

## PRANAYAMA

### **PRANAYAMA MANTRA:**

**PRANASYEDAM VASE SARVAM,  
TRIDIVE YAT PRATISTITHAM.  
MAATEVA PUTRAN RAKSJASVA,  
SREESCHA PRAGNAMCHA VIDEHINA ITI**

What ever exists in three worlds,  
Is all under the control of Prana.  
Prana, Protect us as a mother protects her sons,  
Give us affluence and intelligence.

Prana governs the whole universe. PRANA – means force/vital energy. Pranayama means channeling or regulating this force.

Pranayama is one of the very important limbs of Asthang yoga. It is a “PRAN-YAGNA”. Importance of prana is extolled in all the Upanisads and yogic literature.

“Breathing” is the outward manifestation of “Prana”. Pranayama affects not only our complete physiology but it also affects all of the five kosha or layers of our existence – from outside to the innermost core. Proper practice of pranayama not only cures the diseases and promoted positive health but also leads one to the highest spiritualism. “Breath” is the bridge between mind & body, so by exercising proper breathing techniques one gets mastery over the mind and leads to joyful and peaceful state for the divine pursuits.

There are five major pranas in the body, called prana (above the heart), apana (below the naval), vyana (in the form of 7.2 m nadies), udana (upward prana above the neck), and samana (balancing the prana and apana). There are five minor pranas, (Krkala, Kurma, Devdatta, Dhananjaya, Naga controlling blinking, size of pupil, sneezing, yawning and phlegm).

By exercising control over breath, one learns to control the subtle energies. There are (7.2M) nadies, channels, throughout the body. The main is in the spinal cord called “Sushumna”, and on its right is “Pingala” and on its left is “Ida”. There are areas in “Pranic sheath” called “chakras”, where many nadies or nerves come together like a telephone exchange. (Awakening of Kundalini energy).

Pranayama is systematic exercises of breathing. Breathing is always with awareness, mindfulness, slow, deep & long. Breathing has 3 stages – “Purak” or inhalation, “Kumbhak” or holding and “Rechak” or exhalation. “Holding” or kumbhak should be done with the “Guru” under the guidance. Habit of deep breathing and less # of breaths makes one live longer.

Doing good Pranayama in the morning promotes great enthusiasm, good thoughts, love for life & right activities throughout the day. The whole physiology merges with the nature, love and lightness.

### **Physiology of Respiration:**

\*During quiet respiration 500 cc of air is taken in during inspiration and 500 cc of air is expelled, during expiration. This is called “tidal volume”.

\*Certain amount of air is always left behind in the lungs during quiet respiration and it amounts to about 2900 cc, called “residual volume”.

\*During deep breathing inspirational volume can go as much as 2500 cc and during forceful expiration, air volume can be 1300 cc. (like in kapal bhati)

\*So normally in one minute when we breath approximately 16 times per minute, our total exchange of air is,  $16 \times 500 = 8000$  cc or 8 liters. But same volume can go very high during exercise as much as 60 liters or so. This is called “minute volume”.

\*Diffusion of gas

O<sub>2</sub> – Inspiration 20.96  
Expiration – 16.02

CO<sub>2</sub> – inspiration - 0.04  
expiration – 4.38

### **Guidelines for Pranayama –**

Empty stomach, preferably at twilight time , in a clean place, with loose cloths, sitting tall on the floor or in the chair with both feet flat on the ground, with total surrendering attitude, asking for the presence of divine. The hands should be placed on knees, facing upward with the mudra of grace or mudra of gnana.

Facing the sun is of great value.

### **Some of the Benefits of Common Pranayama**

\*Kapal Bhati – is a kriya. It cleans lungs & whole body, expands physical & mental energy, leads to purity and calming of mind. It gives message to the abdominal organs, improves digestion and constipation , I.B.S. and cholitis etc. Improves liver functions , and balances hormones. P.C.O. improves. (Different rates for the normal people, hypertensives and with hernia) Not to be done by the pregnant women) ( Note: Not to be done by pregnant women and very slowly by the people with hypertension, heart disease, and hernia)

\*Anuloma Viloma – Divine feelings – physical / mental / spiritual  
Cleaning innumerable nadies  
Vata Dosha – diseases – gout, rheumatism, cataract, sinus, etc  
Balances Vata, pitta, kapha  
Coronaries, blockage removes  
Decreases cholesterol – triglycerides  
Negative thinking replaces by positive thinking

\*Nadi Shuddhi – all the benefits of anuloma viloma, plus holding of breath helps cleansing of nervous system, awakens the kundalini (to be done with experienced person only)

\*Bahya Pranayama – sharpens intelligence, cleanses entire body, benefits all levels of abdominal ailments. Retains the energy that is created in the body.

\*Bhiramari –( Humming Bee Pranayama) individual consciousness merges with divine consciousness/ divine bliss is experienced. Helps children with autism and hyperactivity.  
Steadiness of mind – relieves mental tension, agitation, high BP, heart disease.

\*Udgeet –( Om Pranayama) – Om is a cosmic sound. It is a divine energy which regulates the entire functioning of the universe – slow – subtle  
Helps – leads to concentration & meditation  
Peaceful sleep – (recite prior to going to sleep)

\*Bhashika – invigorates all the system, increases respiration capacity, leads to peace in the mind, and complete receptiveness to divinity.

\*Ujjayi – helps thyroid function, improves voice, tonsil and pharyngeal area, insomnia, and brain function.

There are few more special minor pranayamas like Shitali, Shitkari, Sadant and Karna rogantac Pranayama for the special situations.

Namaste.

Courtesy of:

With love, Veena S. Gandhi MD

## **SALIENT FEATURES AND SOME IMPORTANT POINTS TO REMEMBER IN DIFFERENT PRANAYAMAS**

\*Kapal Bhati – (Kriya) –Forceful exhalation  
Passive inhalation

\*Bhatrika – Forceful inhalation  
Forceful exhalation

\*Anuloma Viloma – Balancing of right and left nostrils  
- HA and THA  
- Right connects to left brain  
- Left connects to right brain  
- Start with left nostril (inhalation), end with left nostril – exhalation  
Once you exhale from the opposite nostril, inhale through the same side

\*Nadi Shuddhi – same as anuloma viloma - Add holding with both nostrils closed to count of (15-30) after each inhalation

\*Bahya Pranayama – inhale deep, exhale fully, hold and go on to Tri-Banda (neck, abdomen, and anal sphincter)

\*Bhramani – Ears open with inhalation – close ears tightly with exhalation and humming bee long sound, cup eyes with three fingers and index finger above eye brow

\*Udgeet pranayama – Aum with Long exhalation with total surrendering, feet rising of energy through the spinal cord,

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