutional body size. Dhouti is for most any kind of digestive tract trouble. There are a few conditions that precautions are needed for its use but the main consideration is simply doing the practice correctly. This is the only Dhouti that I recommend for everyone to learn. Learning this is a prerequisite for learning Uddiyana bandha, the stomach lock.

It also helps you get over your attachment to your body. I've used it for that as

well. All of these Vata balancing techniques are also very useful for people with addictions. Drug addictions, alcohol addictions, and behavioral addictions are lightened by this type of Kriyas. Dhouti, if used for addictions, has to be supervised. Remember, there are multi-dimensions to this body. All addictions have their root in the mind but they flower in the body. So, every single illness, every single illness; there is no illness which is an exception to this rule. There is no mental or physical ailment that does not have its root in Vata. That's the core issue. There are three related pranayamas - Agnisar Dhouti, Kapalabhati, and Bhastrika. The optimal learning procedure is to learn Agnisar Dhouti Kriya first followed by the others in the sequence above. Learning them in this order minimizes the incidence of potential side effects.

Cooling Breath - Sitali

This practice is a way to curb excess Pitta. It is described in Classical Hatha Yoga texts, Hatha Yoga Pradipika II, 57-58 and Gheranda Samhita V, 73-74.

Precautions

Practice this pranayama no more than one minute, except under the guidance of a Yoga Therapist (especially if you seek to use it for its Pitta reducing properties).

Instructions

Exhale then protrude your tongue just beyond your lips. Fold the edges of your tongue up forming a trough shape. The ability to curl the tongue is passed on as a genetic factor, so not everyone can do it. If you cannot curl your tongue, instead make a circle with your lips as you would to suck liquid through a straw. Then narrow the passage by pressing your lips around your folded tongue. Inhale and direct the cooling effect of your inhalation to the posterior wall of your oral cavity. Feel it reaching down your trachea extending into your chest region. Then, close your mouth and exhale through both nostrils.

It is not necessary to fold the tongue for the technique to work adequately to cool you. The key is the ability to draw the coolness from the air and take it deeply down through your chest energetically reaching the fire chakra of your belly. The practice is best done for short periods of time, about 1-2 minutes are sufficient.

Benefits

In the summer, a longer practice of up to two minutes is recommended as it can dramatically reduce your body's excessive heat buildup. This pranayama reduces excess Pitta dosha. The Hatha Yoga Pradipika II, 58 claims that it "can cure swelling of the stomach, spleen, fever, excess bile, hunger and counteracts poisons."

Variation

A variation that was given by my teacher from his individual sessions with

Krishnamacharya consists of slowly raising your head as you inhale. At the top of the inhalation, a cool column of air will be felt extending deeply into your abdomen. Then pause while lowering your chin towards your chest, stopping just shy of applying a Neck Lock (Jalandhara Bandha). With your head downward, exhale slowly through both nostrils. Consciously release any sense of excess heat from your body. Pause before continuing with the next inhalation. This variation is an ideal way to learn to apply Neck Lock gradually yet fully in harmony with the other bandhas. This practice can be extended for 2-5 minutes. It is wonderfully soothing during the intensity of the heat of summer. This reduces Pitta dosha as it restores balance to the Vata dosha.

Bellows - Bhastrika

After learning to do Agnisar Dhouti and Kapalabhati (described under Pranayamas for Kapha) so that you can experience the distinct differences in their benefits, then Bellows pranayama can be safely learned. Bhastrika Pranayama (described in the Hathayoga Pradipika II, 59-67 and the Gheranda Samhita V, 75-77) is characterized by a quick expulsion of breath producing a sound like a fireplace bellow. The practice is a continuation of training that was begun with Kapalabhati Kriya in chapter 6.

Precautions

See previous notes, as the precautions are the same as for Agnisar Dhouti and Shambhavi Bhastrika. Students who have not properly prepared with the preliminary practices are more likely to have adverse side effects of headaches or inflammation of excessive Pitta symptoms. It is imperative that the inward pull of the belly occurs only during exhalations; otherwise headaches and dizziness may result. Keep your upper body stationary without lifting your shoulders, tensing your neck, or dropping your chest. For the benefits to accrue the practice should be centered on the abdomen.

The practice is quite powerful and needs to be done for a brief period as described. Prolonged practice can awaken more energy than one is capable of using. While its use can be done for those on long retreat or living in a spiritual community, it is not advised to do regular practice with a householder 9-5 work schedule.

Common Errors

Flexing the spine and shoulders during the motions are signs of inadequate preparation. The experienced yoga student will be able to isolate motions to specific regions of the body. In this case we seek a statue like posture with the motions isolated to the central abdominal cavity.

