

PRANAYAMA

NADISHODHANA:

Nasagra Mudra (Nasikagra Mudra)

In 'Pranayama' the breath through the nostrils is controlled by the fingers of the right hand held in front of the face. Nasagra Mudra is important in the practice of Pranayama'.

The position of the hand and fingers is as follows:

Hold the right hand in front of the face.

Place the tips of the second (index) finger and the third (middle) finger to rest on the forehead between the eye-brows. These fingers should be straight.

The thumb should be placed beside the right nostril, and the fourth finger, beside the nostril.

The air flows through the right and left nostrils are controlled by pressing the thumb and the fourth finger.

The elbow of the right arm should be in front of, and as near the chest as possible, and the forearm should be as vertical as possible.

The head and back should be held upright.

Nadi shodhan (1st stage) :

Sit in a comfortable position. The simple meditative asans. 'Sukhasana' and Vajrasana are particularly suitable for this.

Sit straight, holding the spine upright.

Place the left hand on the left knee or 'in the laps. Relax the whole body.

Close the eyes.

Place the right hand in 'nasagra' mudra.

Be aware of the breathing process,

1. Close the right nostril with the thumb, and slowly deeply inhale and exhale through the left nostril. Continue this for a few minutes.

Then close the left nostril with the fourth finger, release the right nostril. Slowly, deeply inhale and exhale through the right nostril ,

2. In this second stage, try to control the duration of inhalation and exhalation.

First close the right nostril and breathe through the left nostril, While inhaling, mentally count 1, 2, 3....,

During the exhalation, again count 1, 2, 3.....

Try to make the time of exhalation double that of inhalation. Repeat this 10 times with the left nostril.

Then repeat the same 10 times closing the left nostril and inhaling and exhaling through the right nostril

Stage 2: 'Sukha Poorvaka' or alternate nostril pranayama

sit in a comfortable position or any of the simple meditative asanas.

Hold the head and back upright, without straining. Be calm and relax the whole body.

Be aware of your breath.

Lift your right hand and adjust the fingers in 'nasagra mudra',

Close the right nostril with the thumb and inhale the left nostril. Breathe as deeply as possible, to fill the lungs to the maximum.

At the end of inhalation, close the left nostril and release the right nostril. Exhale slowly. The lungs should be emptied as much as possible.

After the exhalation, inhale slowly through the right nostril.

After full inhalation, close the right nostril, and exhale through the left nostril.

This is one round.

Repeat a few rounds in the same way.

During the process, be aware of the breath, and mentally count during the inhalation and exhalation.

Gradually with practice, try to increase the duration of inhalation and exhalation.

In the earlier stages of practice, try to keep the period of inhalation and exhalation equal.

The process is the same as in stage 2, i. e.

Inhalation through the right nostril .

Exhalation through the left nostril.

Inhalation through the right nostril
& Exhalation through the left nostril.

Gradually with practice, try to increase the duration of exhalation in relation to the duration of inhalation, until gradually the period of exhalation becomes double that of inhalation.

Stage 3:- ('Antaranga' or 'Poorna Kumbhaka'):

After you find no difficulty in practicing the stages of pranayama described above, the next stage will be to retain the breath after inhalation.

Gradually increase the period of retention of breath after inhalation.

Breathe slowly and through the left nostril, keeping the right one closed.

At the end of inhalation, close both nostrils and retain the air in the lungs. Hold your breath (Kumbhaka) as long as can be done comfortably.

Then breathe slightly through the right nostril and then slowly breathe out through the right nostril. The exhalation should be controlled, the duration being twice that of inhalation.

At the end of exhalation, breathe in through the right nostril, keeping the left nostril closed.

Hold the breathe (Kumbhaka) as long as is comfortable. Breathe in slightly through the left nostril and breathe out through the same nostril, the duration being twice that of inhalation.

This is one round.

Continue the process as long as comfortable.

With practice, try to increase the duration of retention of breath.

Benefits:

The practice of Poorna Kumbhaka is excellent for the mind; It also helps to throw out impurities from the body. It brings about harmony within the pranic body and mind.

He who can do Kumbhaka for some time will increase digestive fire and hear the internal cosmic sound (nada) The body will become purified and free of disease.

During Kumbhaka, the mind becomes steady and one experiences timelessness. One is able to concentrate intensely on the Brukuti (the eyebrow center),

Stage 4 :

The next stage will be to practice outer retention (Bahir Kumbhaka).

The process is as under:

Inhale through left nostril.

Retain breath internally (Antaranga).

Exhale through right nostril.

Retain breath externally (Bahir Kumbhaka).

Inhale through right nostril.

Retain breath internally. (Antaranga).

Exhale through left nostril.

Retain breathe externally (Bahir Kumbhaka)

This is one round - Repeat this as many times as possible.

Bhastrika Pranayama : (Charging Breath) :

Sit in Vajrasana.

Place your hands on the knees - keep the eyes closed all the time.

Press the air out of the lungs in short rhythmical spurts by contracting the diaphragm and abdominal muscles.

Then breathe in, letting the air in rhythmical spurts, and, by fully expanding the abdominal muscles.

While breathing bend forward slowly, until your forehead touches the floor.

Then count 15 breaths, the forehead remaining touching on the floor.

Slowly raise the head, counting breathing in spurts at all the time in even rhythm.

Strengthen the elbows, and keep breathing on even rhythm while tilting your head backwards. Do this 15 times with your head tilted backwards, keeping an even rhythm.

