



Control Your Body, Mind and Soul with Pranayama

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Abstract

Pranayama is control of Breath. "Prana" is Breath or vital energy in the body. On subtle levels prana represents the pranic energy responsible for life or life force, and "ayama" means control. So Pranayama is "Control of Breath". One can control the rhythms of pranic energy with pranayama and achieve healthy body and mind. Patanjali in his text of Yoga Sutras mentioned pranayama as means of attaining higher states of awareness, he mentions the holding of breath as important practice of reaching Samadhi. Hatha Yoga also talks about 8 types of pranayama which will make the body and mind healthy. Five types of prana are responsible for various pranic activities in the body, they are Prana, Apana, Vyan, Udana & Samana. Out of these Prana and Apana are most important. Prana is upward flowing and Apana is downward flowing. Practice of Pranayama achieves the balance in the activities of these pranas, which results in healthy body and mind.

Keywords: Body, Mind, Soul, Pranayama.

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Introduction

Pranayama is a very old form of exact science. It is a fourth form of Ashtanga Yoga. The practice of Pranayama needs two kinds of actions- The Svasa and Prasvasa. Svasa is the action for inhaling or breathing in and Prasvasa is the opposite, i.e., exhaling or breathing out. By practicing the control of breathing, one can control the subtle Prana inside. Prana is the whole of all the energy that exists in the universe. It is the accumulation of nature, of all latent force and powers, which is hidden in humans. The light, heat, electricity and magnetic energy are the manifestation of Prana. The mind cannot function with this Prana. The process by which one can control the Prana is by regulation of outside breath. This process is called Pranayama. A yogic must focus on removing the impurities from the body just like a goldsmith tries to remove impurities of Gold by heating it on an extremely hot furnace, by blowing the pipe. In the same way, a person can remove negativity and impurities by blowing the lungs, which is the practice of Pranayama. By controlling the breath, you can a person has the ability to all types of motion in the body. It can also control the nerve currents of the body. The development of the body is very quick through Pranayama. There is no reason to fear this exercise.

Pranayama and Meditation Room

It is said, that a person must practice Pranayama

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in a quiet ventilated meditation room. The effects are higher if you decide to put a picture of your Guru, with pure incense sticks. Ideally, try to avoid letting people enter the meditation room as Pranayama needs a lot of concentration and focus. If you can afford a room that is painted with soft colors it would be the best option. Ventilation helps the circulation of air so that you do not feel suffocated. You can also keep sacred books in the room along with the picture. You can have a raised platform for practicing this spiritual ritual. Spread the asana properly and widely. Do not worry about ants and small insects. They would not attack you. You must have a straight posture before starting the asana.

Five Important aspects of Pranayama

There are five most important things that are required to practice Pranayama.

1. A good place- A beautiful spot that supports solitude and no external disturbance is ideal for practicing this pure exercise. It can be a hill top, near a river bank or a sea.
2. Suitable time- The practice of the divine exercise is advisable to do it in autumn or spring months. If you practice it in summer months, then do not do it afternoon or evening. It must be practiced in the morning because it is comparatively cooler.
3. Light, nutritious, moderate food- Many kinds of food can be given up by a yogic to attain goodness from inside. They must give up salt, mustard, sour, pungent, hot, bitter things. The person should also give up asafetida. Practitioners can start with ghee, milk, wheat, green pulse, red rice. A wholesome satvic (pure food) food is recommended for all the

yogis. There should be a level of control or Samyama in drinks and food.

4. Patience and perseverance (A qualified person)- A person who has a calm mind, who has trust towards the Guru (teacher) would be able to practice Pranayama. The person needs to be practicing it with care and determination. He who has feelings of dishonesty, jealousy, arrogance, greediness, harsh, cunning, treacherous, diplomatic would not be able to attain the benefits of Pranayama. The disrespect for Gurus, taking interest in vain conversations, the talkative, disbelievers, who take interest in worldly activities would find this practice unsuccessful. A qualified person would be all of that with 3 types: The good (Uttama), the middle (Madhyama) and the Inferior (Adhama). A practitioner should always speak sweet and kind words and have faith (shraddha), devotion (Bhakti) and mercy (Karuna) etc. to attain bliss.
5. Purification of the Nerves (Nadis) - When the nerves are cleansed, the pupil enters the first stage in the practice of Yoga. This is called Arambha or the start. Those who practice Pranayama have a good digestion and appetite. The cheerfulness and courage with confidence in self is seen in them. They have a high vitality and look quite beautiful and handsome in appearance. Pranayama should not be practiced after having food for when they are quite hungry. Purifying the nerves is very good for health.

Benefits of Pranayama - Controlling the Breath

After successfully understanding and practicing the various asanas, a person must learn how to do Pranayama. This is a practice of breathing. A correct posture is a prerequisite to practicing the pranayama. A comfortable position is an asana that helps to contemplate. Although, it is not necessary to gain success in trying the poses and then start Pranayama, but it's preferable to do so side by side. Pranayama can also be done by sitting on a chair. The control of Prana and other forces of the body through deep breath is Pranayama. It is a regulation inhalation and exhalation. It is a control on life through deep breaths. The correct way of doing Pranayama is doing it on a regular basis. Every day, one must get up early and try these Asanas along with pranayama to achieve calmness in their life. You have to be very regular because in ordinary worldly people, the breathing is irregular as they are very caught up with their materialistic life. If one does it regularly, they can have a steady control on the universe, physical and mental. The mind is stable and calm if they have a control over it. This can be achieved through the practice of breathing. You would get liberation from the birth, death and would also accomplish immortality. People practicing Pranayama will feel the difference within few days. The western population needs to practice this exercise since they have a highly materialistic life. Did you know, a human could take 15 breaths per minute and

21,600 breaths every day? Imagine if you notice your own breathe and control them regularly, it would make a difference from the first day itself.