Instructions

For the first level of practice begin as in Kapalabhati, exhaling with even paced,

forceful contractions of the central abdomen. Allow the inhalation to occur without effort. The amount of force on the exhalation is moderate yet insufficient to flare the nostrils or create tensions in the neck or facial muscles. Your posture will remain stable and relatively motionless once your practice is proficient.

First carry out a few rounds of even-paced Kapalabhati. Practice to your capacity, but not more than 60 seconds. Then after the last expulsion take a deep inhalation followed by the pause and apply first the Root Lock then the Neck Lock. Hold the pause as long as is comfortable, then let the exhalation release slowly and gently without strain. This is one round of Bhastrika. Practice no more than three rounds without a qualified supervisor to guide you.

Benefits

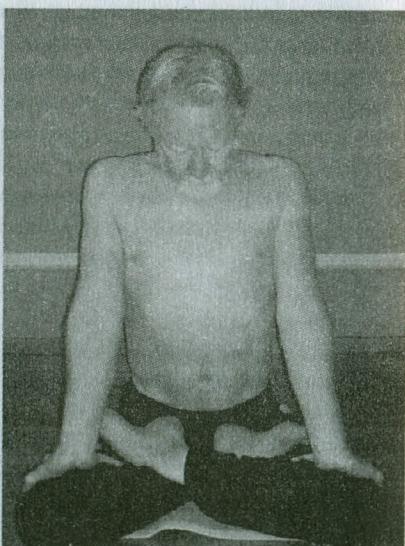
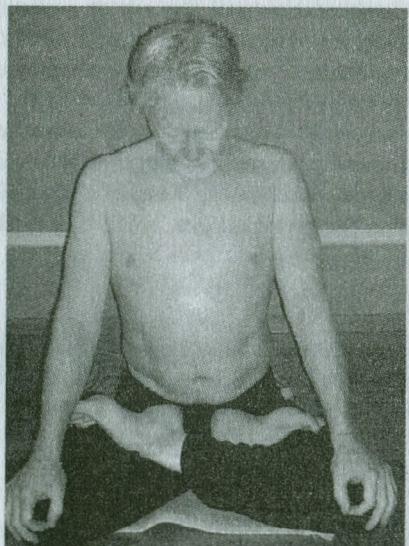
Pitta practices are invariably purifying and the bringing up of these impurities may elicit physical or emotional symptoms. Bhastrika Pranayama increases Agni and Pachaka Pitta.

The raising of anxiety, depression and fear are among the most common side effects of an effective pranayama practice. Through persistence, faith in a higher power, and good guidance these are overcome.

Variation

Bellows of the Goddess - Shambhavi Bhastrika

This technique came from my spiritual teacher who approved my sharing of this unique and profound practice. Shambhavi means the Goddess; She is both the consort that accompanies Her Lord as Shiva and his left side when they are one



body. When they are harmonious, She is the Goddess governing all movement. In this form she is the awakened prana called Shakti. Her nature is the luminous light that accompanies Siva's stillness. His nature is pure consciousness from which springs Her motion of thought and its apparent worldliness. It may seem a paradox that stillness is characterized by having tremendous energy but it is the natural order of the universe that there be a balance of opposites.

There are many variations that are to be learned from a qualified pranayama teacher as this practice can profoundly deepen meditation as a result of the enhanced purification of the nadis that this more profound practice elicits. Once developed this practice can catapult the student into a deep meditation without the normal need to direct your thoughts to a specific technique. This variation increases the efficiency of Bhastrika to create a profoundly still meditative state (Siva consciousness).

Precautions

The same considerations apply as to Bhastrika, agnisar dhouti, and kapalabhati.

Instructions

The ideal posture for Shambhavi Bhastrika is Lotus (Padmasana). Since this practice can bring out the deeper impurities of both the physical and psychic body, the Lotus posture can help one to rise above any uncomfortable sensations that are bound to arise from its continued practice.

Like all pranayama practices, they need to be given by a teacher who was trained to spread it by their teacher. In this case, to be authorized to teach it Swami Muktananda's staff had to teach it while seated in full lotus (Padmasana), with the left foot on top. For all others who do not wish to be certified by Mukunda to teach this, it can be practiced from any comfortable posture with the pelvic sitz bones 6" higher than your knees. It is ideal to use the best seated posture you can do, one that locks your legs and pelvis into a stable support for a static posture. My other favorite postures, in order, equal pose (Samasana), auspicious pose (Swastikasana) or easy pose (Sukhasana). Samasana is with the left heel to the perineum for women and right foot in front of it, both feet flat on the ground, heels centered on the pelvis. Swastikasana is done with the right foot resting between the left calf and thigh. Sukhasana has the ankles crossed feet pointing ahead so they are directly below the shins so the lower legs are supported by the opposite ankles.

