

imperceptibly, or in practising suspension, is the time covered by this form of Prāṇāyāma. There is no need to count the number of Japas in it. One Praṇava may be uttered lengthily and harmoniously (mainly with the 'M' in half-syllable), and this will easily give the count of time, as stated above. This is how Prāṇāyāma is practised together with the observation of time, by the sequence of the Kṣaṇas.

Observation of the time in Prāṇāyāma, in terms of stroke, is called observation by numbers. For in it, time is determined by the number of inhalations and exhalations. The normal time taken in inhalation and exhalation by a healthy person is called a mātrā. If it is assumed that fifteen inhalations and exhalations take place in a minute, then one Mātrā consisting of 4 seconds, will form the time. Twelve similar Mātrās (or 48 seconds) will form an Udghāta (stroke). Twenty-four Mātrās will constitute the second stroke. Thirty-six Mātrās (2½ minutes) will form the third stroke. When the Prāṇāyāma takes place with twelve respirations (inhalation and exhalation taken together) it makes one stroke. This is the mild form of Prāṇāyāma. When there are two strokes or twenty-four respirations it is middling and when there are three strokes or thirty-six respirations it is the best.

According to another view, the time covered by a Mātrā is 1½ second, or ⅓ of the above calculation. Hence on this view the first stroke will consist of 30 Mātrās, the second stroke of 72 Mātrās and the third of 108 Mātrās. The term 'Udghāta' (stroke) has another meaning. The sign of a stroke is that the respiration being influenced by the exhaled air, the breath goes up and comes back. According to this, Bhojaraja has said, "The air from the navel going up and striking the head is called one stroke." It means that when the breathing is stopped, the impulse felt for either taking it or releasing it, is called 'Udghāta'. Vijñāna-Bhikṣu has interpreted the word 'Udghāta' as indicating only suspension of inhalation and exhalation.

In fact, all the three meanings can be reconciled. The meaning of 'Udghāta' is as follows: The extent of time up to which restraint of breath does not create uneasiness for either releasing or inhaling air, constitutes an 'Udghāta'. That time