Bring the head back to the straight position, inhale deeply. Do Jalandhara Bandha (chin lock).

Press the chin against the chest. Contract the perineum as in Moola Bandha.

Hold the breath for a few moments.

Release the Bandha, and exhale, bringing the head to the straight position.

Keep the eyes closed throughout the practice.

The mouth should be closed throughout and only breathe through the nostril.

Most of the air should be inducted into the lungs by the expansion of the abdominal muscles and the diaphragm, so also the air should be expelled by contraction of the abdominal muscles and the diaphragm

Ujjayi Pranayama (Psychic Breathing) :

Sit in a comfortable position, preferably in 'Vajrasana', hands on the knees, and chin touching the chest, holding the neck and head upright. Relax the body.

Breathe slowly and deeply, keeping the glottis partially closed in the throat. As you breathe, a continuous sound (like light snoring sound) is emitted from the throat. Look between the eye brows; Raise your head while breathing in, look up, close the eyes. Exhale lowering the chin.

Repeat this 15 times.

The awareness should be on the sound from the throat and the process of inhalation and exhalation.

Ujjayi can be done with tongue - lock (Khechari Mudra).

Roll your tongue upwards and backwards so that the lower surface of the tongue lies in contact with the upper palate. Stretch the tip of the tongue backwards as far as is comfortable.

Benefits:

By performing Ujjayi Pranayama, one becomes mentally and physically relaxed, and is important in meditation practices. It has many subtle influences on the body and brain. This is beneficial to people suffering from insomnia and those who suffer from high blood pressure.

Bhramari Pranayama-(Humming or Vibrating Breathing):

Sit in 'Padmasana' (Lotus Pose) Close the eyes; relax the whole body.

Breathe in slowly and deeply Retain the breath for 15 seconds.

Bring your hands to your head, plugging the ears with your thumbs Keep the chest lifted, elbows well in back.

Breathe out, making a humming sound, through your nose. The humming sound should be smooth and continuous. The important thing is that you can't hear the sound vibrating under your head. The exhalation would be slow and controlled. Stop the humming at the end of exhalation.

Repeat a few times.

This helps in harmonizing the mind and directing awareness inwards, and gaining tranquility during times of stress.

Bhramari Pranayama is an excellent method of removing mental tensions, and for preparing the mind for dedicational practices.

Nasikagra with manduki :

Sit between the knees, buttocks inside the ankles on the floor, toes out.

This is frog position.

Keep hands on the knees. Fix your gaze at the tip of nose and at the same time, follow the incoming natural breath from the tip of nose to the top of nose. With exhalation, be aware of outgoing natural breath from top of nose to tip of nose. The gaze is fixed at the tip of the nose all the time.

Also try to find out smell of breathing. This will bring quick introversion and spiritual intoxication.

When the eyes are tired, close them and only follow the normal breathing in the nasal passage from tip to top, from top to tip. Do it for 3 to 5 minutes.

After this exercise, sit in meditation for some time or do some Yoganidra (psychic sleep).

Cooling Practices:

These are simple practices which cool down the body. They can be done after the yogic practices which tend to over-heat the body. Besides cooling the body, they also help to cool the mind and relieve mental tension.

1. Sheetal Pranayama :

This consists in inhaling through the mouth, and then exhaling slowly through the nose.

The tongue is rolled so that it forms a tube through which one inhales. This is done by rolling the tongue so that both sides upwards and inwards, with the edges almost meeting. The end of the tongue should be outside the mouth.

Sit in Padmasana (Lotus pose) Hold the back straight and head upright.

Close your eyes and relax the whole body.

Roll the tongue to form a tube.

Slowly and deeply inhale through the tongue-tube.

Withdraw the tongue and close the mouth.

Raise the shoulders, do Jalandhara Bandha (Chin lock). Hold the breath.

Release the Jalandhara Bandha. Exhale slowly through the nose.

Repeat 5 times.

2. "Sheetli Pranayama alleviates diseases of the spleen and other large organs of the body, and helps to remove fever, hunger and bilious problems Furthermore, it helps to eradicate all poisons from the body. ('Hatha Yoga Pradipika'-V.3:58)

"A sadhaka should do Sheetal Praoayama since it eliminates indigestion, cough and bilious problems (v.3:7 3)

Sheetkari Pranayama:

Sit in Padmasana (Lotus Pose)

Shape of mouth as described: Press the lower and upper teeth together. Separate the lips as much as comfortable.

Hold the tongue backwards into Khaechari Mudra, so that the lower surface touches the upper palate (roof of mouth)

Close the eyes.

Breathe in slowly and deeply. At the end of inhalation, close the mouth, keeping the tongue in Khechhari Mudra

Raise the shoulders, do Jalandhara Bandha Hold the breath for 15 seconds.

Release the bandha, raise the head.

Slowly breathe out through the nose.

Repeat 15 times.

"Make the sound 'Shee' while breathing through the mouth, By doing this practice one will

become like Kamadeva" (' Hatha Yoga Pradipika V. 3:54).

Kaki Mudra:

Sit in a comfortable Asana.

Place the hands on the top of the knees.

Keep the eyes open throughout and do 'Nasikagra drishti' i.e. fixing both eyes on. the nose tip.

Push the lips together leaving a small tube through which the air is inhaled.

Breathe in slowly and deeply through the mouth. At the end of inhalation close the lips. Exhale through the nose.

The eyes should be open and there should be continuous Nasikagra drishti, throughout the practice.

Repeat a few times.

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