Exaggerate your erect spine using strong back muscles and begin with arms fully extended hands palm down in chin mudra, lightly touching thumb and forefinger tips. The practice is similar to kapalabhati Kriya, except that the pace is faster and the intention is to bring Pitta home to the central belly. This will result in a warmer central abdomen more than any other part of the body.

Begin with an exaggerated abdominal breathing so that every exhalation is accompanied by a central abdominal contraction. The inhalations are with relax-

ation of the abdomen. After 3 or more abdominal breaths do short, sharp exhalations while maintaining steadiness of pacing at a faster rate than normal Bhastrika. After 30 seconds of sustained breathing, exhale fully. As you inhale form a strong reverse elbow lock by turning your palms flat at the end of your thighs with fingers pointing toward your body. If your body proportions do not permit this then the palms can be placed fingers reversed on the floor in front of your shins. Then pull your shoulders back and downward while extending the spinal column so that your entire ribcage will be fully lifted. Next exhale fully as you apply the triple bandhas from root to abdominal to neck lock. Gradually equalize the effort amongst them.

Concentrate your inner awareness on your heart opening and seeing the Goddess within. Retain the breath as long as it feels natural. When the impulse to breathe comes, release the bandhas and locked arms slowly as you inhale gently allowing your lungs to fill. Sit quietly allowing the breath to return in its own rhythm. It will tend to be quite slow as your prana and its thoughts will also move very slowly. This can be repeated up to three times prior to meditation practice.

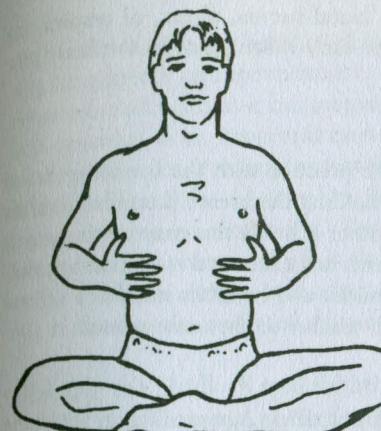
Benefits

It balances all the doshas when done well and increases udana prana leading to a deep state of Siva and Shambhavi consciousness. A natural state of meditation arises when both the effort and the surrender to the benefits is harmonious with sattva guna being predominant.

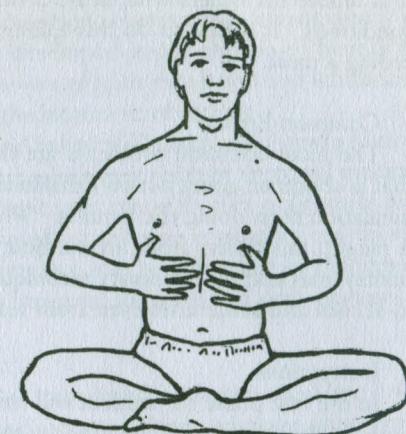
Pranayama for Kapha

Intercostal Breathing

This was described earlier as the middle component (that is the range of the space between the diaphragm and the base of the ribcage) of the complete breath. With practice at isolating this motion, it can become a more powerful tool for elevating your energy levels. To expand your midrange place your hands curved around the shape of your lower ribcage, as shown below. Exhale and press the fingertips together so that they meet adjacent to your solar plexus. Inhale and expand the region beneath your hands. As you exhale begin to press mildly with your hands to emphasize the narrowing of your ribcage. Adjust the width of your hands to let the middle fingertips lightly touch at the end of your exhale. Inhale expanding outward with your ribs, which will strengthen your external intercostal muscles. Exhale using the strength of your arms to narrow the ribs while contracting the internal intercostal muscles.



Inhalation



Exhalation

To make the exercise more effective resist the motions of your intercostal muscles with your hands as you inhale. Let it be a moderate tug of war in which your intercostals will win. This will give them resistance to work with and will increase your inspiratory strength. Then reverse the procedure so that the intercostals will resist the pressing inward of the ribs as you exhale pushing with your hands. Let your hands win.

Continue and notice how much expansion you can get with each inhalation. Ideal is to have 2-3 inches of expansion at the lower sternal region. You can get a cloth tape measure to determine the difference between the circumference of the inhalation and that of exhalation. A standard I have for yoga teachers is to have 3 inches of increased circumference and for Yoga Therapists, 4 inches. In this manner the opening of the Kapha region at the heart can be shown to have a physical component.