Types of Pranayama

To know about the types of Pranayama, one must know a few things about the Matra. A Matra is a time taken in making a round of the palm if a hand, neither too slowly nor too fast, snapping the fingers once is Matra. It is also the each time-unit. A blink of an eye is sometimes taken as one Matra. Time taken to say OM is also a Matra. Many practitioners use this for their convenience. Know that you know about the Matra, there are mainly three types of pranayama- Uttama, Maddhyama, Addhama (Superior, Middle and Inferior). Uattam consists of 32 Matras, Maddhyama takes 24 Matras and Addhama takes 12 Matras. This is for Purakas or inhalation. The ratio proportion between Puraka, Kumbhaka (*retention*) and Rechaka (*exhalation*) is 1:4:2 for Addhama pranayama. This should be practices for the other two pranayama as well. The only thing is to start with Addhama, the shift to Maddhyama for three months and then to Uttama. Do these pranayama at 4 and 10 in the morning and 4, 10 and 12 in the evening. As you progress, a number 320 Pranayama should be covered daily.

Pranayama for Nadi Shuddhi or Purity of Veins

The air cannot enter the nerves if you are filled with impurities. Hence, the nerves and veins must be purified from within. This can be achieved by Samanu and Nirmanu. Samanu is a mental process and Nirmanu is the physical cleansing process. A combination of Samanu and Nirmanu with the above three kinds of Pranayama would get you positive results of Nadi Shuddhi.

Mantras while doing Pranayama

There is a mantra in the Isvara Gita but Yogi Yajnavalkya says that the upward and downward breath, is to be practiced by means of Pranava or OM with due respect to the measure of unit in this Mantra. The repetition alone is meant for all the Sannyasins. This mantra is supposed to be incorporated with deep Svasa and Prasvasa. There are various exercises along with it that can be practiced according to one's suitability.

Pranic Healing

Those who practice Pranayama can use this tool to help in healing morbid diseases. They can recharge themselves with the help of Kumbhaka (*retention*). One can heal their headache, intestinal diseases and other health problems through gentle massage and chanting messages to every cell for healing them up. The subconscious intelligence will have to obey the orders. The amazing power of concentration and strong will lead to beautiful results by practicing pranayama.

Distant Healing

This process is also called absent treatment. One can transfer their Prana and positive energy to another person in need but is staying far away from you. The person should have a receptive mental attitude. The sympathy with the concern person must be present. To make it easier, you can fix a particular time every day for them to receive for the same.

Relaxation

For mental calmness and poise can be achieved through the elimination of anger and worry. The negativity sap the energy from your body, thus, to keep them intact you must meditate, by relaxing all the muscles. Practicing this for at least 15 minutes, every day, would be good.

How to Perform

The first one would be to sit in Padmasana, close the eye and concentrate on the Trikuti or the space between to the eyebrows. Then you would have to close one of the nostrils with your right thumb. Inhale with the opened left side of the nostril with comfort. Then slowly exhale through the same nostril. You should do this twelve times. This is one round. Then breathe in with the same nostril and close the other one. In other words, do the opposite of the previous step. Do this for twelve times. Slowly, after some practice this exercise with greater number of times. The second one is the inhalation with both the nostrils slowly and gently. Please do not try to retain the breath. Then slowly, you need to exhale the breath. This is one round. You can do this two to three times initially but can increase the number of times as you gain practice. This should also be done according to practice and your own level of strength. It is not advisable to go beyond your strength as it may put strain in the body. Do these in moderation. The third one is to sit in your Asana and close the right nostril with the right thumb and inhale through the left nostril. This should be done slowly. Then do the same thing in the opposite manner. Use the thumb and little finger to close and open the respective nostrils. This was one round. Then do it the other way in a slow manner. There is no hurry to complete this exercise as it needs a calm and quiet body. There is no Kumbakha in this particular Pranayama. This process should be repeated 12 times. The fourth one is to meditate with the single letter. This is Pranava or OM. The source of this is three letter A, U and M. Inhale through Ida within 16 Matras. Meditate with letter A in that time. Then use the space of 64 Matras and meditate U in that time. Then again exhale through the right nostril for a space of 32 Matras and concentrate on M. One must practice this again and again to attain the positive vibrations in the body mind and soul. Increasing the number of times of this exercise to 20-30 would be beneficial. But always begin with lesser number as you are just starting with a strong energy. (Ref: The Science of Pranayama by Sri Swami Sivananda).

Conclusion

There are a lot of benefits of Pranayama as I have discussed some. They help your immune system to stay strong, keep your mind calm and composed. For an effortless and positive life, Pranayama is best done every day and that too twice. Most of us forget to aim in our physical and mental self and concentrate in a world of money and other materialistic desire. Deep breathing is essential in our lives for a good session of Pranayama. If there is a healthy mind, there will be a healthy body. There should be consistency in doing such exercise. Irregularity should not be observed. Ensure all of this is done with moderation, correct diet and correct method.

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