The Flying Stomach Lock - Uddiyana Bandha

Uddiyana Bandha, which literally translated means the “flying up lock”, is more commonly called the stomach lock. It is given this name as it increases the activity of Udana Prana whose natural motion is an upward motion through the upper torso and head. This is the third bandha to be learned; first neck lock then root lock. It consists of a strong abdominal contraction that will create a vacuum in the upper abdomen following complete exhalation. There are several phases of its development (see notes on Nauli Shatkarma).

Precautions

The same precautions apply as to agnisar dhouti, kapalabhati, and Shambhavi Mudra. Women are cautioned not to do this practice if menstruating or pregnant.

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It is unsafe for others with heart conditions, hiatal hernia, ulcers, or respiratory conditions. It is safe to do this exercise in the early morning or in the hour preceding a meal.

Common Errors

The most common problems are doing the practice with the breath reversed that is abdomen going out on exhalation, and holding the breath (kumbhaka) after inhalation then doing the bandha. While in other schools this may be the way it is taught, this differs from my method. Students are cautioned to remember that pranayamas and the accessory techniques of mudra and bandhas vary from school to school and sometimes even from teacher to teacher in the same school.

Instructions

In the first phase the student will have been practicing Agnisar Dhouti for some time and has developed the capacity to hold the in breath while rhythmically contracting the abdominals thirty times. When this is done comfortably without stress upon the heart as indicated by palpitations or without a sudden rush of incoming air then the stomach lock can be applied. Following the execution of half a normal round of Agnisar Dhouti, the abdomen is pulled backward in an exaggerated fashion and held in this position. This will create a hollow of the middle and upper abdominal cavity. This is to be repeated three times with natural breathing in between rounds.

In the second phase, the Neck Lock (Jalandhara Bandha) is applied first then the abdominal contraction is applied with a strong back then upward pull. With this phase, there should be a lifting of the diaphragm and an expansion of the ribcage to create the hollow of the upper abdominal region. The "flying up" of the diaphragm having been achieved for 10-15 seconds, the muscles are slowly released followed by an inhalation. This is to be repeated three times while allowing for as many breaths to be taken as necessary for recovery to take place in between rounds. Once the student has built up their stamina, the breath holding time can be increased to up to thirty seconds. This is provided that the inhalation following the release is smooth and not strained.

Benefits

The Stomach Lock produces a profound change to the abdominal contents. The air in the hollow digestive organs of the large and small intestines and to a lesser extent the stomach is pushed out. The earliest physiological studies of Yoga were undertaken in 1926 at the Kaivalyadhama Yoga Research Institute reporting on the internal pressure changes as a result of Uddiyana Bandha. Their findings reveal a vacuum created in the lower cavities of the large intestine created by the strong upward pull of the diaphragm. The increased diameter of the ribcage allowed the upper abdominal organs to be displaced into the thoracic cavity. It is believed that the muscular walls of the intestines were collapsed as x-rays done

following barium enema showed a radical change in the normal shape of these organs.

Its therapeutic application includes indigestion, excess wind, constipation, irregular appetite and incontinence. Once developed it can also be of benefit to respiratory ailments as it can increase the power of both exhalation and inhalation. It is regarded as an important element in the treatment of asthma.

Regular practice reduces excess weight and balances Kledaka and Tarpaka Kapha. It also stimulates the digestive fire, Jatharagni, which may result in improved metabolism and improved elimination. Regular practice can create an aura of lightness and bring clarity to your mind. It is also renowned for relieving respiratory conditions, colds, eyestrain, allergies and other conditions that may be influenced by changes of the seasons or the quality of mucous in the linings of the nasal and sinus passages.

Shining the Skull - Kapalabhati Kriya

This practice is one of the Shatkarmas as introduced in chapter six. Here I will introduce more advance concepts from the Shatkarma Kriya technique given previously. The term kapalabhati literally translates to the "head shining" practice. As a purification practice it acts like water snuffing clearing your head and respiratory passages by expelling excess mucous. It is a good idea to keep a tissue handy in the event that you are successful.

As a pranayama it literally manifests the meaning of the Sanskrit word. Thus it generates an internalization of prana that reveals the light body of the head.

Precautions

See previous notes, as the precautions are the same as for Agnisar Dhouti and Shambhavi Bhastrika. For the benefits to accrue the practice should be centered on the abdomen with the posture remaining statue like. For adequate preparation the student needs to be practicing regularly 6 rounds of 30 agnisar dhouti practice with no side affects.

Common Errors

Similar to agnisar dhouti, it is common to not be able to isolate the motions of the abdomen with the rapid breathing, resulting in flexing the spine and shoulders during the motions.

Instructions

It is ideal to first do water snuffing then kapalabhati. The breath is done only in a stable seated position. It consists of short, sharp abdominal contractions during each exhalation done rhythmically at the pace of one per second. The air is inhaled without effort to return the abdomen to its normal position. Begin with a hand placed palm up upon your knee in Jnana Mudra (Wisdom Seal). Place your other palm on the middle of your abdomen. Begin with a natural breathing pace and make sure that your abdomen contracts away drawing your hand toward the back with

each exhalation. After a minute begin to contract your navel region more markedly on the exhalation while allowing your muscles to relax to normal position for the inhalation. The focus is upon a strong exhalation while allowing the inhalations to come naturally between them.

After the coordinated motion is maintained then you can begin to do the practice pacing each exhalation gradually faster until the rate of 1 breath per second is established. Condition yourself to be able to reach 30 seconds of sustained practice. If the rhythm cannot be maintained then a shorter quantity can be done per round of practice.

Once the rhythm can be maintained and motion restricted to the abdomen, then you can begin a formal round of practice, which consists of 30 breaths in thirty seconds. Breathe normally for 2-3 breaths, and then repeat the process for a second round. You can do up to three rounds of 30 breaths each provided your abdominal rhythm is steady. After completion, sit quietly and observe the effects of the practice. Your inner vision may be drawn to focus on some spot. Allow your attention to be directed to what is a naturally arising point of concentration. Stay still for some time to allow the full benefits to unfold. Sit for at least 3 minutes or go straight into your meditation practice from here.

Benefits

Regular practice can create an aura of lightness and bring clarity to your mind. It acts like a brake to excessive mentation. On a physical level persistent practice is also renown for relieving respiratory conditions, colds, eyestrain, allergies and other conditions that may be influenced by changes of the seasons or the quality of mucus in the linings of the nasal and sinus passages.

Signs of Success in Pranayama

Training in Classical Yoga pranayama is rarely given because there are few competent masters available to train teachers. There are many variables in this process and it is not recommended to pursue practice except in a face to face, teacher to student training. For those who seek to learn pranayama from a book beware of the difficulties. It can be confusing, and potentially harmful when done improperly. There is a potential for weakening the immune system which in turn can prolong illness. One line I recollect frequently due to my own foolish behavior in trying to master pranayama without asking for his supervision follows.

*Pranayama cannot be learned by toil,
Try however many times one may.
Strain, and pain, and surely weariness
Are the most one can hope to gain.*

Guru Gita 53

The Yoga Sutras are clear in their elucidation of the process of pranayama and the experiences that are signposts of following the Classical Yoga Meditation path, step-by-step in the sequence cited as Patanjali's sutras. By the practice of following the previous three disciplines, Prana naturally begins to change from its ordinary course.

Like many Yogic texts, the Yogayajnavalkya Samhita is a treatise of questions by the consort/student of the Yogi who seeks to learn how to love Her consort/guru more fully through learning Yoga. Yogi Yajnavalkya in speaking to his wife Gargi says that "prana extends beyond the body by twelve units. Dear learned Gargi, know that Prana resides in your body."¹¹⁶ For the normal human the body measures 96 units (called angulas or finger widths) and Prana is said to extend 12 units beyond the physical body. Hence the Pranic body altogether measures one hundred and eight units.

A similar text written by Krishnamacharya's 9th century ancestor, Nathamuni writes in his Yogarahasya sloka (verse) 58 that "the Prana Vayu (current) is normally scattered around the individual and if the Prana is brought closer to the body it indicates better life."¹¹⁷ The outward spreading Prana is a sign of loosing Prana. Hence, for the Yogini, Prana is not extended beyond the body but is contained within the body. One definition of a yogi is someone whose Prana does not escape their body. One who masters Prana can deliberately send it outward to another for healing, but except for that, the Prana is held within the Yogini's skin through the mastery of *pratyahara* via Mudras. Indeed, the skin itself is a channel for the subtlest of the five subpranas, *Vyana*.

Desikachar's commentary on the previous sloka states "If the breathing rate is reduced, then the rotation of the chakras gets reduced. This will help in prolonging life, preventing and reducing disease." The final sutras of the Yoga Sutras (II, 51-53) on Pranayama mention how to extend the training to the highest level, called the fourth method. It is a naturally arising form of pran-ayama. By breaking the word into different syllables this meaning is to "extend the prana", whereas the previous Yoga Sutras (II, 49-50) are about prana-yama, referring to the disciplines of prana.